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“Thread Lines”

*The Drawing Center //
September 19–December 14*

LATELY, THERE HAS BEEN QUITE a bit of attention (and market frenzy) surrounding textiles and ceramics, two marginalized media long pigeonholed as craft. In two fall gallery shows in New York—“Satan Ceramics” at Salon 94 and “Fire!” at Venus Over Manhattan—the history of ceramic arts and the artists who fought for its inclusion in the mainstream are ignored, as the technique gets a fire-and-brimstone infused macho makeover. The Drawing Center tackles another hot medium with “Thread Lines,” which features both early and contemporary iterations of fiber art that underscore its material history.

The multigenerational show sets out to make connections between textile and drawing. That thesis is most readily proven in the pairing of a Minimalist Lenore Tawney drawing from 1964 and the hanging linen piece in which she realized it exactly 10 years later. Six small works from Sheila Hicks, another fiber artist working since



Lenore Tawney
*Union of Water
and Fire, 1974.*
Linen, 38 x 36 in.

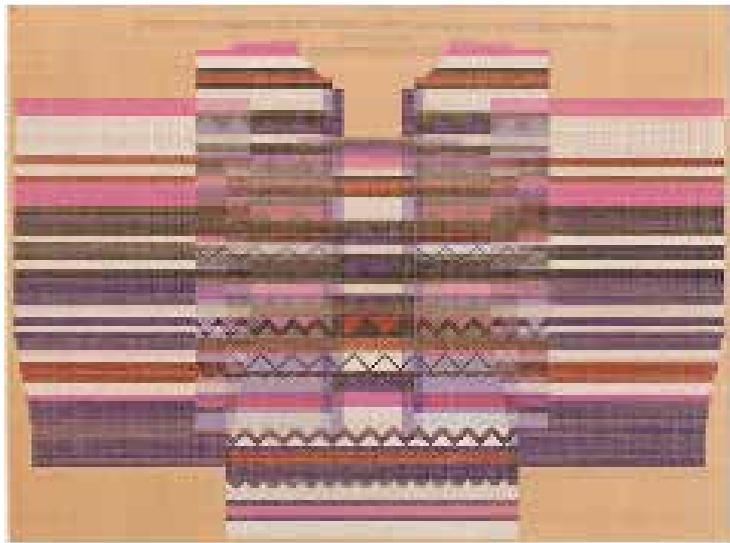
REVIEWS

the 1950s, are absolutely magnetic. All made between 2008 and 2012, the pieces blend various materials (wool and metallic thread, bamboo and silk, alpaca and quills, cotton and steel fiber) in her typically irreverent and playful style.

Anne Wilson, a generation younger than Hicks, was commissioned to create the endurance performance and sculpture piece *To Cross (Walking New York)*, 2014. Using four pillars at the gallery's center as a loom, four participants create weaving crosses by passing the spool back and forth, one thread at a time. By the end of the show, a 5-by-34-foot sculpture will be made.

Works by Ellen Lesperance (who draws the knitting patterns of feminist activists' sweaters) and Sam Moyer (who strangles battered Ikea rugs in black encaustic) were two standouts from a younger generation of artists working with textiles.

Korean artist Kimsooja's *Thread Routes—Chapter 1* video downstairs, however, feels like an outlier in the show. Made in 2010 on 16 mm film, the work documents "ancient methods," per the wall text, of Peruvian weaving. Yet the combination of outdated analog film and traditional culture seems slightly exoticizing and calls to mind the lack of Native American perspectives in the show. Portland-based half-

