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*David Nolan*

*Through Jan. 21*

Works by Christina Ramberg and Victoria Gitman, in these excellent separate shows, are linked by a shared preoccupation with fetishism and women.

A fetish, in Freudian terms, is an inanimate object that someone finds erotic because of its intimate association with the human body. In the case of Ms. Ramberg, the sadly underknown Chicago Imagist who died in 1995, the objects in question are high-heel shoes, bras, corsets and similar accouterments as well as more overtly sadomasochistic forms of bondage.

In many funny and weird cartoon studies on paper, she pictures torsos, feet, hands and heads encumbered by such psychologically charged devices. In “Pinched Corset” (1971), one of her elegant small panel paintings, the index finger of a woman’s hand probes between the shiny black fabric of a tight corset and the otherwise naked back of another woman. Painted in severely muted colors — except for the red fingernails — it is slyly suggestive and wonderfully mysterious.

Ms. Gitman, who lives in Florida, paints life-size pictures of beaded purses with a verisimilitude that verges on magic realism. With a fine-tipped brush, she renders every tiny, glittering glass bead and the beautiful mosaic patterns that myriad beads add up to. The type of fetish that Karl Marx identified — the commodity — naturally comes to mind. But the purse also may be seen as the feminine equivalent of the cigar. Sometimes a purse is just a purse, but in Ms. Gitman’s hands it is certainly something more.

-Ken Johnson