

CHARLES DESMARAIS' ART PICKS

It is rare enough to see contemporary art produced in the medium of tapestry. Yet there are currently two exhibitions at the multi-gallery Minnesota Street Project presenting woven works.

Rena Bransten Gallery has a fine display of six "Selected Tapestries From Magnolia Editions," including a transcendent Kiki Smith called "Sky" (2012). Magnolia has gained universal respect for its work with top artists from around the world, producing editioned works in a range of media.

If it were a competition, though, I would choose the tapestry show at Bass & Reiner, across the way. There, in "Sirens, Silencers, Mufflers, and Mutes," Whitney Lynn has taken advantage of the process with a conceptual rigor the Magnolia artists did not bring to bear. Lynn examines the idea of the siren of ancient mythology, the woman who controls men through her irresistible voice — which implies, of course, her enchanting sexuality.

Her weavings, manufactured at a different mill than Magnolia uses, are the less luxurious. That turns out to be a good thing, as if they have a communicative function that goes beyond decor. Eight female sirens, modeled on altered images from old art history books, surround us in the gallery, joined by tapestried pillows that picture the kinds of alarm sirens better known to our age. Together, they send a quiet signal of distress.



Bass & Reiner

Whitney Lynn's exhibition runs through July 13.

"Selected Tapestries From Magnolia Editions": 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and by appointment. Through June 22. Rena Bransten Gallery, 1275 Minnesota St. 415-982-3292. www.renabranstengallery.com

"Sirens, Silencers, Mufflers, and Mutes": 1- 6 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday. Through July 13. Bass & Reiner Gallery, 275 Minnesota St. S.F. <https://www.bassandreiner.com>