

Art in America

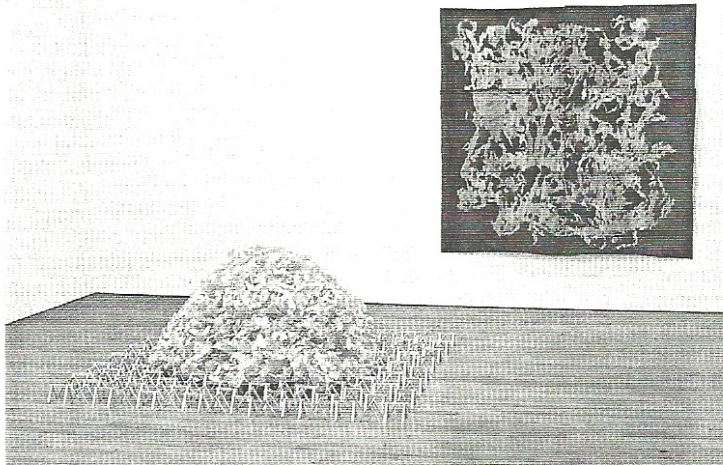
June 1998

Robin Hill at Lennon, Weinberg

That process is at the center of Robin Hill's art was amply evident in this exhibition of works consisting of rolls of cotton batting, piles of paper chains, mounds of ceramic disks, rows of minuscule sawhorses. Process was spelled out in the titles, amusingly earnest instructions with an underlying sound of moral admonition, such as *wad paper. unfold gently. glue. do not overwork. or dip to coat. allow to fall freely onto work surface.* It was also apparent in the practicality of Hill's materials, among them paper, plaster, cellulose packing peanuts, string, clay and cyanotypes (blue photographs made with an early photographic technique).

These substances are easily manipulated and cheap enough to encourage experimentation and repetition. Repetition, in fact, is constant in Hill's work: one wall piece involves 100 rolls of transparent tape rerolled with lint; another consists of 2,300 wads of plastered string strewn across a floor area of 18 by 13 feet. Most of the accumulations are casual rather than obsessive in both construction and arrangement, and dimensions can vary when they are installed. Nevertheless, the making of such numbers of things requires diligence and orderliness.

In these pieces, Hill also addresses the specific character of her materials. Nothing is interchangeable in her concoctions. For instance, *remove from heat. set aside.* is not a domestic cooking instruction but a description of what she has



Robin Hill: Installation view of (left) *add air. let sit.* and (right) *place paper chain on paper. expose to light. wait.*, 1997; at Lennon, Weinberg.

done to the little blue-glazed ceramic "hockey pucks" that were piled up in a corner by the gallery entrance. Clay is fired in a kiln; nothing else in the show shares this heat notation.

The works also have to do with how stuff looks under different circumstances. This was demonstrated by three-dimensional works that were paired with cyanotypes of the same elements. For example, a floor piece involved tiny sawhorses made of pieces of wood a bit thicker and shorter than Popsicle sticks, set in 15 rows of 15, each perpendicular to the one next to it. Piled up in the middle was a chain of torn ivory-color paper. The work is called *add air. let sit.* (Most of the titles have this passive or potential sense: *let sit, wait, set aside.*) A 71-by-71-inch cyanotype records the voluminous paper chain. Another cyanotype captures the shadows of the sawhorses.

Like the Process art that followed Minimalism, these works imply the personal because they are so explicit and literal in revealing the thinking and

actions of the artist. Hill's materials, however, are less forceful and dramatic than the wood, lead or rope used by her forebears. She serves up lightweight, disposable materials consistent with the consumer-electronics and computer era. She is attracted to the abstract, adventitious beauty of circuitry and systems, but she opts for the slower pace and intimacy of hand-making. —Janet Koplos