

# TITLE MAGAZINE

## 1867 1881 1981

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Elaine Cameron-Weir and Ben Schumacher

Showing at [Bodega](#) through April 22

By Daniel Gerwin



In this collaborative exhibit by Elaine Cameron-Weir and Ben Schumacher, the main room is dominated by twinned works on facing walls, placed in such a way that they are in dialogue yet are not directly across from each other. In both pieces a welded metal frame, black and sleek, projects from the wall to support a “painting” consisting of fabric stretched over a rectangular wooden frame. The fabric has been marked with a few desultory blue shapes and meandering white chalk lines. Black mesh netting is tossed rather fetchingly over the light grey rectangle (whose fabric resembles TV static), while white mesh netting lies over the other, whose fabric is a dark blue-black. These quasi-paintings are hung so gently on the metal frames that they actually swayed whenever the gallery’s heat went on. The netting sits equally lightly over the stretched fabric, a poetic sculptural rhyme.

Reflections and repetitions ripple out from these two central objects. A blue ceramic rectangle hangs beside a doorway, its proportions echoing the stretched fabrics and the doorway itself, its glaze matching the blue marks on the fabric. Throughout the gallery’s two rooms, each object in some way resonates with another.

The individual elements eventually coalesce in the mind to form a funky mix of calculation and improvisation. Moving through the gallery, I became aware of which decisions had been carefully planned, such as the welded frames, and which decisions were spontaneous and off-the-cuff, like the way the mesh netting hangs loosely over the fabric, creating moiré effects that buzz the eye even as the nettings’ edges form gently undulating lines. There are funny little moments too, like the dozens of nails hammered into the wall to support the rather small and lightweight blue ceramic rectangle, akin to manically shouting in the ear of someone sitting next to you in the library. This was one of several times in the show where I felt Cameron-Weir and Schumacher might be sharing a laugh.

Those who are hungry for theory will find enough to chew on. The blue ceramic calls attention to its adjacent doorway’s negative space, which cinematically frames our vision of the next room and the people inside it. A small room in the back holds salvaged rectangular woodblocks whose carvings include the letters YH, apparently the initials of the artist who trashed them, introducing the dense thicket of questions relating to authorship.

What struck me most powerfully was the impression that Cameron-Weir and Schumacher share a deep sensitivity to physical materials and modes, but leave themselves room for spur of the moment fun. *1867 1881 1981* is not a show featuring the juxtaposed creations of two artists, but rather presents a fully integrated collaboration between two people with complementary and overlapping sensibilities. They have offered us an experience of disparate materials and objects coming to life through the delicacy of their apposition.