

JOHANNES VOGT

Helen Soreff "The Poetics of Typographical Zen" July 24 - August 23, 2019

Johannes Vogt Gallery is pleased to present its first solo show of Helen Soreff (1926-1998) and the first showing of Soreff's work in over 20 years. The exhibition brings together subtle works in mostly white and black color ranges that entail compositional elements reminiscent of De Stijl and Color Field Painting.

Soreff's abstraction contains an undercurrent of energy beneath contained geometric forms. The swirling textures of the canvas form a stark contrast to the structuralist compositions on the surface of her paintings. *The Poetics of Typographical Zen* is a meditation on cycles and the language of an artist. As with many minimalist painters from the 1970s, gender became an obstacle to Soreff that continues to this day. Despite her energizing and storied career, her name and work do not have a presence in the world of contemporary art. Her pieces have been included in the collections of most major museums in New York, she had her first solo exhibition in New York at the Phoenix Gallery in 1963 and she subsequently exhibited at the Bertha Urdang Gallery and Condeso-Lawler Gallery not long thereafter.

Upon the installation of her 1988 solo show at Guild Hall, the New York Times wrote, "This is one in a sequence of honors recently received by Ms. Soreff, who divides her time between studios in East Hampton and SoHo. There have been grants or awards from the Adolf and Esther Gottlieb Foundation and the New York Foundation for the Arts, plus numerous residencies, including Skidmore College and the Cité des Artistes Internationale in Paris."

Helen Soreff's paintings are functionally similar to Zen Mandalas. One can lose themselves in her works and find a sense of calm therein. Her visual poems provided a refreshing counterbalance to chaotic political and social climate from the 1960s-1980s. In our current period of political and social unrest it is relaxing to be able to pause and be still with Soreff's works. Her painting technique allows a similar sense of calm one would feel taking a walk in the forest and spending time with a learned tree or stone. Even now 20 years after her passing we can benefit from the sublime and subtle visual poetry of Soreff's works. It is a gift to be able to sit in remembrance and to share a moment of silence together. Her silence to our silence, across time and from two vastly different worlds in need of a similar calm.

Helen Soreff was born in 1926 in New York where she lived and worked until her passing in 1998. She received her BFA from The University of Georgia and her MA from C.W. Post College at Long Island University. In addition to her own artistic practice, Soreff has taught at the University of Washington in Seattle, Hofstra University in Hempstead, Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, and Parsons School of Design in New York. Her work has been exhibited in solo shows at M-13 Gallery, New York, NY; Islip Fine Art Museum, East Islip, NY; Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY; Condeso-Lawler Gallery, New York, NY; Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York, NY; Fifty Five Mercer Gallery, New York, NY; and Long Island University, Brookville, NY.

Johannes Vogt Gallery is committed to bringing attention to the complex artistic and cultural ties that bind New York to Europe, the Americas, and beyond. The gallery program features a strong roster of emerging to mid-career artists and has become known for reintroducing established artists to new audiences, including Garth Evans, Mernet Larsen, and Abby Leigh, among others. Founded in 2011, Johannes Vogt first opened at 526 West 26th Street in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood, where it resided before relocating to 55 Chrystie Street in the Lower East Side. In September 2018, the gallery relocated to the Upper East Side at 958 Madison Avenue.