

IZA TARASEWICZ | EQUILIBRIUM IN METEORS

Opening: Friday, July 6, 2018 | 6–9 pm

July 7–September 8, 2018

“The chessboard should also be included in the list of secret objects. Because it represents an autonomous, hermetic world, alternative to our world. It also has time, but its own: space, objects, resistance—everything its own. It has mechanics, precise and no worse than ours, which we study on earth and in the sky. And with this autonomous world we can make a decisive experiment: to dematerialize it.”

– L. Lipavskii, *Issledovanie uzhasa (Исследование ужаса)*, ed. Valerii Sazhin (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 2005), 412.

Galerija Gregor Podnar is pleased to present *Equilibrium in Meteors*, Iza Tarasewicz’s (b.1981, Białystok, Poland) first exhibition with the gallery. Comprised of new and recent works, the exhibition highlights the role of tools and modelling in the artist’s practice, accentuating the ways her distinctive installations and sculptures serve as abstract depictions and demonstrations of relationships, movements, and events. In her work, humble ingredients undergo complex transformations, often through processes borrowed from craft practices and routines from daily life. Her installations frequently take the form of modular and reconfigurable display systems that combine a raw and modest functionalism with formal logics found in the natural world, scientific experiments, and graphs and diagrams—figures of thought and charts of relation that systematize knowledge and abstractly describe the interaction of phenomena.

Referring to a certain utility in abstraction, each of the works in *Equilibrium in Meteors* function as models that describe specific flows and paths, weaving distinct logical systems together and registering the results. Continuing with her protracted interest in modelling as a process and concept itself, Tarasewicz overlaps and intermingles the closed yet infinite system of chess, with the contingent yet exact system of astronomy, conflating the micro and macro, the internal and the cosmic, through a logic of numbers and the charting of movement.

The starting point for the project was the artist’s 2016 residency at GeoAir in Tbilisi, where she was invited by the Georgian curator Nini Palavandishvili to respond to The Tbilisi Chess Palace, a Soviet Modernist public space that today is largely invisible for most of the city’s inhabitants. As Palavandishvili points out, “Theatricality was an indivisible part of chess performances, especially during the Soviet period,” and there were “palaces dedicated to this sport, where the ‘play’ was performed on a stage in front of hundreds of compassionates...by an additional player, who would repeat the moves on a vertical board.” This projection of the players’ moves from a horizontal and hermitic chessboard to a vertical and public display inspired the artist to examine the algorithmic and performative qualities of the game, as well as to consider the internal and abstract notation of tactical possibilities by the players in relation to the movements charted and expressed on the two-dimensional chessboard. Tarasewicz’s *Knight’s Tour* (2016) is a model that describes the movements of a chess piece through time and space. The structure borrows its course from an ancient sequence of moves regularly studied by mathematicians, computer scientists, and poets, whereby a knight on a chessboard visits every square only once. The knight’s movement is the oldest unaltered structure in the game, and the diagram, which has hundreds of variations, shows the choreography of a single knight. Using a set of wooden poles, hemp rope, and a hand-sewn grid, the artist transcribed this long-studied movement into a three-dimensional object.

Portable and composed of modest, unadorned materials, the elements form a kit for materially mapping possibilities within a limited field, serving as a ready-at-hand tool for abstract comprehension. For the exhibition *The Blue Box* at Izolyatsia in Kiev, Ukraine, the choreography described in the model was then transposed and enacted by the dancer Larisa Venediktova, introducing temporal and bodily dimensions to the sequence. Presented as video documentation in the exhibition, the dancer's measured movements around a wood floor accentuate the knight's ability to "jump over" other pieces, and demonstrates the sequence's repetitive and revolving progression. This combination of a model or tool with its performative implementation is an essential strategy for Tarasewicz, and serves as an integral mode throughout the exhibition.

While conducting research into the knight's tour, the artist interviewed a chess historian, who noted to her the game's roots in practices of astronomical charts, mystical divination, and mathematical patterns such as the magic square. Tarasewicz's installation *Dot To Dot* (2018) emphasizes this connection by conflating sequences of the knight's tour with astronomical constellations. Borrowing methods from jewelry making, textiles, and the production of fishing nets, Tarasewicz rendered various knight's tour patterns in metal wire to produce woven and knotted grid-like structures. From these matrix-like meshes hang a diverse arrangement of linear configurations in brass that were inspired from the Dunhuang Star Chart, the first known graphical representation of stars from ancient Chinese astronomy. The linear arrangements of points are similar yet differ from the astronomical constellations represented in the European canon, thereby highlighting the subjective and culturally-contingent identification of the stars above. A circular sheet of brass, from which the combinations were cut, is on display as a model and testament to the ancient map, while the tool the artist built to produce the metal nets is also presented, implying the possibility to continue the knight's tour process ad infinitum, and making visible her own process. Detached from the stable grid of the tool, the metal meshes become deformed by gravity, generating flimsy web-like forms that allude to the curvature and warping of spacetime. The combination of loose arrangements together create a larger system, an organism that is more than the sum of its parts, a system of overlapping systems. The hanging installation becomes akin to the apprehension of the sky, while its title points to child-like puzzles of connecting the dots, accenting the role of creative association in understanding masses of data.

The mapping of sequences of combinations is also visible in a pair of hanging sculptures titled *Deep Blue* (2018). Referring to the legendary chess matches between world chess champion Garry Kasparov and an IBM supercomputer called Deep Blue, each structure charts one of the six game matches played between man and machine, which are often seen as signs that artificial intelligence was catching up to human intelligence. Abstracted to accentuate the movements in the game as well as the almost infinite possibilities of each move, the hanging columns appear as root-like or rhizomic constructions that make visible the abstract process of decision-making in the game and erase any hierarchy or distinction between the neural networks of man and the computation of the machine.

As a whole, the exhibition *Equilibrium in Meteors* spotlights Tarasewicz's ongoing exploration into the interrelation of chaos and order in the organization of information. Stressing the performativity of abstract comprehension, the result is a topology of interlacings and linkages that flow through a network, demonstrating how closed systems can allow for infinite variation, how tools and maps can help render experience and how systematic approaches can produce creative possibilities.

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