

"It's not just women's work: the paintings of Edward Shalala"
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In every family exists evidence of the Pack Rat-- the almost forgotten box of receipts, paper scraps, and seashells that one is convinced will someday be of use, the jar of pennies waiting to be transformed into dollar bills, the container of multicolored strings and threaded needles on the ready to mend an emergency tear. In Edward Shalala's work, the mundane and the forgotten are recast as provocative tapestries of domesticity, recycling, and tempered energy.

Using pennies and a butane torch, Shalala visualizes the remnants of the almost forgotten. Within the absences, the exposed circular areas, the implied penny places are imbued with an immediate tangible quality through the tanning processes of the butane torch. In Shalala's **Hot Sonata Series**. The grid pattern, made from fire stains interrupted by insignificant monetary sums, becomes complicated Morse codes or delicate tapestries. The series' inclusion in an exhibition at Saint Peter's church was a fitting setting for these works-- as if they were transposed from the seemingly mundane to the sacred.

Shalala's **Clothes Iron Series** investigates the use of common household items in unconventional ways. Using the iron to burn the canvas, Shalala composes a spiraling dance of triangles-- reminding us of the creativity or domesticity. It becomes the gentle dance of the homemaker.

In one of Shalala's most poignant works, a blueberry Marimekko fabric is stretched revealing a single iron burn mark. The stain of domestic work juxtaposed with the overt femininity of the cloth is a provocative reminder of the forgotten toils of "women's work."

Shalala exhibits the transcendent nature of household objects in his Untitled blue iron painting. Like a mad chemist using wax, pigment, and heat, Shalala creates an amoeba-inhabited moonscape transporting domesticity to the celestial sphere.

Shalala's most recent work, the **Collage Series**, recalls his earlier interests in domesticity and in the recycling of the discarded or the ignored.

For the Collage Series, Shalala creates a dialogue between scraps of burlap and canvas threads and paint. His monochromatic texture paintings become pathfinders through the folds and bumps of the canvases. As with the previous series, Shalala offers glimpses into the forgotten. Like the Marimekko iron painting where the viewer is given a hint of past labor, the Collage Series offers memories of a secondary color peeking through the curling edges of the ripped burlap. The forgotten and the lost scraps of material are not allowed to wither in the box. Rather, they are reinvented on the textured surface.

Running throughout Edward Shalala's work is the almost obsessive desire to save the trivial from oblivion, maintaining control within the grid, and finding a new aesthetic home.