

Art in Review

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LIZA LOU*L & M Arts**45 East 78th Street, Manhattan**Through Nov. 15**Lever House**390 Park Avenue, at 54th Street**Through Nov. 29*

It's no coincidence that Liza Lou's first New York appearance since a 2002 solo at Deitch Projects in SoHo takes place in an uptown town house and a Park Avenue lobby. Ms. Lou, a sculptor who makes hand-beaded versions of everyday objects and environments, has shifted from immersive installations (like the "Kitchen" and "Back Yard" exhibited at the New Museum in the mid-'90s) to highly marketable sculptures and relief paintings.

The transition isn't all bad. Ms. Lou's beadwork is still dazzling, and she is certainly experimenting with different genres (namely, minimalism and a kind of ethno-political abstraction). The works at L & M, many of which were made specifically for the exhibition, play off of the townhouse architecture in a clever and occasionally spectacular way. Of particular note is "Tower," a narrow cage covered with white bugle beads that rises through the center of the spiraling staircase to a height of three stories.

In a series of wall-mounted panels based on Muslim prayer rugs, beads are turned on their ends and glued together side by side. In places, the textile pattern is obscured by irregular clusters resembling topographic maps or creeping fungi. Titles like "Axis Defeat" and "Quick, Cheap, Overwhelming Victory" indicate that Ms. Lou, perhaps influenced by a three-year stay in Durban, South Africa, has moved from the born-again Christian themes of her earlier work to more global concerns.

The showstopper is "Security Fence" (2005-7), a shimmering 10-foot-square enclosure of barbed wire and chain-link steel completely covered with silver beads. A similar sculpture, "Maximum Security Fence," is on view in the lobby of Lever House — the site that, not long ago, was given over to a slaughterhouse's worth of Damien Hirsts. This, too, is no coincidence. **KAREN ROSENBERG**