

Marcel Schwittlick
Composition no. 94 (Vertical Line Test)

Opening: May 28, 2024 18:00 – 21:00

Exhibition: May 29 – June 09, 2024

Mariannenstrasse 33, 10999 Berlin

Curator: Mimi Nguyen

Mathematics serves as the backbone of generative art, with its pioneers such as Georg Nees and Frieder Nake, who originally were trained as mathematicians. Generative art, though often perceived as random, often finds its groundwork on precise mathematical principles and orderly algorithms. Schwittlick's newest body of work, presented at the Galerie Met in Berlin, explores this foundation through a dialectic of complexity and playful exploration with physical pen plotter drawings using cursor data as the foundation for his art. His recent works draw on a decade of collecting cursor movements, transforming these into generative art through mathematical functions.

In this series, Schwittlick employs the "functional" property of a polyline, where each x-value within a domain corresponds to a unique y-value, ensuring no vertical intersections occur along the polyline. This property is akin to passing the "vertical line test," a fundamental concept in mathematical function analysis. Schwittlick's approach involves connecting multiple straight line segments that, when projected onto the x-axis, do not overlap vertically, maintaining their functional integrity.

Composition no.94, started in 2023, is inspired by abstract shapes found in Vera Molnar's "8 carriages." Schwittlick's series seems to conjure the avant-grade geometrical compositions, a graphical analogue of the visual culture that can be glimpsed in Molnar's recent Centre Pompidou's solo show or at the hidden archives of the V&A Museum in London. He writes: "Vera Molnar's oeuvre has been a touchstone in my artistic evolution, seamlessly weaving into my style and perception, often beyond my conscious choice. Her enduring presence in the generative art world has not only shaped the genre but also profoundly influenced my approach. I am particularly attuned to her minimalist exploration of form, especially her nuanced use of lines. The understated transformations and the almost imperceptible shifts in her work have fascinated me from my earliest acquaintance with her art."

The association of geometric shapes and simplicity of plotter lines go beyond an accident of digital practice. Schwittlick makes no claims, he says, about the evident reference: "I view this as an homage to hers, where I infuse my distinct perspective by incorporating dynamic lines as a core element, thereby delving into the interplay between digital possibilities and bodily movement. This approach is not so much an attempt to replicate her methods but rather a respectful nod to her legacy, as I explore new frontiers within the framework she has inspired."

The works radiate with visceral colours, prehensile lines, and the most insinuating pen lines of any modern generative artists, all indirectly nourished by his passionate reverence for Vera Molnar's legacy. "Her methodical explorations, characterized by simplicity and subtle variation, continue to be a wellspring of inspiration. It's evident that elements of her pioneering work have found echoes in my recent series."

-
Text by Mimi Nguyen.

Artist: Marcel Schwittlick

Marcel Schwittlick is a Berlin-based artist who uniquely blends digital and physical art through the use of drawing machines and algorithmic systems. His work spans generative art and plotter art, where he transforms digital cursor-lines into intricate, tangible artworks. Schwittlick draws inspiration from generative aesthetics and computational methods to create geometric patterns that play with the concepts of chance and intention. With a background in computer science and art, he crafts his pieces using vintage plotters and self-developed algorithms, embracing the machines' quirks to explore the symbiosis between artist and machine. His practice not only visualizes the intricate dance between control and randomness but also includes an auditory dimension through the distinctive sounds produced by the plotting machines during the creation process.

Curator: Mimi Nguyen

Mimi Nguyen is a Creative Director at verse. She is an assistant professor at Central Saint Martins, University of Arts London where she leads the CSM NFT Lab. Her background is New Media Art, having previously studied at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) and Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. She now also teaches at Imperial College London, Faculty of Engineering, where she leads Mana Lab - a "Future in Blockchain" PhD research group.