

ART

Review

School's in

P.S. 1 rings the bell on a brand new season

"Lynne Yamamoto: Selected Work," through Mar 1, + "Martin von Haselberg: New Works," through Feb 1.

One might have expected that P.S. 1's renovation would finally banish the ghosts of decrepit ceilings, spitballs and bathroom passes that continued to haunt this former public-school building long after it became a home for contemporary art. But, in fact, a lingering classroom aesthetic remains: P.S. 1 never intended to completely divorce itself from its original educational function.

Lynne Yamamoto, *Wrung*, 1992.

Case in point: this selection of work by Lynne Yamamoto, organized by a group of high-school students. Yamamoto presents signs and symbols of her grandmother's odyssey in America after immigrating here, creating a kind of fragmentary installation-art portrait.

The first thing you notice upon entering the gallery is a long column of black synthetic hair tumbling from the ceiling to the floor. Nearby, there's a piece entitled *Plantation Green*, in which a chignon is affixed to the middle of a green square painted on the wall. The other end of the room holds a large color photograph of weathered hands, along with a cluster of stiff, starched shirtsleeves protruding from an adjoining wall.

In another piece, taken from a previous installation, Yamamoto has hammered a long line of masonry nails across a wall. Each flat head bears a single tiny inscription: Arrive, Marry, Cook, Clean, Fold, Iron, Weep, Drown—every one representing another nail in the coffin of a woman whose identity was obliterated over time. An even more direct commentary on the hardships that afflicted Yamamoto's grandmother comes in *Wrung*, a fall of black hair caught in an antique wringer.

Often delicate and simple, these pieces are nevertheless painstaking. Together, their muteness evokes one woman's struggles with gender and race.

P.S. 1's quirky basement may just be the right location for Martin von Haselberg, whose images smack of the rude boy hiding out in the cellar. Von Haselberg was one half of the Kipper Kids, a late-'70s performance duo whose insult-ridden, slapstick brand of audience assault was well ahead of its time. Here (in a low-slung gallery with the door still marked "no entry"), he's just as timely, taking up a choice medium of the moment—digital ink-jet prints—to create a series of self-portraits.

Here, against bright, hallucinatory swirls of color, Von Haselberg uses computer effects to deconstruct himself into a human cartoon: His teeth balloon out from his face, and his forehead expands in a cruel caricature of the cranium. He makes faces at the camera, his tongue flapping unnaturally toward the lens, while his hair splays straight out from his scalp. Von Haselberg similarly comforts his body, in a group of black-and-white pictures, providing the coup de grâce to his fun-house spin on John Coplans's work upstairs.—*Tim Griffin*

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