

ARTFORUM

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BARBARA GALLUCCI

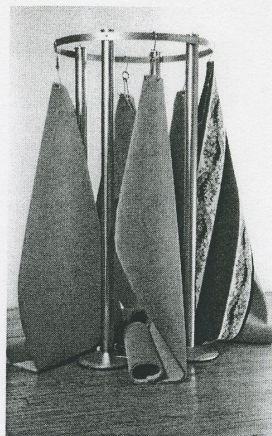
LAUREN WITTELS GALLERY

For the past several years Barbara Gallucci has worked primarily with commercially fabricated carpet in her installations of variable dimensions. Wryly making analogies between Minimalist sculpture—particularly Robert Morris' felt pieces—and office-building culture, she turns a

passive, downtrodden material into an aggressive architectural element that rolls across floors at odd angles, climbs up walls, or hangs from ceilings in giant loops while mapping the parallels between Minimalism and kitschy commercial design.

Unlike the classics of Minimalist sculpture, which attempted to maintain a fine-art patina through monochromatic color schemes, Gallucci's strips of pile carpet are often imprinted with stripes, checks, and honeycomb patterns reminiscent of '70s institutional decor.

With this installation, Gallucci's work took an unexpected turn, injecting angst as well as humor into the discourse accompanying Minimalist reinterpretation (e.g., Rachel Lachowitz's lipstick versions of Carl Andre's floor pieces). In the center of the gallery a large nickel-plated rack resembling a restaurant kitchen fixture displayed four swaths of carpet dangling like sides of beef. Pierced at the top by a menacing set of meat hooks and stretching from the floor to just above head height, three of the runners were a featureless salmon, while the last sported a funereal pattern of black and white stripes with floral trim. On the wall behind the rack, a line of evenly spaced ceramic serving dishes traversed a narrow, waist-high shelf. Bearing a floral insignia and colors that matched the carpet, the plates were cracked and in some cases broken into shards.



Barbara Gallucci, *Racked*, 1996, carpet, meat hooks, cast iron and nickel-plated steel, 7 x 7 x 7'.

The installation's wholesale inversion of use value—plates that can't hold meals, floor coverings as food (or apparel)—suggested a scene of domestic bliss gone dangerously wrong, a topsy-turvy world in which pure functionality had been turned upside-down. The carpets hanging like flayed carcasses, meanwhile, suggested a

kind of postindustrial crucifixion, with carpets presumably standing in for the artist. These evocations of domestic strife and Christian martyrdom wouldn't seem out of place in a neo-Expressionist painting, but it was surprising to encounter them within a cool, ironic critique of Minimalist sculpture. Yet the installation had an undeniable impact, heightened by its own signs of denial: shattered plates lined up neatly as if nothing were amiss, carpet "stigmata" fastidiously reinforced with grommets. In the end, the work's formal elegance made its scenes of emotional dislocation seem all the more disturbing.

—Tom Moody