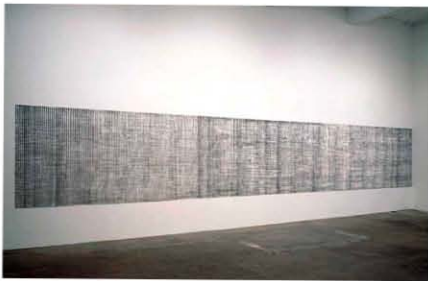




sixteen foot drawing more or less



Thirty foot drawing



(detail)Thirty foot drawing

mark sheinkman

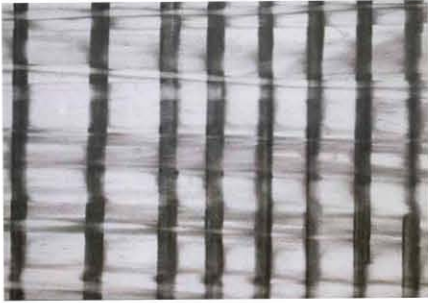
at morris healy

by michael brennan

artnet®

Mark Sheinkman has been showing his abstract drawings and paintings, experimenting with image, size, scale and format, for the past few years. In a previous show at Information Gallery, now closed, he presented a series of works that were marked by limpid gestural brushstrokes, painted and developed on black-and-white photographic paper that was folded over stretchers. This work successfully explored the gap between painting, drawing and photography. Although the images were selected and cropped, they maintained a feeling of randomness and infinity. Their style could be described as calligraphic, but my own feeling is that Sheinkman's drawing is a more rigorous synthesis of both Eastern and Western traditions. Sheinkman has traveled in Asia, and his work has been influenced by Pollock, among others, as well as by New York's own growing Orientalizing tradition in abstract painting. Sheinkman, in his characteristic manner, explores this versatile technique to its limit, in one case extending a single monumental image across the broad expanse of a billboard sign. However, one thing this early work lacked was a significant surface, something that bonded the image to its ground and made it less slippery.

At this point Sheinkman began to produce beautiful small drawings that were simply graphite on paper. Usually a dense, rectangular area of graphite was laid down and marks were made by incision or erasure. These works were toothy compared to the early paintings, but remained equally lush and atmospheric. Sheinkman can elicit such a wide variety of effects, not all of them elegant, from such seemingly austere means. All of his drawings have a wonderful hand-made facture that seems to defy many of the mechanical overtones of Minimalism or photography, although his work still draws heavily from those resources. Sheinkman uses the most elementary material means in his pursuit of an image. It is his level of invention that is most surprising, creating a sense of the infinite with hairy lines, crustaceous lines or dazzling light effects with parallel lines, loopy lines, etc. No matter how wildly gestural his line becomes, a certain aloof equilibrium is maintained throughout the work. Sheinkman's routine disengagement with the process lends these nonrepresentational works an unlikely pop quality.



(detail)Thirty foot drawing



4.4.96

Part of the charm lies essentially in the material. If a pigment can be praised, let us now praise graphite; carbon-based like ourselves, literally the staff of the best golf clubs and tennis rackets, an industrial lubricant suitable for velvety smudging or smearing, unfixed with slight iridescence, a weak tinter capable of turning cool blue or warm green-gray depending upon the white. Graphite is an economic pigment with boundless properties that moves like no other when mixed in oil or under the eraser. And Sheinkman is an artist who fully exploits these properties to such a wide degree, with a heightened awareness of the positive/negative interchange between the metallic black of the graphite and the whiteness of textured paper or a gallery wall.

In his most recent show at Morris/Healy Gallery, Sheinkman presented a wide variety of work from the broad raking grid of "Thirty Foot Drawing" to the disarmingly personal twin towering verticals of the "Sixteen Foot Drawing more or less" wall scroll, both 1996. In "Thirty Foot Drawing" Sheinkman has taken a mural-sized space (similar to his earlier billboard project) and filled it with a dense, crushing Op-ish hatch. The cultural connotations of the wall scroll are obvious, but its feeling of endless lightness reminded me of Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage's famous "Automobile Tire Print" scroll from 1953.

Both of Sheinkman's drawings challenge the viewer with their pronounced imposition and soft metal-gray extension into either direction, reaching for meaning at the limit of means, vision, and tradition. Their strength is in their quirkiness, which lends new possibilities that lead to new responses to something as minimal and familiar as graphite on paper.

Sheinkman recently began painting with graphite paint on panels. These works are not merely uninspired translations of the drawings into a new medium on a different scale, which proves that Sheinkman recognizes the limits and potential peculiarities of everything he works with. It will be interesting to see how these paintings develop, and if they successfully advance with the swiftness of his personal drawing style.

Morris Healy Gallery, 530 W. 22nd St., NYC,  
June 6-July 7, 1996.

Michael Brennan is a New York painter who writes on art.