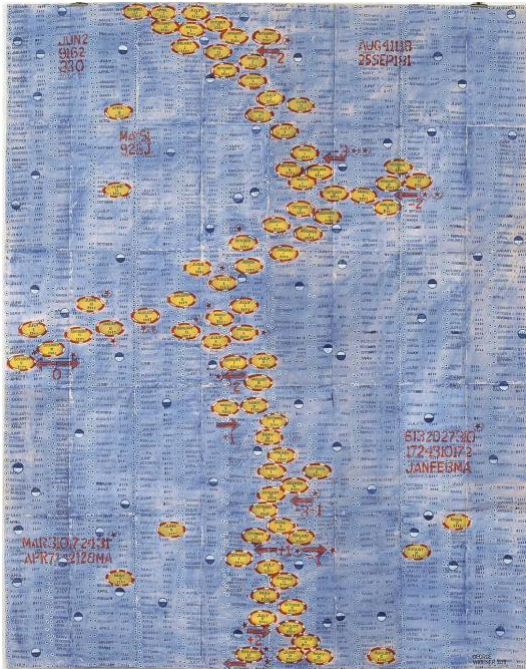


Forbes

Savant George Widener Makes Art For Robots... But You'd Better See His Berlin Exhibit Even If You're Human

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In the small world of contemporary art, George Widener has largely been ignored. There's no reason to believe that he cares. Filled with mathematical calculations, his watercolor drawings are not necessarily designed for the enjoyment of humans. He'd be more content to be admired by robots.

Medically classified as an autistic savant – and sufficiently agile with calendrical calculations to be featured in the Science Channel's *Ingenious Minds* series – Widener is certainly more mathematically adept than most people. He can instantly reckon the day of the week for any calendar date based on patterns he perceives. Those same patterns, inscrutable to most, inform his art.

A highly-deserved solo show at the Hamburger Bahnhof – his first in Europe – samples this extraordinary body of work. Bearing titles like "Robot Puzzle", these intricately patterned works on paper have been generously produced by Widener so that future hyperintelligent computers will be well provided for in their off hours, and might even be encouraged to like our dimwitted species after the Singularity renders our brains obsolete.

Yet his watercolors also resonate for ordinary people, even when his mathematics remains elusive. His expression of the patterns he perceives is so palpable that they tickle us visually. His numbers come across as both intimate and remote.

Even if you're not a hyperintelligent robot, you get a sense of how such a being might experience the world. Widener isn't only fostering future robotic empathy toward us. If the Singularity ever does come to pass, Widener's watercolors may provide the common language humans and computers will need to reach mutual understanding.

[Image Caption: George Widener, *Robot Puzzle*, 2011 Mixed media on paper, 152,5 x 121 cm, private collection, Berlin © photo: Bernhard Schaub]