



Swatch (Simulated)

## SURFACE TREATMENT

What: Abby Sherrill: "Moody Swatch"  
Where: Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, 660 E Ringgold St., Brownsville  
When: Sept 14-Oct 25, 2019  
Hours: 10am-4pm, Mon-Tues; 10am-8pm, Wed; 10am-4pm, Thurs-Sat.  
Contact: (956) 542- 0941  
General admission applies.

### **Recursive Relationships**

The exhibition explores technology, meaning, and experience through materials whose original use was elsewhere.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

With the "Moody Swatch" exhibition at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, has Arte Povera evolved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century? With materials whose intended function has passed, Abby Sherrill has created new visual, intellectual, and even humorous experiences for them. This two-section exhibition consists of flat fabric swatches from the artist's printer, and wall sculptures that are leftover remnants from who knows what. But they all have a meaningful existence in Sherrill's world.

The "Moody Swatches" are small abstract situations of moody colorations manipulated into unexpected arrangements. But it's the process that makes them truly unique; they represent a symbiosis between the artist and her textile printer. As Sherrill worked with the printing machine, she became aware of its duality - a task-oriented instrument that also produced an intimate process-based experience. This duality occurred to her while

she was conducting a daily ritual of cleaning the printer nozzles of excess dye. As she placed the small pieces of microfiber in the machine and watched the cleaning swatches absorbing the wet dye, they began to feel like artifacts that provided a portal into the deep workings of the machine. "It metamorphosed into a dreamy sea of color," she exclaimed, "that allowed me to task my own sense of humanity onto the machine." The labor of the swatch and its disposable future became an analogy; it played a necessary role in the prosperity/success of the machine. The swatches became the machine's own products, and when she manipulated images of the swatch to be printed by the printer that it once cleaned, the tiers of creative hierarchy became a symbiotic blur.

A classic sensibility toward abstraction is apparent here. In "Swatch (Below)" colors bleed in fuzzy edges onto the fabric beneath a 3-D illusionistic effect superimposed upon the originally flat image. With "Swatch (Simulated)" Sherrill takes more control over the swatch by folding and printing its image on a different fabric. "Swatch (Alias)" is a bas-relief with swatches cut and adhered to sections of wood. Within this small piece different degrees of depth imply contrasts between absolute and relative barriers. Negative space seems to be something with which her swatches and remnants both need to contend.

The installation, "Eye Floaters; Past/Present (Wayfinding)", fills the entrance wall space as an introduction to the 3-D remnants and objects. Several items are spaciouly placed in what feels like organized randomness; there is no focal point, so the eye wanders, seeking a resting stability. But there is, simultaneously, all and none, and its feeling echoes senses of social instability. Its focus lies within our ability to relate to it.

Arte Povera used natural or discarded objects that had no commercial value, such as the swatches; hence – poor art. But unlike combining found objects for simple arrangement, this art offers more. Sherrill's remnants, etc., contain philosophical musings and comical, sometimes jarring juxtapositions. They seem to have been left behind after a necessary construction moved on; a rational explanation replaced by mysteries that are felt, but not easily explained, as in the installation wall-piece, "Remnants (Time)". Here, a wood board impossibly balances on another remnant while supporting a washed-out swatch. A holder above it references a clock, but with no hands or numbers. "Remnants (Holder)" displays a careful combination of unrelated elements having no apparent function other than to be held up by a small L-shaped wood structure, establishing a symbiotic relationship. A dark analogy, it still evokes humorous pleasure.

With this body of work, the artist visualizes the philosophical space between technology, meaning, and experience, and wants us to connect with her in this artistic trek.

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