

Sculpture 28.2

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

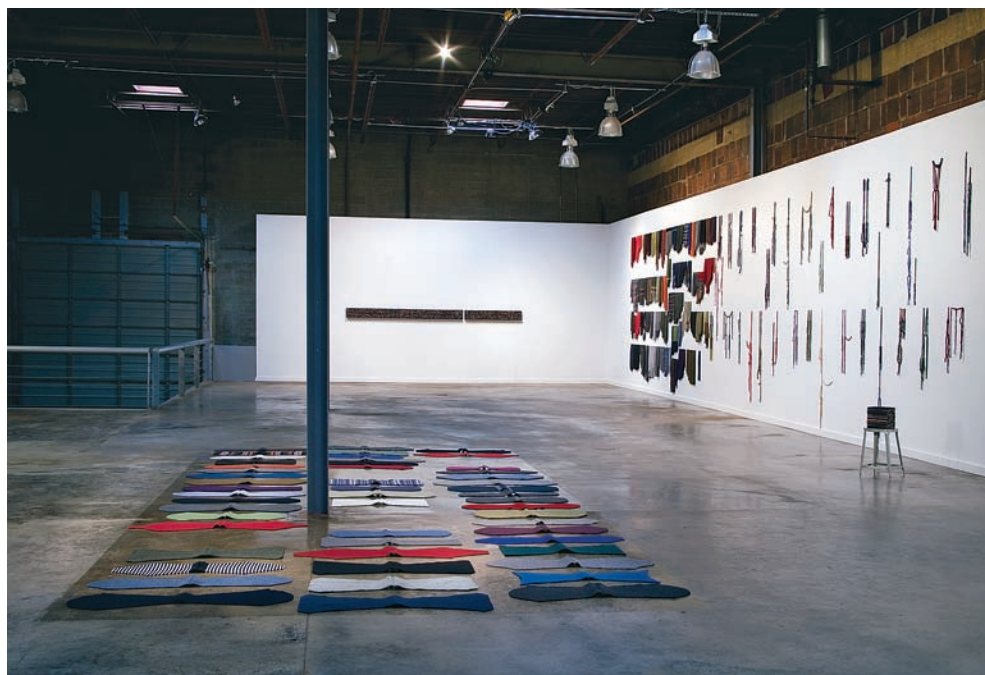
Marcie Miller Gross

Review Studios

How do we measure labor and its value? Globalized industry assigns a number or a mathematical weight per hour, unknown to consumers in far-flung countries. Wool sweaters made in the tropics are inventory, not local necessity. Their making is not for bodily protection, but it does connect to survival. Do we then subtract value when the making of sweaters is undone by another labor?

The first impression of Marcie Miller Gross's work is that as contemporary Minimalist sculpture it owes a large debt to Donald Judd. In *Flex (line)*, a horizontal box hangs at eye level, and the size is quite similar to that of Judd's work. Yet within the restrictive geometry, there is an aesthetic of compassion in sharp contrast to the cool elimination of content and craft posited by Minimalism. To do the math is to add labor and cloth into the equation.

One reference for expressive meaning is Gross's choice of material: discarded wool sweaters. Cast-off clothing has many potential attachments, psychological and physical. Any pathos is erased in the sweater's new role as an inventory of parts. Sleeves are separated from torsos, which are cut methodically into narrow strips. In *Flex (cube)* and *Flex (line)*, the strips are stacked and cut again, reconfigured into compressed blocks of geometric color and softly shifting pattern. The modulated palette is determined by the accumulation of fashion choices over many years, realigned in a checker-



Top: Marcie Miller Gross, installation view with *Re-pair*, *Flex (line)*, *Inventory*, and *Flex (cube)*, 2008. Used felted wool sweater parts, pins, and found stool. Above: Marcie Miller Gross, *Inventory* (detail), 2008. Used felted wool sweater parts and pins, 44.8 x 10.6 x .75 in.

board that will not snap tight to the grid. The felting of the sweaters prior to their disassembly renders them more absorbant and able to be compressed with a particular weight and density. These works transform the sweaters into abstract geometric volume while retaining their material identity, as the slight protrusions and non-conforming angles of knit undulations create the mathematical rhythm of a musical score.

In *Inventory*, the sweaters' striped or Fair Isle-patterned identities are revised into narrow strips grouped from pins across a strong top horizon-

tal line. The 45-foot work gathers another musical reference in its ordered sections: sweater strips form the ebony increments of a piano keyboard and the negative space of the white wall creates the ivories. This system loosens to organic lines of seams cut free from sweater mass, revealing an architecture of the body even when collapsed. As the dissected garments hang from a single point, gravity does not diminish their human quality, and with it the separate identities of original maker, wearer, and now artist. The aesthetic skill required to transform the

sweaters is less showy than traditional virtuosity. In this, Gross calmly asserts the value of human labor and knowledge that must be shown.

—Gerry Craig