

# REVIEW

June 2007

2007 Surface Design Association  
Conference: Mind + Body

Transgression & Transformation:  
The 2007 SDA Fashion Show

Kansas City  
Garment Museum  
and District



## A Note From the 2007 *surface design association* Exhibitions and Conference Coordinators

Few things are as intimate as cloth. We are enveloped by it virtually every moment of our lives. But most of us don't take the time to look at and appreciate the beauty and expressive potential in a piece of fabric. In a world of increased alienation and suspicion, the tactile nature of cloth invites us to reconnect with one another and to interact with our environment.

As part of the Surface Design Association's textile conference, artists from all over the world will be in Kansas City this June to be inspired by art, ideas, and new techniques. This is the fourth year that the Kansas City Art Institute has hosted and sponsored the SDA's biennial conference. With each successive conference, the Kansas City art community has become increasingly involved. In this issue of *Review*, you will find the result of two years of planning and preparation as SDA brings over 30 textile and fiber related exhibitions to Kansas City area galleries as part of this international celebration of textiles.

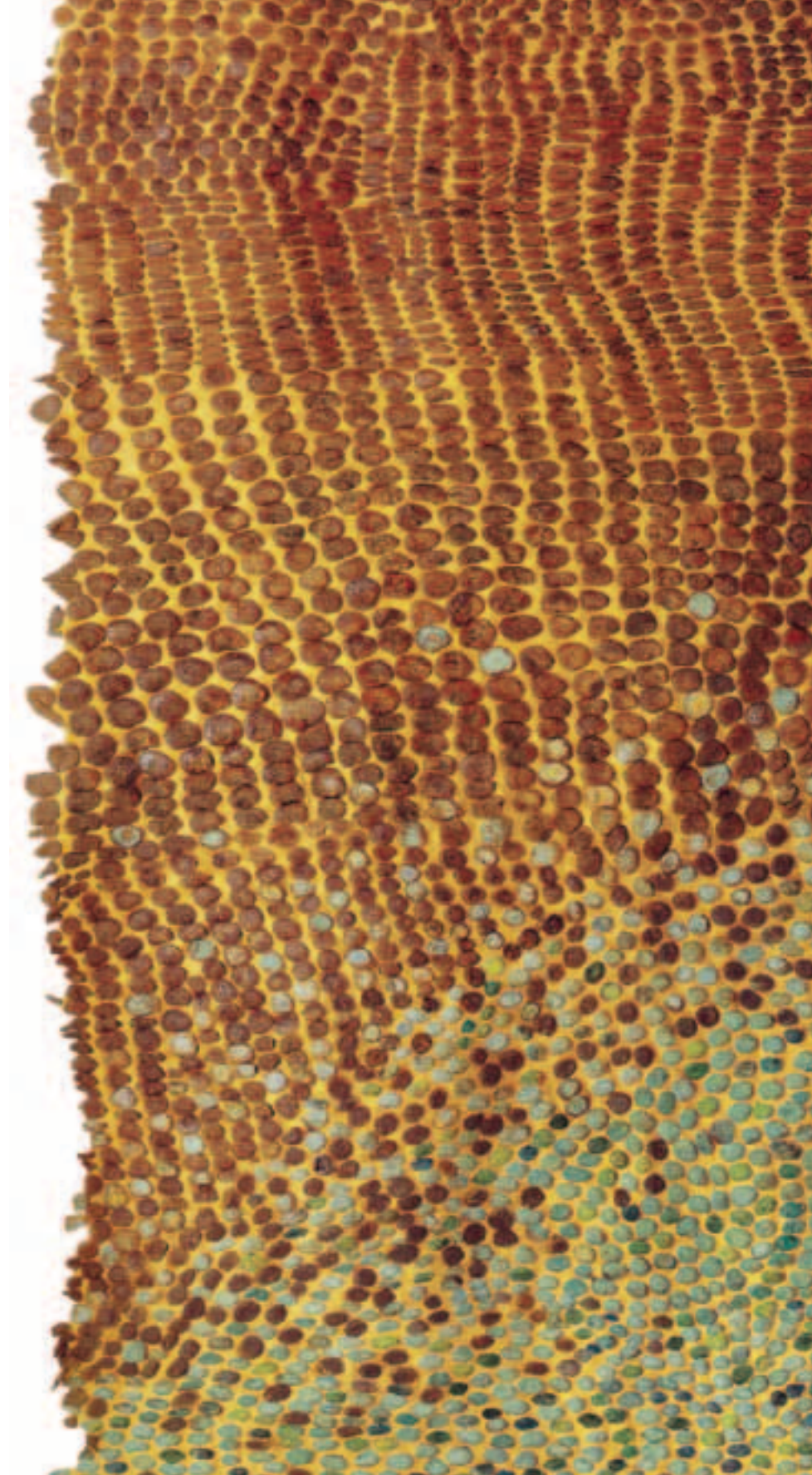
The theme for the SDA's 30th Anniversary Conference, *Mind + Body*, explores the relationship between textiles and humans: how they relate to our bodies and how they interact with and influence what is in our minds. The Belger Arts Center will host Annet Couwenberg's exhibition *On Pins and Needles* in which conceptual works reference the body but causes us to re-think our ideas of the human form. Marian Clayden's retrospective will showcase her lavish garments, vivid in texture and pattern, which have adorned the bodies of Meryl Streep, Elizabeth Taylor and Catherine Zeta-Jones. Artists explore the adornment of private, intimate parts of our body in *Intimate Apparel*, curated by Linda Gass. Julia Freeman and Anna Lambert collaborate to create a transformative environment of print and textiles. *Secrets* by Saaraliisa Ylitalo is comprised of handwritten secrets, which comfort and connect us to others through sharing similar secrets and fears.

To quiet our minds, other exhibitions at the Belger create contemplative spaces within the galleries. Kyoung Ae Cho's pieces of constructed silk organza, corn husks and hand stitching celebrate the beauty, fragility and endurance of nature. Dorothy Caldwell creates new meaning, marks time and builds history as she mends and repairs cloth. Kate Kretz uses her own hair as thread with which she stitches intricate visions that make up our dreams.

And to keep our intellect sharp, Maria Elena Buszek's exhibition *Handymen and Girly Boys: Masculinity, Craft, Culture* spotlights the work of contemporary male artists who are subverting gender norms by working in media traditionally associated with women. Maria has brought together artists from all over the country to challenge us to re-think what fiber is and what it can say.

We would like to thank all of the artists, galleries and volunteers who donated their time, expertise and space to make these amazing exhibitions possible.

— Shana Rossi Talley and Carolyn Kallenborn





# SDA {surface design association} member show 2007 | *Sum of the Parts*



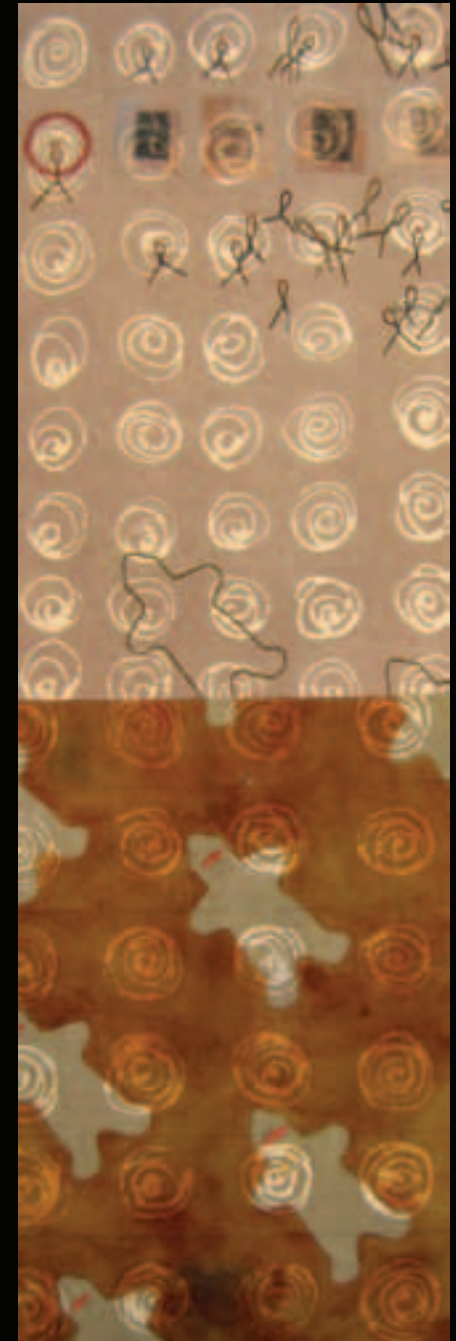
Pat Kumičich, *Being a Woman* (detail), 2006, rusting, ink jet print, free motion embroidery, painting, hand and machine quilting, 18" x 52".



Brenda Buntten Schloesser, *New Hope* (detail), 2007, fiber reactive dye on cotton, machine pieced, hand quilted, embellished with beads and embroidery, 18" x 52".



Denise Linet, *Autumn Montage* (detail), 2007, screen printed, resist dyed, xerox lithography, hand dyed cottons - quilted and stitched together, hand and machine stitched, 18" x 52".



Teresa Paschke, *Domestic Alchemy II* (detail), 2007, screen printing, embroidery, stamping, wax-resist, photocopy, stencil, piecing on cotton; ribbon, metal dye, pigment, embroidery thread, 18" x 52".

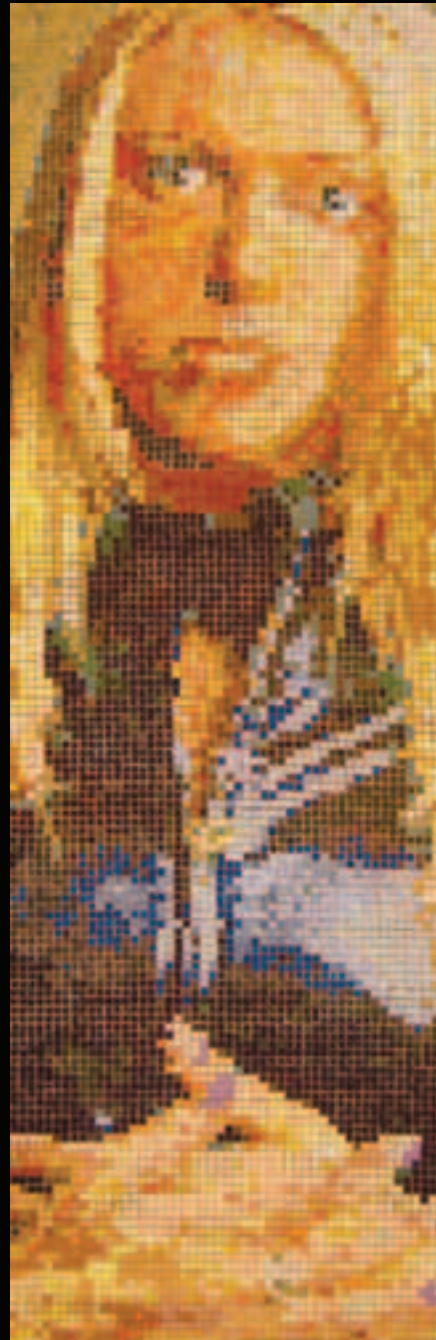


**M**onths before the Surface Design Association Conference, SDA members were asked to create submissions to the Members' Show exhibition. Organized this year by Mary Beth Yates, all works presented are automatically entered into this display. Proven to be the most anticipated exhibition of the Conference – as

well as the most spoken of afterwards – the Member Show of 2007 at H&R Block Space is sure to present innovative textile manifestations that explore the multi-faceted range of processes, materials, and techniques describing the individual artists of the SDA organization.



