

Art in America

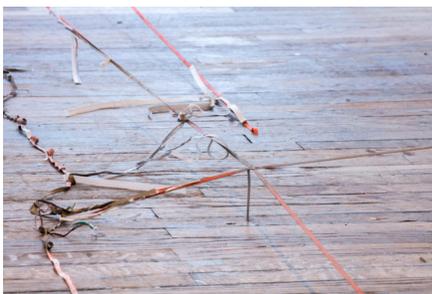
REVIEWS August 22, 2019

Olga Balema's Rubber Band Works Show How Less Can Be More

NEW YORK

at Bridget Donahue
by David Everitt Howe

Olga Balema: 4, 2019,
elastic band, paint,
glue, nails, staples, 4
by 69 by 91 inches; at
Bridget Donahue.



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economy of means, Balema has a maximalist tendency, filling the gallery with so many elastics stretched between nails and staples that you had to be careful where you walked, lest the whole thing break apart. Given the prevalence today of artwork focused on digital means and political subject matter, Balema's use of such a dumb, simple material felt somehow poignant and rousingly different.

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In 4, unpainted bands stapled to the wall trail into pastalike messes on the ground or attach to blue-tinted bands that wrap around nails at the work's other end, while 5 is a barely-there stretch of two bands. Both works feature elastics with stray nails attached to their ends: vestiges of the works' installation in Balema's studio. Such details made you wonder how far the works at Bridget Donahue might have strayed from their original versions, and where the line between repeatability and site-specificity is when the medium is a bunch of strung-together elastics. In any case, Balema's skillful handiwork commanded the space, providing an instance in which less, in the form of a painfully mundane material, was notably more.