

UPSTATE DIARY

'LUCIO POZZI: qui dentro/in here' at Magazzino, and 'I Was Here' at September Gallery.

April 2, 2025



Installation view, Jen Simms. Image by Pierre LeHors.

The six artists in *I Was Here* are all engaged in a ratified form of weaving, sewing, and textile collage using mostly ordinary found materials: strips of fabric from thrift store clothing, and rough cords and chains, to delicate beaded strings and silk threads. The artists: Kesewa Aboah, kg, Emma Safir, Jen Simms, Odessa Straub, and Amas Verdâtre are united by an ability to achieve highly personalized visual statements with universal appeal. Organized by gallery director Kristen Dodge, the show has a special resonance for this venue, which is a renovated former knitting mill. Outstanding here, Odessa Straub's sumptuous composition *One is on a Horizontal Line* (2020-24) features glittery red glass beads meticulously clustered near the center of a shimmering field made of pieces of shiny pink and red, unadorned nylon and cotton fabric. These relatively crudely stitched together panels contrast with the refined, labor-intensive application of the centralized beading, whose curvilinear shape suggests a beating heart or an otherworldly, centipede-like insect.



I Was Here, installation view. Image by Pierre LeHors.

After extended viewing, works by the Polish-born artist known as kg deliver at times an emotional impact, and at others a potent dose of humor. The artist's *Swieltliste Drogi* (2018), for example, is an elegiac image—literally funereal—composed of sticks woven into dyed linen with braided cords that hold the golden letters, *Loving*, from their father's funereal wreath. It is a clearly heartfelt tribute to theirs or anyone's beloved, departed parent. Equally stunning, but filled with humor, kg's *Oasis or What a Bunch of Assholes* (2018), is a rectangular weaving of strands of beige material adorned with brown rose-shaped buttons. This rather coarse section frames a languorous gathering of Prussian blue threads arranged in a cluster at center. Since the artist offers a choice in the title, rather than an anus, I prefer to think of the blue mass as a refreshing watery oasis.

Issues of gender and identity abound in the exhibition, perhaps nowhere more vitally expressive than in Jen Simms's portraits, each with an unexpected and imaginative use of found material and thrifted yarns. Displayed in pairs or rows along one wall, each of the dozen or so squarish compositions contains a face with a distinct character. Some heads are abstracted far beyond any recognizable human attributes. Yet, like all the artists in this unforgettable exhibition, Simms aims for an emotional intensity that is thoroughly humanistic. —**David Ebony**