



Elana Herzog: Shredding Domesticity



UTILIZING A PNEUMATIC stapler to affix textiles to walls, Elana Herzog creates one surface from two. Proceeding in an expressive method akin to drawing, she places and pulls out staples, removes and shreds bits of fabric, and reapplies both until a dematerialized image emerges. "When I feel my spine tingle, I go with that," she says. In her works, fabrics adorn and dissolve into walls, with the woven pattern of the fabric a mere memory in her final composition. Sometimes dense staples stand in for fabric on the grid of a weave; in other areas, the staples break out on their own, acting as silver lines on white space. The evidence of aggressive textile tearing and distressed wall marking offers poetic moments, as when a

long fabric tendril curls into the air or a surprisingly voluminous fold pushes out from the wall beside a conspicuously flat, empty space.

After receiving her MFA from SUNY Alfred in 1979, Herzog created mixed-media sculpture for almost ten years before turning to utilitarian textiles as her materials of focus. Her first work with textiles consists of a wooden kitchen table altered by cutting, and a long piece of knotted, sheer fabric hanging below the table and snaking along the floor. Given the table's anthropomorphic character and the evocative quality of the twisted fabric, the title *Rapunzel* (1990) is fitting. Since that work, Herzog has been using sheets, bedspreads, rugs, draperies, and curtains to make her sculptural works and architectural interventions.

The artist's most recent installation,

Plaid (with detail), 2007; wool fabric, metal staples, painted drywall on plywood panel constructions; dimensions variable. Installation at Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, New York, September 29–November 11, 2007. Photos: Etienne Frossard. LEFT: The artist installing *Candlewicked*. Photo: Chris Dissinger.

Plaid (2007), was created onsite at the Brooklyn nonprofit art space Smack Mellon. For the piece, Herzog chose brown wool plaid fabric, which she purchased at a fabric store near her Manhattan apartment. While her previous works suggest paintings by maintaining the rectangular form of found blankets, curtains, and carpets, this piece suggests sculpture in the way she uses yardage to involve and interact with space. To extend the piece among multiple surfaces, she subtly altered



the gallery space by building objects such as horizontal platforms, a ceiling-height pier, and several low, partition-like forms. Uniting the forms with the fabric, Herzog was then able to create dynamic vertical and horizontal elements around the perimeter of the room and into the gallery space. With tiny square fabric networks reminiscent of city models placed up high, down low, and in unpredictable shapes, the installation recalls both a Modernist grid and a contained, in-progress construction site. Viewers experience exquisite, ever-shifting panoramas as they walk through what is essentially a three-dimensional plaid environment. One has to wonder what Herzog could do with toile. ●

RIGHT: Candlewicked (with detail opposite page, bottom), 2007; cotton chenille bedspreads, metal staples in existing gallery partition; about 144" x 104" x 24". Installation for the exhibit *Materials Pursuits* at Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington, September 4–December 14, 2007. Photos: Chris Dissinger.

