

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Asimina Chremos

Chremos and Crochet

by Lynn Matluck Brooks

Tiny worlds unfold in each woven work by Asimina Chremos, a well known figure in Philadelphia's improvisational dance scene. The exhibition *HomeWork* features Chremos's fiber-art work, together with that of artist Erin Endicott, who stitches patterns of blood-red embroidery onto antique, once-white clothing. As I enter the Philadelphia Art Alliance gallery for the exhibition opening, a couple of the attendees are commenting on the feminine wholeness they read in the lighting that illuminates the small, colorful works pinned to the wall. Chremos admits to having set up the light on her works, but not with a plan to creating the reading these viewers see: "I work improvisationally," she notes, her body doing a subtle swerve-skip-bow.

The doily-like works, each just a few inches, more or less, in irregular circumference, reveal rich worlds of wandering pathways and apertures. Looking closely at any one takes the viewer into a unique microcosm of spidery forms, of sea anemones, or neural networks, or maybe maps, even yarmulkas or Amish ladies' bun-caps. One piece—a favorite of mine—looks like a brightly colored tropical fish with a little red crown, another like a big lace cookie with a bite out of it, yet another like a map of Manhattan (almost).

The wall featuring Chremos's works is colorful in a range of palettes: primaries, pastels, subtle shades, and a few fluorescents. The colors, juxtaposed in each small work, create layers, depths, dimensions. Most of the pieces displayed are self-contained in some kind of border (though none of these is regular, even, or symmetrical), but one drips a thready beard from its center, and two others are works in progress, stretched and pinned across small frames, their emerging threads still ready to entwine and enclose.

A video, also called *HomeWork* (directed and performed by Chremos, with camera work by Mauri Walton) plays on a screen near the mounted crocheted pieces. It reveals Chremos working with her threads, then standing and crouching in the corner of a bare room, a lacey piece masking her face and then fluttering up and down her body. In another shot, the lacework creates shadows against the wall, and then Chremos's arms and fingers entwine and gesticulate in the stark light, working imaginary strands, becoming shadowy threads of their own.

Back in the live exhibition, I overhear Chremos answering viewers' questions. A young woman asks about the artist's process for choosing colors. "It's totally improvisational," Chremos responds. "I make each choice as I work. I don't have a plan." The free-form beauty that emerges channels some deeply natural life-flow, unfurling microcosms of brilliance.

HomeWork, Asimina Chremos and Erin Endicott, Philadelphia Art Alliance, Dec. 10, 2015-Jan. 3, 2016, www.philartalliance.org/current-exhibitions

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