

My Pet Ram
Zuriel Waters - "Pent-Up House"
March 25, 2022 - April 17, 2022



Rodeo Waltz, Acrylic, Dry Pigment, Stainless Steel, Thread, Upholstery Linen, & Cotton Duck,
36" x 27", 2021

From March 25th to April 17th, My Pet Ram Gallery is exhibiting “Pent-Up House,” a collection of eight works by Brooklyn-based artist Zuriel Waters. Flatly stitched fabric appendages adorn the walls. Waters’ colorblocked, vermiform formations come in a variety of muted, acrylic tones (pinks, aquas, grays...) which seep into the linen ground beneath them. The way that these protuberances thrust out from a central rectangle cause his pieces to resemble insects, or as he puts it, “butterflies suspended in a state of perpetual metamorphosis.”¹

For example, in *Rodeo Waltz* the form of four wings and four antennae can be made out. However, the geometric nature of this supposed butterfly is uncomfortable and is reminiscent of sci-fi alien life forms...of invasion. Despite this unnerving similarity, *Rodeo Waltz* inadvertently fits snugly into the umbrella of the decorative arts: it is visually appealing as well as functional. Placed on a living room wall, into a space of safety and comfort, it serves the function of creating instability. Confronted with the uncomfortable visual reminder of the unknown, (aliens, automation, change...) hypothetical homeowners begin a conditioning period wherein this small addition to their lives slowly acclimates them to the idea of change. They begin to find comfort in the uncomfortable. Each piece in “Pent-Up House” is repetitive and belies the steady hand behind them. They speak to the nature of how slow the march of change truly is.

In a way, Waters’ colorfields and occasionally phallic tendrils harken back to Helen Frankenthaler. Even as a pioneer of color field painting and the inventor of the soak-stain method, Frankenthaler and her contemporaries (Elaine de Kooning, Lee Krasner...) were considered “women artists” as opposed to their male counterparts who were simply considered “artists.”² The male-dominated art world of the 20th century often thought of these powerhouses as “just” the wives of more famous men like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.³ In a misogynist society a woman is thought to be bound to the domestic realm and is seen as little more than a functional and visually appealing decoration, something that she and Waters’ work share.⁴ In the same way that the female abstract painters of the 20th century broke through social codes and brought discomfort to the art world, Zuriel Waters’ paintings serve as a reminder of the importance of discomfort for the sake of progress.

¹ “Zuriel Waters - Pent-up House.” My Pet Ram, 2022. <https://www.mypetram.com/pent-up-house>.

² Gabriel, Mary. *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine De Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2019.

³ Gabriel.

⁴ Domenico, Desirae M., and Karen H. Jones. “Career Aspirations of Women in the 20th Century.” *Journal of Career and Technical Education* 22, no. 2 (2007). <https://doi.org/10.21061/jcte.v22i2.430>.