Barbara James, *Spilled Wine* (detail), 2007, immersion resist dyed, silk screened, dye painted on silk satin organza, 18" x 52".



Marty Jonas, *Double Exposure* (detail), 2005, 29,952 square pieces cut from hand dyed cottons attached to sheer silk, 18" x 52".



Adrienne Yorinks, *Our Dead #2* (detail), 2007, machine pieced and quilted, hand stitched, photo transfers, Japanese kimono fabric, cotton, cardboard, 18" x 52".



Edie Brown, *Root Cause Analysis* (detail), 2007, felted, stamped, quilted, machine appliquéd cotton, angelina fibers, wool and soy silk roving, polyester, clay, 18" x 52".



● SDA Invited ● Supported in part by the Missouri Arts Council

## Opening Receptions

### THURSDAY, MAY 31

**Christian Community Church**  
4601 Main Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-561-6534

● **Saaraliisa Ylitalo: Secrets**

Reception: May 31, 2:30 - 4:30p.m.

May 21- June 30, 2007

The main work in this installation is an 18' wall of hand written anonymous secrets. When we write our own secrets and read the secrets of others, we can weaken their hold on us. We learn that our own secrets are the secrets of many, and that our fears about them are the fears of many.

### FRIDAY, JUNE 1

**Arts Incubator**  
Environmental Building & Supply  
115 West 18th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-421-2292  
www.artsincubatorkc.org

● **Jennifer Falck Linssen:**  
*How to See the Forest Through the Trees*

● **Julia Freeman and Anna Lambert:**  
*Revealing the Residue*

Opening Reception: 6:30 - 9 p.m.

Hours:  
Tuesday - Thursday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Friday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

May 29 - June 27, 2007

See Preview on page 25 for information on artist Jennifer Falck Linssen.

*Revealing the Residue* is the result of a time-based exchange that exposes repetition, irregularity and decay of pattern and the essence of familiar interiors. Midwest artists Julia Freeman and Anna Lambert, who both currently reside in the Northwest,

contemplate pattern's ability to resonate and leave behind a lasting residue.

### Belger Arts Center

2100 Walnut Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-3250

www.belgerartscenter.org

● ● **On Pins and Needles:**  
*Work by Annet Couwenberg*

● ● **Dorothy Caldwell:**  
*Marking the Everyday*

● ● **Kyoung Ae Cho: Tranquil Moment**

● **Kate Kretz: Undressed**

**Laura Anne Bernard:**  
*Harmonic Reverberations*

Opening Reception: 5:30 - 9 p.m.

Hours: Wednesday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Saturday, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Through September 7, 2007

See featured article on page 34 for information on artists Annet Couwenberg, Dorothy Caldwell, Kyoung Ae Cho and Kate Kretz.

In the exhibition *Harmonic Reverberations*, artist Laura Bernard explores the narrative potential of the line through weaving. "Through the use of various hand manipulation techniques on a plain weave ground, I create linear elements that have the ability to form their own path. The large scale of the weavings and multiple panels creates depth and invites the viewer to enter a contemplative space," says Bernard.

### Blue Gallery

7 West 19th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-527-0824  
www.bluegalleryonline.com

● **Pauline Verbeek-Cowart and Susan Lordi Marker: RHYTHEM:**  
*A Symphony in Cloth*



Carol LeBaron, *Acid Rain*, 2005, wool, acid dye, clamp resist, hand stitch, pieced, 32" x 36". (George Caleb Bingham Gallery, see page 18)

Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.

Hours:

Tuesday - Thursday, 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
Friday - Saturday, 12 p.m. - 9 p.m.

May 25 - June 10, 2007

See article on page 36 for information on artists Pauline Verbeek-Cowart and Susan Lordi Marker.

### The Cross Gallery

(Leedy-Vouklos Art Center)  
2012 Baltimore Avenue  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-651-3480  
www.thecrossgallery.com

**Heather Nania: The Nature of Things**

**Lizz Born: Harnessing the Abyss**

Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.

Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11 - 5 p.m.

May 16 - June 23, 2007

Heather Nania's work references the macroscopic and microscopic world, inspired by sea life and cellular organisms.



Jeannie Frederick, *Raqchi Traje*, 2006, Peruvian costume (Mattie Rhodes Art Center, see page 18).

Lizz Born's installation sculpture and drawings explore the relationship between ships, temples, storage and the transference of human energy.

### Excessories for Home & Body

2004 Main Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-853-4960

**Katherine & Laura Morris**

Opening Reception: 4 - 9 p.m.

Hours: First Fridays, 4 - 9 p.m.  
Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

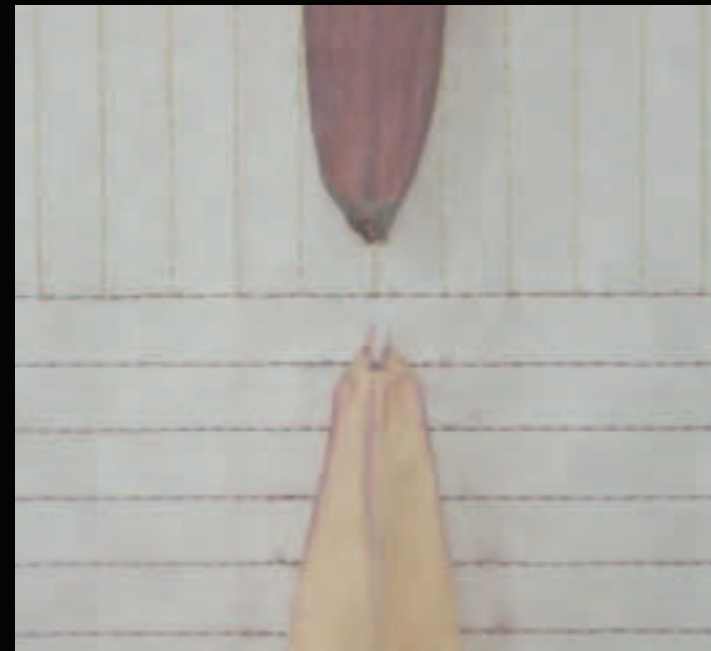
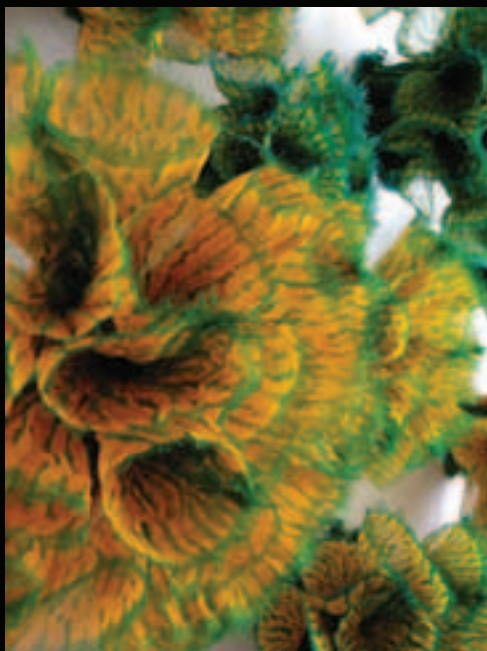
This retail venue features original designed hand-made fiber art for home and body including scarves, jewelry, wall art, knitted items, felted items, purses and studio art furniture.

### Grothaus + Pearl Gallery

(Leedy-Vouklos Art Center)  
2016 Baltimore Avenue  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-835-2084

● **Jan-Ru Wan: Potent Thread**

Opening Reception: 6 - 10 p.m.



From Left to Right: Heather Nania, *Interchange 1* (detail), 2006, shaped-resist dyed, silk organza, 15" x 16" x 6". Photo courtesy Michael Lundgren. (The Cross Gallery, see facing page); Lorraine Glessner, *Blossom*, 2005, layers of branded marks, images, paint, wax, hair and found materials (Red Star Studios Ceramic Center & Gallery, see page 18); Kyoung Ae Cho, *Charged*, 2003, corn leaves, silk organza, rayon thread, 48" x 16 3/4". (Belger Arts Center, see facing page).

Gallery Talk: Saturday, June 2, 1 p.m.

Hours: Saturday, 11 - 5 p.m.

Through June 30, 2007

See Preview on page 25 for information on artist Jan-Ru Wan.

### Janet Kuemmerlein Studio

2004 Broadway Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-842-7049

Janet Kuemmerlein: *Fiberart — New Work*

Opening Reception: 5 - 10 p.m.

Hours: Monday - Friday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
and by appointment

May 15 - June 30, 2007

Janet Kummerlein's studio features fiber wall pieces, stitched fiber vessels, crocheted silver jewelry, and hand-dyed silks.

### Kansas City Art Institute

#### Crossroads Gallery

1908 Main Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-453-7342  
www.kcai.edu

### "PHYBER?"

Opening Reception: 1 - 9 p.m.

Hours: Saturday, 12 - 5 p.m.

Sunday: 3 - 6 p.m.

Through June 3, 2007

This Kansas City Art Institute show, curated by junior fiber students Stephanie Miller and Amanda Gatten, features students' work from all departments. This exhibition supports an emphasis on experimental and inventive uses of fiber materials, processes and techniques to redefine ideas of fiber and fiber art in non-traditional ways. The show is presented in conjunction with the Surface Design Association Conference.

### The Late Show Gallery

1600 Cherry  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-1300

Jeremy Evans and Tabbetha McCale Evans:  
*Sticks and Stones*

Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.

Hours:

Wednesday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
and by appointment

Through June 29, 2007

### Leedy-Voulkos Art Center

2012 Baltimore Avenue  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-1919

Pat Hodson: *The Illusory and the Real:  
Dyed Colour and Digital Colour*

Sue Hammond West:  
*Abundance Magnet*

Through June 31, 2007

Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.

Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11 - 5 p.m.

See Preview on page 24 for information on artist Pat Hodson.

*Abundance Magnet* presents new mixed media textile paintings by Sue Hammond West. In West's work, cloth and felt are infused with an abundance of materials, such as hair, antique woven fragments, mica, and copper wire.

### Light Box Gallery

9 West 19th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-221-0012

Maggie Leininger and Gail Katz-James:  
*Order vs. Chaos: Surface in Sculpture*

Opening Reception: 6 - 8 p.m.

Hours:

Wednesday - Sunday, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

May 30 - June 3, 2007

Maggie Leininger and Gail Katz-James combine an array of materials to create intricate dimensional structures that are informed by traditional textile concepts and techniques. *Order vs. Chaos* features free-standing and wall-mounted constructions that integrate found objects, cast forms and other identifiable materials into interpretations of surface.

### Mattie Rhodes Art Gallery

915 West 17th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-221-2349  
www.mattierhodes.org

Jennie Frederick: *Artist and Collector*

Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.