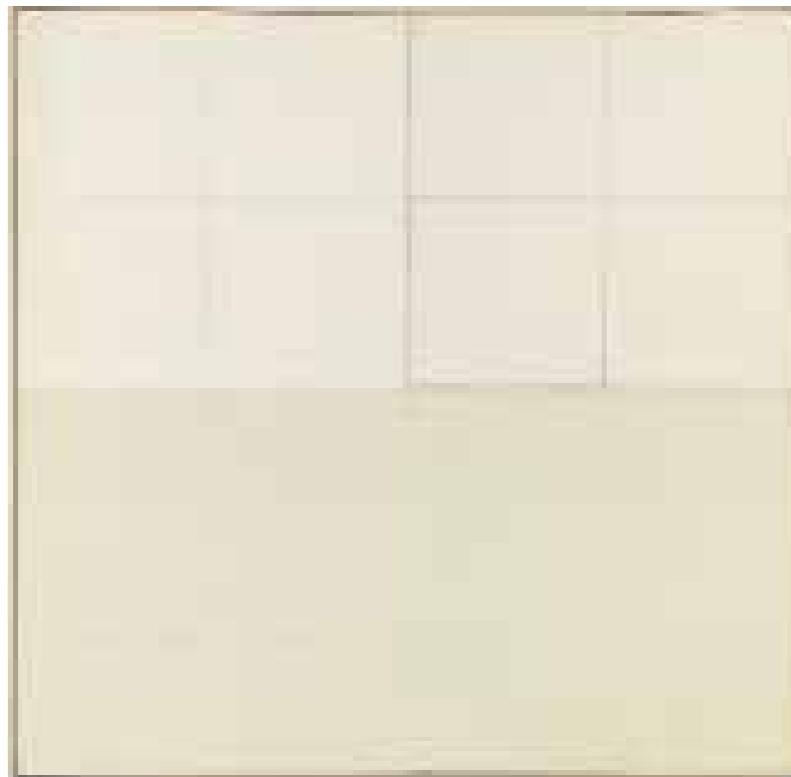


Ellen Lesperance
December 12, 1983: *Standing Beside the Communal Campfire, She Read Aloud from the Front Page News: "Women at War! 25,000 in Greenham Base Demo,"* 2012. Gouache and graphite on tea-stained paper, 26 x 34 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Seneca artist Marie Watt's sky-high stacks of wool blankets, which reference 18th- and 19th-century trades between Native populations and Europeans, would have been a great addition.

Overall, "Thread Lines," a historically grounded survey of contemporary fiber arts, serves as a refreshing counterpoint to shows-of-the-moment that have asked buzzy bad boys to reinvent the potter's wheel.

—Ashton Cooper



NEW YORK

James Bishop

David Zwirner // September 6–October 25

ALONG WITH THE PAINTERS Ray Parker, Ralph Humphrey, Ron Gorchov, Darby Bannard, and John McLaughlin, Bishop is a seldom-seen artist's artist of the 1960s and '70s generation. In that period, he was well respected and extensively shown, but he does not fit into orthodox historical categories of the era and has therefore largely gone ignored for decades. Generationally closer to Abstract Expressionism, he may be considered a proto-Minimalist who, while adhering to that movement's reductive logic and self-referentiality, does not eschew composition, paint handling, or surface effects. Consequently, Bishop can be seen as a sensualist who paints for aesthetic as well as intellectual pleasure.

James Bishop
Having, 1970.
Oil on canvas,
77 x 77 in.

This exhibition consists of 11 mostly square oil paintings completed between 1962 and 1986 and small-scale paintings on paper. Some of the latter works abandon geometry for a more poetic, painterly orientation. The paintings are formalist, but not in the Greenbergian sense. Instead of emphasizing flatness and process, Bishop composes his canvases in such a way that the works' imperatives are realized rather than obeyed. Formalist strategies supply Bishop with a plan—a schema, not unlike Frank Stella's early paintings. Most important for Bishop, painting is ultimately visual, rather than a literal or literary form.

From 1967 to 1986, Bishop worked on a square format using a muted palette. His subtle color is supplemented by delicate brushwork and slight changes of density; his imprecise edges are hand-painted. Overlapping thin but radiant veils of monochrome color, Bishop creates discrete geometric frameworks that might be thought to reference grids, post-and-lintel construction, and stretcher bars, while his truncated triangular forms on rectilinear bases suggest houses or cubes in perspective.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Bishop's works is their indeterminacy: Though they seem quite literal and his imagery remains logical, the order and consequence of the procedures become confounding. The discrepancy between what is explicitly and nearly visible—as in an untitled work from 1980, where pale forms slowly emerge from fields of color—brings duration into the equation. The relationship between surface and space is to be sensed, discovered, and reflected upon, the effect of which is difficult to translate into language. In their combination of opticality and sensitivity, Bishop's paintings are a strange hybrid; it is as if Giorgio Morandi had decided to paint an Ad Reinhardt. —Saul Ostrow