

Tema Celeste

Arte contemporanea

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Polly Apfelbaum

D'Amelio Terras, Chelsea

Ice, the new floor piece exhibited at D'Amelio Terras, is one of Apfelbaum's largest, covering nearly the whole floor of the gallery right up to the walls and leaving barely a little room for the public to walk around. Hundreds of tiny bits of synthetic velvet are dyed with 104 colors of fabric dye, then blotted and intricately laid out on the floor, each overlapping the other, to create a gradual prismatic progression from yellow to black. From a formal point of view, Apfelbaum's slap-dash hybrid between painting and sculpture continues to defy easy categorization. It suggests a scatter aesthetic or the early materially non-challant projects of Mel Bochner or Barry Le Va, but its chromatic intensity, that the shiny texture of the material often accentuates into something quite dazzling, are equally reminiscent of the scintillating waterlily paintings by Monet. The shorn and layered textile technique may also refer to the art historically relatively neglected, and mostly women's, handicraft tradition of patchwork. Apfelbaum's stream of velvety scales are harmonious and jarring, embodying the delicate precision of Islamic decorative patterns while also suggesting various biological metaphors of expansion, fluidity and aberrant growth. Although arguably deterministic, in that it is limited to one set of formal means that are continually rearranged into different configurations, Apfelbaum's project remains appealing, taking abstraction into structurally and visually innovative territories.



Polly Apfelbaum, *Ice*, 1998, velluto sintetico e tinta, dimensioni variabili. D'Amelio Terras, New York.