

# Houstonia.

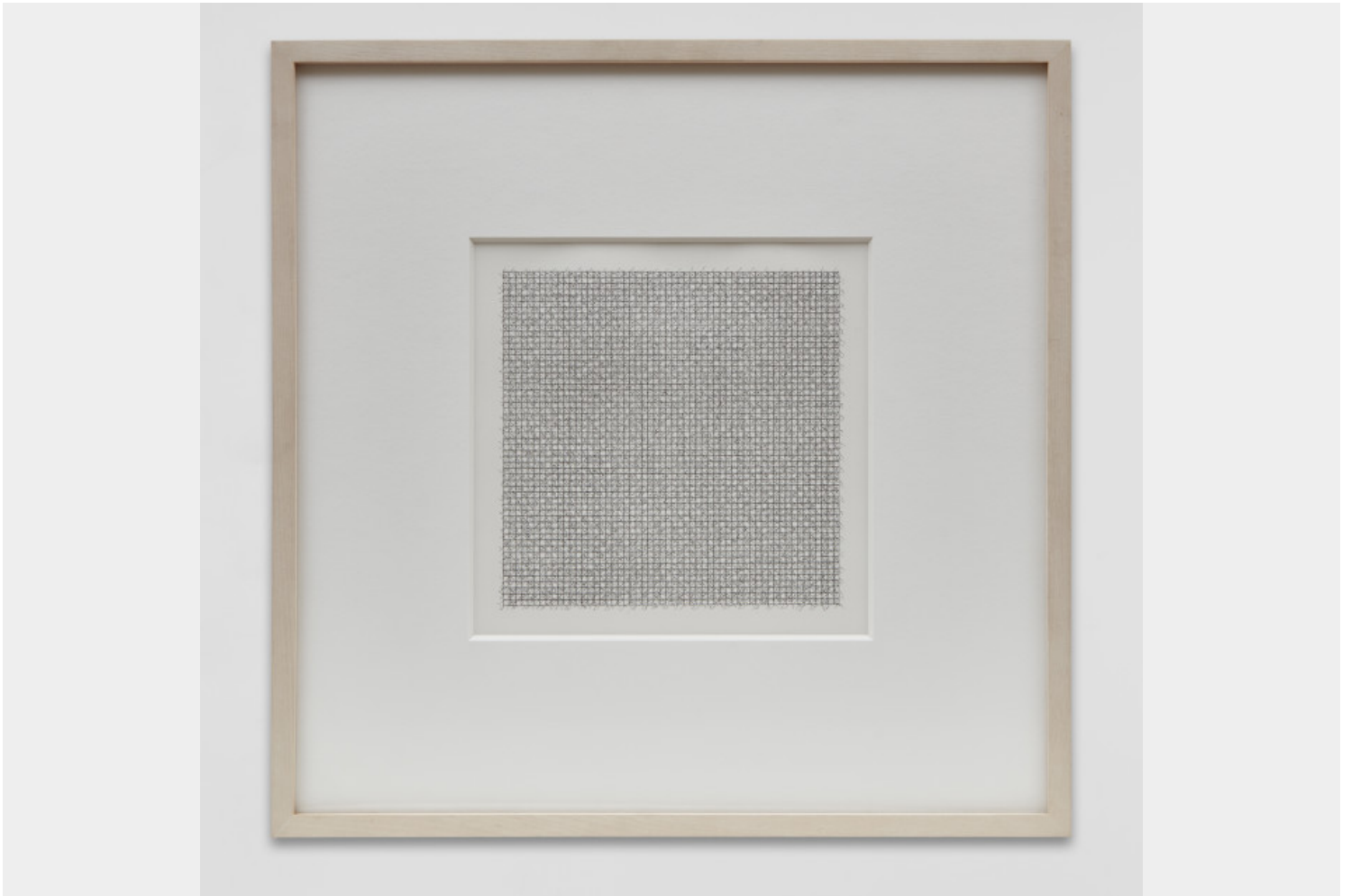
LCD SOUNDSYSTEM?!

## Behold *On Repeat*, Over and Over and Over Again

A Clarke & Associates Gallery show parlays a James Murphy banger into a surprising survey of repetition.

By [Morgan Kinney](#) • 10/6/2017 at 4:00pm

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**Jacob El Hanani, From the Signature Series (A84)**

1999, Ink on paper, 8.5 x 8.5 inches, Courtesy Acquavella Galleries, New York

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**BEHOLD ON REPEAT**—yes, as in the [LCD Soundsystem song](#). Curator Raphael Rubinstein tells *Houstonia* he's a huge James Murphy fan, and the trancelike indie bop perfectly encapsulates the theme of the show put on at Clarke & Associates in the Heights. There he's corralled 14 artists—both young and old, local and far-flung—to survey a range of approaches to repetition.

To single out an artist: Moroccan-born Jacob El Hanani takes the title to its mystic extreme, with a small, square work comprised solely of his name scrawled thousands of times in microscopic Hebrew script. *From the Signature Series (A84)* is a modern riff on the Jewish micrograph, where words are repeated to form visual patterns. This example exudes the mechanical quality of Sol LeWitt as the autographs perfectly tangle into a uniform grid of personhood. A work of impossible, computer-like precision was somehow executed by a single middle-aged man.

In fact, Rubinstein tells me El Hanani does this with his own hand, without a magnifying glass, adding the artist could only muster the focus to work on the piece for a dozen or so minutes at a time. My second-rate eyes strained to discern the loops and stems of the script, which, on my visit, prompted an open debate between the gallerists on whether magnifying glasses should be available to patrons (there will be several, just ask).

If you count yourself as one versed in the history of modernism, *On Repeat* offers much intellectual fodder to kick around. Rubinstein writes in a short essay this show aims “to situate [the artists’] work in dialogue with the Supports/Surfaces group of the 1970s,” a short-lived French movement steeped in Maoist politics. He also draws a line to the American Pattern and Decoration movement, which mimicked things like quilts and wallpaper before disappearing amid an ’80s feminist backlash. He further explains how several pieces draw inspiration from the “rhythmitized textiles of Africa,” recalling how [many say](#) the true roots of abstract art reside in ancient Africa, not modern Europe.

But if you, like me, enter these conversations wishing you paid more attention in that art history elective, don’t worry; there are other pleasures to be had. *On Repeat*, fittingly, is a groovy procession of optical illusions and clever use of media, from bedsheets (Heather Bause) to bean bags (Tameka Norris) to wristbands from the George R. Brown (Christopher Cascio). These unconventional works require you examine them from odd angles, force you to squint and look closely, and, best of all, beg you to ask questions of what exactly it is you’re looking at. Contemplating process—things like tearing napkins apart one ply at a time in the case of James Radcliffe’s *Unknown Unknowns*, or especially El Hanani’s painstaking calligraphy—was the most fascinating aspect.

Really, in a world where shows seem to exclusively conjure deeply furrowed brows or dutiful nods, it was wonderful to feel my jaw drop in surprise at the assembled achievements—and not the cheap surprise achieved through gimmicks or shock value. I just might have to repeat the experience.

*On Repeat, Oct. 7–Dec. 14. Opening reception Saturday, Oct. 7 at 8 p.m. Clarke & Associates, 301 East 11th St. 713-254-2998. More info at [clarkeassoc.com](http://clarkeassoc.com).*

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