

LIMITLESS VARIABLES OF THE SAME

Within a rigorous set of limitations - fields of heavy cotton rag paper, washi tape, and graphite powder - Veronica Herber explores infinite variables within the open-ended structure of the grid. Her visuality is one that eschews the easy entertainments of lavish gestures and thrumming colours, or the lure of narrative – instead she tends to and preserves those minute ruptures or tremors that trouble the ordered regularity of the grid. These arise from the fluctuating relations between hands and material, each small segment of tape being hand torn, each smudge of graphite dabbed on, in endless and subtle variations that hover precisely at the horizon between conscious deliberation and sensorial encounter.

The resulting works are a hard-won, wrought from the tensions between body, mind, and materiality. Effort is made to constrain the materials and to control the hand, to ensure that the size and shape of each torn piece of tape is family to the one that came before it. What is so compelling about these works are these delicate slivers of difference, the collusion between the action of the hand and the innate quality of the materials, that cause the carefully measured grids to pulsate with life. But while there is predetermined order here, even the grid itself is fragile, delicately drawn freehand, in pencil. The faint, tremulous lines, sometimes fractured into dashes, are a flexible web that barely contain the sly activity that it snags.

The viewer is initially called to these works by the striking and sometimes even explosive impact of seeing them from a distance, drawn by their swarming energy, perhaps akin to a murmuration of starlings or the insistent buzzing of bees going about their work. Coming closer, it becomes evident that this pulsing energy emanates from oscillations between the cut and the torn, the layered and the separated, sharp edges of white glimmering against soft smudges of graphite. It is here that our visuality becomes snagged, searching out each tiny shift, finding within them their own and unique specificity, worlds within worlds.

Here, the vitality and of the relations between order and chaos show up, reminding us that the dance between mind and body, the known and the unknown, between form and matter, and even life and death, weaves the world into being and allows it to thrive.

Julia Teale, 2022