



this room piece was the most significant element in the show, it was also the weakest. Though formally Jurgensen is capable beyond his years, his narrative focus shows his age.

—Kriston Capps

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Marcie Miller Gross

Review Studios

How do we measure labor and its value? Globalized industry assigns a number or a mathematical weight per hour, unknown to consumers in far-flung countries. Wool sweaters made in the tropics are inventory, not local necessity. Their making is not for bodily protection, but it does connect to survival. Do we then subtract value when the making of sweaters is undone by another labor?

The first impression of Marcie Miller Gross's work is that as contemporary Minimalist sculpture it owes a large debt to Donald Judd. In *Flex (line)*, a horizontal box hangs at eye level, and the size is quite similar to that of Judd's work. Yet within the restrictive geometry, there is an aesthetic of compassion in sharp contrast to the cool elimination of content and craft posited by Minimalism. To do the math is to add labor and cloth into the equation.

One reference for expressive meaning is Gross's choice of material: discarded wool sweaters. Cast-off clothing has many potential attachments, psychological and physical. Any pathos is erased in the sweater's new role as an inventory of parts. Sleeves are separated from torsos, which are cut methodically into narrow strips. In *Flex (cube)* and *Flex (line)*, the strips are stacked and cut again, reconfigured into compressed blocks of geometric color and softly shifting pattern. The modulated palette is determined by the accumulation of fashion choices over many years, realigned in a checker-



Above: Benjamin Jurgensen, installation view of "Don't Ready to Die Anymore," 2008. Left: Benjamin Jurgensen, *life after death, ninety-six, woulda stayed fine had puff daddy been a better father figure*, 2008. MDF, acrylic paint, vinyl, and plastic crown, dimensions variable.

board sled, in its recent version, it tilted vertically. The base on which the sled stands leaned against the wall, propped up from the floor by four cartons of eggs. Audaciously, another piece was paired with this one—a canvas leaning against the wall with the same angle, propped up by fake bricks.

The floor of the back project room was painted DayGlo green to match the pieces in that space—a tall, hipster bicycle, emerging half-formed from a crystalline formation; several painting-like planes inclined on the floor, hanging from the wall, or serving as a plinth; crystals and orbs along the ground growing like rock formations in Superman's Fortress of Solitude. Though

Jurgensen's. Modularity, in particular, is a popular sculptural concern that Jurgensen confronts. Though his pieces are large and compositionally ornate, he treats them as if they were simpler and more randomized. Like ornaments, objects that might be cellular towers or satellite antennae appeared over

the door of the gallery, along one slanted ceiling, and in the aqua piece—these could appear anywhere. A large black sled, titled *every-ting crash, this is a chaos race, not your typical dark skinned disney villains*, previously appeared in Jurgensen's thesis exhibition: in that show, the half-pipe-shaped sled



Top: Marcie Miller Gross, installation view with *Re-pair*, *Flex (line)*, *Inventory*, and *Flex (cube)*, 2008. Used felted wool sweater parts, pins, and found stool. Above: Marcie Miller Gross, *Inventory (detail)*, 2008. Used felted wool sweater parts and pins, 44.8 x 10.6 x .75 in.

board that will not snap tight to the grid. The felting of the sweaters prior to their disassembly renders them more absorbant and able to be compressed with a particular weight and density. These works transform the sweaters into abstract geometric volume while retaining their material identity, as the slight protrusions and non-conforming angles of knit undulations create the mathematical rhythm of a musical score.

In *Inventory*, the sweaters' striped or Fair Isle-patterned identities are revised into narrow strips grouped from pins across a strong top horizon-

tal line. The 45-foot work gathers another musical reference in its ordered sections: sweater strips form the ebony increments of a piano keyboard and the negative space of the white wall creates the ivories. This system loosens to organic lines of seams cut free from sweater mass, revealing an architecture of the body even when collapsed. As the dissected garments hang from a single point, gravity does not diminish their human quality, and with it the separate identities of original maker, wearer, and now artist. The aesthetic skill required to transform the

sweaters is less showy than traditional virtuosity. In this, Gross calmly asserts the value of human labor and knowledge that must be shown.

—Gerry Craig

NEW YORK
Nancy Azara
A.I.R. Gallery

Maxi's Wall was displayed in a separate room of the gallery, suggesting a chapel or at least the space apart that Nancy Azara's work demands. Intensely spiritual in a transhistorical and transcultural way, this assemblage of vertical forms reads like a

call to celebration. Composed of various shapes and sizes, its colors and images have long been associated with the artist. The reaching hands and the gold are hallmarks. There are also shades of red and purple and an occasional heart. These contemporary spirit poles evoke thoughts of tribal rites and universal prayer.

Inspired by the birth of Azara's granddaughter, Maximiliana, this cluster of 20 forms suggests a community bursting with energy and mystery. A single gold hand with threads of red starts at ground level in one of the smaller columns at the left. Moving across the work, recognizable hands in various hues appear singly, in pairs, or in groups of as many as 16 atop one column near the center. The hands face both outward and in, a recognition of the viewer and a symbol of eternal striving, reaching heavenward. Placed at various heights, they also suggest physical as well as metaphorical growth.

Azara's material of choice has long been wood, which she transforms with color. Her signature carving, her hand, is everywhere present and palpable. Her surfaces are especially rich. The layering of metallic pigment, deep and changing color, as well as the use of encaustic create an alternating shimmering and flattening out, conveying at times a sense of elation and at other times opacity and thoughtfulness.

The historical use of color in sculpture was featured in two important exhibitions this past year. "Gods in Color," which originated in Munich in 2004 and ended its run at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery at Harvard, demonstrated that Greek art was not only brightly colored but often patterned as well. "The Color of Life: Polychromy in Sculpture from Antiquity to the Present" at the J. Paul Getty Museum focused on the body. Catalogues and ancillary programs accompanying both exhibitions made clear that colorful sculpture was the