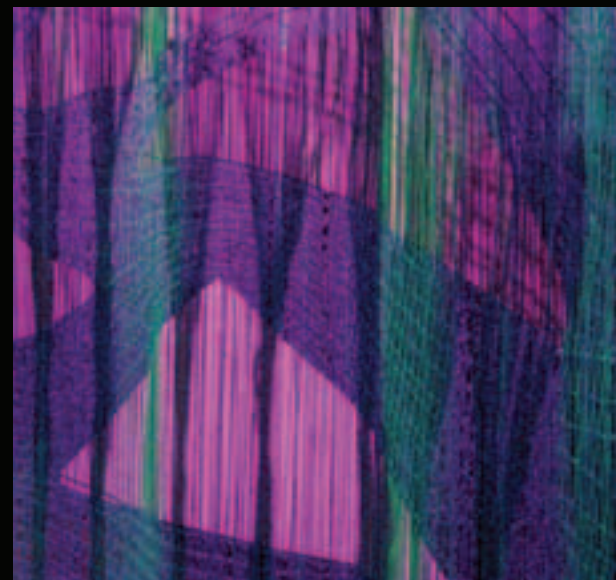
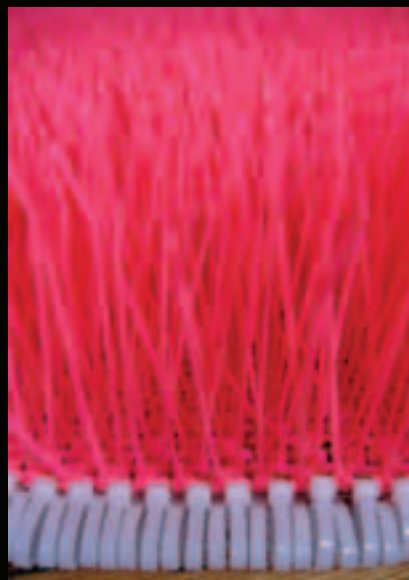
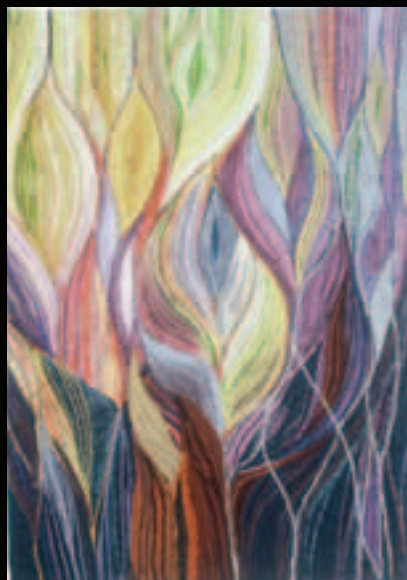
Gallery Talk with Artist:  
Saturday, June 2, 11 a.m.

Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Through June 22, 2007





From Left to Right: Marian Clayden, dress from *The Dyer's Hand - A Retrospective* (Leedy-Voulkos Art Center, see facing page); Janet Kuemmerlein, from *Fiber Art - New Work* (Janet Kuemmerlein Studios, see page 17); Ben Schachter, *Pink Shag Rug* (detail), 2006, construction cloth and cable ties, 7" x 36" x 60" (Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, see this page); Laura Anne Bernard, *Descending* (detail), 2006, hand dyed silk and cotton, 15' x 6' x 6' (Belger Arts Center, see page 16).

This exhibit features new works by Jennie Frederick alongside her personal collection of Central and South American Textiles. The exhibit will include costumes, garments, papers and photographic documentation collected from her travels.

**Opie Gallery**  
(Leedy-Voulkos Art Center)  
2012 Baltimore Avenue  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-1919

● **Uncharted Territory: SDA International Juried Student Textile Exhibition**

**Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.**

Hours:  
Wednesday - Saturday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Through June 30, 2007

This exhibition juried by Annet Couwenberg and Wendy Huhn.

**Pi Gallery**  
419 East 18th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-210-6534

● **Intimate Apparel:**  
*Invited Artists curated by Linda Gass*

**Opening Reception: 1 - 10 p.m.**

Hours: First Fridays 6 - 9 p.m., Saturdays,  
noon - 4 p.m. and by appointment

Through June 30, 2007

See article on page 29 for information on  
this exhibition.

**Red Star Studios**  
**Ceramic Center & Gallery**

821 West 17th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-7316

www.redstarstudios.org

● **Lorraine Glessner: Nexus**

**Opening Reception: 5 - 9 p.m.**

Hours:  
Thursday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
May 31 - June 30, 2007

Utilizing processes such as burning, rusting, decomposition, burying or weather exposure, layers of fabric are collaged with encaustic, images and found materials. Through pattern and materials, questions are raised concerning want versus need, natural versus man-made creation, the overabundance of choice in a commercial society, excess, waste and its impact on cyclic life.

**Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art**

2004 Baltimore Avenue  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-221-2626

www.sherryleedy.com

● ● **Handymen and Girly Boys:**  
**Masculinity, Craft, Culture**  
(Invited Artists curated by Maria Elena Buszek)

**Opening Reception: 7 - 9 p.m.**

Hours:  
Tuesday - Saturday, 11a.m. - 5 p.m.  
and by appointment

May 11 - June 23, 2007

See Preview on page 24 for information on  
this exhibition.

**Saucy Hound Gallery**

1607 Westport Road  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-960-1400

**Holly Stewart and Carolyn Kallenborn:**  
**Cloth, Paper, Scissors**

**Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.**

Call for hours

Through June 30, 2007

**Unit 5 Gallery**

Kansas City, Missouri  
1920 Wyandotte Street  
816-841-5500  
unit5@gmail.com

**Jason Pollen and Lisa Grey: Oasis**

**Opening Reception: 6 - 9 p.m.**

Hours: Thursday - Saturday, 11 a.m. -  
5 p.m. and by appointment  
May 11 - June 22, 2007

**MONDAY, JUNE 4**

**George Caleb Bingham Gallery**

Fine Arts Building  
Hitt and University Streets  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
Columbia, Missouri  
573-882-9435

**Carol LeBaron: Endangered Species**

**Opening Reception: 2 - 4 p.m.**

Hours: Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Through August 8, 2007



Laura Morris, *Leaf* (detail) (*Excessories for Home and Body*, see page 16).

### PS Gallery

812 East Broadway  
Columbia, Missouri  
573-442-4831

#### Jo Stealey: *Memoir*

Opening Reception: 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Sunday, 12 - 5 p.m.

May 22-June 30, 2007

This exhibition features sculptural works of handmade paper. Part of the SDA Colombia Bus Tour (see SDA Events, page 20).

### THURSDAY, JUNE 7

#### Irene B. French Gallery

5701 Merriam Drive  
Merriam, Kansas  
913-322-5550

#### Kansas Art Quilters: *Altered Views*

Opening Reception: 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Hours: Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.  
Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Sunday 2 - 4 p.m.

May 30 - June 30, 2007

## Current Exhibitions

### THROUGH JUNE 3

#### Kansas City Art Institute

Irving Building  
4415 Warwick Boulevard  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-472-4852

#### ● *Granted: Projects and Individuals Supported by SDA Grants*

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
May 31- June 3

SDA provides grant funding to members via small event and personal development grants, as well as a student award for creative excellence. This exhibition demonstrates the breadth and depth of the award distributed since the last conference.

### THROUGH JUNE 4

#### H & R Block Art Space at Kansas City Art Institute

16 East 43rd Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-561-5563

#### ● *Sum of the Parts: SDA Membership Exhibition*



Jo Stealey, *East of the Sun* (PS Gallery, part of the Colombia, Missouri Bus Tour, see this page and page 20).

#### Hours:

Friday, 1 - 9 p.m., Saturday, 4 - 7 p.m.  
Sunday, 12 - 6 p.m.,  
Monday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

### THROUGH JUNE 8

#### Kansas City Art Institute

(Dodge Painting Building)  
4415 Warwick Boulevard  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-472-4852

#### Collaborative Art Project KCAI Fiber Faculty Exhibition

### THROUGH JUNE 10

#### Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art

2818 Frederick Avenue  
Saint Joseph, Missouri  
816-233-7003

#### *Material Matters*

Hours: Tuesday - Friday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Saturday - Sunday, 1 - 4 p.m.

Designed in conjunction with the 14th International Surface Design Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, *Material Matters* will feature approximately 20 artists whose work involves creative manipulation of the

fiber arts that serves to expand the definition of the textile medium. This exhibition features work by established fiber artists alongside artists from other disciplines who incorporate textiles into their work. A diverse group of contemporary artists will be represented, including Amie Adelman, Marna Goldstein Brauner, Jenny Hart, Lisa Kriner, Susan Lordi Marker, Kristin Miller, Laura Strand, Wendy Weiss, and Bhakti Ziek. Curated by Jennifer Zeller and Mary Anne Jordan. This exhibition is part of the St. Joseph, Missouri Bus Tour (see SDA Events, page 20)

### Leedy-Voukos Art Center

2012 Baltimore Avenue  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-1919

#### ● ● *Marian Clayden:*

#### *The Dyer's Hand - A Retrospective*

Closing Reception 6 - 9 p.m.

#### Hours:

Wednesday - Saturday, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

An internationally acclaimed textile-artist, Marian Clayden designs most of the printed silks, cut-velvets and lace fabrics that are the basis of her magical garments. This exhibition is a retrospective of the work of one of the world's foremost exponents of resist-dyeing techniques- textiles, wall hangings, and haute-couture clothing. Curated by Melissa Leventon.

### THROUGH AUGUST 31

#### Interior Landscapes

2121 Central, Suite 144  
Kansas City Missouri  
816-842-2120

#### VIVID: A Collection of Weavings and Surface Design by Colleen Foster and Anne Harris



# SDA *{surface design association}* calendar of events

## WEDNESDAY, MAY 30

### Saint Joseph, Missouri Bus Tour

Day trip to St. Joseph to view contemporary and historical textiles including Material Matters at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, patient's artwork at the Glore Psychiatric Museum and historical clothing at the Saint Joseph Museum. This tour was developed in conjunction with the SDA conference.

**This tour leaves the Kansas City Art Institute at 8:30 a.m. and returns at 4 p.m.**

Contact: Jennifer Zeller at 816-233-7003 or [jzeller@albrecht-kemper.org](mailto:jzeller@albrecht-kemper.org)

[www.albrecht-kemper.org](http://www.albrecht-kemper.org)

**General Admission: \$50**

(Lunch and all museum admissions included)

## THURSDAY, MAY 31

### Silent Auction

The Silent Auction represents an opportunity to find and bid on works of art donated by SDA members. Auction proceeds will be used to fund SDA grants, awards and scholarships.

### Kansas City Art Institute

(Irving Building)  
4415 Warwick Boulevard  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-472-4852

**Thursday, May 31, 12 p.m.-9 p.m.**

**Friday, June 1, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**Saturday, June 2, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Contact: Bette Levy, [bettelevy@aol.com](mailto:bettelevy@aol.com)

**No Admission Charge**

## FRIDAY, JUNE 1

### Member's Trunk Show

SDA members, including Ana Lisa Hedstrom, Jan Myers-Newbury and Brooke Poirier will present jewelry, yardage, scarves, felted clothing and hand-painted fabrics for sale during the Trunk Show. This one-night-only event coincides with the First Friday exhibition openings.

### Belger Arts Center

2100 Walnut Street  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-474-3250  
[www.belgerartscenter.org](http://www.belgerartscenter.org)

**Event: 6 - 9 p.m.**

Contact: 816-474-3250 or Holly Stewart, [hstewart@kcai.edu](mailto:hstewart@kcai.edu)

**No Admission Charge**

### Vendor Fair

Presenting manufacturers and distributors of textiles, dyes, pigments, supplies, books and major equipment used in the production of textiles.

