

## 'Domestic Scenes'

*Through July 2, Brian Gross Fine Art*

**TO PRODUCE THE** pieces presented in "Domestic Scenes," Stephen Sollins removed the threaded patterns from embroidered linens, counted the number of stitches as he did, and sorted them by color. He then re-embroidered the empty linens with colored squares consisting of the same number of stitches per color as the original. The results both distill the linens to their most basic elements and translate them from traditional, sentimental, domestic objects, produced primarily by women, to publicly displayed, modernist works of art, produced logically by a man. The transition parallels and reiterates the process according to which many have tried to explain both the maturation of the individual and the rationalization of the modern world. Like a child, who learns to let go of his or her parents and eventually leaves home to work, Sollins withholds his spontaneous sentimental responses and approaches the linens as objects of detached reflection. Like a modernist, he finds the practice and enjoyment of embroidery problematic, submits it to rational examination, and reinvents it in the process. But Sollins's work doesn't merely move beyond tradition and the sentimental attachments of home. To the contrary, it betrays a deep devotion to folk crafts and the pleasures of domesticity – albeit one that has been suspended and can be enjoyed only indirectly. Sollins presents the persistence of childhood in maturity and tradition in modernity as lost origins, which continue to inform the sophisticated subject in their very absence. The pieces in the show are all titled *Elegy*, with distinct subtitles to distinguish them. They present maturation and modernization as mournful processes, which require working through the loss of the attachments and illusions that once gave shape to the world. *Tues.-Fri., 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m., 49 Geary, fifth floor, S.F. (415) 778-1050.* (Clark Buckner)