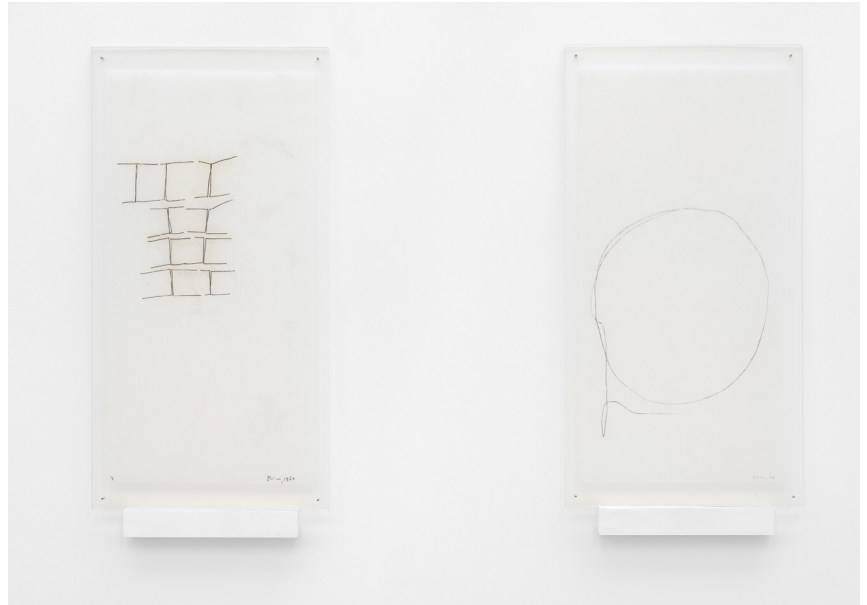


Press Release

Mira Schendel : Six drawings - Monotipias, Toquinhos  
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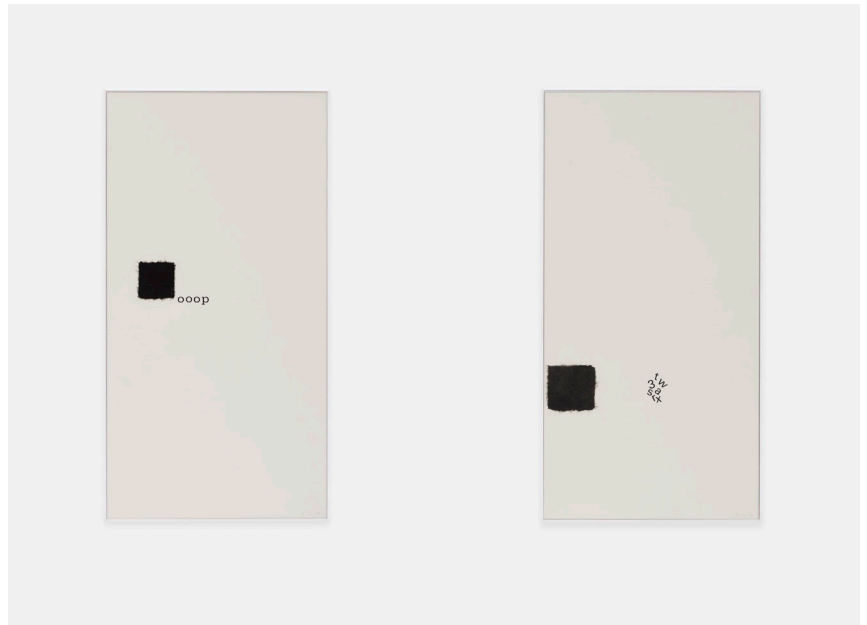


*Installation view of Monotipias [Monotypes]*

Cecilia Brunson Projects presents *Mira Schendel: Six drawings - Monotipias, Toquinhos*.

Schendel was born in Zurich in 1919. She was studying philosophy and art in Milan in the late 1930s when Mussolini's racial laws were announced. Schendel was raised as a Catholic in Italy but due to her family's Jewish heritage she was stripped of her citizenship and forced to leave the country. Having moved around Europe, among currents of anti-Semitic persecution, Schendel managed to reach Sarajevo where she lived throughout the Second World War. In 1949 she moved to Brazil, settling in São Paulo in 1953. After years of displacement, she began to establish herself as an artist in Brazil's vibrant, post-war cultural climate.

Two of the works in this selection are from Schendel's expansive series of *Monotipias [Monotypes]*. In the creation of this series the material dictated the method; Schendel was given some Japanese rice paper but struggled to utilise it without it tearing. Eventually she came up with a solution: she laid the rice paper over oiled glass and scratched with a point or fingernail, causing the oil to adhere to the paper. Schendel referred to this series as dealing with the 'problem of transparency' and exhibits her fascination with the meeting of opacity and translucency. The oil and the paper were brought into contact and then her touch



*Installation view of Toquinhos [Little Stubs]*

dictated the flow of the lines that interrupted the transparency of the paper.

The untitled works in the selection are from Schendel's series of *Toquinhos* and were made in 1972. These works consist of square and rectangular shapes made with Ecoline ink, alongside Letraset letters and punctuation marks. Schendel often worked with language and she viewed the symbol (or letter) as something 'ordinary, devoid of emotion'. She included handwritten or painted words, floating letters, symbols and quoted text in her works. Having aspired to be a poet, her work has an undeniably poetic aspect to it. However, she felt unable to express herself entirely with words. She once said in an interview, 'If I could speak or write, I think I would not paint or draw'. This serves as an insight into the experimental, searching way in which Schendel used language in her work and the subsequent textual dislocation exhibited in the *Toquinhos*.

In Schendel's *Monotipias*, fuzzy lines waver and overlap one another lending the works an energy that directly reminds the viewer of the kinetic input of the artist. This textural effect is maintained in the *Toquinhos* with the imprecise, woolly edges of the rectangular shapes. However, there is also a direct contrast with the sharpness of the typeface. In an undated statement, Schendel identified in her work a desire to 'seize the very instant in which the living experience seeps onto the symbol'; the *Toquinhos* demonstrate an attempt to dissect or deconstruct this moment, distinguishing the static symbols from the dynamic, textured shapes.

Furthermore, the artist chooses to leave the majority of the paper untouched, thereby allowing the dark shapes and symbols to be suspended in various positions on the white paper. Haroldo de Campos, a poet and friend of Schendel, described her work as an 'art of voids where the utmost redundancy begins to produce original information'. It is the negative space in these works that allows the artist to continue her experimentation with the balance between light and dark, as well as the freedom to explore the interaction between sparsity and density.

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