

CONTEMPORÁNEA 1999

February 24th to June 30th 1999

MARTA CHILINDRÓN

CINEMA KINESIS

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Marta Chilindron CINEMA KINESIS

Contemporánea 1999, February 24 to June 30, El Museo del Barrio, New York

(Exhibition brochure)

But how can we measure time except in some sort of extension" - St. Augustine

Ever since she began exhibiting in the U.S. in 1981, Marta Chilindron has sustained a visual dialogue between materiality and mind, between everyday objects and ideal forms. This is more than a theme; it is the compositional essence of her oeuvre to date. Her career encompasses early paintings and prints done in a realistic style, yet marked by extreme foreshortening and unusual angles of view; a series of projects (1990-96) executed in collaboration with the conceptual artist Eduardo Costa (these included "clothings" made entirely of congealed paint, a mobile outdoor slide projection of a hand, and numerous "paintings" assembled from collaged and laminated magazine pages); and finally her signature furniture-based constructs in wood and industrial materials.

In 1997, Chilindron who has always favored large-scale works, some of which have been installed as public art, began experimenting with sculptural motion. (The problem is odd and intractable. Sculpture, be it the Parthenon frieze or swirling Baroque figure groups or Boccioni's futurist *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, has often *represented* movement; only rarely does it actually embody velocity.) From the beginning, this Uruguayan-émigré artist was fascinated with the seemingly magical relationship of shape to field, particularly of three-dimensional volume to the two-dimensional plane. (All painting, drawing, printmaking, film, and video involve the transfer of a 3-D reality to a flat pictorial surface. Chilindron reverses that effort by allowing the whole object to spring from its surround. Her recent works are, in effect, Caravaggio's projectivist space made literal.) Her solution has been to break the surface-object conundrum,

which cannot be fully resolved in either two or three dimensions, by adding a fourth parameter - namely, *time*. Readers of Edwin A. Abbott's 1884 classic *Flatland*, in which inhabitants of a two-dimensional world suddenly confront the "impossible" intrusion of a volumetric sphere, will recognize this galvanizing leap to a new conceptual realm.

Indeed, anyone who has ever opened out a packing box from its initial squashed state to its full cubic capacity knows firsthand the quiet thrill of seeing related planes go through their swift Constructivist permutations. A similar wonder affects children (and, let's admit it, adults too) in pop-up books, which make concrete the parallel mystery of a tale surging instantly into one's consciousness from the flat, seemingly unpromising pages of a printed text.

Unlike Calder and other founders of kinetic sculpture (e.g. Tinguely, Bury, Rickey), and unlike such present-day artists as Rebecca Horn, Chilindron eschews the pursuit of a "sensate" quirkiness of motion in favor of a more austere, more abstract esthetic goal. As with Lygia Clark's shape-shifting metal sculptures, feeling and sentiment are deeply sublimated into Euclidean forms and precise mathematical relationships until Chilindron's work comes to resemble the demonstration of an equation, one combining elements of plane geometry and calculus.

Yet *Cinema Kinesis* (titled after the Greek word for motion) is more than pure math made manifest. In its evocation of a film auditorium - and surely this allusion to the movies is not incidental - the work recalls Edward Hopper's haunted theater interiors. Simultaneously it calls to mind two of the richest, and most severe, concepts in recent critical theory: that of the

spectacle (the displacement of real experience by virtual experience) as analyzed by Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard, and that of the fold (the collapsing of time through the collapsing of physical or conceptual distance, yielding a nonlinear enrichment of meaning) as examined by Gilles Deleuze, himself the author of a treatise on cinema.

