Time Out New York

The obsessive guide to impulsive entertainment
January 24–31, 2002 Issue No. 330 $2.99

Marilla Palmer, "New Work,"

Pierogi, through Feb 11 (see Elsewhere).

At first, Marilla Palmer's show of eight "sculpture-fabric paintings" at Pierogi will remind you of walking into a Nolita gift shop: Diaphanous silk curtains hang from the ceiling to make a tent that shelters a beaded butterfly; fabrics dyed in soft pastels are decorated with sequins and holographic vinyl; and a cute store-bought fountain lights up to the sound of trickling water. But don't worry. Pierogi hasn't replaced the art in its famed flat files with incense sticks. When Palmer's serene, craft-heavy works succeed, they sidestep kitsch to create vivid and complex environments.

Palmer's skill lies in her penchant for layering disparate materials, which she does sometimes with invisible threads and sometimes with steel armatures that jut from the wall. Palmer uses the front end of the steel to stretch one layer of material while the back end serves to frame a layer of something else. In one piece, for example, she's suspended a swatch of dyed silk a few inches from a sheet of holographic paper. When you look through the silk, the two surfaces mix together in an explosion of whirling color.

Backyard Paradise consists of a number of such frames fastened together, each suggesting a different aspect of suburban decor. A patch of Astroturf works as the grassy backdrop for a web of beaded flowers; a sheet of blue holographic vinyl catches the light like a rippling swimming pool. It's as though Palmer is trying to see how far suburbia's artifice can be taken toward inducing the sublime. Strangely, it is often quite far. *Snowflake Constellation* is a shower of cheap sequins strung on invisible thread, effecting a tacky toy-store mobile that is nevertheless a seductive blur of light and shadow.

Christopher Bollen

Marilla Palmer, *Backyard Paradise*, 2001.