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REVIEWS

Anna Sew Hoy

Various Small Fires / Los Angeles

Anna Sew Hoy is interested in the ability of materials to facilitate some sort of intimacy. Often she works with clothing, using the effects that clothes can carry: warmth, breathability, veiling, wrapping and, ultimately, a sort of coziness. Sew Hoy's sculptures do well in houses, and she has likened her exhibitions to bedrooms or living spaces. She often performs in and around her work, as if to add additional psychic memory to fabric and forms already lived in. Her other preferred medium is ceramics, hand worked and full of Sew Hoy's presence even after the sculptures are fired.

Post-performance, Sew Hoy's exhibitions exist somewhere between the cold, analytic repetition of Donald Judd's forms and the traumatic, stuffed ready-mades of Mike Kelley. Sew Hoy's spaces can feel sparse and almost too empty: in the past, she has left the impression of a lightly populated clothing boutique or a small gathering of strange antennas with no clear idea of what is being transmitted. For these reasons, most rewards in Sew Hoy's work comes from close looking at her off kilter craftsmanship, the little knots and accumulated gestures that become her art.

Sew Hoy's current exhibition at Various Small Fires is her best yet, clever in its ability to use emptiness to directed ends. Vaguely organic, Sew Hoy's new sculptures are made of stoneware (often with the addition of slip during the firing process) and dispersed around a polite garden of gravel. Each has a circular hole of some kind. Some holes appear like empty goal posts or rings hung in the air, others are like mouths or caves. At times, black mirrors appear, able to both absorb and reflect an image.

The gravel gently tunes the space; the crunch underfoot is a nice complement to the changing textures and depths of the various voids. Instead of boredom taking over, the new sculptures are in a good position to offer their intrigues. This is a meditation garden, a place where the self can emerge and then disperse into small details.

by Ed Schad