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Culture Monster

All the Arts, All the Time

Art review: Elaine Reichek at Shoshana Wayne

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In her latest show at Shoshana Wayne, Elaine Reichek plays art history professor-cum-curator. Her theme is the mythical figure of Ariadne, who gives the warrior Theseus a ball of thread to find his way out of the labyrinth of Crete after he has slain the minotaur imprisoned within. Theseus accepts Ariadne's help but ultimately dismisses her affections and abandons her as she sleeps. The tale has inspired writers and artists throughout history, from Titian to John Currin, Ovid to Paul

Auster. Reichek, whose primary medium over 30 years has been threaded line, presents a sampling of these collected images and texts in the form of framed embroideries.

The premise is as straightforward as an introductory slide lecture. Images are paired with quotes and stitched onto colored linen. A supplementary photo archive covers two walls of the side gallery with what amounts to selective results of a Google image search. The images throughout are interesting enough and the quotes pithy, but Reichek limits her own voice to that of anthologist.

The real heart of the show beats in an excerpt from George Grosz about the essential quality of line in each of our lives, guiding us through the metaphoric labyrinth all around us. Line defined the path to Theseus' salvation, Grosz writes, and it has the same value to us. Decades of complex and challenging work scrutinizing language and history testify to Reichek's own faith in line's power and potential, but here she lets the thread go slack.

-- Leah Ollman

Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 453-7535, through May 21. Closed Sunday and Monday. www.shoshanawayne.com/

Image: Elaine Reichek, Line is Like the Thread, Shoshana Wayne Gallery