

# ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

**JUNE 10, 2023 BY ETTY YANIV**

## George Widener and Terence Koh at Andrew Edlin: Traces of Time



*George Widener at Andrew Edlin*

The riveting debut exhibition at Andrew Edlin showcases George Widener's profound fascination with historical catastrophes, particularly the tragic sinking of the Titanic in 1912. The artworks on the wall, made of patched-together napkins and tea-stained scrolls, bear the marks of accidents, palimpsests, and esoteric knowledge, reminiscent of ancient manuscripts and enveloped in an aura of mystery. The elaborate numerical puzzles,

complex wordplay, and prophetic visions informed by historical events become data landscapes that the viewer explores alongside the artist.



George Widener at Andrew Edlin

Engaging in a captivating visual dialogue with the framed pieces, the exhibition also features elongated sculptures made of wire, fabric, and paper. Placed on narrow horizontal pedestals, the bold physicality of these sculptures offers a striking contrast to the subtle texture of the two-dimensional work. The sculptures resemble skeletal remnants of a boat excavated from beneath the sea, adding an extra visceral dimension to Widener's exploration. Both the two-dimensional and sculptural bodies of work captivated me with their visually arresting presence.

In his visionary *Megalopolis* series, Widener presents a humane approach to urban design through harmonious plans and the incorporation of magical squares—a complex numerical grid where the sums of rows, columns, and diagonals remain constant. Widener assigns each section a distinct calendar date, seamlessly bridging art and mathematics. As an outsider in his troubled youth, Widener (b. 1962) demonstrated exceptional memory skills and excelled in mathematics. Graduating with honors, he spent four years as an Air Force intelligence technician specializing in aerial surveillance before embarking on aimless

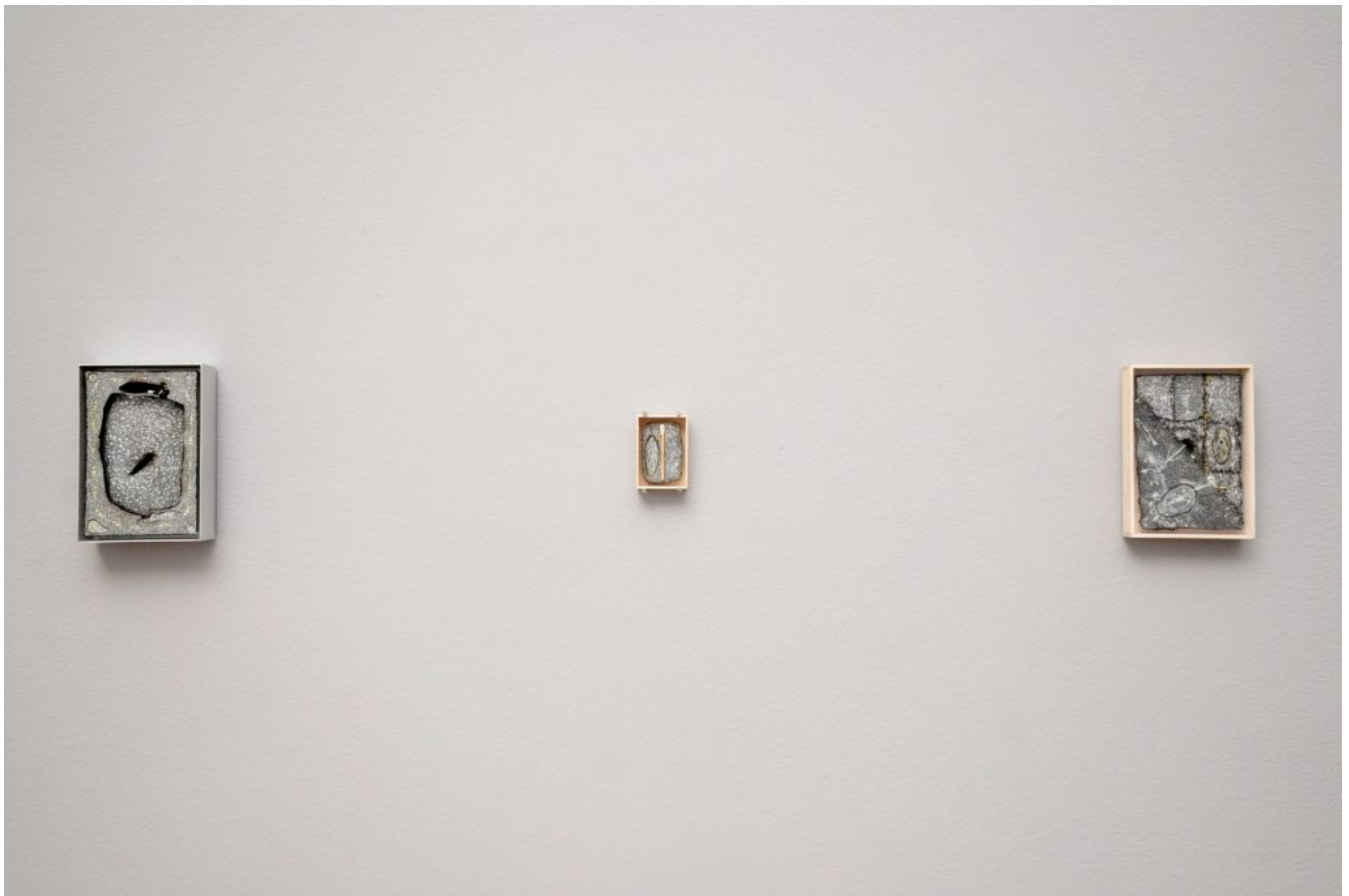
years in Europe as a nomadic day laborer, filling countless notebooks with numbers, architectural drawings, numbers, and statistics, which later gained recognition in the art world.

