



Denver + Marfa rulegallery.com
info@rulegallery.com 303-800-6776

The Soft Grid

By **Charlene K. Lau**

The works in Lo-Fi play an optical ruse on the viewer. In a nod to painting, they kid with their precise and vibrating lines, neatly contained within frames, seemingly behaving like the textiles they are not quite. The only warps present are those of the non-woven variety: wavy lines, organically determined patterns and organized yet wonky fibers. Here, the normally rigid modernist grid is softened, literally, materially and structurally.

This teasing extends to the materiality of the individual works. In contrast to their finely-crafted frames, each “textile” is upheld by its backing of workaday Velcro—a name which merges the French terms for “velvet” (velour) and “hook” (crochet)—in a collision of refinement and industrial manufacture. It’s these tiny hooks and loops that do the integral but invisible labor, holding each work together by tightly gripping the strands of yarn, which themselves are a series of interlocking fibers. Nevertheless, the compositional intensity belies simple yet idiosyncratic application in a duet of old-world technologies with new but distinctly analog ways of making.

The lines’ visual trickery plays at the spatial tension between two and three dimensions, creating a slight lenticular effect where the sheen of yarn fibers changes ever so slightly in the light. High contrast color pairings of red and black or black and white further create hypnotizing Op-Art oscillations, snaking across the picture plane and generating frenetic energy that messes with the viewer’s field of vision. It’s an effect that holds whether viewing these works in person or through a computer screen. In both, there’s a distinct feeling of scratchiness, where the visual aberrations transmute into real or imagined touch. The warmth and dense lines of yarn function as if signals corrupted by the visual noise of background fuzz, improvising a soft “screen” with basic technology. *Soft Focus* (2020) takes this to heart with its dizzying transmission of a salt-and-pepper surface—akin to a “snowy” picture on a television set that’s the result of a weak signal. But *Fade Out* (2020) is its calmer sibling, overall subdued in its silvery effect and controlled chaos.

Unlike the modernist grid theorized in the 20th century, Larson’s warbling grids are narrative by their naming; and anyway, their relatable materiality conjures up associations to things in everyday life. Some works look like how tweed or a sweater stretched over a frame would, as is the case with *Hard Edge* (2020) or *Work Around* (2020). Both of these could also easily be reimagined as carpet in a design forward office, their preciousness only made possible by virtue of their framed edges and conventional display on a wall. The undulations of *It’s All Over Now* (2020) cannot help but resemble aquatic waves in two kinds of blue, although electric, zig-zagging and barbed ones at that. In this sense, the viewer envisions what they want in these works, that is, if they see anything at all. At the same time, Larson’s “weavings” also serve as funny reminders of moments when we think we might see or know something, when in fact, we don’t.

Charlene K. Lau is an art historian, critic and curator who has held fellowships at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Parsons School of Design, The New School and Performa Biennial. Her writing has been published in *Artforum*, Atlantic.com, the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Canadian Art*, *Frieze*, *Fashion Theory* and *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, among others.