

Melding the beautiful with the mundane

Gerry Trilling uses fabric as a material for visual and mental play in her exhibit.

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Special to the Star

Sometimes, the uglier the material, the better the result.

Kansas City artist Gerry Trilling's visual vocabulary includes commercially produced fabric (often with deliberately dubious aesthetic appeal), lenticular plastic, paper, sequins, and other everyday materials found at any hardware or fabric store.

These strange accretions are minimalist (without being emotionally detached), and often effusively decorative.

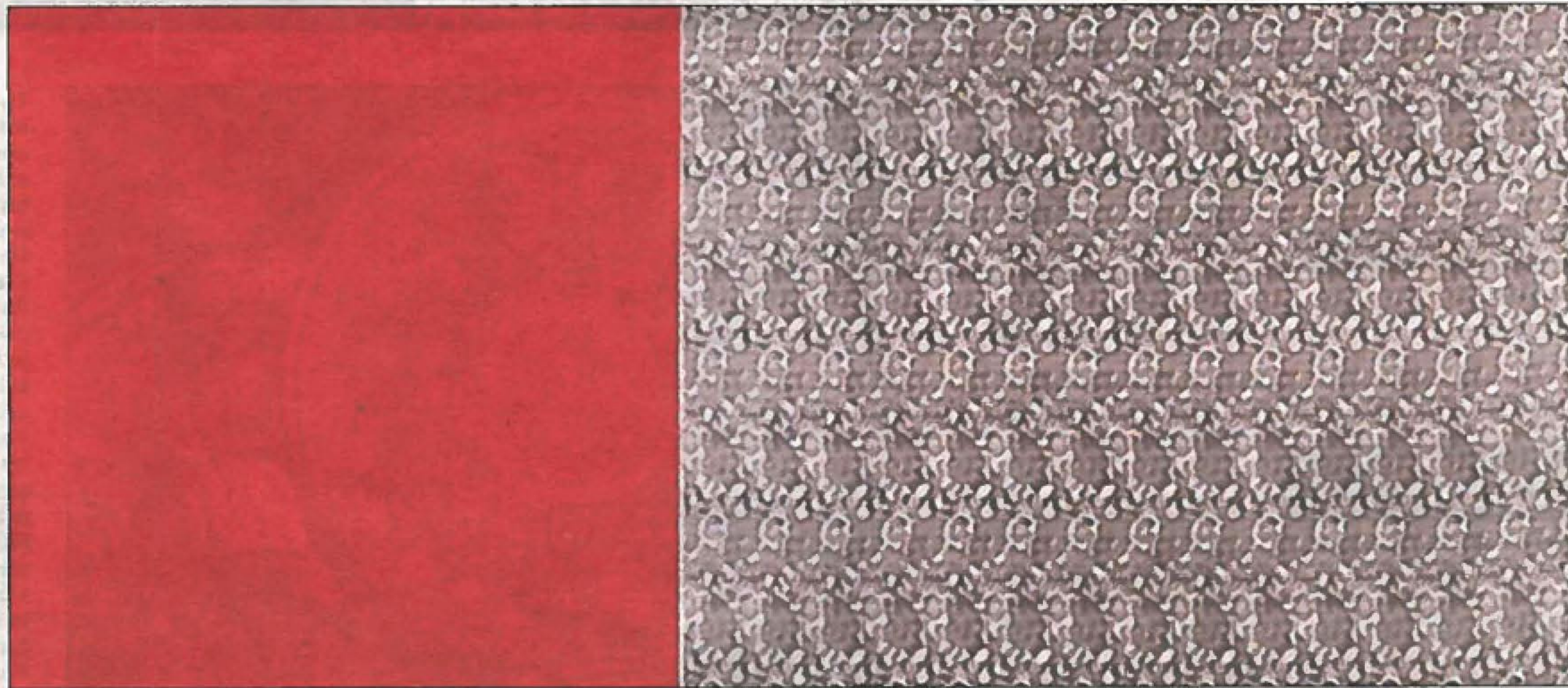
REVIEW In the diptych,

"Some Mornings Everything Goes Right," an unattractive floral fabric is covered with a sheet of plastic, lending the fabric a slippery surface. Trilling embellishes the textile with small squares of plastic and painted paper, which lends a pixelated affect. The cheery but ugly fabric is a funny, yet completely authentic choice that somehow telegraphs Trilling's commitment to it.

In the nine works in her exhibit at City Ice Arts, Trilling repeats shapes and patterning ideas, if not the patterns themselves. She often uses a 36-inch square canvas; a size that echoes the 3/4-inch squares of lenticular plastic and painted paper she layers. Her explorations include the relationship of handmade to commercial production, combining the two in a conversational loop.

"Hard & Shiny Soft & Shiny" travels from opaque to transparent across three panels and three different materials in 36-inch squares.

The grand "Neon Toile" capitalizes on the fabric's homey sensibility. Trilling covers a black and white



IMAGES FROM THE ARTIST

"Hard & Shiny Soft & Shiny II" is part of the "Gerry Trilling: In Site" exhibit at City Ice Arts.

On exhibit

"Gerry Trilling: In Site" continues at City Ice Arts, 2015 Campbell St., through Dec. 7. Hours are noon-5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and by appointment. For more information, call 816-820-4105 or visit cityicearts.com.

toile with a layer of translucent neon red/orange and then a layer of wrinkled and loose black netting.

"Collecting Magnetism" is a stretcher of fantastically busy fabric from Tasmania whose acid green, yellow and blue patterned stripes convey a strange urgency and sense of purpose. It is one of the weirdest works in the show for its utter simplicity. It appears that sometimes you simply can mount fabric on a stretcher and call it a day.

"Smoke and Mirrors" makes optimal use of the "light escaping" illusion



The pattern on "Collecting Magnetism" conveys a strange urgency and sense of purpose.

plastics that Trilling uses for her 3/4-inch squares deployed throughout the piece.

Each square of the neon orange seems illuminated, as if the tiny squares are hoard-

ing light that bleeds from their four edges. This piece with its shiny netting, faceted sequins, and camouflage fabric, transcends ideas of plain or beautiful, forming a hybrid of the two. Trilling weaves her interest in patterns and repetition throughout her work, and yet, many of the pieces have patterns that are just slightly off in ways that aren't instantly recognizable.

In the monumental, all white, two-paneled "Lady Work," Trilling creates what looks like an embroidery pattern. She begins with a printed and numbered grid onto which she has attached corrugated 3/4-inch paper squares into a Rorschach/embroidery looking decorative pattern. Close inspection reveals that the pattern is not symmetrical; it is off just enough to create tension, but not enough to be immediately noticeable.

This sly sleight of hand is part of the visual and mental play that informs her work.

Trilling notes that her grids emerge from playing

around with the small rectangles found in an Excel spreadsheet, which provide infinite opportunities for expansion and contraction. The spreadsheet grid combines workaday, computer experiences with handmade and mass production, essentially touching on the hard wirings of contemporary life.

Although her work is nothing like Jasper Johns', Trilling shares his view that we look at the world in fragments that are in constant flux. Her works are flexible fragments of themselves, some enlarged and some reduced, and then co-mingled.

Trilling's work follows her own system of grids, mathematical ratios, transparencies, and strata of myriad materials — sometimes sparkly and fantastic, sometimes, homely. Her focus on the tooth and feel of material, on seeing through and around layers that are sometimes transparent and sometimes opaque, beautiful and ugly, coexist in an easy camaraderie.