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Art in Review

■ Where craft and gender overlap ■ Self-portraits
(in lingerie) ■ Cinder blocks and rich paneling.

Charles LeDray

*Jay Gorney Modern Art
100 Greene Street, near Prince
Street
SoHo
Through May 11*

Charles LeDray is in the process of leaving home, branching out from the small emotionally vulnerable hand-sewn garments that first won him attention. Although somewhat mixed in quality, the work in his second solo show in New York has a terrific energy and determination, as well as a new diversity, while continuing to mine the issue-laden territory where craft and gender overlap.

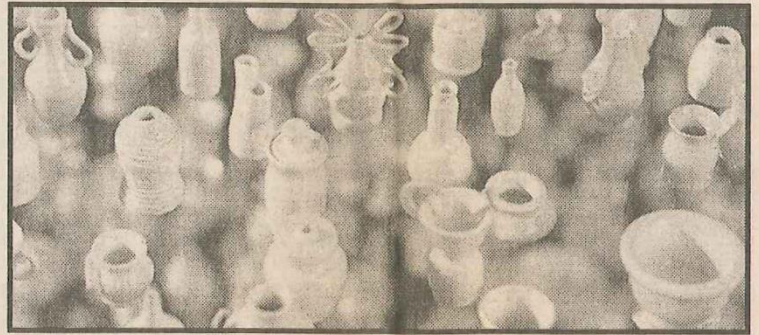
The upper gallery is dominated by an especially good example of Mr. LeDray's garment pieces, a small work uniform, embroidered with the artist's name, from which dangle even smaller pieces of clothing like a fringe of memory or fantasy: tiny dresses, coats and possibly children's and babies' clothes intimate a complex web of identities, events, desires and stages of development.

The other works veer between the ultra-feminine and the ultra-masculine, that is, between a frothy white bassinet-sewing basket and a tiny toy rocking chair carved from human bone on the one hand and, on the other, four souvenirs of the 1963 Seattle World's Fair that revolve around the manly theme of cigar smoking. These works are engaging, especially in the way they play off one another. But their full impact is largely conceptual, which is not the case with Mr. LeDray's hand-sewn garments. Here, you have to be told that the artist made everything in sight (including the scissors, pins and needles stashed beneath the bassinet) to appreciate the full extent of his obsessiveness.

In the show's tour de force, in the downstairs gallery, things are perfectly clear. "Milk and Honey" con-

sists of nearly 2,000 astoundingly delicate miniature objects in white porcelain: vases, bowls, lidded jars and pitchers. Obviously hand thrown, these tiny vessels breeze through the history of ceramics, conjuring Greek and Sung, as well as George Ohr and 50's biomorphic. Individually, they imply remarkable restraint; as a whole, an exuberant, liberating release. They are displayed in a glass vitrine with five shelves, creating see-through possibilities of a surprising pictorial power: a ceramic demonstration of the concept of infinity, or the craft equivalent of a painting by Veja Celmins, or, for the moment, New York's own little object-oriented corner of the Milky Way.

ROBERTA SMITH



Jay Gorney Modern Art

A portion of Charles LeDray's "Milk and Honey" installation.