

MARTOS GALLERY

Pedro, Laila, "The Surprising Eloquence of Mass-Produced Materials," *Hyperallergic*, November 20, 2017

HYPERALLERGIC

The Surprising Eloquence of Mass-Produced Materials

Jessica Vaughn's show of restrained conceptual works subtly evokes the experiential dimension of mass-produced objects.

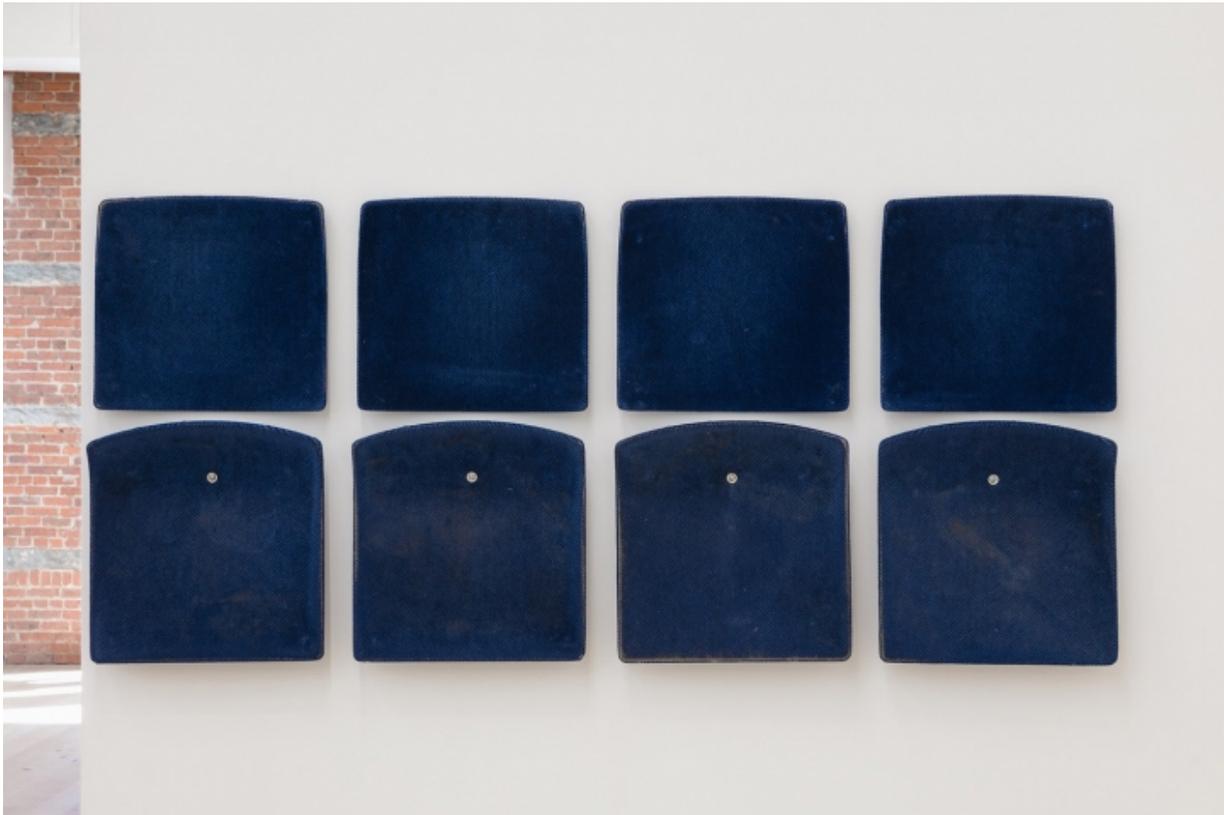
[Laila Pedro](#)



Installation view, Jessica Vaughn, *Receipt of a Form* (all images courtesy Martos Gallery)

I first encountered Jessica Vaughn’s work in a group exhibition at Martos Gallery in Chinatown last spring. “After Willis (rubbed, used and moved) #005” (2017), a minimal array of seats taken from Chicago Transit Authority buses and arranged in a grid, was a discreet, weighty intervention in that show. The taut balancing act between the elegant restraint of Vaughn’s forms and the gritty materiality of the work’s semantic content, which imbued it with dynamism and verve, lingered with me.

That installation is one of three distinct bodies of work on view now in *Receipt of a Form*, Vaughn’s first solo show at the gallery and in New York. It reflects expansions and variations on the compass points of “After Willis”: the effects of scale and repetition; the visible and the illegible; formal affect and lived functionality. The interplay between seen and unseen, and the unnervingly mature discipline of a quite young artist in erring on the side of providing too little information — which means either putting great trust in or making a great demand on the viewer, depending on your point of view — run through each.



Jessica Vaughn, ““After Willis (rubbed, used and moved) #005” (2017)

A benefit of Vaughn’s assured sparseness is that it suffuses small elements and minuscule details with hefty meanings. This is connected to her investment in the energy and meaning of space, one in which absence does not equal silence or imply ambivalence. In a series of works displayed on the floor, industrial upholstery remnants are

reconfigured into abstract shapes. In each case, Vaughn seems to have excised material according to an inscrutable set of secret choices. The removal is unflinching; in some cases, only the barest scrappy edge of fabric remains. This transforms the weight and visual scale of the upholstery patterns: what would otherwise be tiny hits of color serving only to inform the whole or enrich the main color become points of interest in themselves. This reconfiguring of focus, or redistribution of significance, invites a reconsideration of the fabric scraps as objects themselves — the meaning and implication of how and why they were made, and by whom. Vaughn’s work elicits a consideration of process and production. Put another way: when you’re focused on why she chooses to take away what she does on an individual scale, you might be more inclined to consider how and why additive manufacturing choices are made on an industrial scale.



Jessica Vaughn, “Boomer Blue No.340 #2” (2017)

There's an inside-out quality to Vaughn's work that's related to this activated looking. Arranging CTA seats in a considered array invites a different flavor of interaction with their materiality and unlocks a cascade of history and experience; her cutaway upholstery pieces invite an engagement with the choices of making, personalizing, and scrutinizing mass manufacture. The oblique diagrams of "Learning From the Work of Others" (2017), a set of photocopies and one unique print featuring studio notes and a pattern guide, suggest an excavation of knowledge. They're in visual dialogue with "After Willis": it's another grid of mostly deep-blue squares, formally similar yet utterly different, emphasizing again the outside impact of precise decision-making.



Jessica Vaughn, "Learning From Others" (2017)

Blue is a unifying thread in this show (it's the dominant color in many of the upholstery scrap floor works as well) and that alone speaks to the formal and conceptual coherence of Vaughn's project. Arranging and operating on material in highly specific interventions propels a greater focus on each element — color, line, content. *Receipt of a Form* makes us awake to these, creating powerful resonances by asking us to tune in to subtlety.

Jessica Vaughn: *Receipt of a Form continues at Martos Gallery through December 10 (41 Elizabeth Street, Chinatown, Manhattan).*