

in: Artforum, June 2012.

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

London

Amalia Pica

CHISENHALE GALLERY
64 Chisenhale Road
May 25–July 15

Multi-hued festoon lighting dangles over the entrance to Amalia Pica's debut exhibition in the UK. Spreading diagonally across the foyer from one wall to another, *Inside, outside and across*, 2006/2012, draws the viewer into the exhibition space, where the festoon is haphazardly attached to the wall and the bulbs are stripped of color, radiating a white light. The chromatic shift that happens in the transition from one space to another speaks to a schism between celebratory lived experience and the institutionalized sphere of art, a theme that is at the heart of Pica's show.

The invisible center of the exhibition is the commissioned off-site project *I am Tower of Hamlets, as I am in Tower of Hamlets, just like a lot of other people are*, 2011–12. Carved in the shape of the fleshy blossom of the echeveria plant, the work is a portable granite sculpture that has been circulating among the residents of the East End borough of Tower Hamlets since July 2011 and is due to return to the gallery this month. The tellingly mischievous title of this work foregrounds the dysfunctions that attend when art is used as a mode of communication.

In *Acoustic Radar in cardboard*, 2010–12, a sculpture modeled after a gramophone, the use of nonresonant material redoubles futility. Occasionally performers activate the piece by "listening" to the "radar," shifting focus from the device to the listener and to listening as a performed activity. *Overhearing Fiesta by Raffaele Carrà*, 2012, even compels the viewer to move in order to listen. Every time he or she stops walking, a motion detector disconcertingly interrupts the muffled fiesta music coming from the rear of the gallery, and with it the involuntary flow of cultural fantasies about South American festivities it triggered. It is at this point of disruption and dissonance that Pica's show is most productive.



Amalia Pica, *Inside, outside and across* (detail), 2006/2012, festoon lights, dimensions variable.

— Jenny Nachtigall