

# Art in America

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## Andrea Zittel at Andrea Rosen

With Andrea Zittel's recent project "Rough" (pronounced "raw"), the quirky utopianism long apparent in her work has become even more pronounced, and in refreshingly lively ways. The two large mounds of gray foam rubber that dominated the gallery are examples of a new line of Zittel's A-Z furniture. While they are meant to suggest looming outdoor rock formations, what they actually resemble are convincing movie set props. You could sit or lie on them while perusing various books and magazines that were scattered about, bringing a welcome note of freedom and relaxation to the gallery. Disarmingly humorous, these massive mounds effectively upend the implicit behavioral codes of traditional furniture, which typically molds your body to this or that "appropriate" posture. They are startlingly comfortable, so much so that you almost forgot how unusual it was to be lounging on a sculpture in the middle of a gallery. Meanwhile, a television set in the corner played a promotional video touting not only this special furniture but the idea of "rough" as a comprehensive lifestyle. Masquerading as a relent-

lessly cheery TV infomercial hawking a wonder product, the video features Zittel and others in various domestic situations. One segment, which asks you to "imagine a system where things belong exactly where you put them," relates to Zittel's earlier, hyper-ordered modular living units. Another segment demonstrates how to make a rudimentary yet comfortable dress out of a single piece of fabric and safety pins. "Don't ever let anyone tell you that you have to be an expert to make things that you use every day," the viewer is told, suggesting affinities with do-it-yourself utopians like the famously self-reliant Henry David Thoreau. The visitor came away from the exhibition with an understanding of Zittel's rules of "rough." It's "absolutely comfortable," it "absorbs dirt rather than reveals it," and it "deteriorates beautifully"—all qualities that apply directly to the ersatz rock furniture. With her references to TV merchandising, pop-culture trends and self-improvement Zittel is absolutely of her time: The real point of her oddball visionary bent, however, is a search for personal freedom simplicity and exuberant ease.

-Gregory Volk

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**Andrea Zittel: Installation view of "Rough," 1998, showing foam rubber furniture' at Andrea Rosen. '**