### Holiday Inn on the Plaza

One East 45th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri

Public Hours:

Friday, June 1, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Saturday, June 2, 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Sunday, June 3: 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Hotel Front Desk: 816-753-7400

**General Admission: \$10**

## SATURDAY, JUNE 2

### ● Fashion Show Performance: *Transgression & Transformation*

Coordinated by Joscelyn Himes and Chadwick Brooks, this event includes a musical performance by Mark Southerland and dance performances. The runway show will feature over 70 designs of an urban fairytale flavor, including works by Colleen Quen and Sunny Dawn. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster. A limited number of tickets will be available at the door before the performance.

### Folly Theater

300 West 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Event: 8:30 - 10 p.m.**

Box Office: 816-474-4444

**General Admission: \$28**

**Box Seating (for a group of 4): \$250**

## MONDAY, JUNE 4

### Columbia, Missouri Bus Tour

Day trip to Columbia Missouri to view Endangered Species by Carol LeBaron and seven other Columbia galleries featuring the best in regional fiber arts. This tour was developed in conjunction with the SDA conference and is sponsored in part by the City of Columbia.

**This tour leaves the Kansas City Art Institute 8:30 am and returns at 5:30 pm**

For complete information on this tour:

[www.columbiafate.com](http://www.columbiafate.com)

Contact: Jo Stealey at (660) 848-9953 or [stealeyj@missouri.edu](mailto:stealeyj@missouri.edu)

**General Admission: \$30**

(Lunch and all museum admissions included)

## SDA Workshops

Reservations for attendance to Pre-Conference and Post-Conference Workshops may still be available. These are offered on first-come basis. Refer to the SDA website ([www.surfacedesign.org](http://www.surfacedesign.org)) for complete workshop descriptions, instructor bios, class fees and up-to-date availability. To register, visit the registration table at the Kansas City Art Institute's Living Center before the corresponding workshop. All official SDA Workshops will be hosted on the campus of the Kansas City Art Institute, 4415 Warwick Boulevard, Kansas City, Missouri.

### Pre-conference Workshops

#### MAY 26-30

**Screen Printing:**

*Simple to Sublime:* Wendy Huhn

**Body Ornaments and**

*Extreme(ity) Extensions:* Jorie Johnson

**Unconventional Material:**

*Chunghie Lee and Jiyoung Chung*

#### MAY 27-30

**Traditional Yoruba**

*Batik and Adire:* Gasali Adeyemo

**Handwoven Dévoré:**

*Fabric Transformation:* Holly Brackmann

**Beyond Kimonos: Color Rice Paste**

*Resist on Silk:* Akemi Nakano Cohn

**Simple Stencil/Magical Color:**

*Jane Dunnewold*

**Knit and Crochet Sculpture:** Karen Searle

*Using Photoshop for*

*Jacquard Design:* Bhakti Ziek

## MAY 28-30

**Experimental Drawing:** Lorraine Glessner

## MAY 29-30

**From Passion to Paper: Writing for Surface Designers:** Bean Gilsdorf

**Advancing the Business Side of Your Art Practice:** Jill Heppenheimer and Doshi

### Post-Conference Workshops

#### JUNE 4

**Digital Photography for the Textile Artist:** Jeffrey Bruce

#### JUNE 4-6

**Loop-Braiding:** Joy Boutrup

*The Art of Creating Repeats:*

*Teliha Draheim*

**Needle Felted Drawings:** Briony Jean Foy

**Low-Tech Printing and**

*Improvisational Design:* Julia E. Pfaff

**Ikat Weaving with Indigo:** Marilyn Robert

#### JUNE 4-7

**Breakdown Printing and Beyond:** Claire Benn

**Garment Draping:** Anna Carlson

**Resist Dyeing on Hand-Felted Wool:**

*Chad Alice Hagen*

**Fabric Manipulation:** Candace Kling

**Silk, Color, Design and Reverse Appliqué:**

*Susan Louise Moyer*

**Contemporary Marbling:** Elin Noble

### 2007 SDA Conference: *Mind + Body* DAY PASSES (MAY 31 - JUNE 3)

SDA Conference day passes are available at the registration table-located at the Kansas City Art Institute's Living Center-for \$150. This pass includes admission to the vendor fair, lectures, concurrent sessions, events and gallery transportation for one day.





Above: Garth Johnson, from Elvis plate series, 2005, china paint, platinum and gold luster on found plates.

Below: Pat Hodson, *Red on Red* (detail), silk habotai, long fibred paper tissue, linen thread, wax, 280 cm x 160cm.



## Handymen and Girly Boys: Masculinity, Craft, Culture

Curator Maria Elena Buszek at Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art

Driven by her passion for experimental and conceptual art, Maria Elena Buszek's curated exhibition *Handymen and Girly Boys* investigates the boundaries of traditional craft culture. To be viewed, perhaps, as an encore to her Cube at Beco exhibition *Extra/ordinary* (displayed during the 2005 SDA Conference), Buszek's selection consists of contemporary artists who apply the syntax of craft and folk art culture to redefine gender and medium presumptions.

Composed entirely of art created by male artists, *Handymen and Girly Boys* calls into question the modern aesthetical judgment of Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno and Clement Greenburg. Highlights of this exhibition include mixed media sculpture by Pratt Institute graduate, Ben Schachter, whose work features electrical hardware and household forms. His contribution to *Handymen* includes *Shag Rug*, a mat of pink cable-ties that utilizes common domestic tools to recreate the traditional latch hook technique. Also on view are illustrated ceramic works by art blogger Garth Johnson ([www.extremecraft.com](http://www.extremecraft.com)). Through the combination of antique porcelain forms, gold leafing and images of the rock and roll icon Elvis Presley, Johnson references antique and kitsch collector's series to add a dash of luxury to pop culture.

Maria Elena Buszek is a curator, critic and art historian who currently teaches contemporary and modern art and theory at the Kansas City Art Institute. Critical writings by Buszek can be found within *Art in America*, the *Woman's Art Journal* and her publication *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*. Buszek is currently editing an anthology of critical essays that discusses the growing recognition of craft arts within fine art culture.

## The Illusionary and the Real: Dyed Colour and Digital Colour

Pat Hodson at Leedy-Voulikos Art Center

Challenging contemporary perceptions of digitally rendered artwork, Pat Hodson displays her recent textiles in the exhibition *The Illusionary and the Real: Dyed Colour and Digital Colour*, held at the Leedy-Voulikos Art Center. This work, the result of twenty-five years of exploration, presents an innovative approach to the possibilities of color and texture within textile arts.

Displayed as hanging panels or art books, Hodson's artwork utilizes a heightened contrast and saturated color that results from the artist's constant search for emotional ambiguity and a "purity" of color. The ever-present cyan hues of the batik dying process work alongside digital rendering of cyan in unified competition for validation of process in the fine arts setting.

In the wall hanging *Blue on Blue*, tactile illusions of depth are created through Hodson's mastery of a complicated process of collage that results in semi-transparent material that is both fabric and paper. Laminated within long-fibered tissues and coated in wax, these surfaces are collages that include fragments of dyed fabric and images collected from the artist's sketches, journals and photographs. The layering of these items seems to preserve and document the artist's alchemical creative process. Floating among an immaterial background, these fragments of de-contextualized shapes, alphabetical letters and drawings recall the compositions of surrealist artist Joan Miro.

Projecting her work towards the next step in illusion is the multi-media installation *Shadows*, which suggests a narrative that has been built around a book of signatures. Through its embracing of texture, the addition of a new color syntax and strengthened preservation qualities, the addition of a time-based dimension to Hodson's collages appears to complete her journey into surface illusion.



## How to See the Forest for the Trees

Jennifer Falck Linnsen at Arts Incubator

A peaceful hike through nature at any time of year tends to inspire the collector out of each of us. Provided with enchanting gazes into the trees or at the ground below, one is likely to discover shapes, forms and objects that have long gone unnoticed. Many a traveler has filled their pockets with these precious keepsakes for private reflection: the perfection of a seed, the functional beauty of a cocoon, the texture and color of a leaf. Yet, it sometimes seems impossible to take the time to appreciate such things.

Formed out of various papers and precious metals, Jennifer Falck Linnsen's sculptures enliven this desire to become enraptured with details. Her delicate handcrafted baskets are created from organically inspired tones, forms and patterns that urge viewers to take the time to experience. Linnsen's intricately cut patterns invoke the Japanese katagami processes that were developed as ancient forms of silkscreening to create resist stencils for use in kimono dying. In Linnsen's work, these stencils are re-contextualized from artist's tools to an art object in its own right. These lattice-like patterned surfaces illustrate a fetish in details that are delicately crafted metaphoric and archetypal forms. The addition of metallic wiring used to create sterling silver cores or to reinforce and bind the papers' outer edges strikes a sense of balance in her work.

A resident of Colorado, Jennifer Falck Linnsen has won nation-wide awards in sculpture, basketry and craftsmanship. Her work has appeared in Chicago's International Exposition of Sculpture Objects and Functional Art, the *Surface Design Journal's Gallery Issue*, and multiple printed advertisements and showrooms with clients such as Crate and Barrel.

## The Resonance of Stitching

Jan-Ru Wan at Grothaus + Pearl Gallery

Born in Taiwan, Jan-Ru Wan has spent much of her artistic career reflecting upon cultural and personal identity. Her pursuit has resulted in a detection of balance that evolves from an innate dualism that she has felt encompassing all things. In her solo exhibition, *The Resonance of Stitching*, Wan presents three major sculptural works that appear to document the trials Wan has met in her journey towards finding the universal human. Though individual works are laden with specific cultural references from her Buddhist and Taoist roots, Wan hopes to represent the essential human, "born in nature and constructed by culture."

Her sculptural installation *KuanYin — observing the inner voice* depicts a garment suspended in the prone position from the wall reaching out to its viewers. Its title refers to a Buddhist bodhisattva and a Goddess of Mercy and Compassion. Her name originates from Kuan-shih Yin, which translates to "observing the sounds of the world." Her use of symbolism and repetition combined with a use of ordinary materials and tendency to work in large-scale unite in ways that are emotionally powerful. Through these qualities the embellished garment of *KuanYin* seems to transform into a physical manifestation of the religious deity herself.

Jan-Ru Wu is an assistant professor of art at East Carolina State University. Following studies at the University of Wisconsin and the Art Institute of Chicago, Wan has exhibited textiles throughout the United States and Asia. Her work has been selected for honors through various juried and invited exhibitions, including the touring exhibition *Red Beans and Rice: Asian Arts in the New South* that was curated by Kóan-Jeff Baysa and Craig Bunting for the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center.



Above: Jennifer Falck Linnsen, *Begin Again* (detail), 2007, handcrafted basket of katagami-style hand carved paper with stitched and random weave construction, archival cotton paper, waxed linen, coated copper wire, reed, dye, paint, varnish, freshwater pearls, 3.5" x 13.5" x 14". Photo courtesy Tim Benko.

Below: Jan Ru Wan, *KuanYin - observing the inner voice* (installation detail), woven ikat and waxed thread, rusted bells encased in wax and printed mirror on floor, 9' x 15' x 2'.





# Debra Smith:

**The Good, The Bad, But no More Ugly**

Janell Christopher Meador



Debra Smith in her studio. All images courtesy Elisia Friedman.



