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ARTS & LETTERS

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On the face of it, the late Fred Sandback — the subject of a two-part exhibition at Lawrence Markey and the uptown premises of David Zwirner — was as minimal as they come. His trademark material was store-purchased brightly colored acrylic yarn, stretched taut between floor and ceiling, or forming right angles to a wall. These lines of string inevitably force awareness of their environment in a way that displaces attention from the object itself to its effect, a hallmark of minimalism.

Yet Sandback's string pieces are strangely sculptural. You become aware not so much of the room itself, as of planes defined in space. A sense of implied continuation, the thought that the lines must continue through to other rooms and spaces, adds a poetic element alien to hardcore minimal art. Despite his drastic means, Sandback was ultimately more of a connector to artistic traditions than a disruptor of them. His professed preference for the expressive figuration of Giacometti over the presumed affinity between his own work and the Russian constructivists is richly suggestive and rings true.

"Fred Sandback: Sculpture and Drawing" at Lawrence Markey until May 8 (42 E. 76th Street, between Park & Madison Avenues, 212-517-9892) and at Zwirner & Worth until May 1 (32 E. 69th Street, between Park & Madison Avenues, 212-517-8677). Prices: The galleries declined to disclose their prices.