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# DATEBOOK

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## Oh What a Tangled Web We Fix

Katchadourian's art not pleasing to spiders

**A** couple of outstanding artworks in a group show can blot out memories of everything else on view.

In "Interventions" at Clark, for example, the unforgettable work belongs to Nina Katchadourian.

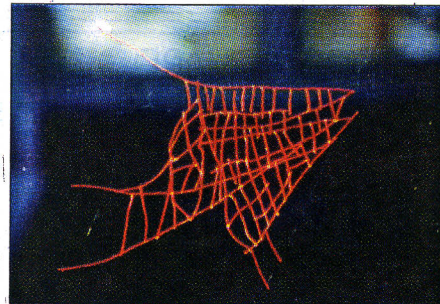
**KENNETH BAKER**

*Art*

Her titles sound half-serious. "Do-It-Yourself Spider Web Repair Kit" (1997), a small plastic stitchcraft box containing scissors, glue and fine red thread, is merely precious until we see in her photographs and video how she put it to use.

In the photograph titled "Mended Spiderweb No. 8" (1998), a net-

work of red filaments hangs in the air against a shadowy background. A close look reveals that Katchadourian has actually glued thread bits into the torn grid of an existing spiderweb. Her little net of threads itself is framed as a separate work, titled "Rejected Patch" (1998), for the spider that built the original, damaged web would have none of Katchadourian's help and cut away her me-



For her photograph "Mended Spiderweb No. 8" (1998), on view at Catherine Clark Gallery, Nina Katchadourian glued bits of thread into a torn spiderweb.

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ticulous architecture.

The color video "Gift/Gift" (1998) is the most arresting piece. It shows Katchadourian struggling with tweezers to place in a web snippets of thread that spell out "gift." The moment she finishes, the spider appears and begins dismantling the gift, tossing it away letter by letter.

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## Naked Sculpture and Clothed Boulders

► **ART**  
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Katchadourian's work brings to mind Andy Goldsworthy's, especially her "Transplant" (1998), a fernlike plant sprig whose missing leaves she replaced with similarly shaped insect wings. She should expect a call from the insect rights advocates.

But where Goldsworthy modifies patterns he finds in nature, Katchadourian's work exudes a mild ecological guilt. Her spiderweb repairs are too-little-too-late gestures at repairing the damage done to nature by humankind.

Katchadourian must know that spiders are psychoanalytic symbols of female sexuality and that, in form, her rejected grids resemble

remnants of process art from the late '60s.

But one wonders if she is aware of Ludwig Wittgenstein's remark about trying to think about problems of language using language: "We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers."

### Mix and Match

Notable works by two other artists in separate shows make an improbable good match.

Rachel Neubauer, the star of New Langton's annual Bay Area Awards Show, knows that we think of sculpture as a tangible art, but that convention requires us mostly to look at it hands off.

She exploits this tacit frustration of touch in a series of moldable

foam sculptures.

The puffy pink cheeks of the Cabage Patch Kids reappear here in "Buttons" (1999), only the cheeks are those of a massive, yet childlike, derriere. Alert to the lubricious cuteness of so much contemporary culture, Neubauer's work is exemplary post-pop surrealism.

What Neubauer does for nudity, Marisa Hernandez does for clothing with her "Fall Collection" in Yerba Buena Gardens.

The summit of free-lance curator Marcia Tanner's outdoor show "Super Natural," Hernandez's work is clothing for the park's scattered boulders. A satire of fashion as disposal of the natural in ourselves, "Fall Collection" also evokes the biblical fall of man, after which clothing in Eden was mandatory.