Artist Debra Smith has been in nine car accidents (most involving the neglect of red lights), suffered Bell's Palsy, spent nine months in a wheelchair and was given an obscene sign from the cosmos before deciding to move back to Kansas City, Missouri from New York City in 2005. Near the end of her eight-year sojourn in New York, Smith asked the cosmos for a sign to indicate whether she should return to Missouri or remain in New York. She had hoped the sign might be the handsome guy on his bicycle, she often saw on her neighborhood walks. Instead, her sign came in the form of a fat naked guy standing in his window masturbating, shades half pulled to hide his identity. Bad stuff. It was time for her to restart her life and career elsewhere.

Debra Smith now lives in a beautifully remodeled house overlooking downtown Kansas City, she has sold her work in galleries and boutiques in Germany, Switzerland

and the United States, and she continues to make her living as a fiber artist — her passion is her profession. That is good.

Smith graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, Missouri, in 1993, studied at the Italian Academy of Fashion and Design at Lorenzo de Medici, the Polimoda International Institute of Design and Marketing, Florence, Italy, and she has an associate degree in accessory design from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. She is the founder of Sakori, a business that produces hand-woven scarves, accessories and fine art made from contemporary and antique fabrics. A third generation weaver, she has shown her work at the Dolphin Gallery and The Pearl Gallery in Kansas City, the Pencil Factory in Brooklyn, New York, and the Olsen-Larsen Gallery in West Des Moines, Iowa.

After graduating from KCAI, Smith worked for Asiatica, a Kansas City company that sells custom designed clothing and accessories, owned by Elizabeth Wilson and Fifi White since 1980. Asiatica is renowned for creating fashions from antique kimonos collected in Japan. In the early 1990's, the partners donated some scraps of silk from kimono linings to the fiber department at KCAI, where Smith was studying. Smith seized the opportunity to work with such rare fabric and wove the first of her now well-known scarves, which Fifi White bought at an end-of-semester student art sale. White returned to show off her purchase to Wilson, saying that she had bought the best thing at the sale. Wilson then pointed out that of course it was the best — it was woven out of their own donated fabric.

It was no coincidence, therefore, that the Asiatica partners asked Debra Smith to work for them when she graduated





Detail of one of Smith's works in progress.



Detail of felt and fabric flower pins in Smith's studio.

from KCAI. "They asked me if I was still making the scarves," says Smith. "I totally lied and said, 'Yeah, sure.' I had to run out and borrow a loom." Smith worked as a fabric inspector at Asiatica for the next five years.

The first time Debra Smith visited New York City she was a student and could afford only cheap accommodations; she quickly saw the ugly side of the city. Later, as an employee of Asiatica, she could afford more agreeable surroundings and saw the creative, exciting possibilities of living in New York. Walking in Soho, she saw fabulous work in shops and felt that, if surrounded by this teeming atmosphere, her work would be inspired — she could create anything.

In 1998, Smith moved to New York City, rented an apartment and a studio. She had just received the largest order of her life: 300 scarves from the globally distributed

Peruvian Connection Catalog. "You get so busy just living in New York," she says. She was so busy, preoccupied and in such a hurry, while riding her bicycle home through the crowded streets, that she failed to avoid an oncoming car driven by a 74-year-old man who did not see her coming. She landed on her knee, shattering her tibia plateau, and spent the next six months in a wheelchair.

Plowing forward, she continued weaving from her wheelchair, filling the Peruvian Connection order and attending the Fashion Institute of Technology to study accessory design. In 2002, she was working for Wolfgang Thom, a German artist, at his company Decor Floral in New York. She began to realize that all her energy was being spent to simply pay the high cost of living in the city. Her art was being pushed into the background.

From November 2002 to March 2003, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York exhibited the *Quilts of Gee's Bend*, a collection of 70 quilts created by 42 women, most descendants of former slaves, from the community of Gee's Bend, Alabama. This exhibit had a stunning effect on Debra Smith. "The quilts were like undulating hides of flesh that billowed off of the wall," she says. "One woman made a quilt from the work clothes of her dead husband." Smith was awed by the naive beauty of the quilts. "They were pure passion and love," she says. "They weren't even trying to make art — they just did it. I wanted to do that."

A phone call from a friend gave Smith the push she needed to make a change. Rachel Jacobs was working as a chef at the Rainbow Trout Ranch in Antonito, Colorado, and she encouraged Smith to join her there. "I kept telling Wolfgang I wanted to quit, but he ignored





Fabric strips waiting to be woven.



Stack of Smith's popular woven scarves.

me," Smith says. "So I told him I was going to an art camp in Colorado, and to not contact me." She bought some vintage western clothing from David Brockman at Second Honeymoon, packed up her portable sewing machine and spent the next six months at the dude ranch. "My job at the dude ranch was to drop the laundry off in Alamosa and get the chainsaw blades sharpened," she says. "Then I would walk around Wal-Mart wearing these insane pink paisley pants looking for blue cheese and buying massive amounts of clay pigeons. They must have thought I was crazy."

After an expensive trip to Australia and the aforementioned sign from the cosmos, Debra Smith was convinced to leave New York City. "I was spending all of my time paying the bills in New York," she says. "I realized that I could do what I do anywhere."

In 2004, Smith exhibited in Kansas City in a KCAI alumni show organized by artist and alumni Davin Watne. While in town, she found a house at 1661 Madison and decided this was where she wanted to be. Built in the

late 1800s, the house was dilapidated. "No one but squirrels had lived there since 1984," she says. "Before that, a blind couple lived in it for 60 years." Smith peeled off wallpaper, put in a parquet floor in the kitchen, and added a shed dormer and a deck on the second story where she now has her studio. In the studio, stacks and racks of colorful rolls of strips and folded fabrics fill every space not occupied by looms, cutting tables and sewing machines. "I'm constantly opening boxes," Smith says. "I never get to see all my fabrics together."

Smith says she created more art during her first year back in Kansas City than she had done in the entire eight years she spent in New York. "I had three shows here the first year I was back," she says. In 2005, Smith participated in the *H&R Block Artspace Flatfiles* exhibition, a group show at the Dolphin Gallery and a show with Kate Andrews at The Pearl Gallery.

Her home finally finished, Smith is considering a new contract with Peruvian Connection and looking forward to the 2007 International Surface Design Association

Conference in Kansas City. She still weaves scarves and creates fine art with fabric, she recently hosted another show of her fine art in March, in Kansas City, and she returned from a trip to Hong Kong in April.

Is it difficult to make a distinction between art and craft? "There is a distinction," she says. "The scarves are my bread and butter. Doing them allows me to make art. I have noticed that when I stop weaving and sit down to try and sew art there is always this moment of anxiety, stress and pressure ... the first things I do are so forced — overworked ... then I hit a more calm, tranquil stride where things just flow. Working on multiple pieces, things just begin to fit rather than being forced together."

Smith easily balances her fine art versus her commercial work, just as she answers the question: artist or craftsman? "I have no problem with the word craft. I am not offended," she says. "I'm a Gemini. I'm both." •





Anna Peach, *Schwarzwald/Black Forest*, 2006, lichen collected from the Black Forest of Germany, cut and reassembled using glue, 5" x 4" x 2". Photo courtesy Max Gessler.



Carolyn Kallenborn, *Yes or NO*, 2006, X-acto blades, beads, sequins, bells, velvet, ribbon, found objects, stitching, construction, disperse dye, 12" x 2.5" x 8". Photo courtesy Jeff Bruce.

# Let Them Wear Merkins!

## An Interview With Curator Linda Gass

*What is a merkin and what is a group of them doing in Kansas City's Crossroads Arts District? Guest Editor Amelia Ishmael, had a chance to discuss these questions with Californian artist and curator Linda Gass, whose *Intimate Apparel Exhibition* will be on view at the Pi Gallery throughout June.*

**Amelia Ishmael:** Could you describe what a merkin is, in the context of your exhibition?

**Linda Gass:** The best way I can describe what a merkin is in the context of this exhibition is that it's the format for the artwork. When I invited the artists to participate in the exhibition, I let them interpret what a merkin was in any way they liked. I did give them some background information on what a merkin is, and I gave them a size constraint because I wanted the merkins to be somewhat realistic in terms of size.

Most people don't know what a merkin is though, and that's part of the fun of this exhibition. Dictionaries vary

on the definition but most agree that it's a pubic wig. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "an artificial covering of hair for the female pubic region; a pubic wig for women."

**AI:** Does the artwork in this exhibition take, primarily, a female perspective?

**LG:** Yes, the artwork is most definitely from a female perspective. All of the invited artists are female and the subject of the exhibition, the merkin, is historically about a female part of the body. Many of the artists' interpretations are very intimate and reflect a wide range of the female experience. The artists have really

tapped into important female experiences that cover the complete emotional spectrum from joy and ecstasy to fear and protection.

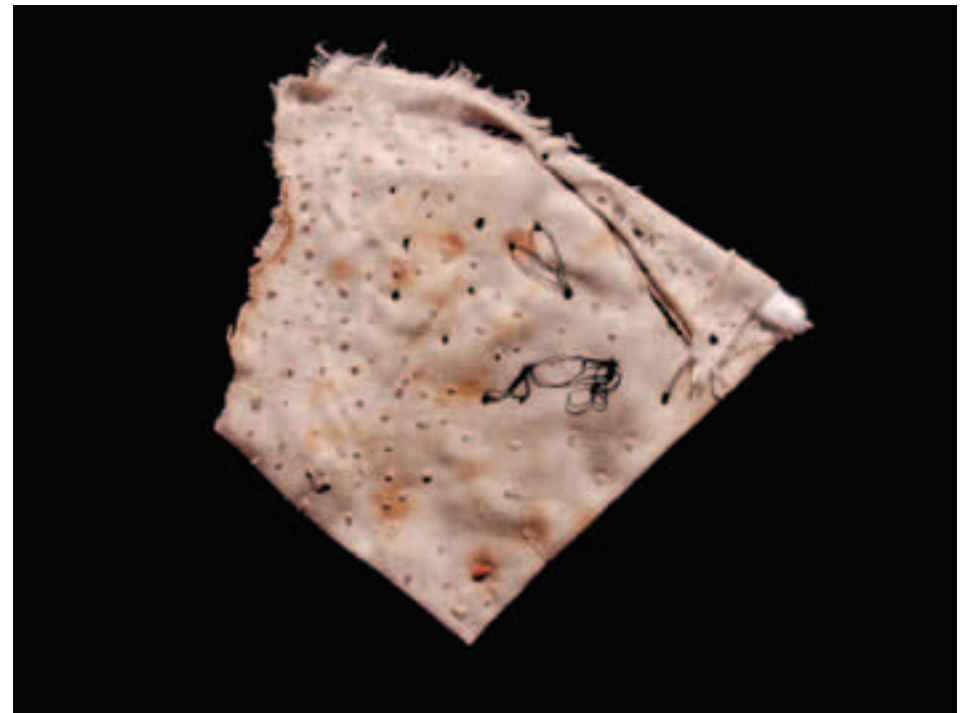
**AI:** How did you arrive at the idea for this exhibition?

**LG:** The idea for this exhibit came up during a late night conversation with my hotel roommates at the last Surface Design Conference, two years ago. A few days before I left for the conference, a friend sent me a link to a satirical website made to look like an online store for must-have gear for Burning Man (the week-long communal camping and art event that takes place in the Nevada Desert every year around Labor Day). One of the items on the





Wendy Huhn, *Safety 1st*, 2006, cotton thread, silk flowers, beads, cotton fabric, timentex as batting, hand embroidery, stitching, xylene transfers, beading, 7.5" x 6" x 1/8". Photo courtesy the artist.



