

## Artillery September / October 2011 REVIEWS

Tony Orrico at Shoshana Wayne Gallery



AS A PERFORMER, DANCER and artist, Tony Orrico can be thought of as a human Spirograph who uses the body's appendages as levers to create his magnificent series of *Penwald drawings*. Like Leonardo's Vitruvian Man, Orrico takes advantage of the body's proportions and uses its geometry to create arcs and lines. As he moves his body across large sheets of paper placed on the floor or wall, he repeatedly strikes the surface with pieces of charcoal or graphite, creating linear or circular patterns that become denser as the drawing progresses. Watching a time-lapse video of his process it becomes evident that the physicality of the performance is as much a part of the work as the finished drawing. Like many artists working in the '60s and '70s who were interested in performance, endurance and duration, Orrico — who was trained as a dancer and has danced with the Trisha Brown Dance company as well as with Shen Wei Dance Arts — designs specific patterns of movement, and while the resulting drawing is a record of that activity, it becomes more than simple documentation.

Every title includes the word "Penwald," a reference to those who teach themselves to be ambidextrous through practice. The simultaneous use of both hands creates symmetry in the work that recalls Rorschach patterns, or hemispheres of the brain. Whatever the final shape, the quality of line, whether overlapping arcs or tightly controlled scribbles, demands close scrutiny.

*Penwald: 2: 8 circles: 8 gestures* (all works 2011) is a site-specific work created in the gallery during a private performance that lasted more than two hours. To make Orrico lay down on top of the prepared 235 x 235 inch panel, made up of a five by five grid of 47 inch squares. Lying on his stomach he moved outstretched hands holding graphite in repeated motions — top to bottom — as he spun his body in a circle. As the graphite marked the paper, his feet followed along, sometimes smudging the surface below. After completing one revolution he rolled over the circle and changed the motion of his arms. The resulting drawing depicts eight circles made from eight separate gestures repeated eight times. If the paper happens to rip during Orrico's mark-making he still keeps his pace, the torn paper becoming an artifact indicating the intensity of the gesture.

Orrico draws on paper as well as directly on the gallery wall, as in the 12-hour drawing taking place over three days, *Penwald: 4: unison symmetry standing*. The drawings, whether on the wall or on paper, are explorations of choreographed body movements not dissimilar to the series of commands issued by Sol LeWitt as directions to create his wall works. Unlike LeWitt however, these could not be made by just anyone. Orrico's training as a dancer and his interests in gesture and the body make his process and abstract works unique. His specific sequences of movement reflect his training, and are designed to leave a trace — the enactment of a dance and the record of those movements unfolding over time.

- Jody Zellen