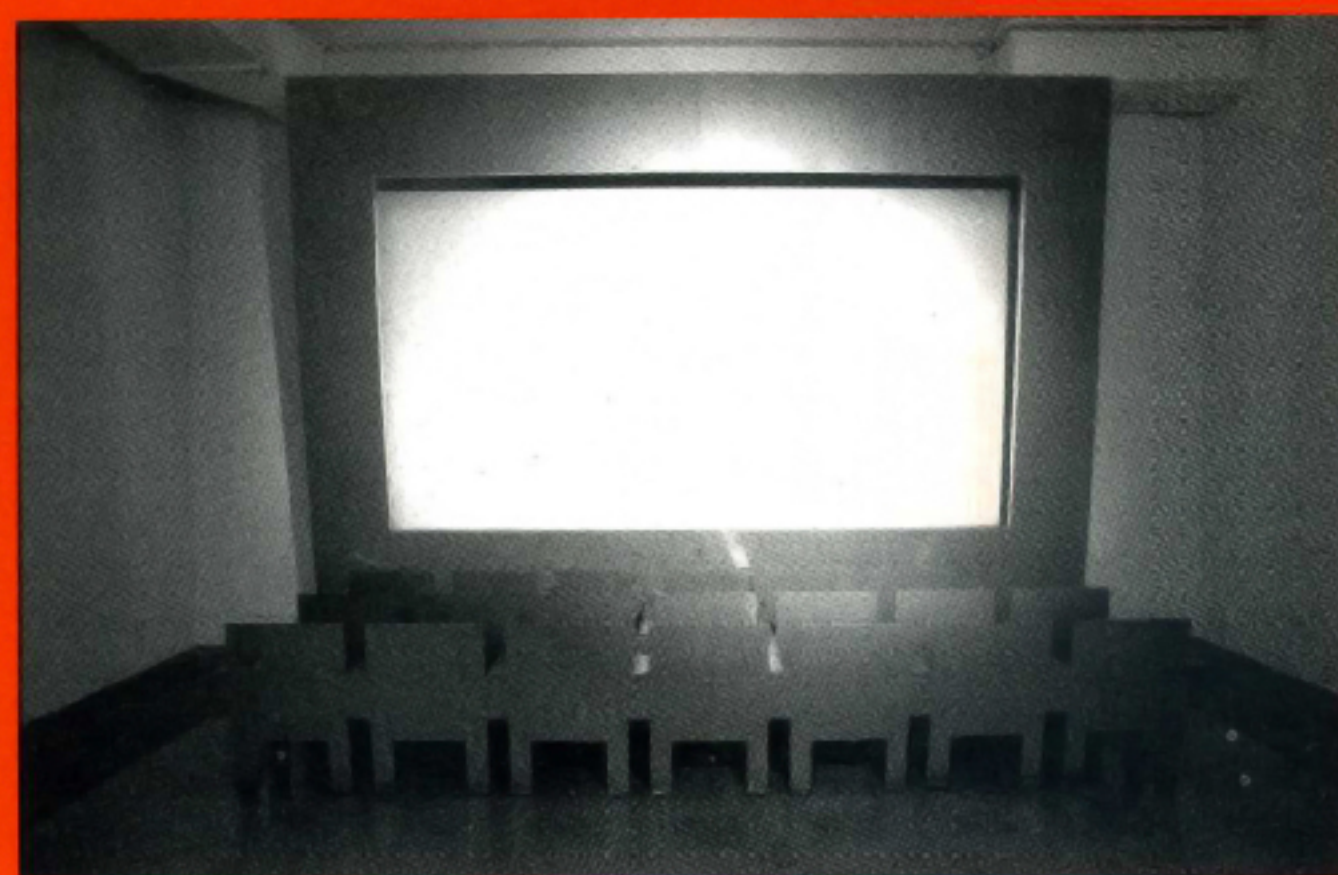
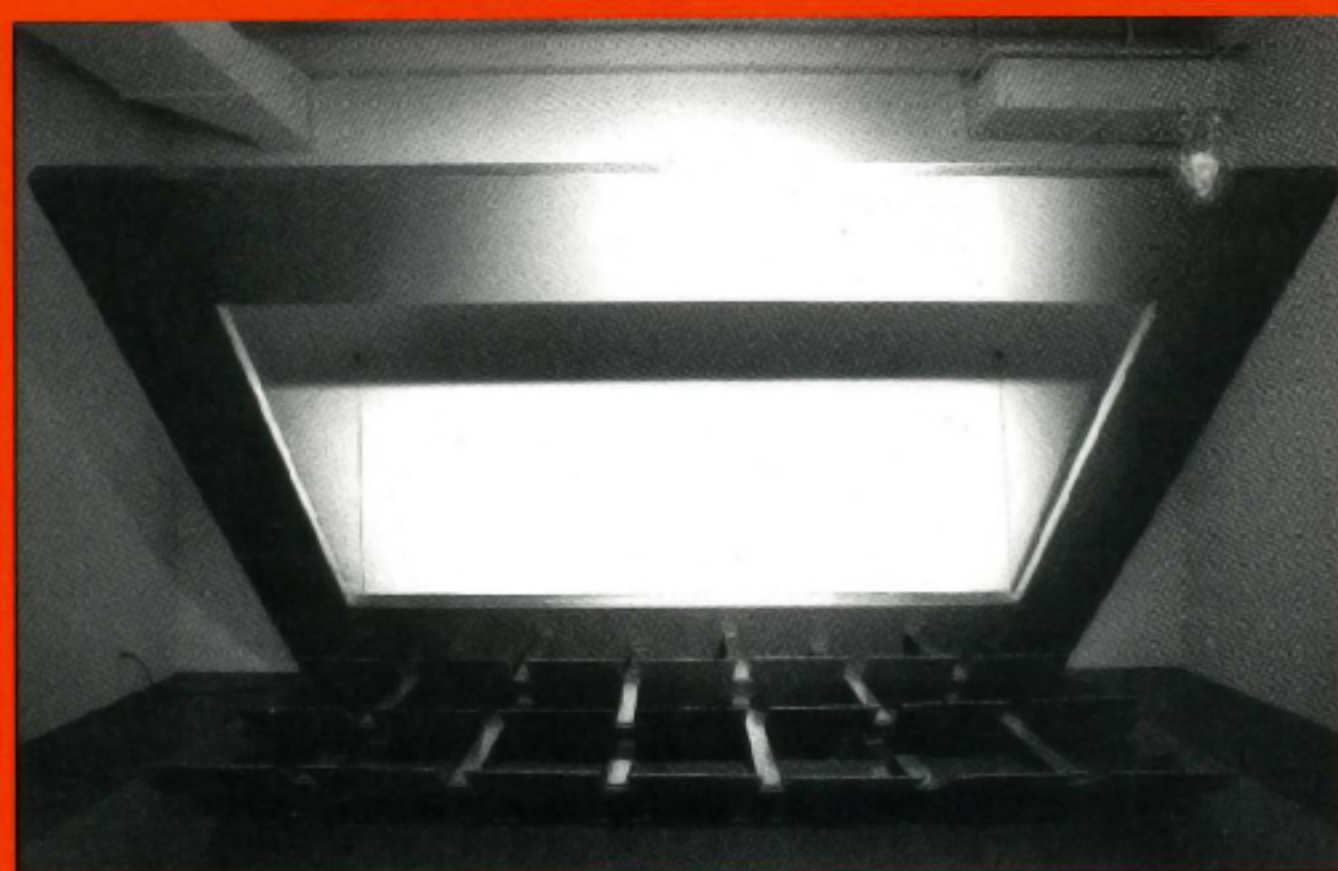
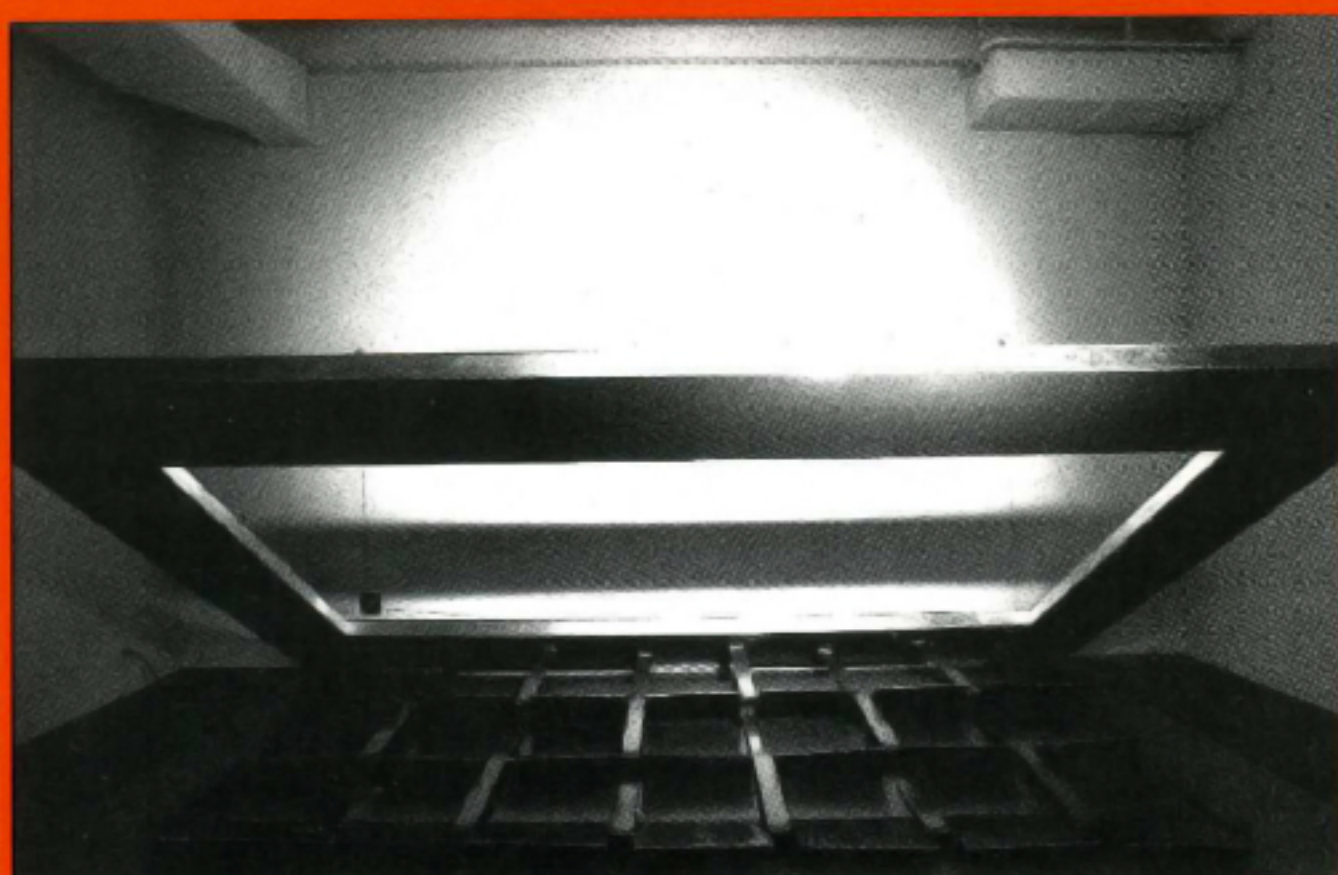
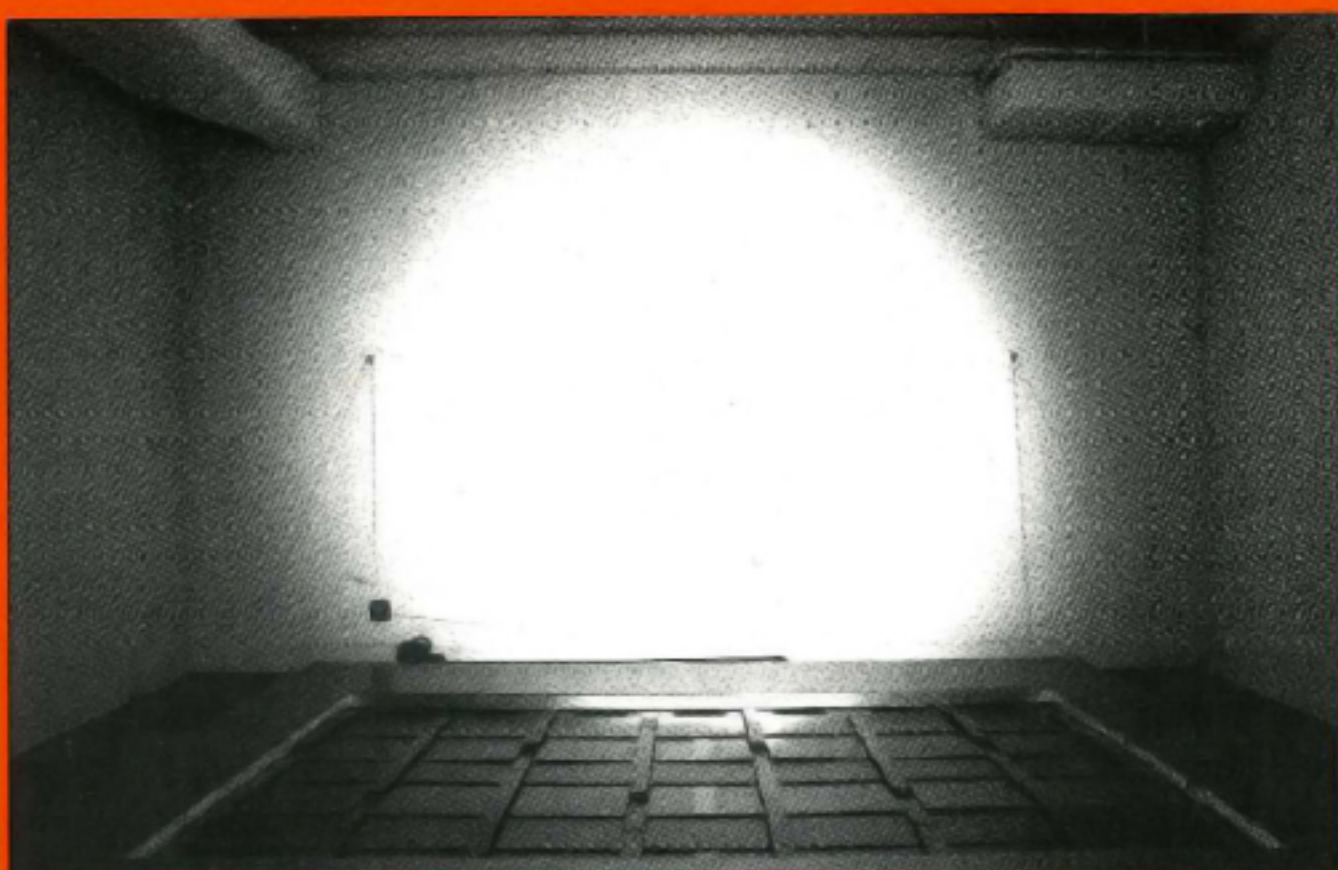
The gray that predominates in this installation, matched with the empty seats and a "movie screen" that is actually a vast hole, a physical and cultural vacancy, invites us to see *Cinema Kinesis* as a theater of absences. As the work continuously blooms forth and retreats, prompting a ghostly play of shapes and shadows, one thinks perhaps of Macbeth's grim valediction: that life is a drama "signifying nothing." In this work, futility is compounded by repetitiveness. The spectacle of life, that brief cinematic gleam of light in which all present will vicariously participate, is endlessly, numbingly (yet, somehow, always fascinatingly) reiterated.