Susan Freidland, *Worn*, 2006, burnt linen, hemp twine, hand quilted french knots, 5.5" x 5.5" x 1/4". Photo courtesy the Hansine Pederson Goran.

website was a Flashlight Merkin complete with a photo of a woman's torso modeling this pink fur patch with an LED headlamp attached to it. Any woman who has gone to Burning Man can appreciate what a useful hands free item this would be for the porta-potties at night but, when I shared the joke with my hotel roommates, they didn't know what a merkin was and didn't believe me when I told them it was a real thing. I had heard of a merkin before, but I had to admit that I didn't really know how and why it came into being.

The next day, I did a little bit of research on the internet and learned that the merkin goes back many centuries to a time when pubic lice were a common problem and women would have to shave their pubic hair to relieve the itching and eradicate the lice. Merkins were then invented to replace the shaved hair, so the women wouldn't feel bare. Then, prostitutes got hip to the fact that merkins could be used to cover up the marks of syphilis and genital warts and they could appear to be disease-free and therefore, still employable. My roommates were amazed to learn this and were still a little skeptical so we started discretely asking other conference attendees if they knew what a merkin was. We got some very interesting answers, and only one other person actually

knew what a merkin really was. One of the most hilarious answers came from the British husband of one of my roommates. My roommate was sure that her husband would know what a merkin was, since she thought it sounded like a British word, kind of Shakespearean. She called him on her cell phone late at night after we had gone out to dinner and unintentionally woke him up. She asked if he knew what a merkin was, and being the good humored sort of man that he is, rather than hanging up the phone in disgust, he said "it's what President Bush calls the people who live in this country."

Once all of this talk of merkins started, we really couldn't stop, and because we're all artists we started coming up with wild ideas of what could be a merkin. Then we found out that the theme for the next conference was going to be Mind and Body and that's when the idea of creating an exhibit of merkins really solidified.

**AI:** What sorts of issues do the artists you have selected for this exhibition approach in their works?

**LG:** There is such a wide range of issues covered — which I'll tell you about in a second — but first, I want to say that I didn't ask the artists for statements about

their merkins and, like all good art, the works speak for themselves, and everyone may view them differently. That said, I see many issues being addressed such as fertility, shame, power struggles and domination, flirtation and seduction, voyeurism and pleasure. Many of the pieces use humor to address their issues — some are very direct in their humor through use of illustrative graphics. Others are more subtly humorous through their choice of materials or the title they have given to their piece. Some of the works look at the stages of our lives and the impact that has on our sexuality and sense of womanliness — whether it's being young, attractive and seductive or growing old with a life full of experiences or being in the circumstance of a long distance relationship. Two of the works are representations of fig leaves — making the Biblical connection of merkin as cover-up and all of the issues that go with covering something up: shame, self-esteem, modesty, vulnerability. It's interesting for me to observe that many of the works have a dangerous quality to them — mostly through their choice of materials but sometimes through their imagery. We're clearly dealing with a dangerous part of the body here and those artists addressed that straight on. Many of the works have a messenger quality to them — they communicate a specific message to an intended viewer



Hollie Heller, *So to Speak*, 2006, Collage with gloss medium, text, painted paper fiber, stitching, 6" x 7" x 1". Photo courtesy the James Dee.



Robin Cowley, *Bait*, 2006, purple silicone fishing worms, industrial black plastic screening, canvas, 6" x 10" x 3". Photo courtesy the Don Tuttle.

— some are literally instructive, and some indicate mood or receptiveness.

**AI:** What types of material and processes are used in the pieces on exhibit?

**LG:** The range of materials is wildly diverse. In addition to fabrics such as velvet, silk, cotton and lace, the artists have used beads, sequins, human hair, X-acto blades, silicone fishing bait, bobby pins, pine cone scales, chrysanthemum stamens, lichen collected from the Black Forest, seaweed, glass eyes, fish skin, vintage keys, match sticks, mirrors, aluminum, copper wire, rusted metal washers, and plastic and glass fruit.

The techniques used are equally diverse and include weaving, embroidery, crochet, quilting, fusing, felting, basketry, silkscreening, monoprinting, marbling, beading, sewing, bookmaking, painting, casting, burning, and mixed-media assemblage.

One of the merkins will literally come to life during the exhibit; it's made of moss and seeds and visitors to the gallery will be able to interact with the merkin by

spraying water on it to help it grow during the duration of the exhibit.

**AI:** In your research did you come across any companies seriously producing merkins as a commodity?

**LG:** Before I approached any of the artists to invite them to participate, I put together an informational website about the exhibit including information about merkins. Some of the early artists I invited wanted to see photos of actual merkins and so I found some on the internet. I actually did find a company that sells wigs that offers merkins that are made to look like real pubic hair. There are also a couple of websites out of the UK that sell decorative merkins — ones that look like dyed fur in different designs such as rainbows, bulls-eyes and happy faces.

**AI:** Have any of the artists who were invited to create pieces for this exhibition worked with this subject matter previously?

**LG:** Yes, two of the artists have made merkins before. In fact, one of the merkins in the exhibit was made seven years ago. Most of the artists I invited had never heard

of a merkin before I invited them to participate but a few were already familiar with what it was. In fact, one of the artists told me that she's been looking for a specimen of a real merkin in museum collections around the world for the past ten years and she has yet to find one. From the very beginning, it's been so much fun to work with the invited artists on this exhibit. I invited some artists I knew personally or had some prior contact with but half of the artists were people who I basically cold-called to invite. Their responses to my invitation were so enthusiastic and oftentimes they had funny stories to share around the topic, especially once they learned what this was. I was amazed to learn that some of them had already made a merkin (one made a quilted merkin for a friend who had a hysterectomy and she didn't want her to catch cold after they shaved her for the surgery).

**AI:** The exhibition's title, *Intimate Apparel*, implies that the merkin is worn. Did the artists involved work out how their works could be attached to the body?

**LG:** I agree that the title does sound like we might have created wearable art, however, that wasn't a requirement of the exhibition, and it was never implied that the artists had to make merkins that could be worn. Some of the artists have created pieces that could actually be worn but most did not. The exhibition was really more about the concept and interpretation of a merkin rather than creating a real piece of wearable art. As a result of not making this wearable constraint, I think it's a very strong exhibit — I mean, some of these merkins would be downright scary to wear yet their message is extremely powerful because of this. Just in case you're wondering how real merkins are attached to the body, they are done in the same way as false mustaches, with spirit gum.

**AI:** Could you tell us about one of your personal favorite works in the show?

**LG:** I'd be happy to tell you about all 37 of my personal favorite works in the show. Seriously, I find it impossible to choose a favorite because the artists have exceeded my expectations in terms of what they have created. Each time photographs from an artist arrived in my mailbox, I was blown away by what they had done — it was like receiving the most incredible gifts for weeks on end. And I think the artists themselves are really pleased with what they've created within this theme. Originally, I asked each artist to only make one merkin, but I later gave them the option to make more than one in the event that there was space in the gallery. Some of the artists made three or four merkins — I was just astounded by the response and creativity I was getting. •





## An Urban Fairytale Flavor: A DIALOGUE WITH JOSCELYN HIMES

Showcasing 29 individual artists and 75 garments, the Surface Design Association's Fashion Show is performing this year at the historic Folly Theater under the coordination of Joscelyn Himes and Chadwick Brooks. Announced to present an urban fairytale flavor, this runway show aspires to present a range of elegant, chaotic, rough and serene traditional garments and garment sculpture.

**Amelia Ishmael:** How did your involvement in the SDA fashion shows begin?

**Joscelyn Himes:** I had been a member of SDA for a couple years and had helped with the Trunk Shows. Carolyn Kallenborn, the conference coordinator, asked me to attend a meeting after the 2003 conference as part of a brainstorming committee. I had been thinking about how to involve the public more into SDA events and how to gain more support for the galleries and artists in general. The fashion show was proposed as a way to offer the members a way to show their wearables in motion and as a way to have the Kansas City community attend an event that would help achieve a better understanding and appreciation of what SDA stands for.

**AI:** How does your experience as a fiber artist inform how you create and view fashion shows?

**JH:** I think understanding art in general, both in concept and creation, helps me to visualize the way through the process to the final product. I have collaborated many times as an artist, and I love that way of working, which is vital to pulling a piece like this fashion performance together.

**AI:** At the Kansas City Art Institute, one can get a sense that many students of the fiber department were also interested in fashion design. This seems true for other art institutes and schools as well. How does the interest for building clothing sprout from the creative textile and surface design?

**JH:** It is natural to think about a final product when creating yardage. When I design fabric to show to fashion designers, I constantly think about how they can use it. I think about placement, line, pattern, color ... all of those things that would affect the person wearing the final garment. It ultimately has to be wearable so therein lies a natural set of boundaries that are fun to push and pull.





Joscelyn Himes, *Gold Dupioni Tutu with Umbrella*, modeled by Destiny Dixon for the 2005 fashion show *Taking Flight*. Photo courtesy Matt Collins.



Carolyn Kallenborn, *Weighting*.



Joscelyn Himes, *Tourquoise Fiddle Dress in Charmeuse*, modeled by Ashley Thursby for the 2005 fashion show *Taking Flight*. Photo courtesy Matt Collins.

This is not to say that all surface design should be made into clothing; this is how I use most of my design, but obviously, there are multitudes of applications in many different industries.

**AI:** The last conference included a presentation by Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada who described high-tech natural and synthetic fiber blends that are being used by contemporary artists. At the same time, digital printing on textiles has become easier to access for artists and students. Have you seen any interesting runoffs of these modern applications in fashion design? How are they integrated with more traditional techniques?

**JH:** We have two artists in particular in the June 2nd fashion show that fit into this category. Jorie Johnson of JoiRae Textiles in Kyoto, Japan, has presented us with her felted, light-reactive clothing. These pieces incorporate wool with day-glow polyester fibers and other materials to create garments that are interesting in every light.

Eundeok Kim from Tallahassee, Florida, has created garments that exhibit a joyful balance of technology and nature. We will present three of these in our show. Look for images of trees and flowers digitally printed in the form of lovely, flowing dresses.

**AI:** *Transgression and Transformation* is the title of this year's show. Could you describe this title and how its concept guided your selection of artists?

**JH:** We wanted a theme that would be a natural link to the theme of the conference, *Mind + Body*. The idea of transformation seemed an obvious choice, but we wanted to incorporate the idea of something that would represent the opposite ... like the yin-and-yang balance of this theme. Transformation can be a positive or a negative, depending on the circumstances of the process, and transgression is an equal duality that is usually thought of as a negative, but to transgress against something can also be very positive depending on the circumstances of that transgression.

**AI:** What are some of the difficulties you confront when organizing a show of this scale?

**JH:** The biggest challenge is creating a show that looks cohesive. We have so many artists that we have to be very inventive about how we present the work. We do not want it to feel like 29 mini-shows; we look for similarities in the submitted garments and start grouping them together. We can also use props, hair and makeup to create a thread of consistency within the show. Fortunately, I have Chadwick Brooks as my co-director (he will be focusing on the performance part of the show, while I will focus on the runway portion), and I have Arlen Wickstrum as a creative partner, as well as amazing musical and dance professionals. I feel so fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated group to help make this show a reality!

**AI:** One of the artists on view will be the San Francisco designer Colleen Quen, whose couture designs have been worn on the red carpet by celebrities such as Tyra Banks, Paris Hilton, and Geena Davis. Can you tell us a little about what she will be presenting?

