the train’s machinations, recreates the journey from New York to Washington D.C. carrying assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy’s coffin. The film is loosely based on the RFK series by Magnum photographer Paul Fusco, who was on the train that day, capturing images of the countless bystanders who had come to pay respects. In essence, the film is a series of tracking shots from the perspective of the train—motionless bystanders caught in some infinite stance of remorse, their stillness accentuated by the wind-bent grass or the movement of tree limbs. Compared to the Fusco archive, groups of rail-side mourners in Parreno’s film are generally pared down. Indeed, the most poignant of the images are the solitary mourners—a boy at an intersection on a bicycle, a young woman, alone, unexpectedly bikini-clad along the tracks. At times, in Fusco’s photographs, the gazes of the witnesses meet his lens and at others, trail off to the length of the train, seeking something they know to be invisible. However, the bystanders’ gaze in Parreno’s film seem to meet our own, as though we are standing on the other side of nothing, and through this meeting the exchange between art and audience occurs.

As much as it is an elegy to death, “Chronicles” also acts as a memorial, preserving remembrance and guarding against that greatest loss, which is forgetting.

“Chronicles of a Disappearance” was exhibited at DHC/ART, Montreal, from January 19 to May 13, 2012.

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the short, energetic black strokes distributed across the paper create an ambiguous, overall field in which there is no obvious representational subject. These graphic repetitions evolve into an increasingly dense, oval web that invokes a shallow, fluctuating space interrupted only by a stabilizing, vertical accumulation of the same black marks located a few inches from the right side of the page. This improvised, upright band emerges from the extended field, nearly touches the upper and lower edges, and intensifies the piece’s inherent optical tension, in which a kind of linear energy becomes mass.

Similar strategies are evident in the haunting charcoal abstractions, Untitled (ACD), 1957, and Untitled (ACD), 1958, which possess a darkening atmosphere constructed by the distribution of gestures in various tonal densities and textures. In certain places within these mysterious fields, the marks enclose passages of white ground, define subtle geometric forms, and draw the viewer’s attention across the paper’s surface. In a related way, a small, untitled watercolour from 1963 investigates the pictorial dynamism that can be created through the purposeful juxtaposition of diagonal gestures and a calculated set of horizontally spaced intervals. Finally, the lone oil painting on canvas, OC#54, 1958, consists of broadly brushed, slanting planes of layered dark blues, dull greens and a lighter ultramarine that flank a central zone of highly saturated reds. The advancing and receding hues of this plastically organized composition reinforce the viewer’s recognition of one of Modernism’s fundamental lessons—that a painting can be perceived simultaneously as both physically flat and spatially shifting.

The potent drawings in this show appear to be forerunners of later, larger-scaled oil paintings on canvas, beginning with Trace, 1966, and Situation L., 1967–68, and continuing through to his final paintings such as the Compression and Expansion of the Square, 1982. In each of these canvases, Tworkov employs deliberate linear gestures that accumulate into pulsating fields in which a flickering geometry often emerges, sometimes suggesting opposing movements. Throughout his artistic life, he remained committed to a complex creative process that embraced premeditation and disciplined decisions as well as intuitive responses and improvisation. His nuanced and often restrained approach was the result of working patiently through received traditions and conventions, while thoroughly exploring familiar materials and allowing the possibilities inherent in drawing and painting to unfold. He never sought to create art as the product of a so-called big breakthrough, but rather pursued an authentic art inextricably connected with place, material, time. As Tworkov once wrote in a letter to the late painter and critic Andrew Forge, “art is the absence of falseness; it teaches us not only about art but how to judge anything in life...”

“Jack Tworkov” was exhibited at Barbara Edwards Contemporary, Toronto, from February 8 to April 7, 2012.

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