

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Polly Apfelbaum: 'Flatland: Color Revolt'

By KAREN ROSENBERG

Published: April 19, 2012

D'Amelio Gallery

525 West 22nd Street, Chelsea

Hansel and Gretel Picture Garden

511 West 20th Street, Chelsea

Both through April 28

Polly Apfelbaum's art, which typically consists of petal-like pieces of crushed velvet laid out on the floor, always looks as if it had just blossomed underfoot. So it's surprising to see her invoke rigid Euclidean geometry in this pair of solo shows (which are titled after Edwin Abbott's 19th-century novel "Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions" and Ian Stewart's 2001 sequel, "Flatterland: Like Flatland, Only More So").

Math isn't much in evidence at D'Amelio, at least, where Ms. Apfelbaum's hand-dyed velvet floor piece "Flatterland Funkytown" surrounds two columns in the center of the gallery with a mossy panoply of abstract shapes. Long, caterpillarlike rows of dots fan out toward the walls, crisscrossing over big puddles and smaller splatters in a rich array of jewel tones.

A few blocks away at Hansel and Gretel Picture Garden, Ms. Apfelbaum is exhibiting a related project titled "Flatland: Color Revolt." It consists of small piles and stripes of brightly hued glitter, each resting on a rolled-out blob of Plasticine, and looks a bit like a preschool version of Josef Albers's "Homage to the Square" series. Its 174 iterations, laid out in neat rows on long tables, suggest that Ms. Apfelbaum's floor pieces aren't as spontaneous as they look.