

SPIN

[Spin, exhibition by Robbin Deyo at the artist run centre TRUCK in Calgary, from October 21st to November 24th, 2011]

The work of Montreal based artist Robbin Deyo is marked by repetition and even more so by the concept of time as an organizing principle. Iterative and incremental development lies at the heart of her practice, which plays itself out in a rational and interactive mode, going from the particular to the general in a highly structured manner. Moreover, since strategies of repetition sets these patterns and leads to the formation of the work, the work entails the formation and creation of complex systems out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions. Each element in Deyo's work repeats at a certain mathematical interval and in certain sequences and yet remains unique in its relation to the whole. In developing her work the artist uses a variety of adaptive art-making tools and technologies, including those that have repetition in them, like the computer. Her work involves the use of unique pattern-making tools like the vintage style cookie cutters and plastic sets of toy Spirograph gears of varying sizes and shapes, which she continues to use in her current production of drawings, installations and videos. Her practice includes bodies of work that are representational, decorative and abstract, unique objects and hand-made multiples, drawings, paintings, sculptures and hybrids of these. What connects these seemingly disparate works is an engagement in processes that can be labor-intensive and time-consuming.

In SPIN Deyo turns to the meditative processes of Spirograph drawing to extend a dialogue around rationality, order, productivity and even the object itself. Over the course of a six-month span of time the artist began making simple Spirograph drawings in a slow and meditative manner. Her approach was systematic and intentional: day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month Deyo spiraled her way into what might be describe as an induced state or trance. Possibly an antidote to stress for some, or a form of ritual for others, Deyo's slow and meditative approach to technology and process presents a self-reflective way of working-through a process. Seated with pen in hand for the majority of each day, the artist came to realize every possible variation of forms that can be produced with the round gears of the Super Spirograph toy (7905). Her mesmerizing process led to the subsequent creation of the four stop-motion drawing animation videos featured in SPIN: *SPIN Archive* (2009-2011), *Spin* (2011), *Swirl*, and *Rewind* (works in progress). Each video presents a unique synthesis of the spatio-temporally configured archive of drawings included in the installation. Viewed for 8 frames (at 30 fps), *SPIN Archive* is likely the most mesmerizing of the four as it gradually moves through the entire set of drawings. The

artist explains that “The slow repetitive cycle of the shifting muted monochrome background as it moves through the colour spectrum and the accompanying sound of the pen repetitively circling on the paper is meant to emphasize the meditative aspects of the drawings’ production in this time based medium”. The other three animations, *Spin*, *Swirl*, and *Rewind*, are far more unsettling than the first. *Spin* is an animated short. This roughly two minute animation is a compression of the archive through an organized layering of the different sequences of linear forms. While the ongoing piece *Swirl* explores the durational aspects of drawing through the interplay of color, movement and transparency. *Rewind*, is a 5-minute video shot in agitating black-and-white rather than color at 30 interlaced video “frames” per second. The effect of this animation is intentionally unsettling and challenges the viewer’s perceptual experience in a way that harks back to 60s Op Art.

The internal logic of the animation sequences in *SPIN Archive* was determined by ordering the drawings in relation to the characteristic matrix and corresponding number systems (of holes) of the toy Spirograph gears whereby a natural progression of morphing/rotation of the drawn form occurs. There is no other modification. On one level the installation represents a return to the origins of cinema, the kind of frame-by-frame hand-made production associated with traditionally animated productions but on another level, it demonstrates a process that foregrounds the actual screen and material substrate of animation drawing: the various frames and sequences, the projector, the theater and the audience. It is in this and other ways that the temporal composition of the installation develops with relation to its visual and conceptual contents. *SPIN Archive* also points back to fundamental differences between archives of physical objects and archives of digital objects. Occupying a space between old and new media technologies – it is poised somewhere between the formal grammar of a playful and minimalist dimension, both a throw back to the cultural logic of the late sixties and an expression of all that is new. The result for viewers is a heightened awareness not only of the materiality of the projections they are watching but also the layering of moments in time that is evident through the artist’s production process.

Tanya Rusnak

Tanya Rusnak is an interdisciplinary artist whose work includes drawing and video, installation, painting and photography. Her projects explore issues pertaining to the concepts of impermanence and change. She teaches in the drawing program area at the Alberta College of Art + Design.