

the abundance of natural growth. One part of the installation playfully encircled a small tree, the colors of the fabric mimicking or contrasting with the plantings. While playful and colorful, the installation also examined the more sobering concept of permanence. Outdoors, Hicks's work, like any other, became ephemeral, changing over time and aging. The unraveling and fraying only added to the impact, offering a reminder of the temporary nature of life.

Hop managed to hold its own in a busy urban park filled with rail lines, walkers, paths, and abundant vegetation largely through its color and energy. This work would have been inconceivable in any other material—the impact and feeling were largely dependent on fiber. Fabric is familiar; it covers our bodies and is soft and flexible. Within it, structure and color are married. A similar synthesis characterized Hicks's approach to the site: *Hop*, *Skip*, *Jump*, and *Fly* did not attempt to conquer; instead, it enhanced its surroundings, both natural and manmade.

Outdoor installations seem an anti-intuitive choice for fiber-based works, and yet Hicks also contributed *Proserpine en Chrysalide* (*Persephone in Chrysalis*) to "Voyage d'hiver," an exhibition at the gardens of Versailles. Sited at the Colonnade, the sculpture, which refers to the changing seasons and the Greco-Roman myth of Persephone, shrouded a figurative fountain sculpture in colorful swaths of fabric that extended out to enliven and disrupt a space of supreme neo-classical restraint.

Hicks's work is soft and feminine, yet very strong; big and bold without being strident, it seems to carry no political messages. A subtle, quiet, and powerful commentator, Hicks knows what she is doing and does it well. She is a master still at the top of her game.

—Jane Ingram Allen

NEW YORK

Jeanne Silverthorne
MARC STRAUS Gallery

For nearly three decades, Jeanne Silverthorne has treated the artist's studio and all it encompasses as her subject. The work that gets made there, the furniture and tools, the person who makes the work (herself), and the workings of the artist's body are all represented, along with memories, dreams, and discarded ideas. The other living creatures who share the studio—ants, flies, caterpillars, moths, and spiders—are present as well. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the end of studio arts as a whole and the impossibility of this mode of expression regaining its former creative validity and vitality in today's world.

Her recent exhibition offered viewers a range of genres that were once the primary tools used by studio artists to explore the world and their reactions to it. The still-life was represented by floral arrangements, lamps, chairs, and packing boxes. The self-portrait was also present, most powerfully in *Suicidal Sunflower* (2014) in which a sunflower hangs from the cord of a work light, its



desiccated roots draped over a packing crate. *Self-Portrait as a Fly With Glasses* (2017) consists of a larger-than-life-size fly lying on its belly with its legs splayed out behind and its broken antennae hanging over a pair of black glasses. The artist's process itself is shown as a trash can, filled with broken wooden planks,



Left: Jeanne Silverthorne, *Suicidal Sunflower*, 2014. Platinum silicone rubber, dimensions variable. Below: Jeanne Silverthorne, *Looking At A Caterpillar*, 2017. Platinum silicone rubber and phosphorescent pigment, 11.5 x 24 x 18 in.

and by many un-illuminated light bulbs. *Wrapped Task Chair* (2016), a bubble-wrapped and taped work chair, is perhaps another self-portrait; or it could symbolize transient support for the artist's endeavors or the binding of the artist's ideas and a subsequent inability to carry work forward.

Silverthorne's preferred medium is cast silicone rubber. Lamps, cords, light switches, light bulbs, packing crates, flowers, and insects are all cast in rubber. The inherent blockiness and non-reflective surface of the material lends a quality of caricature or cartoon to her objects, as though she were pointing out the futility of investing her subjects with the relevance or the ability needed to move artistic discourse forward into new realms.

What is new in Silverthorne's ongoing investigation is the presence of an alter-ego, or perhaps of the viewer, cast in the form of a caterpillar looking up at a pair of desk lamps, which are trained on it inquisitively. In *Looking At A Caterpillar* (2017), the caterpillar is not going about its business while being examined; instead, it is standing up and looking back, aware of the scrutiny. This alert caterpillar appears again in *Poppy Juice* (2017), on top of a pile of oozing opium poppies that sprawl across a packing crate. Unaffected by the state of its support, this caterpillar is once again standing up and taking stock of its surroundings. It is confident, and even cheerful, like an explorer on top of a mountain peak who knows that the route forward involves flying and not crawling.

—Jan Riley