



Narrative threads

By Helena Lee

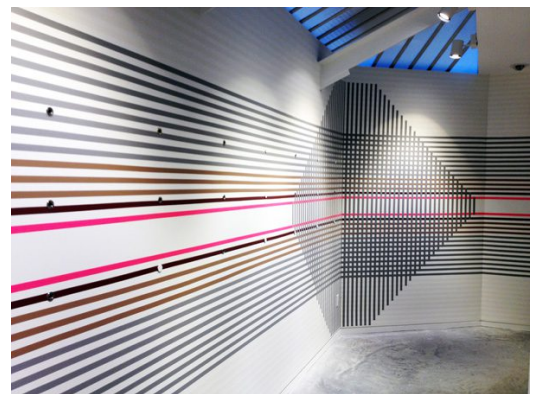
November 2015

Stella McCartney and Kate Spade have championed the artist Rebecca Ward's quietly subversive work, which now comes to London in a solo show.

The candy-coloured canvases of the Brooklyn-based artist Rebecca Ward suggest a fine line between sculpture and painting. Though she works with the conventional materials of canvas and paint, if you look closely, you'll see each one has been picked apart, only to be reconstructed with meticulous care. Every thread has its place. The results are richly textured pieces, with the structural base frame exposed, affording the translucency and beauty of a stained-glass window.

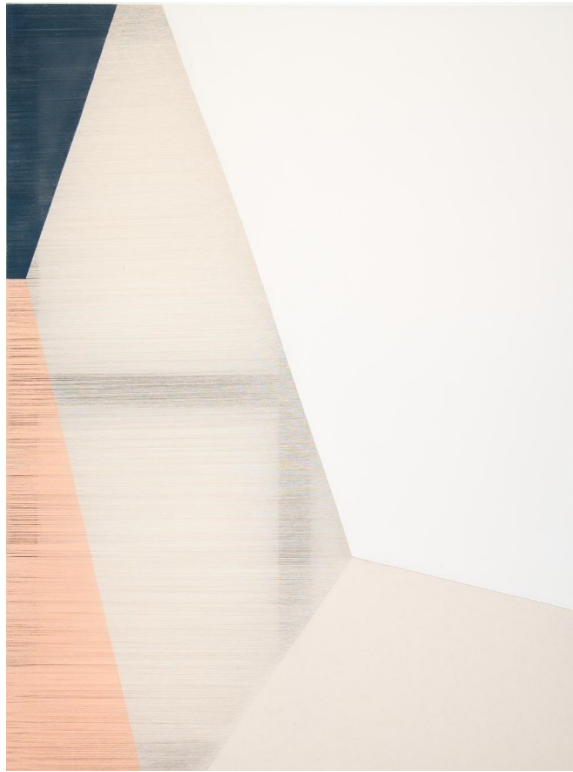
"I like to dismantle ideas and cultural clichés," Ward tells me. She sometimes interweaves string and silk, or uses bleach on the canvas - materials long associated with female domesticity- to create her abstract, minimalist pieces and, in a direct reference to arte povera, uses found objects to paint with, rather than a brush. Colour and the organic process of dying are essential to her work. In the past, she has created electrical-tape installations for Kate Spade and Stella McCartney stores, transforming the spaces with a rainbow of geometry, akin to the suspension cables of structures like the Brooklyn Bridge.

Earlier this year, Ward occupied a former 12th-century chapel in Puglia. This was a challenge; a far cry from the urban white cubes she was used to. But as an admirer of the Italian architect Carlo Scarpa and his artisan Venetian glass vases, she created a body of work that, like Scarpa's pieces, was heavily patterned and lined. 'I had respect for the sacred space I was working in, but then I'm working with minimalist forms, which also has its own historical weight. Luckily, I do like problem-solving.' As a result, the exhibition was her first foray into using shaped frames - beyond the rectangular- that



Ward's installation at the Stella McCartney store in New York City

complemented the space. In her new solo show at Ronchini Gallery, many of the 10 pieces will be string works in triangular frames. Does changing the shape of the frame define her as a sculptor 'Yes,' she says, 'I guess I've always felt like one at heart.'



Salience (2015) by Rebecca Ward