

Leslie HEWITT

Artforum

October 2019



Leslie Hewitt, *Untitled (Dreambook or Axis of the Ellipse)*, 2019, digital chromogenic print in wood frame, 52 x 62 x 7".

NEW YORK

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PERROTIN | NEW YORK
130 Orchard Street
September 11–October 26, 2019

Leslie Hewitt builds deftly upon her conceptual photographic practice in "Reading Room," an exhibition featuring both a solo presentation in the main gallery and artist's reimagining of Perrotin's in-house bookshop. Hewitt was inspired by the National Memorial

African Bookstore in Harlem, which was founded by Lewis Michaux, a celebrated black nationalist whose business—which opened in 1932 and lasted until 1974—doubled as a home for community gatherings, political discussions, and art. Her show includes pieces such as *Riffs on Real Time (2 of 10)*, 2012–17, a photo that depicts Michaux inside his store; *Forty-two*, 2019, a computer-generated video that randomly selects and configures words from a data set related to Michaux's shop, building concrete poetry with endless associative relations; and a collection of texts influential to Hewitt. The artist has also scheduled a series of collaborative events that will take place throughout October.

In the gallery, Hewitt's photo-sculptures—pictures of still lifes resting inside heavy wooden frames that sit on the floor—contain elements and strategies that appear frequently in her work, such as a square sheet of elm balanced on a stack of books with their spines flipped away from the viewer, rebuffing our gaze; the layering of objects to create registers of opacity or access; and the repetition of symbols, in a minimalist, serialized arrangement, that evoke a desire for interpretation while refuting any explicit narrative.

Möbius strips materialize in several of the photographs, including *Untitled (Awakened Even When Turned)*, 2019, where it takes the form of a metal sculpture, and *Untitled (Dreambook or Axis of the Ellipse)*, 2019, in which it appears as a drawing and, rather obliquely, via the spines of two cleverly arranged books: Jean-Paul Sartre's *Black Orpheus* (1948) and Henry Dumas's story collection *Ark of Bones* (1974). These pieces in particular reflect the dual structure of "Reading Room," a stunning extension of Hewitt's incisive rephrasing of interpretive refusal and embrace.

— *Jonah Groeneboer*