**JH:** At the time of this interview, we have not nailed down the exact garments; plus, we don't want to give away the brilliant surprise! But Colleen Quen is such an amazing designer and artist that to miss seeing her garments at this show would be a real shame. I have seen garments that she has created that have the most intricate inner structure imaginable. Some have tiny bits of boning that create small pyramids built into the fabric of the garment. This construction ensures the integrity of the garment regardless of wear. Bold strokes of color and pattern are also signatures of her work. She is really quite fearless with her garments. Her website is [www.colleenquencouture.com](http://www.colleenquencouture.com).

**AI:** The 2005 SDA runway performance included an amazing kite show; can you provide any hints as to what we will be in store for this year?

**JH:** This year we are bringing in the talent of Mark Southerland, musician extraordinaire (Mark plays in several bands including the Malachy Papers and TJ Dovebelly). He will present one of his wearable instrument performances in conjunction with dancers from various dance genres. •



## Fluent in Thread: SDA Solo Exhibitions at Belger Arts Center

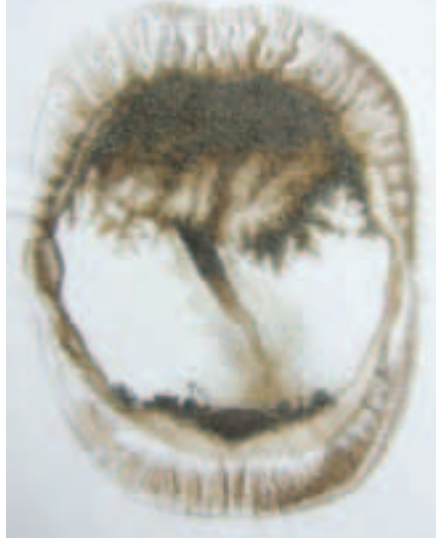
Amelia Ishmael

With four solo exhibitions in-house, the Belger Arts Center continues its protagonist role as the textile arts' mecca during the Surface Design Association Conference. The work of Dorothy Caldwell, Kyoung Ae Cho, Annet Couwenberg and Kate Kretz display a wide range of processes and ideas that are sure to inspire and fascinate viewers who approach the exhibits on various levels of contemporary fiber arts fluency.

Internationally exhibiting artist and lecturer Dorothy Caldwell presents the latest developments of her textile work in the partitioned show *Marking the Everyday*. Begun in 2003, during a studio residency at the Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto, Canada, this exhibition was inspired by Caldwell's exploration into historical restorative stitching and mending techniques. Separated into two collections — the artist's recent fine art quilts and a supportive display of domestic traditions, antiquarian textiles and artistic influences — *Marking the Everyday* allows viewers to gain insight and visually reference the intensive processes and appearances of historical domestic textiles within Caldwell's representational quilts.

Strongly influenced by the surrounding landscape at her eastern Ontario home (where she has lived since the early 1970s), Caldwell has created large-scale quilts for this exhibition that extend over gallery walls suggestive of landscapes and everyday objects. In almost thematically colored blue, black-and-white swatches, the pieces in this collection use simplified shapes — such as ovals, rectangles, and cones — to signify the geological formations of hills, ponds, and islands. The organically trimmed pieces are plotted into grid-like patterns that stretch across her quilts' surface in ways that resemble patched cloths. Across these representational shapes, Caldwell creates a series of marks that are created using wax-resist and discharge techniques, adding layers of patterned texture and imagery to the quilts. Real and painted stitches are worked into these layers, often covering the surfaces in hypnotic rhythms that seem to reference field rows of cultivated land. Titles such as *A Lake/A Bowl* and *An Island/A Pond* provide these works with an ambiguous sense of representational *jouissance*.

Partitioned from these quilts is a smaller exhibit of objects taken from Caldwell's studio and private collection. This



Kate Kretz, *Threat of Heavy Weather*, human hair stitched on pillow.



Kyoung Ae Cho, *Aura II* (detail), 2002, corn leaves, silk organza, thread, 54" x 25".

display includes a historic darning sample and woman's sewing handbook, a child's sampler book and mended white muslin dress and sketchbooks, and drawings and patterns that were part of the artist's research at the Textile Museum of Canada. Such highlighting of the care and energy that was once expended to conserve simple cloths seems strongly disconnected from modern predispositions. This second display provides exciting insights into the artist's personal interests and the influences behind her quilts. Like the years of cultivation that identify contemporary field-scapes, Caldwell's collection of mending techniques and cloths introduce the possibility of the textile or garment to be a time capsule of personal details and memories.

Regarding collaborations with nature, Kyoung Ae Cho's mixed media artworks pronounce an intimate approach toward our environment. Cho's exploration, represented through material-based series, concentrates on single elements such as pine needles, sage bushes or small bits of wood. Her works succeed in reaching a difficult balance between respectfully portraying organic materials and restructuring these materials to develop visual enhancements.

Cho was born in 1963 in South Korea, where she studied textile arts at the Duksung Woman's University, Seoul, South Korea, before relocating to the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Her work has been exhibited internationally including exhibits in the United States at the Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, Minnesota, the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, Colorado, University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington, Kentucky and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Alongside her active exhibition schedule, Cho also participates in academia as a lecturer, visiting artist and instructor — with students from the Kansas City Art Institute, Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School and

Penland School of Crafts, Penland, North Carolina. She is currently an associate professor at the Peck School of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

For her exhibition *Tranquil Moment* Cho has formed a series of work revealing of the formal and spiritual possibilities of corn leaves. Each piece on view contains long narrow leaves that are encased within two delicate sheets of white silk organza. Suspended within this enveloping, the leaves appear to float above the wall's surface as though in a thin cocoon.

Peacefully, the preserved corn leaves in the Cho's *Aura* series include four wall hangings. Encircled by thousands of red or white hand-stitched lines, these leaves appear to release lyrical fields of energy. In one piece, this spiritual force appears to radiate from a single leaf, but as a second leaf is added to the composition a relationship is suggested between each element and its surroundings.

In the 22-foot-long horizontal display *Continuation*, Cho presents a corn leaf that has been spliced into short segments and lengthened with repeated middle particles. With bars of vertical red stitches, Cho appears to be methodically compressing the leaf. (The choice of material used to present this dissection and artificial splicing seems to introduce a meditation of, specifically, the genetic alterations that have been performed to corn since its early days of cultivation and, generally, the interactions that man continues to have through his environment.) The scale and ambiguity presented in *Continuation* empowers this particular work to actively initiate a dialogue with Cho's viewers regarding our present environmental concerns and politics.

In a series of work that relates directly to the human form, Annet Couwenberg presents three groups of work for her exhibition *On Pins and Needles*. Heavily provoked by the



Dorothy Caldwell, *Between a Hill and a Lake*, wax, oversized stitching, cloth.



Annet Couwenberg, *Act Normal and That's Already Crazy Enough* (detail), starched fabric, reed, computer embroidery, copper wire, 31" diameter. Photo courtesy Dan Meyers.

culture surrounding her Dutch background, her work is rooted in the civic responsibility and Calvinistic work ethic that permeates her heritage. Balancing this strict work ethic with exhaustive introspection, Couwenberg uses clothing as an entrance into the emotional realities within the wearer. She approaches her constructed garments architecturally, as both a form of protection and concealment, and metaphorically, as an opportunity to describe the conflict between social rhetoric and private desires.

Couwenberg's frequent use of the ruff collar (a popular high ruffled collar worn in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Western Europe) in her work, alongside needle-lace, introduces contemporary viewers to antiquated symbols of nobility and wealth that today seems foreign and archaic. *Discarded Ruffle*, her latest installation, takes advantage of the unique architecture of the Belger Arts Center. Through the wielding of thousands of large paper lace dollies, this artist creates an engulfing oversized version of the ruff collar that is a feasible extension of the piece Couwenberg recently created for New York's Museum of Arts & Design exhibition *Radical Lace & Subversive Knitting*. With references to the history of the lace commodity, *Discarded Ruffle Collar* confronts the appropriation of this once priceless object into a disposable commodity. In her artist statement, Couwenberg describes the lace paper dolly as an "imitation of culture, cheaply bought and easily discarded. As a commoditized token of class," she continues, "it glorifies elegance, however false."

This idea of falseness is further explored in the new series of work *Are We Perfect Yet?*, which includes dozens of digitized computer embroideries/portraits. In reaction to a personal fear of eugenics, Couwenberg references the cruel Nazi experiments that were attempts toward perfection and beauty through genetic and surgical intervention. The digital white-on-white images portray

a dehumanized image that strives towards superiority. A continuation of this installation is represented through three large-format digital prints depicting the circled embroidery of the question *Are We Perfect Yet?* Through her reference to the historical use of embroidery to identify significant bloodlines, Couwenberg establishes embroidery as a metaphor for genetics.

Annet Couwenberg's textile works have been exhibited internationally and throughout the United States at the Villa Julie Gallery, Stevenson, Maryland, Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts, Wilmington, Delaware, and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri. She is currently the chair of fiber arts at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland.

Hand-embroidered images created from human hair invite viewers to a surreal state in Kate Kretz's exhibition *Threadbare*. Trained initially as a painter, Kretz turned to textiles about seven years ago in order to communicate three-dimensionally. After teaching herself to sew by instruction manuals and experimentation, Kretz created a series of *psychological clothing* as a way to use garments to illustrate, rather than conceal, inner states of mind. Qualities of this subconsciously inspired clothing are perceptible in the series of embroidered pillowcases that Kretz presents in *Threadbare*. Illustrated with the psychologically intimacy and the emotional vulnerability explored by artists such as Frida Kahlo and Nan Goldin, this series of work seems to dwell on characteristics of the female condition.

In *Threat of Heavy Weather*, an open mouth is craftily stitched into the pillow's surface with the artist's own hair. Pressed from within the pillow's surface the mouth's lips are parted, revealing a frightful tornado spinning inside. Whether this image portrays a scene from the artist's memory or a nightmare, the inner tornado image

presents a scene that the artist often revisits within her artistic career. Cate McQuaid of the *Boston Globe* wrote that "the mouth, to this artist, is a metaphor for taking in life, and then digesting and integrating it or spitting it back out." If the scene that is presented here represents the inhaled life, viewers are invited to wonder what secrets they might witness if they were to rest their own ear atop the Kretz's exhaling mouths.

Perhaps inspired by a stray hair left behind on Kretz's pillow, the piece *Young Lover* depicts the long wavy trusses and ear of the artist's ex-boyfriend. Created by crosshatching and threading strands of the boyfriend's hair, Kretz presents her viewers with a chilling representation of this partner. As though made in an attempt to arrest the lover's presence on her bedside, this invocation seems to regenerate the lover's ear with the purpose to engage in intimate unspoken discussions.

Kretz is a graduate from the fine arts departments of the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, and the Binghamton University in New York. Her work has been exhibited at The Fiber Art Foundation in Amherst, Massachusetts, The Frost Art Museum, Miami, Florida, and the Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.

