

By Edward J. Sozanski
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

A new space. The Project Room on Eighth Street just south of Girard Avenue is something new in grassroots exhibition spaces. It's halfway between an artist's studio and a full-fledged gallery, a place where artists can make work, especially installation art, and exhibit it in a gallery setting.

The Project Room was conceived by Kait Baltzer, a sculptor and installation artist who runs a commercial fabrication shop on the premises.

Jim Hinz, the artist in her inaugural exhibition, hardly needed the gallery's 16-foot ceilings or the heavy-duty shop next door. Most of his six pieces would fit in a cigar box with room to spare.

They demand close observation and intense focus. When one's nose is practically against a fragment of plastic and thread, the surroundings drop away, and one sees the piece very clearly.

Hinz's pieces are technically installations, because they're attached directly to the white walls. Several can be considered sculptures that incorporate drawing and coloring. Others are more purely drawing, but an unusual kind that lies flat in parts and lifts off the wall in others.

The "drawing" is done with colored thread not much thicker than horsehair, and with fragments of cloth and colored plastic. The thread is pinned to the wall with needles that are all but invisible.

Hinz's pieces may require intense looking, but they reward you for it. Their smallest details, such as the different weights of thread used to create color bands on a block of wood or the way two snippets of green thread are carefully draped over a white one, communicate a refined and restrained aesthetic intelligence.

Each piece reveals itself detail by detail. For example, a group of orange threads hang vertically, like a scraggly fringe. About half terminate precisely at a sharp knife cut made horizontally in the wall, while the other half hang slightly over it.

Hinz's pieces are a bit like symbolic puzzles. You can enjoy them on a formal level, or you can try to make them speak through your imagination. Either way, Hinz makes you believe that small and quiet can be beautiful.

The Project Room, 960-980 N. Eighth St. By appointment, although because Baltzer works on the premises visits are easily arranged. Phone: 215-413-3101.

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