

Time Out

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“Research”

NIU Gallery (see River North),
through May 21.

In lieu of the nonexistent curatorial premise of the group show “Research,” let’s posit: material transformations of temporality. If this formal alchemy seems to be the only nail that supports every artwork here, the problem is that each work’s success will depend on your belief in the tensile strength of its materials. Therefore, the most engaging works are the most formally invested—those by Dianna Frid and Gisela Insuaste. Frid’s diagrammatic structures use collaged juxtapositions of cheap (masking tape, tin foil) and precious (densely stacked and stitched cloth). Insuaste’s *Untitled memories at 6310, part 2* is an exemplary case study in being careful of what you wish for. This field of precariously stalked forms had partially

collapsed by mid-opening, initiating much discussion of whether or not to let culture take its natural course. It’s great as is. Paola Cabal’s cunning wall/floor painting of incidental light is beautiful, even if you question the critical valiancy of trompe l’oeil after endless market revivals.

While Frid, Insuaste and Cabal are sensitive to the temporal dimensions of materials, it’s unfortunate that Jessica Almy-Pagán and Edra Soto here display little trust in their respective methods. Almy-Pagán so strenuously gropes for Meaning with a capital “M,” that her ritual marking is smothered under ersatz symbolism. And a staged and witty video offering the audience a few minutes of deserved appreciation by Soto brings hammer to thumb with its awkwardly attendant podium and interactive request to compile a dictionary of common slang.—Anthony Elms



Gisela Insuaste, *Untitled memories at 6310, part 2*, 2005.