

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

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Nancy Shaver

Through Sunday. Derek Eller, 300 Broome Street, Manhattan; 212-206-6411, derekeller.com.



Nancy Shaver's exhibitions often overload the senses. They are extravaganzas of stuff, colorful and tactile, mostly society's castoffs recycled into forms that expose false binaries, like high versus low, form versus function, masculine versus feminine and art versus craft.

Ms. Shaver operates simultaneously as artist, curator, hoarder and stylist. She is also an astute frequenter of flea markets, seeking items for both her work and her secondhand store, Henry, in Hudson, N.Y.

Her latest New York show, at Derek Eller, demonstrates her complex proclivities with special clarity. Its title, “A Part of a Part of a Part,” suggests a parsing of her efforts.

Some of the art is cobbled together from found materials or objects, most notably her signature wall pieces, called “Blockers”: little wood blocks, individually covered with paint, fabric, paper or wallpaper, and arranged into grids, which evoke projects ranging from quilts to scrapbooks to works by Piet Mondrian and Joseph Cornell. A similar process obtains in a beautiful, porous sculpture, “Drawing #30 — Light and Air,” in which stacks of little thread spools evoke Brancusi’s “Endless Column,” in embryo.

But Ms. Shaver also uses things as they are, frequently in large numbers, as in the ambitious “Collections — Love and Work.” It includes wooden drawer knobs; baby hats from China, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan; beaded evening bags; and a handmade snow shovel. (Duchamp, anyone?)

Some things have been borrowed from Robin Greeson, a collector of textiles and antiques, including the 19 colorful, exquisitely embroidered mola blouses from Panama. These figure prominently, with numerous “Blockers,” in “Tapestry #3,” an immense wall installation. A few things lent by Ms. Greeson and other sources are presented in isolation, including a suggestively beaded harem-pant onesie said to have been worn by Nijinsky, and two works by Vanessa Bell, the British artist of Bloomsbury Group fame, the best of which is, fittingly, a textile design. There’s more, including 17 small, free-standing “Sentinel” pieces. They need either more thought or space, but don’t let them stop you.

ROBERTA SMITH