All subjectivity has been factored out. Neither the phantom spectators nor the narrative that would enrapture them is specified. We are left with the pure underlying structure, the relational constant, of an encounter which will recur countless times. The superficial effects of this imaginary show may be various, as particular subjects react to particular "films." But the latent format of the spectacle - the message of this voyeuristic medium - is stable: many individual in uniform ranks, plunged in darkness, beholding a single glowing, oversized vision in which they see both the worst and the best of themselves - the Word from on high, in big-screen closeup.

Ironically, *Cinema Kinesis* as a whole has no fixed form. It is a perpetual dynamic; the constituent shapes alter unremittingly. Only by taking a "snapshot," a temporal cross-section, can one say that the piece has *this* configuration at *this* moment. (Such has been the strategy of most motion studies in modern art, from Muybridge's photographic sequences to Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* to

Edgerton's stop-action images.) But the piece in its entirety is more than the sum of such moments; it is the very process of unfolding and retraction. Its essence is change - within the strictures of a preordained template. Here, despite its apparent mechanical regularity, *Cinema Kinesis* departs from Euclid to embrace the more fluid geometries of the biological sciences and contemporary space engineering. It is a move with teleological implications, as is clearly implied when we say that events "unfold" in time. Thus it can serve as a compelling metaphor for the paradoxes of animate life.

An 18th-century viewer might have seen in such a construct the image of a clockwork universe, running by mechanical rules conceived and set in motion by a dispassionate Deity. Today we are more likely to think of the impersonal laws of physics, or the dictates of the genetic code, silently at work behind the apparent multiplicity of observable nature. Future viewers, replicating the action of the theater's unseen audience, will undoubtedly make their own inferences and projections. But whatever our reading, *Cinema Kinesis* will continue to engage us sensuously and move us to think - and that is the key accomplishment of art.



The perception of space: is it a reflection of the perception of oneself? Or an understanding of what is around us, the way forms and shapes relate to one another, how everything connects? To see the beginning, the end, and the middle all at once . . . these are some of the concerns that shape my work.

This is the first piece I have done that represents a public space—a theater. My previous work also dealt with the perception of space, but at a more intimate level—the apartment. I use ordinary forms because they are easily recognizable, and also because I want to recreate everyday experience.

Each of these forms exists in the second and third dimension, as well as in a place between them. They occupy real space and real time. They recreate themselves over and over. They have a symmetrical existence. And they are never still.

Being originally from another country makes me see things around me from a distance. I'll never be at home.

La percepción del espacio: ¿es un reflejo de la percepción de uno mismo? O, ¿es un entendimiento de lo que a uno le rodea, de la manera en que las formas se relacionan entre sí, de cómo todo se conecta? Ver el principio, el final y el medio, todo a un mismo tiempo... éstos son algunos de los temas que delinean mi obra.

Esta es la primera pieza que hago para representar un espacio público: un teatro. Mi obra anterior también lidiaba con la percepción del espacio, pero a un nivel más íntimo: el apartamento. Uso formas comunes porque son fácilmente reconocibles, y también porque quiero recrear la experiencia cotidiana.

Cada una de estas formas existe en la segunda y en la tercera dimensión, así como en un lugar entre ellas. Ocupan espacio y tiempo reales. Se recrean a sí mismas una y otra vez. Tienen una existencia simétrica. Y nunca están quietas.

El ser originaria de otro país me hace ver las cosas que me rodean desde la distancia. Nunca me sentiré como en casa.

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