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Art in Review

■ Drawing with yarn and air ■

Fred Sandback

'Sculpture'

*Dia Center for the Arts
548 West 22d Street, Chelsea
Through June 29*

'Drawings 1966-1996'

*Lawrence Markey
55 Vandam Street, South Village
Through Oct. 26*

The word Minimal takes on new dimension in the large-scale geometric sculptures of Fred Sandback, made with nothing more than thin air and several lengths of colored yarn. They couldn't be more suited to the pure, ascetic precincts of the Dia Center, where he has set up a group of them, along with a few new wall pieces.

In No. 10 (they're all untitled), for instance, two very large rectangles, "drawn" in black yarn from ceiling to floor, stand at an angle to each other in a large room, possessing the presence if not the substance of two planar walls. In No. 6, floor-to-ceiling lines of yarn form a giant scalene triangle that redefines a corner. A simple diagonal line of bright red, from an inner corner to an outer one, creates two airy triangular volumes in another room, and at the show's entrance, a straight run of yarn partway down a wall and then along the floor lays authoritative claim to the space around it.

Mr. Sandback, whose work goes back to the Minimal 60's, has famously declared that his aim is to make sculpture with "no inside," which becomes part of the viewer's space. Each work is specifically designed for its architectural site, and no doubt about it, these elegant immaterialities mysteriously assert the same volumetric presence more conventional sculpture does. Several small bas reliefs, each made of one or two panels of painted wood deeply incised with criss-cross grooves that function more as absence than presence of line, complement the yarn works.

At the Lawrence Markey gallery, Mr. Sandback shows drawings that relate to his sculpture from 1966 to now. Although far more corporeal than the actual works that they schematize, the drawings — done in pencil, pastel or paint on paper and more recently by incision on a surface — are also models of silent eloquence.

Sometimes they're a kind of

shorthand for the work, as in "Untitled, 1985," which consists only of an orange, a blue and a yellow line set at angles to one another on a white ground. The connections among them are implied, as in a child's pencil puzzle spaced out by dots. Others are even more abstract, as in an untitled isometric projection drawing from 1991 that relates to an architectural space. Its gray pastel impressionistic markings may refer to light sources. Like the sculptures they project, these precise little notations have an austere beauty that speaks volumes.

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