

Art in Review

Nasreen Mohamedi

'Becoming One'

Talwar Gallery
108 East 16th Street, Flatiron
district

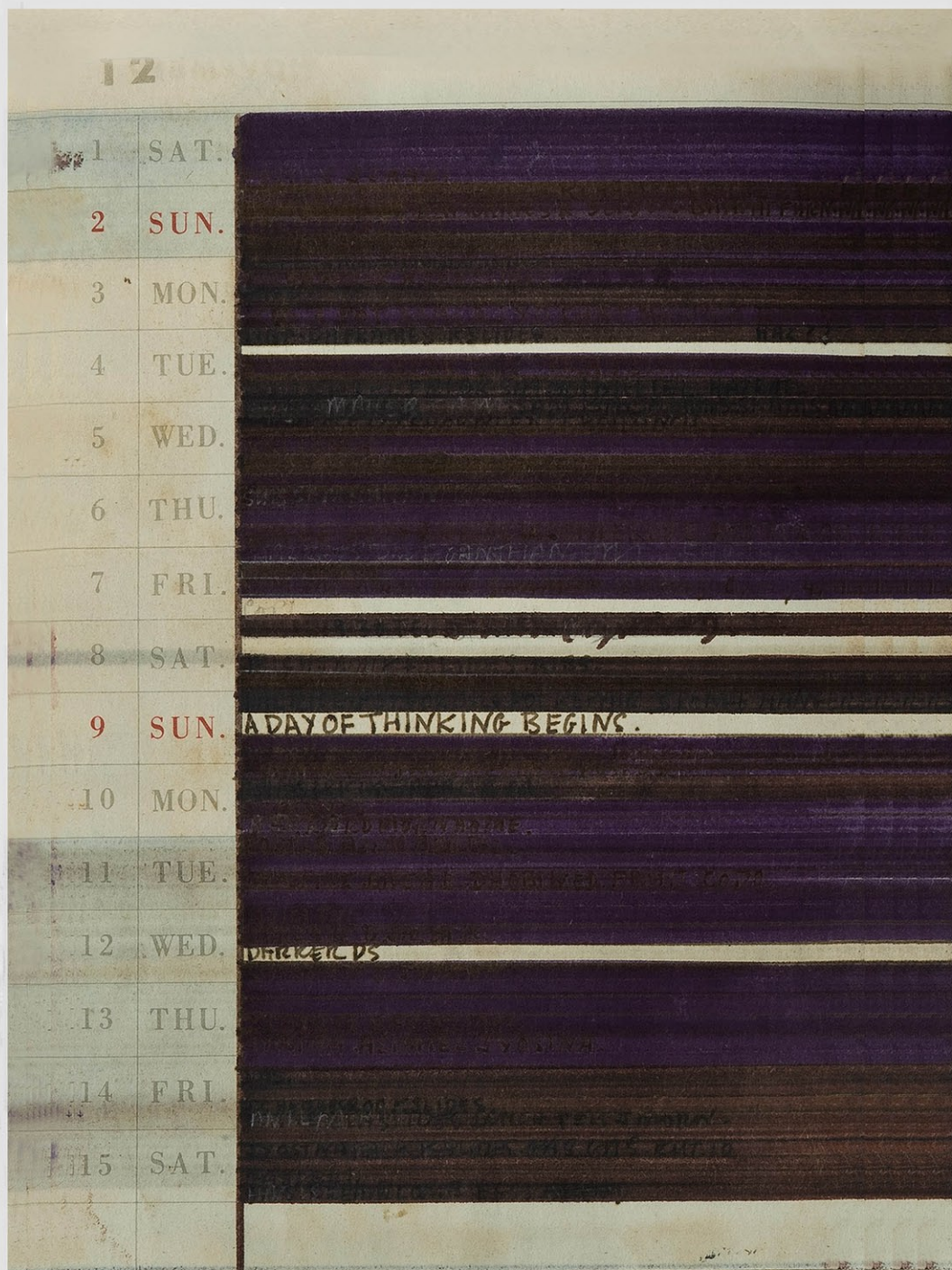
Through Jan. 25

When Nasreen Mohamedi died in 1990, at 53, in India, few people outside a group of artist friends in her home country knew of her. That has changed. A retrospective at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in New Delhi last year was rapturously received. She is now recognized as a key figure of South Asian Modernism.

Her recognition in New York has been slow but steady. The perspicacious Queens Museum introduced her in its 1998 group show "Out of India." Talwar Gallery presented an exhibition of her nearly abstract photographs in 2003, followed by another of her fine-line abstract drawings. "Becoming One" has examples of both, covering some 20 years, along with a handful of her written notebooks.

The show reveals, among other things, how original and personal her art was. As an international traveler, she was well versed in European art, but it would be a mistake to try to find her roots in Western movements like Constructivism and Minimalism. Her primary inspirations were more culturally specific and concrete.

Her photographs of details of Indian architecture, urban and Islamic, of desert landscape and of weaving still on the loom were the visual sources for many of the drawings. And, as her notebooks suggest, her drawing was, functionally, as intimate as formal handwriting, in which discipline and expressivity were inseparable. Mohamedi died of a neurological disorder similar in its



An untitled work by Nasreen Mohamedi from one of her notebooks, part of the "Becoming One" show at Talwar Gallery.

symptoms to Parkinson's disease. Tremors made both drawing and writing extremely difficult, but she continued to do both.

In her last journal entry, she writes: "Vibrations multiply. Intensity of sweep. Undulative. Curve slowly comes to a . . .," and the writing falters, jumps, drifts

off like a thread unspooling, but finally forms a closed circle. I can't imagine seeing a more beautiful and tender gallery solo this winter.

HOLLAND COTTER