

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

Erica Baum's photographs of sewing patterns; Leah Guadagnoli's sculptural paintings; Anna Plesset and Fred and Daniel Terna reckon with loss; 'Make Believe' takes on the movies.

Erica Baum

Through Feb. 17. Bureau, 178 Norfolk Street, Manhattan; 212-227-2783, bureau-inc.com.

Erica Baum has been included in several exhibitions devoted to abstract photography, but this is misleading. Ms. Baum actually photographs concrete objects but presents them from unfamiliar angles, perspectives or distances so that the images appear abstract. She shows how the edges of a book, fragments of text or sewing patterns from the last century, displayed in her current show — “A Long Dress” at Bureau — offer a wealth of information that initially seems like innocent or irrelevant minutiae.

The sewing patterns are captured with such detail that you can see their fibrous texture; they resemble fabric rather than photographic prints. With their red, green and black lines and numbers blown up in the images, some like “Edges Fold Fold” look like abstract geometric paintings from the early 20th century.

Texts and direction lines on the patterns offer instructions about the alignment of busts, waists and shoulders. One pattern, for a bunny costume, orders you to “turn head right side out,” pushing the show into a kind of surreal post-human zone. The exhibition's title, “A Long Dress,” comes from Gertrude Stein's prose-poem “Tender Buttons,” a contemplation of everyday objects. It adds to the sense that you're reading poetry rather than viewing templates contributing to a uniform language about human forms.

Ms. Baum's work can be read through various filters, including conceptual photography and the philosopher Michel Foucault's “Discipline and Punish” (1975), a classic text on the institutional policing of bodies. The sewing pattern, with its basic lines and neutral color, seems like a bland and simple thing, but Ms. Baum reminds us that the devil is in taking such details for granted.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

'Make Believe'

Through Feb. 17. Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464, magentaplains.com.



Left, Kerry Tribe's "Ceiling Light (Monstera deliciosa)," from 2018, modified lighting equipment and potted plant; and right, Sayre Gomez's " Behind Door #9" (2018), acrylic and urethane-based paints on canvas over panel. Magenta Plains

Works by 11 artists, in a variety of media, all have something to do with the movies, in "Make Believe," curated by Bruce W. Ferguson at Magenta Plains. In nearly every case, some ordinary aspect of filmmaking, like set design, takes on a weirdly unnerving quality when isolated from its context and presented in a gallery.

Jennifer Bolande's plywood-patterned curtains in the gallery's front windows and Sayre Gomez's life-size trompe l'oeil storefront, installed against the back wall, make you uncertain whether you've just stepped into a gallery or out of one. Then a large potted plant, installed by Kerry Tribe under an enormous ceiling lamp, draws your attention magnetically, only to rebuff it again just as quickly.

Two lush 1956 photographs taken by the movie star Yul Brynner, behind-the-scenes shots of "The King and I" and "The Ten Commandments," look as overproduced and artificial as the movies themselves, while Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler's 2009 video, "Grand Paris Texas," is a

master class in elliptical understatement. Comprised entirely of interviews with residents of Paris, Texas, it circles around their relationships to the movies — to the town's decaying theater, to Wim Wenders's "Paris, Texas" — to expose the medium's seductive power to falsify.

Brilliantly encapsulating the concurrent menace and pathos of American entertainment generally is Walter Robinson's "Strange Journey," a rough acrylic painting of a dark-eyed man and blond woman ripped from some forgotten noir poster: Instead of using canvas, Mr. Robinson painted them on a Smurf-themed bedsheet. *WILL HEINRICH*

Leah Guadagnoli

Through Feb. 16. Asya Geisberg Gallery, 537B West 23rd Street, Manhattan; 212-675-7525, asyageisberggallery.com.