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Mika Tajima

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By Wendy Vogel



View of "Mika Tajima," 2016

Mika Tajima's work probes the tension between the rationalism of modernist aesthetics and the fragmentary—if not destructive—quality of modern life. Since the early 2000s, she has been creating noise music with her band New Humans and installations based on architecture that molds the activity of its inhabitants. Cinema sets, factory assembly lines, and Herman Miller's Action Office of modular furniture are among her references.

Recently, Tajima has explored the symbiotic relationship between design and human affect, aided by data-scraping technology. "Embody" (all works 2015–16), her exhibition here, picks up where her 2014 Art in General commission, "Total Body Conditioning," leaves off. Like "Total Body Conditioning," this show includes new selections from her sleek "Negative Entropy" and "Furniture Art" series. The "Negative Entropy" textiles—woven paintings created on a Jacquard loom and stretched over sound-muffling panels—translate recordings of Japanese curator Kazue Kobata and the sounds from a Jacquard card cutter into patterned abstractions. The straightforward concept of data-as-portrait is enlivened with Tajima's subjective color choices (magenta,

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chartreuse, and plum, in the case of Kobata's panel). The "Furniture Art" works, composed of cloudy sprays of enamel barely visible from behind dark sheets of thermoformed acrylic, seem to mock painting as decoration (or speculative asset).

Tajima's three brand-new "Meridian" mood-light sculptures deploy live data from social-media feeds and the stock market. The light sculptures house LED bulbs in vertebrae-like skeletons, made up of ergonomic chair parts wrapped with gauzy layers of cocoon resin. The colors of the lights represent two sets of data. In the front gallery, two bulbs flicker on a spectrum from red (positive) to blue (negative) based on the moods of social-media followers in London and Cairo, respectively. In the back, a light tracking the gold market vacillates from warm to cool tones, illuminating the shiny, hollow surfaces of the "Furniture Art" series: a mirror for our hyperdesigned lives.