

The New York Times



Dena Yago's "Sleeping Spinner" in felt. Courtesy of the artist and Bodega

DENA YAGO

Through April 2. Bodega, 167 Rivington Street, Manhattan; bodega-us.org.

For "The Lusting Breed," at Bodega on the Lower East Side, Dena Yago colored five large sheets of store-bought felt with a homemade purplish-black dye. She cut and scored them with more or less recognizable shapes borrowed from two Courbet paintings — one of a woman sifting wheat, another of a woman asleep at a spinning wheel — and from three scenes of more contemporary labor, including one of people prospecting for vintage finds in a Salvation Army bin. She worked with an artisanal dyer to add accents of orange, green and ash gray. She asked the artist Brittany Mroczek to embroider a few yellow lines on "The Influencer." And then she pegged up the results like animal hides.

Neither attacking the notion of "women's work" nor mining its craft-based, collaborative potential to revitalize art practice is a new idea, though both are still needed. But what makes this work so striking is how powerfully it brings out the ambiguous violence of all image-making, Ms. Yago's as much as Courbet's. The felt sheets start as rectangles, but the cutouts leave them distorted and fragile, as if the only way to mark a surface were to partly destroy it. The orange dye looks like blooms of rust, and the green like mold. And the bottom edge of "The Grain Sifters," under a long slit, hangs open like a grimacing lip.

WILL HEINRICH

March 16, 2017