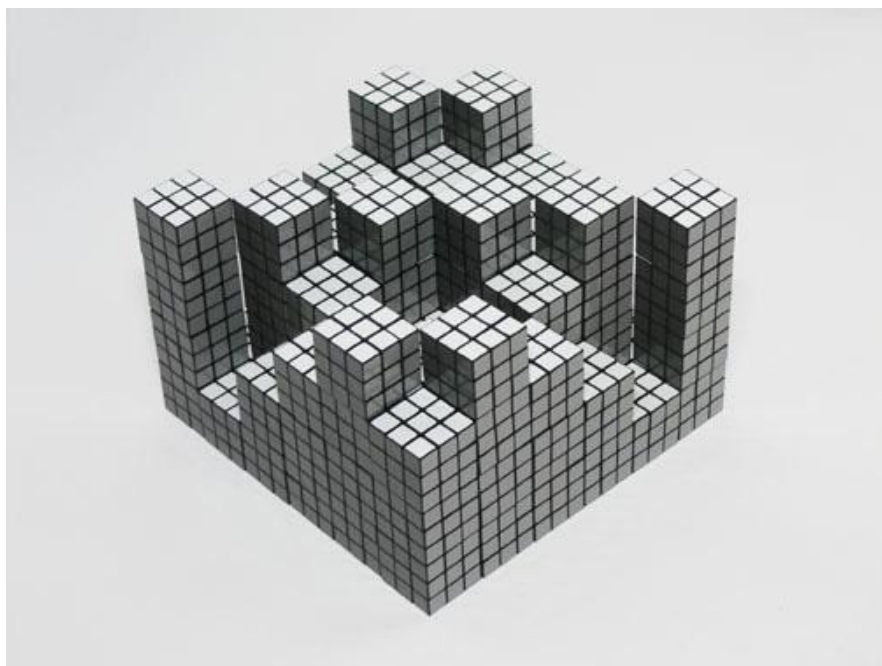


REVIEWS / JUNE 12, 2008

Roula Partheniou: Changing the Rules of the Game

Roula Partheniou *Possible Form* 2008



by Aileen Burns



Rubik's cubes begin and end from the same point. To play, you have to break the order of the six solid-coloured sides, mangling them to create a challenge for yourself. Roula Partheniou is intrigued by the infinite potential inherent in this formula. Her work focuses on this mathematical game; in an early work she made a drawing of every move she made in a single game until she found the solution. Those drawings track a path from order to chaos to order once more, personalizing a mathematical process by documenting each phase in her progress.

In her exhibition "100 Variations" at MKG127, Partheniou rewrites the rules of Rubik's game and makes it her own. She strips the standard cube of its traditional colours, replacing them with grey-scale equivalents. The move reduces the number of colours in the game since red and green share the same grey tone. Doubling the possible locations for the red and green squares makes the game mathematically less challenging. However, the subtlety of the shaded gradations on Partheniou's cubes complicate their optics. It becomes hard to tell whether a cube's grey tones are the result of lighting or inherent properties.

Roula Partheniou *Possible Forms, (100 Cubes, instructions for 100 Variations)* 2008

Partheniou's reformulated cubes are central to her larger project. After grey-scaling the blocks, she added new rules to the game. Engaging the sculptural and architectural qualities of her material, she set parameters for stacking and combining the units and laid out plans for stacked formations using simple mathematical calculations on paper. She then followed her renderings to create 100 variations of 100 stacked grey-scale Rubik's cubes. The resulting structures have an architectural quality. Optical illusions are at play as you move your eyes over the sculptures. It is a disorienting sensation because the light and shadow of the sculptures often does not correspond to the light in the gallery.

Partheniou documents her 100 sculptural variations with colour photographs that look uncannily like black and white photos of colour Rubik's cubes. The mind game induced by the photos is indicative of the project as a whole. While the subject is a playful, pop-inspired Rubik's cube, the formal qualities of the work and the rules

of the game are more closely tied to minimalism—Sol LeWitt’s variations in particular. The work challenges us to unravel a formally demanding game that is playful in spirit. (127 Ossington Ave, Toronto ON)

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Roula Partheniou "100 Variations" 2008 Installation view

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