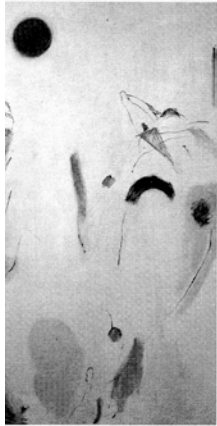
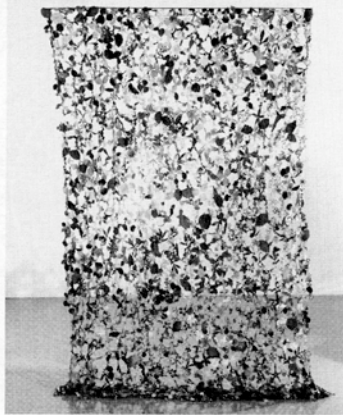


# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Decter, Joshua, "Review," *Artforum*, November 1996, pp. 104-105



**LA Sunbathers, 1996,**  
canvas, 72 x 64".



**Jim Hodges, In Blue, 1996,**  
silk flowers and thread, 12 x 7".

ming some episode. Looked at fast or with a cloudy head, they could be taken as the underpainting for Picasso's *Guernica*. Sue Williams at war. The porn version.

—Benjamin Weissman

## JIM HODGES

MARC FOXX

Pushing daintiness to the point where it becomes strangely unsettling, Jim Hodges makes work that produces "meaning" in the form of disconnected clues. The ephemeral, somewhat ambiguous works assembled here under the title "Yes" flirt with narrative coherence and concrete, physical presence, without placing pressure on the viewer to construct a signifying chain. Unlike a number of young contemporary artists who have taken to narrative-laden visual poetics with a self-conscious relationship to history and memory (Kathleen Schimmert comes to mind), Hodges constructs a symbolic economy that deflects meaning more than it points to it, encouraging a productive brand of disengagement. A spider's web held together by delicate metal chains attached to the wall with pins discreetly occupied a corner of the gallery (*On We Go*, 1996); a large but nearly invisible wall drawing executed in blue, purple, and green comprised three overlapping circles of reinscribed lines (*Being Here, These Three*, 1996); and deliciously colored silk flowers formed a floating wall (*In Blue*, 1996). This last piece was unrepentantly gorgeous, virtually absent, sinfully artificial—a floral phantom hovering before the viewer.

Hodges' works suggest a spirited if hermetic preoccupation with the world of del-

icate sensations and things. All three pieces could be understood as quasi-immaterial testaments to an engagement with rather ordinary materials and objects that have a particular resonance for the artist. With some artists, you couldn't care less what this resonance might be; but Hodges' little fascinations have an infectious charm. And while it's tough to pin down, his cryptic system is clothed in a readily accessible materiality that seduces as much as it masks.

However specific the symbols, they stop just short of allegory. If there is some kind of narrative at work here, it's one that leads us back to the artist's own desires, fetishes, and pleasures—which may just be our own. Beyond this, the work quietly celebrates process and its manifestation in natural structures, such as the archetypal web. Yet, for Hodges creating an object that foregrounds its handmade status can be understood as more than a reactionary rejection of systematized reproduction.

Initially the suspended curtain of silk flowers, *In Blue*, seemed to curl softly through the air, the tissue of artificial flowers transforming itself into a wall of closely dancing butterflies. When sunlight filled the space, Hodges' hanging screen of flowers delicately strung together with thread was animated by something utterly ephemeral. Placing this veil of graciously embroidered, ersatz flowers parallel to the gallery's open-air entrance was fortuitous in other ways as well: the convergence of natural elements and artificial nature suggested that meaning can drift in on a current of air and alight on just about anything. If Hodges has a crush on beauty it is as much for its mystery as for its surface appeal. His is an art at the margins of visibility: it whispers to us through the

walls, flirting with states of material and conceptual dissolution in an unsentimental, private language.

—Joshua Decter