

Soledad Arias
GALLERY SONJA ROESCH

Garland Fielder



Soledad Arias, *[lullaby]*, 2008; piezo pigment print; 24 x 30 inches; edition of 5 + 3 AP

Argentinean-born, New York-based Soledad Arias is a practitioner of the metaphor. Her text-based art, on view in an exhibition entitled *Snippets* at Gallery Sonja Roesch, delves into the self and its isolated existence through a variety of media. Arias' preoccupation with human presence (and/or lack thereof) acts as a lynchpin for a pendulum that sways between poetic isolation and communal awkwardness. This places her in a unique category defined by artists that use life itself as their tableau.

Arias' aesthetic is minimal, soft and understated. Several elegant light works included in the exhibition create an off-white glow in the gallery. In *[lullaby]*, the artist simply presents the word in neon. The subtle inclusion of brackets is

endemic of Arias' meditative play with language. A lullaby is something that should be soft and understated, for it is meant to drift the listener off to sleep. Thus, the piece looks like a lullaby should look.

In *you are here*, Arias uses the same tint of white neon to display the title phrase while a timer/fader allows the work to pulse, changing in intensity on a five-second loop. Another version of this piece was displayed in Times Square. One can imagine busy New Yorkers catching their breath to the heartbeatlike rhythm of the work. It is a calm reminder of an existential pondering that cycles with a conscientious beat. One is constantly present in life—or here, literally—but in the flow of time, of course, we are nothing more than a collection of past moments. This body of work is rife with such contemplations.

A small video monitor included in the exhibition loops three word passages under the title *Snippets I*. White phrases appear and fade, describing scenes of seeming banality, but under closer inspection, the mini plots could be describing moments of intensity felt under unusual circumstances. They work as a sort of stage direction, as if cycling through the imaginary production of some heady Sam Shepard play. On the wall directly across the room are piezo pigment prints composed of digital wave renderings of words and phrases. In *[not an exit] I*, black vibrations stretch across a print reminiscent of a landscape. The metamorphosis of language into a visual abstraction works to the artist's advantage. Her awareness of language as a conduit capable of being manipulated to one's own ends is important. This saves the show from adopting a didactic tone and allows for the artist's subtle aesthetic to be established and understood. One walks away from *Snippets* feeling the presence of the artist, while fully cognizant of his or her own isolation in the world.