

Mary Mary is pleased to present HURTS WORST, Amanda Ross-Ho's first solo exhibition at the gallery. The show will feature a suite of new large scale textile assemblages, and a group of small text-based paintings.

In 1981, two American paediatric nurses working in a burn unit identified the need for a visual tool to help pre-verbal children accurately describe the complex sensation of pain. The result was the Pain Rating Scale, consisting of a series of expressive cartoon facial ideograms with an accompanying numerical system and text in multiple languages. Forebears of the omnipresent *emoji* invented in 1999, the success of the first pain scale begat countless nonproprietary variations, slipping into widespread usage at medical facilities. Claiming stylistic liberty, each version aimed to create a universal metric to measure human suffering, factoring in diverse perspectives of generation, culture, and ability.

HURTS WORST mines this database, isolating the faces that represent the extreme end of twelve different pain scales. Like Tragedies permanently divorced from their better half, these flat graphic depictions are translated into large scale, wall bound textile assemblages, gathered together into an ensemble of misery and all its company. Hand hewn with collage-like techniques of frenetic needlecraft, each soft wall hanging teeters between the index of its crisp graphic origin and its anxiously tactile decoy. Vulnerable, frayed, and cranked to 11, they intone a choral sob tuned to acutely describe the anguish of a universal and perpetually raw nerve.

Los Angeles based Amanda Ross-Ho has spent more than a decade performing conceptual and material forensics that wrestle with the entwined ecologies of personal and universal phenomena. Borrowing from muscle memory of formative experiences in stagecraft, prop making, photography and performance, she cultivates an ongoing vocabulary of theatrical gestures and recursive experimentation. Ross-Ho surgically parses the currencies of matter, human experience, and cultural strata, shifting the status of known quantities and rearranging the DNA of our circadian experiences. On her watch, ephemeral artifacts convert into monuments and permanence becomes fugitive and uncertain. Like autopsies or historical reenactments, her work disarticulates anatomies of established structures, reanimating them to hyperbolic effect.

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