
Art in Review

■ Nine visitors from California ■ Nailing down

(precisely) the drudgery and joy of women

■ Making the neighborhood part of the art.

**Brennan McGaffey and
Lynne Yamamoto**

*Information Gallery
411 East Ninth Street
East Village
Through Oct. 2*

In Brennan McGaffey's beautiful but vacuous sculptures, Minimalism goes natural: his wedge shapes and divided circles are made of packed mud and topped, like icing, with salt or lime that will change in time. The star of the show, however, is "Wash Closet," Lynne Yamamoto's installation piece, or at least one wall of it.

On this wall a long horizontal line of flathead nails, all pounded in at eye level and each with a tiny word pasted to its head, spells out the drudgery of a life that is clearly female. Between the words "arrive" and "drown" are 278 other nails, a majority of them topped by verbs having to do with laundering (wash, bleach, scrub, boil, iron, fold — repeated again and again). Other, more life-affirming events and feelings are intermittent: marry, hope, fear, love, birth, nurse, save, smile, lose, weep.

Reading this piece is in itself a kind of drudgery, but you want to know how the life turns out, hoping against hope it will get better, while gradually realizing that each day is another nail in the coffin.

It turns out that the life recounted is that of the artist's grandmother, who emigrated from Japan to Hawaii as a "picture bride," who met and married her husband at the dock, then spent her life as a laundress on a sugar plantation. This is all made clear by the remainder of the installation and a small brochure, but none of this information is essential to the mounting impact of the nails in the wall.

ROBERTA SMITH
