

Art in America

Kathryn Refi

The 2nd of November

Solomon Projects

Kathryn Refi explores her place in the world through her artistic practice. Like conceptual artists On Kawara or Richard Long, she works with a set of predetermined parameters, mapping her existence in various ways. For this new body of work, all completed in 2010, Refi developed three projects around the date of her birth, November 2, 1975.

For “The Days of My Life (Nov. 2nd, 1975 through Nov. 2nd, 2010),” the artist methodically inked in a tiny square of a tightly-drawn grid for every day she had been alive until the opening of the show, which was held on her birthday. Cycling through seven colors, one for each day of the week, resulted in a geometric pattern within the – x – drawing that seems to ripple in time.

In the same space are thirty-four graphite on paper drawings, each 12 x 10 inches. Refi made each page by placing a paper over a New York Times crossword puzzle published on her birthday and solving as much of the puzzle as possible. Of the finished drawings, some are quite complete, others more empty, and one page is completely blank, due to the fact that there was a printer’s strike on her birthday in 1978. Installed chronologically in a grid on the wall, “My Solution to the November 2nd New York Times Crossword Puzzle” also becomes a beautiful

meditation on markmaking as the words meld into vertical and horizontal lines that range in pattern and density.

These two works set the conceptual foundation for the series in the main gallery, which document events that all occurred on the day of Refi's birth. Sifting through the microfiche and internet at the library, the artist selected seven photographic illustrations that range from historically important, such as "President Gerald Ford Greets President Anwar Sadat in Florida" or "Film Director Pier Paolo Pasolini is Murdered" to the more mundane "Chris Holl Poses with Dr. Lewis' Lamborghini Miura." She added a family photograph of herself shortly after being born to the group and then laboriously re-drew each of the eight photographs in charcoal (if the original was black and white) or pastel (if it was color) on paper. Her incredibly rich depictions are not hyper realistic but intuitive, adding an emotive quality to the work that would be hard to imagine in microfiche predecessors. Her recitations bring the historical events to life and, by inserting her own self-portrait, she establishes her personal history amongst them.