In addition to his fascination with numbers and historical events, Widener's recent art also reflects his engagement with contemporary events, specifically his volunteer work during the war in Ukraine. The series *Krakov to Ukraine* vividly maps his experiences transporting non-military supplies, exemplifying his interest in intertwining personal and societal narratives through his meditative renderings of calendar-referenced numbers. The cumulative patterns, along with the strong presence of the artist's hand and mind create hypnotic data fields manifesting an urgent longing for order within the odd unfolding of human events. They hint at different ways of perceiving time—calendar time and historical time, leaving me with a profound sense of wonder.



*George Widener at Andrew Edlin*

I found Terence Koh's body of work in the back space of the gallery equally moving, urgent, fragmented, ritualistic, and intimate. Unlike Widener's relatively large-scale pieces, Koh's work can only be measured as—no larger than the size of a human heart—as the artist himself describes. Koh's monochromatic artwork encompasses a range of mediums, from drawings to miniature dioramas, all of which possess a sense of immediacy embedded in ritual.



Terence Koh at Andrew Edlin Gallery



In one framed dimensional work, for instance, a tiny vertical rectangular piece with rounded edges covered with intricate white patterns and some carvings, resembles an archeological artifact with mysterious sacred text or perhaps a cave painting. In the middle, a match with a white head resting vertically within a carved mold, like a grave or a cradle. The match, as a source of fire, carries a strong sense of a dual presence and immediacy—life and destruction, light and dark, fire and ashes. I was informed that the artist, who is almost blind, made many of these drawings by burning. They indeed invoke different stages of burning, alternating between incinerating, kindling, or going up in smoke on the verge of disappearing.



*Terence Koh, at Andrew Edlin. Photo by Ety Yaniv*

It perfectly fits the spirit of Koh's work to present the viewer only with a poem as press release for

the next

few

ears

eye

will

dedicate my life too a single body of work  
no piece will bee larger than the size of the

human heart

each work is created using my natural  
almost blindeyesight

ev e r y

dot, line, gesture

breath thought

mome n t

sings

god

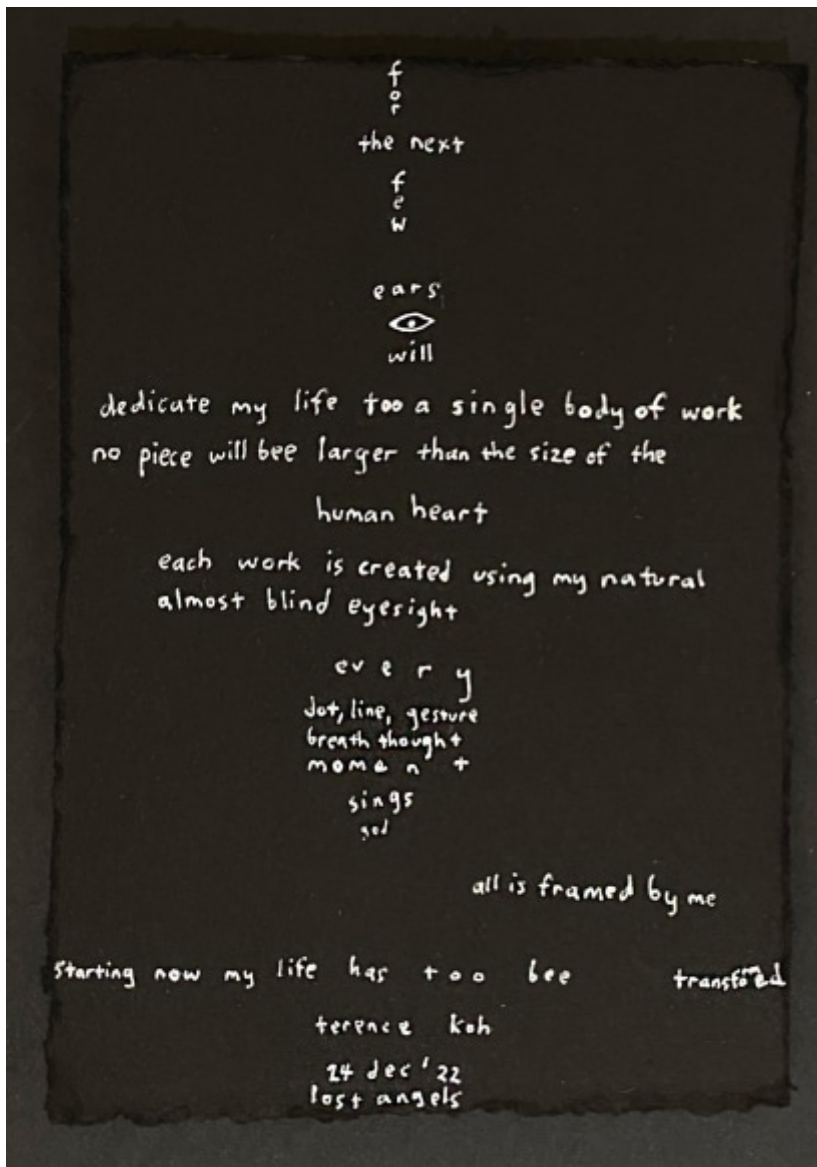
all is framed by me

starting now my life has t o o bee transformed

terence koh

24 dec '22

lost angels



**George Widener: Tip of the Iceberg Terence Koh Starting Now At Andrew Edlin Gallery May 19 – June 30, 2023 212 Bowery, New York, NY, 20012**