

# Art in America

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## ANDREA BUTTNER

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[HOLLYBUSH GARDENS](#)
*by charlotte bonham-carter*


**LONDON** A sense of humbleness pervaded "Moos/Moss," Andrea Buttner's second exhibition at Hollybush Gardens. A sparse, largely gray installation, the show rang changes on the idea of insignificance and was evidence of Buttner's continuing interest in notions of wealth and poverty.

*Corner (gray)*, 2011, a 49-by-58-inch woodcut, depicts an empty corner of a room using three shades of gray. Implicit is the idea of being sent to sit in the corner as a child, or of being marginalized on the fringes of society. *Corner Seat* (2012), by contrast, evokes poverty as a choice, as in the voluntary renunciation of worldly things as a spiritual practice. A plain bench made of planks of wood resting atop four gray plastic crates, it provided a quiet vantage point to look out at the exhibition, or even, perhaps, to meditate.

Ranged along two walls of the gallery was a series of fabric "paintings" (each 2012, 78½ by 63 inches) made from the same gray twill used in work uniforms. Buttner remarked in a magazine interview that these fabric paintings are, in part, a reference to St. Francis of Assisi, who according to legend publicly rejected his wealth by removing his fine clothes and returning them to his father. More topically, they may also allude to another of the artist's interests—the changing response of unemployed workers to their joblessness, from rage in the early part of the 20th century to humiliation in the 21st.

Set just a few inches apart from one another on the gallery walls, the paintings were easily mistaken for sound paneling. Their questionable status as art was further emphasized by the placement of a flatscreen monitor on top of one of them. Displayed on the monitor was *Moos/Moss*, a seven-minute slide show of photographs of moss taken by the artist and her friends. Buttner is drawn to the idea of moss as something that is as transient as dust yet also, in German culture, a metaphor for money. "Ohne moos nichts los" goes one German expression—Without moss you don't get anywhere.

Playing from two suspended speakers was the audio piece *Quaker Meeting, Houston, Texas* (2011). A recording of a Quaker worship meeting in a building with a Skyspace by James Turrell, the work captures only the external sounds of birds, planes and cars, as these gatherings are largely silent. Like the other pieces in the exhibition, it made its impact through understatement.

Despite, or perhaps because of, its outward simplicity, the exhibition was a profoundly moving rumination on what it means to have enough.

*Photo: Partial view of Andrea Büttner's "Fabric Painting" series, 2012, stretched gray fabric, each 78½ by 63 inches, with Moos/Moss, 2012, digital slide show, 7 minutes; at Hollybush Gardens.*

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