

56 Yvette Kaiser-Smith

Peter Miller Gallery
740 N. Franklin, 60610
312/951-1700

new art examiner may 1999

In her first solo show, Yvette Kaiser-Smith exhibited a distinctive body of work that accomplishes the difficult task of carving an individual niche in a group of established Chicago women sculptors—Joan Livingstone, Barbara Cooper, Jo Hormuth, Carolyn Ottmers—who have been influential in using a Minimalist abstract vocabulary and poetic material investigations to subtly explore feminist issues. These contemporary artists provide an important context for a rich dialogue with Kaiser-Smith's sculpture. But the unusually caustic formalism of her work—the result of the heightened synthetic artificiality exuded through her technically complex crocheted fiberglass and polyester resin processes—reveals it to be more a '90s hybrid of the idiosyncratic Minimalism of Eva Hesse.

Resembling life-size nets stretched, twisted, and folded into gravity-defying, airy, concave hollows, bulbous curves, and elongated tubular forms, Kaiser-Smith's sculptures derive their tension from the multiple contradictions she explores—strength/weakness,

protection/vulnerability, confrontation/evasion, beauty/ugliness. Whether dynamically cantilevered from the wall or quietly receding into the floor, her glistening, lithe pieces seem in perpetual danger of imminent collapse, yet the seemingly toxic beauty of their membranes and the structural integrity of her intricate webs act as psychological and physical deterrents to any threat. The result is a deft articulation of both feminist and universal human concerns.

The largest works—*Cookie*, *Cyst*, *Subserved*—are Kaiser-Smith's strongest pieces, providing a healthy level of discomfort in their physical aggressiveness that her modest-sized works only partially muster. The wall-mounted, nautilus-like form of *Cookie* deceptively hides its open and closed spaces in the immensity of its inflated girth, whose straining mesh seems to hold an incalculably large life-sustaining breath. *Cyst*, in contrast, with its candy-colored, convulsing nodules, resembles a malignancy whose territorial conquest will eventually lead to implosion.

Symbolic Venus flytraps that lure one with their unusual hypnotic beauty and then quickly ensnare one in their psychological webs, Kaiser-Smith's sculptures are a terrain unto themselves.

John Brunetti

Yvette Kaiser-Smith

Cookie, 1998. Crocheted fiberglass, resin, 55" x 51" x 18". Courtesy of Peter Miller Gallery.

