

ART REVIEW

Not your grandmother's needlework: Sam Fields stretches boundaries in 'Space Between the Warps'

The show at LaMontagne Gallery features 'Wall Breasts' and other surprises.

By **Cate McQuaid** Globe Correspondent, Updated March 14, 2022, 2:42 p.m.



Sam Fields's "Space Between the Warps" is now at LaMontagne Gallery. NOHEMI RODRIGUEZ

Sam Fields defies rigid cultural categories in "Space Between the Warps," her delicious show at LaMontagne Gallery. Warps are the taut vertical threads on a loom around which the more pliant wefts weave.

To Fields, a sculptor and conceptual artist who uses textiles and other materials, the warps might be old-fashioned notions about feminine and masculine, about traditionally domestic arts and fine arts. She uses them to contrast with the messy beauty of what bubbles up in between.

She belongs in a lineage of artists whose work addresses the indefinite, sometimes ecstatic, queer, goopy messiness of living in a body — like [Lynda Benglis](#) and [Kathy Butterly](#). She makes private public, gives form to inchoate yearnings, and liberates mediums dismissed in the past as women's work.

In Fields's hands, techniques traditionally thought of as tame and pretty become wild; the divine feminine is unleashed. In "Square with a Circle" a glorious glob made of beads and French knots weighs down its needlework backing, lolling off a painting frame, as if it's too lush and unpredictable to be contained within painting's rubric.



Sam Fields, "Square with a Circle" NOHEMI RODRIGUEZ

Riffing on domestic interiors, Fields uses fabrics and needlework, but also plumbing materials, furniture, and more. “Diamonds & Grapes,” the show’s centerpiece, is a magnificent textile hanging on an armature of pipes that poke out and hold sconces. Claw feet in pastel tones, made from legs cast in vitreous china, peek out alluringly at the bottom. The textile began with a found floral bedspread, to which Fields has added crocheted ruffles, beading, embroidery, synthetic hair, and plastic grapes. It is at once homey, gaudy, seductive, and unapologetic. If it were a woman, it would be Mae West.



Sam Fields, "Diamonds & Grapes" NOHEMI RODRIGUEZ

West might have gotten a kick out of Fields's erotic humor. "Wall Breasts" features a pair of drawer pulls cast in vitreous china, ornamented with crochet and beads, hung at the height of the artist's breasts. In "Biting," a dial plate — the swelling circular shape that once held, say, a thermostat — opens and a deliriously long pink crocheted tongue falls out.



Sam Fields, "Wall Breasts" NOHEMI RODRIGUEZ

The tensions in Fields's work hold space for something with greater dimension to take form. Her art gleefully suggests we can respect our traditions and simultaneously brace hard against them, because they provide the framework for what's next.

SAM FIELDS: SPACE BETWEEN THE WARPS

At LaMontagne Gallery, 460 Harrison Ave., through March 26. 617-487-3512,

www.lamontagnegallery.com/space-between-the-warps

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