

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

the Stranger

CURRENTLY HANGING: ELENA DEL RIVERO'S DISHCLOTH

You can stand inside Elena del Rivero's dishcloth. It's made of large pieces of sturdy abaca paper that were laid on the floor of a collective art studio in New York and stepped all over for weeks. Then, del Rivero picked them up and fixed them up. She washed the paper, gently but insistently. She sutured its rips. She sewed the pieces together and added a border of red and white stitching, then hung it on a big hook like a dishcloth drying. And if you are careful, you can maneuver yourself into it. I can't forget this piece lately; it keeps coming back to me (it's on display at Lawrimore Project). It's an obvious object in many ways—a feminist take on minimalism, a portrait of the artist as a caretaking seamstress. But its quiet pride is simply touching, and it rewards exploration. Stand inside it and it becomes clothing, architecture, a whisper echo of Richard Serra's steel walls. The dishcloth is displayed with an assortment of drawings—of mended feathers, mostly, made as much with pencils as with erasers, in addition to needles, thread, and gold leaf. This small gathering is del Rivero's first show in Seattle; born in Valencia, Spain, she has lived in New York since 1991 and is best known for two series: One, the enigmatic Letters to the Mother, collected by the Museum of Modern Art; and two, a project including tapestries created from the documents she found upon returning to her blown-out, World Trade Center-facing studio on September 12, 2001, which will be featured at the New Museum on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the attacks this fall.

UPDATE: I forgot to mention Carolina Silva's lovely essay in honor of del Rivero, which is well worth reading. Here's a segment: Feathers are a recurrent sign in Elena Del Rivero's work... Feathers, detached from the body of the bird, become something different. They used to be objects with a spiritual dimension, one related to the first and most primordial humanhood, culture and civilization, used in rituals and instrumental for the beginnings of tracing, puncturing and writing. In her hands, however, feathers are no longer obsolete. They become traces of an existence, one that has flown, is lost forever, and will never reconcile with its origin. There is a certain sense of orphanhood that makes the work heroic while brutally humble, vulnerable while strong, sensitive while self-confident.

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