

ARTFORUM



Pati Hill, *Section of Corset*, 1976, black-and-white photocopy, 9 x 6".
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Pati Hill

ESSEX STREET

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In the early 1970s, Pati Hill (1921–2014) began using a photocopier to create life-size images of mundane objects that together call to mind the song “My Favorite Things” by those famous Teutonic *Singvögel*, the von Trapp family: a crumpled brown paper bag, a box tied with twine, a seashell, spools of thread, and a frayed shirtsleeve. Hill’s chosen medium simultaneously evokes the drudgery of adult administrative duties and the messy thrills of high-school collages and punk zines. But her ambitious spirit was decidedly youthful: In 1980, at almost sixty years

old, she moved to Paris, intent on “photocopying Versailles.” She succeeded in copying almost everything there, from the royal palace’s cobblestones to its pear trees.

Hill’s use of the photocopier capitalized on the machine’s ability to flatten images, with unexpectedly dramatic effects. The selections in this exhibition, such as *Untitled (striped rag)* and *Untitled (sardine tin)*, both 1977–79, depict the titular objects as if they are floating in space, untethered. Per the exhibition’s title, “How Something Can Have Been At One Time And In One Place And Nowhere Else Ever Again,” these items are typically relegated to the realms of the domestic before being discarded and forgotten. The fifteen different shapes a scarf can make (*Understanding Your Chinese Scarf*, 1983) are not exactly the stuff of history—but perhaps of personal memory instead, in which quotidian events and material ephemera take on symbolic status with the distortions and dilations of time. Hill’s pictures foreground the objects that often go unexamined, reminding us that the archives of daily life are sometimes hiding in plain sight.

—Hiji Nam

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