



Room With a View

How to tell if you're an art junkie: A new gallery opens and you respond by a) immediately adding the space to your First Friday route, b) going into fits of unrestrained glee about the booming Philadelphia art community but never experiencing it because the existence of another venue is the important thing, or c) reading the fine print to see if the art is going to be worth your time and if the people behind it have a shred of credibility. If you answered "c," then you need to get help — right now. Anyone paying attention to the art scene in Philadelphia has seen galleries come and go, and knows that to get a fix of worthwhile work you have to be very selective about your time. So the appearance of Project Room, and the propitious choice of Jim Hinz for an inaugural show, is especially noteworthy. Hinz's profoundly mute work has appeared at Beaver College's "Works on Paper" show, in the University of the Arts' "Objects and Souvenirs" and other occasional venues where his work qui-

etly demands a viewer's rapt attention. His spare constructions of fabric, paper, leather and other materials at first seem to be nothing much. But their inherent oddness imprints them in your mind and you find yourself making up desperate explanations for the work — as if your life just won't make sense until you explain Hinz to yourself. Project Room is described as "not quite a gallery and not quite a artist's private studio," and was initiated by artist Kait Baltzer to serve as an experimental venue for performance and installation. Don't miss this show, and look for more at Project Room in the future.

- GERARD BROWN

Jim Hinz, through March 28. Project Room, 960-980 N. Eighth St. 215.413.3101.

By Edward J. Sozanski

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 fullfledged 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

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 intelli-

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.

Friday, March 19, 1999