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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in August

Martha Schwendener | Aug. 3, 2023



“Shake off your chains! ...” (2023) by Hilma’s Ghost, a feminist artist collective established by Dannielle Tegeger and Sharmistha Ray, in the exhibition “Schema: World as Diagram.” via Dannielle Tegeger and Sharmistha Ray and Marlborough Gallery, New York

‘Schema: World as Diagram’

Through Aug. 15. Marlborough, 545 West 25th Street, Manhattan; 212-541-4900, marlboroughnewyork.com.

When the paintings of the blockbuster Swedish artist Hilma af Klint, who died in 1944, were first shown publicly in the 1980s, [some critics](#) argued that the works looked more like [diagrams](#) illustrating occult ideas than abstract paintings. Later audiences and critics disagreed. Tastes have changed perhaps — but so has our relationship to diagrams, as John Bender and Michael Marrinan asserted in their book “[The Culture of Diagram](#)” (2010).

“[Schema: World as Diagram](#)” focuses on artists — mostly painters — who use the diagram in formal, conceptual and sometimes playful ways. Some use it to describe social, political and personal structures, such as [Mike Cloud](#), [Alan Davie](#), [David Diao](#), [Thomas Hirschhorn](#), [Mark Lombardi](#) and [Loren Munk](#). Grids, networks and circuit boards appear in works by [Alfred Jensen](#), [Paul Pagk](#), [Miguel Angel Ríos](#). Maps are a touchstone for [Joanne Greenbaum](#) and the aboriginal painters [Jimmy and Angie Tchooga](#). More cosmic diagrams appear in paintings by [Chris Martin](#), [Karla Knight](#), [Paul Laffoley](#), [Trevor Winkfield](#) and [Hilma’s Ghost](#) (the artists [Dannielle Tegeger](#) and [Sharmistha Ray](#)), who take af Klint as an inspiration.

For [Raphael Rubinstein](#), who organized the show with his wife, [Heather Bause Rubinstein](#), the diagram, which only became important in the 20th century in European and American art, closes the gap between abstract and representational art. Maybe this rich, dense show signals a shift, though: Who cares about abstraction anymore? Viva the diagram! Like painting itself, diagraming is a way of thinking and organizing information — speedier than the written word, more graphic and visual. In a chaotic, overstimulating world, no wonder diagrams are so popular.