

CLAREMONT, CA

Amanda Ross-Ho

POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

At the heart of Amanda Ross-Ho's recent installation at Pomona College Museum of Art, the Los Angeles-based artist's first solo museum exhibition, was a giant fiberglass candy dish in the form of a smiling, wide-eyed ghost—the kind of novelty home decor one might expect to find on the shelves of Target in late October but here inflated to larger-than-life proportions. In its deliberate physicality and human scale, the sculpture, titled *Great Grandparent* (all works 2010), seemed a compulsory symbol through which to understand this show in its entirety—that is, as suspended between presence and absence. Just as a ghost is a transmuted body—a vestige of its former self—many of the works here were likewise metamorphosed from preexisting figures.

Take, for example, the exhibition's title: "The Cheshire Cat Principle" is appropriated from the name of an abstruse theory in quantum physics that attempts to describe observable variables—a name that is itself derived from the disappearing and reappearing cat in *Alice in Wonderland*. Reference to Lewis Carroll's feline materializes again in the assemblage *Unfinished Wave Guide with Double Comedy and Oranges*, which incorporates an image included in a previous show, a light-jet print of scanned Amazon shipping boxes, the logo of which appears like a "grin without a cat." Also assimilating previously made imagery, the large framed composition *Flatwork Ghost (0/∞)* reveals hazy marks made by pigment that seeped through a delicate macramé-silhouette canvas the artist pinned directly to the Sheetrock surface, painted black, and then removed. (Ross-Ho used the same method to "paint" two areas on the opposing wall.) Attached to this Sheetrock are two geometric black-and-white printed images and two newsprint broadsheets from which Ross-Ho has excised columns of text, leaving only the layout's skeleton-like blank space of the margins and a single black-and-white image. Copies of the original broadsheet—with a well-written but almost too jargony text on the scientific logic behind the Cheshire Cat principle—were available for free in the gallery as a separate piece. And whereas the printed text was an unlimited edition, it is significant to note that *Flatwork Ghost (0/∞)* is editioned as zero of infinity, as a nothingness or immateriality.

Adjacent to these works were two used canvas drop cloths pinned floor to ceiling, side by side, each with a large circle cut out of its center. Seen from the gallery entrance, the openings recalled the eye-holes in a ghost costume and reiterated the empty black eyes of *Great Grandparent*, which occupied the center of the room. Part of the artist's 2009– "Negative Carrier" series, the hanging canvas sheets literally frame the missing centers, while elevating what may simply have been the remnants of some previous studio action. Here, paint-splattered canvas leftovers (rather than a "completed" painting on its stretcher bars) became the focal point from which to appreciate artistic motivation. Ross-Ho's consistent deployment of careful material

permutations and literal removals and reversals knit the works together. She further restaged secondhand materials through a strategic and ornamental use of mismatched gold-toned jewelry: Gold necklaces were hung from holes drilled in the gallery wall; vintage flower brooches adorned the apertures of the cut canvas; single dangly earrings were pinned to the wall here and there; stud earrings in the shape of fans, roses, and bows were pushed directly into the wall, forming anchor points for geometric "drawings" made with a thumbtack. As tarnished and outdated treasures more indigenous to eBay than to Amazon, the miscellaneous jewelry further articulated the physical absence of bodies in the space. And when considered alongside the spectral (ancestral?) connotations of *Great Grandparent* (which, we must remember, simulates a mass-produced knickknack), these cheap charms and trinkets seemed also to contain some veiled significance. Perhaps by invoking these meager commodities, Ross-Ho seeks to remind us how a lost-and-found culture is haunted by forgotten value and resurrected worth.

—Catherine Taft



Amanda Ross-Ho, *Flatwork Ghost (0/∞)*, 2010. Sheetrock, latex paint, staples, excised newspaper, linen tape, acrylic paint, black gesso, graphite, laser-print rubbings, single earrings, ballpoint pen, ceramic basket, 96 x 48 x 3".