

SEAN KELLY

Prentnieks, Anne. "Rebecca Horn," Artforum, May 2014.

ARTFORUM

Rebecca Horn

SEAN KELLY GALLERY
475 10th avenue
May 10–June 21

An eponymous poem by Rebecca Horn is the unseen backbone to "The Vertebrae Oracle," the artist's first solo show in New York since 2011. Honoring what would have been her friend Méret Oppenheim's one-hundredth birthday, the poem describes an androgynous oracle—"circling / pulsing / bird-proud"—protected by stars but exposed to elements. Activated by motion detectors, Horn's kinetic sculptures—along with paintings—carefully reprise both her poem's narrative as well as quintessential imagery and themes of her work. The series embodies a fresh, quiet focus, and the paintings, scrawled with text, together create a landscape of shimmering marks that convey the artist's fascination with the airy, structural lyricism of a spinal chord freed of connective tissue.



Rebecca Horn, *Revelation of a Tree*, 2014,
branches cast in bronze, steel, brass, motor,
electronic device,
57 1/8 x 90 1/2 x 59 1/16".

Light and motion are explored in Marcel Duchamp's *Montgolfiere*, 2014, a wall-mounted grouping of mirrored discs that cheekily orbit under a spotlight around one of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*. The sculpture casts a shape-shifting shadow while reflecting ellipses of light around the room, recalling Horn's earlier mirror installations. Periodically, the light illuminates a vitrine resembling a terrarium, *Metamorphoses between Rock and Butterfly*, 2014, which houses a reproduction of the titular insect, perched atop a volcanic formation; tiny rotating gears mimic the joints of flapping, iridescent blue wings with the calibrated exactness of a Swiss watch.

A Bourgeoisian idea of the protective cage also carries through Horn's sculptures: A centerpiece, *Revelation of a Tree*, 2014, sprouts a nest of winding branches from a low platform. Nine large brass needles affixed to the branches slowly close to meet at a perfect point, like a sea anemone guarding its mouth. Containing natural and motorized elements, three nearby sculptures performatively mimic the tides and movements of nature, perhaps suggesting that all life is a series of gears whirring in unison. By opening cages and separating connective tissue, Horn compels an awareness of machinelike order, crystallizing the power of her folkloric *Vertebrae Oracle*—and, indeed, of Horn herself.