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GALLERY & ART ADVISORY

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Marta Elise Johansen
The Orbit of Our Spirits

April 25 - June 8, 2024

Opening: Sunday, April 28, 2-4pm

Sarah Shepard Gallery is pleased to announce its third solo exhibit with Bay Area artist Marta Elise Johansen (b. 1980, Rawalpindi, Pakistan) who makes beautifully sculptural, methodical and immersive line drawings. For her third exhibition, entitled *The Orbit of Our Spirits*, each of the ten new drawings reflect on moments in ones life where we are in the midst of searching and arriving. A type of silent meditation can occur as one approaches these drawings. The artist's own meditative journey becomes revealed as she resets her spirit to a value near absolute zero, an intentionally spacious and vulnerable state open to unknown destinations.

As the artist moves in and out of this spiritual journey, she returns to reflect upon how we all approach meaning, search for answers, and interact with life altering moments. The titles of these pieces are meant to tie back to the title of the exhibition while leading you to the edge of the intention of the work. And from there one can take a wider view.

“If I truly can see what is there, what is revealed, I can live a meaningful life. These meditations build on each other, learned last lessons from my own body and inner experience become a well tuned self-awareness. Watching and waiting, I am at the mercy of the rhythms of my surroundings. Following my impulses, creativity becomes what I am”

Working only in natural light from a studio off the bay, the artist draws with one fine point at a time, one line begins only once the other is completed, never overlapping, nearly ad infinitum until a drawing is complete. The artist attempts to establish order out of impressions, pacify chaotic urges which delineate emotion through process. She believes in the basic significance of craft and in the abstraction that making art allows.

Johansen studied at the University of Southern California's School of Architecture and has taught Graduate and Undergraduate art and design at The California Polytechnic Institute and The University of Southern California. Johansen is driven in her practice - rooted in a strong work ethic, formal discipline and technical skill. Her mother, an American textile designer and consultant for the United Nations, met her father, a Norwegian engineer who designed railway systems in Asia, while working in Pakistan. That was where Johansen was born and raised until they moved to a farmhouse in Vermont when she was five to be closer to family. Growing up in a household that was frequently visited by her parent's friends from all over the world, including her mother's circle from the Black Mountain College scene, led her from a young age to appreciate the cultural arts.