Gallery goers during the 2005 SDA Conference are sure to remember the large-scale installations of Chunghie Lee, the reconstructed ancient Japanese garments by Wendy Lugg, the cerebral works of mixed media by Anne Lindberg, and Jason Pollen's *Chysalis*, a magnificent series of collages on industrial rubber. In this new exhibition, the Belger Art Center presents artists who express a rich understanding of the traditions and practices of textile arts and who infuse each work with originality, thoughtfulness and aesthetic maturity. This stands as proof of the liveliness of textile arts in the contemporary fine arts community. •



# Excavating the Surface:

An exhibition of Textiles by Pauline Verbeek-Cowart and Susan Lordi Marker

Amelia Ishmael

*RHYTHEM: A Symphony in Cloth*, Pauline Verbeek-Cowart and Susan Lordi Marker's first collaborative exhibition, hopes to guide viewers through a cornucopia of exploratory textiles rich in weavings and surface designs. Driven with the impetus and inspiration of nature's mysteries, both artists incorporate aspects of organic patterning into their works. Experimental and controlled, immense and intimate, Verbeek-Cowart and Lordi Marker present a coordination of pattern that seems to resonate with sound.

Previously exhibited textile works serve as the framework for *RHYTHEM*, which contains mostly artworks that were created specifically for this exhibition. Branching out from the traditional display methods, the works installed required high ceilings and room to breathe. Verbeek-Cowart explains, "Creating works for this exhibition has prompted me to consider placing a piece in space; it will be fairly large and encompasses many ideas that are all converging in one piece."

Although the works in this exhibition span up to eight feet in height and width, neither artist views the work as installations. The spatial relations between the body and the artwork of both artists, however, provide dynamic experiences for the viewer. "I want the whole to create impact for the viewer when they first encounter the piece," Susan Lordi Marker says. "Thus, the scale needs to be large." As their work evolved together, Verbeek-Cowart and Lordi Marker realized that they were no longer creating yardage; they wanted to exhibit their works in a non-traditional way to revisit how to let "cloth be cloth, and not force it onto a wall or simply hang it straight." Verbeek-Cowart discovered that "the idea of movement" in her work "expanded beyond the visual plane to the possibilities of having the work move away from the wall to allow for various perspectives." Her work in this exhibition is installed to allow viewers to walk completely around her weavings and experience her artworks as objects with depth instead of as two-dimensional images. "The most recent development," she says, "has been the idea of having planes intersect to evoke pattern and to engage the viewer in understanding the piece through different points of view."

Like macro photos captured by scientists, there is a moment of "what is it?" that occurs in many viewers as they look into Pauline's weavings. Her latest work, *Luna*, immediately draws to mind NASA's recent extraordinary pictures taken on Saturn's moons. Yet, the patterned

texture depicted in this weaving seems vaguely familiar ... like something ordinary. There is a dance that often occurs between her textile works as her viewers step back and forth ... toward and away. The panel draws you in until the image's resolution slowly breaks up into intercrossing lines. Of this vantage point she says, "As a weaving is constructed of intersecting horizontal and vertical threads, an image is not on the surface but in the structure."

Verbeek-Cowart's process is unique among many other fiber artists. She captures her source images through manipulated photographs and digital scans. She then processes her image through the interface of her Norwegian electronic Jacquard-loom, which translates her black-and-white image into a pattern of ones and zeros. "I weave because I am attracted to the process. Weaving engages both sides of my brain and technological advances constantly redefine what is possible in this medium," she says. "The computer interface allows for the correct lifting of each thread on the loom, but the weaver still has to throw the shuttle and advance the weave." Because the enhanced level of complexity of the loom is still fed by the subtle imperfection of the artist's hand the results of this process maintain a sense of the human touch. "The result is a perfect marriage of precise technology and the nature and unpredictability of the human hand and mind."

"The most interesting aspect of this process of translation is the questions that arise." Verbeek-Cowart writes about her own work. "What is the difference between a photograph and a weaving of the same image? What is unique about woven form? What happens to an image in translation? Is the content about the literal subject or the way the image was created? If it is not about the literal subject, how is that image chosen in the first place?"

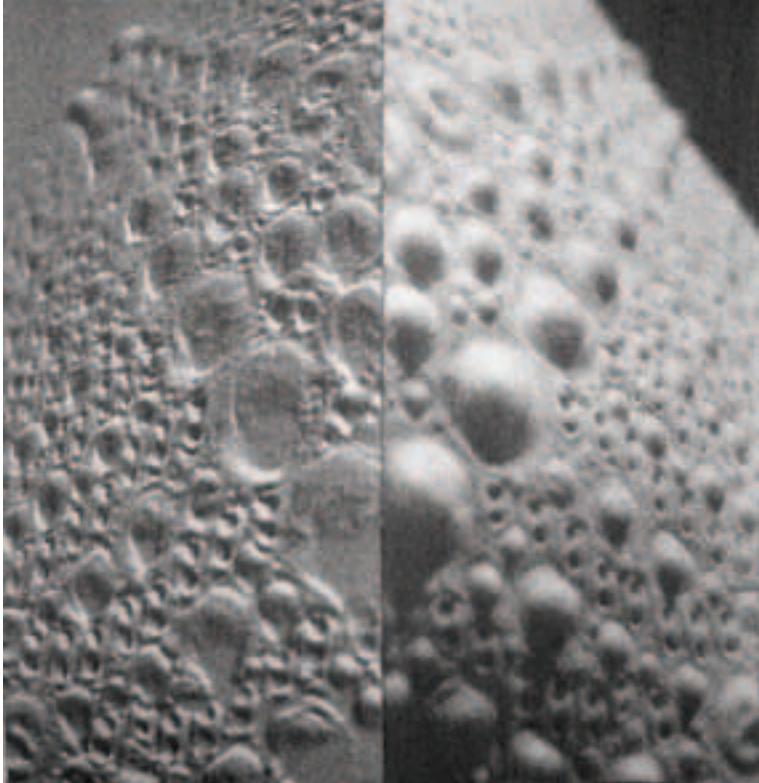
Counterbalancing Verbeek-Cowart's electronically integrated processes, Susan Lordi Marker's work consistently exhibits a search for new materials and techniques; from *Generations* to *Soulskin/Dragonfly*, her works are built completely by hand, using various chemicals and hand-stitching processes to achieve the desired effect. Repetitions in mark-making are created individually, instead of through mechanical printing methods. "It is the difference between grabbing a handful of dried grasses and forming a nest in one motion verses placing one blade of grass at a time: layering, tucking and working in each one individually to build up a nest over time." Such experimental, hands-on



Susan Lordi Marker, *Cricket* (detail), 2007, stitched organza and fiber reactive dyes.

processes are consistently exciting her interests in new materials from iron to gold leaf to polyester/linen blends. "There is a different visual result — I want the hand of the maker to be very evident and I know I can't fake it by speeding things up." Lordi Marker experiments with how chemicals react and alter her fibers causing the fabrics to suggest many other things: skin, earth, wings, paper. "I like the challenge of excavating the surface of the cloth," Lordi Marker admits. Using a technique known as *devoré*, she burns into fibers, she alters the color with a choice of dyes, she submerges cloth in a lye bath to shrink and tighten the fibers ... until the mark-making that she creates is no longer limited to a two-dimensional image that sits atop the image but has become "part of the permanent structure of the cloth." It is this quality that seems to characterize the works of both artists as they become further relatable as three dimensional objects rather than surface-based impressions.

To control the results, these processes used by Verbeek-Cowart and Lordi Marker involve time-intensive research and experimentation. "Knowing my materials and how to make full use of their potential is at the core of much of my research," Verbeek-Cowart says. "It usually takes time to get to know [my] materials. So, when I find something that works for me, I usually stick to it for a long time, and that's when the material starts suggesting new work or a different approach to using it." When choosing weft colors Verbeek-Cowart takes into account how the gallery lighting will reflect off of her strands to



Pauline Verbeek-Cowart, *Luna*, 2007, hand woven jacquard, cotton, sized Japanese silk 83" x 90". Photo courtesy the artist.



Susan Lordi Marker, *Soulskin: Sun, Lake, Dragonfly* (detail), 2000, linen blend fabric, dye, pigment gold leaf, 90" x 54". Photo courtesy Jason Harris.

emphasize horizontally stretched lengths: causing the vertical stretches of yarn in her weavings to appear less prominent. The finishing that is applied to the yarn before Verbeek-Cowart even begins working dictates how the final piece is finished — whether the final wash she traditionally uses will tear away the essential qualities of the fibers she uses or if that final wash is actually essential to bring out the qualities of the material that she desires to achieve. She understands that the nature of the material she uses controls how it is expanded, darkened, resisted and dissolved. By knowing the how her materials react she can add or remove its natural texture — even use its own idiosyncrasies to create a transparent quality in the fibers. "Often artists choose their materials based on color or texture," she says. "Much more important to me is their composition and structure, down to the molecular level."

Radiating from the work of both artists is a sense of inspiration drawn directly from observing nature. "We are passionate gardeners," Lordi Marker says, "and both [of us] believe in the benefits and rewards of restoring and preserving the natural world." Currently, Susan Lordi Marker is engaged in restoring a grass prairie, and Pauline Verbeek-Cowart is developing a living green roof. "This passionate involvement with our planting projects naturally is reflected in the work we are now making. You may see references in both of our work to organic forms, earth or water but with different scale, methods and materials between us," Verbeek-Cowart comments.

"What our work has in common is a reverence for the powers that shape our environment."

With such strong artistic connections, it is difficult to imagine that *RHYTHEM* represents the first show these artists have participated in together. They first began influencing each other 15 years ago as graduate students in University of Kansas's textile design department. As a fellow student, Verbeek-Cowart says, "I was immediately drawn to [Susan's] work ... the sources for her work reflected an interest and passion for many things I was attracted to ... I saw color choices and a sense of space and placement that related so strongly to my decision making that I knew instantly that we would become close friends." Often they had spoken about their interest in showing together, but it was not until *RHYTHEM* that this idea came into implementation.

"I spend a lot of time outdoors," Lordi Marker says. "These pieces reflect my fascination with the thousands of elements that surround me when I am immersed in that natural environment. Natural happenings inspire rhythmic patterning. For example, ethereal ripples on the pond surface, pieces of dried grass neatly woven and tucked in circles to form a nest, insect eaten paths on a tree trunk, passages and tracks in the mud (which I call mud-mapping) or perfectly ordered seed heads beginning to unfold and release themselves. I am fascinated by how these naturally occurring patterns gradually emerge, grow and change according to plan,

season after season. I enjoy observing these repetitions; and so, back in the studio, I am inspired to impose my own ordering of marks on cloth." This poetic translation of rhythm, offered in both artists' works, escapes from the rigid patterning found in mechanical quilting and surface design. Inspired by the mysteries of nature itself, organic repetitions in their works change: dynamically their paths detour, and quietly particular aspects in the textiles fade and emerge in unexpected manners. "In nature, there is an awareness of thousands of elements being coded — they fit together — and it is this orchestration that fascinates me."

Working with the theme of rhythm in mind inspired both artists to explore how the allocation of elements moving within a piece suggest an active or quiet section. Verbeek-Cowart said that as their concept for the exhibition progressed she became "more aware of the sounds or music that could be associated with the representation of marks and the directional quality." She began asking herself how the rhythm interacts to create different impacts: "Do you read it in a soft and gentle way or does it hit you in a big bang?"

During their routine meetings Verbeek-Cowart and Lordi Marker realized that the terms they had begun using to describe the visual elements in their work were often associated to musical terms. "We decided to create a symphony in cloth," says Lordi Marker. •





# Stitch-by-Stitch Revolution:

## Kansas City's Historic Garment District & Museum

Amelia Ishmael

If you were to take an inventory of the countries listed on the care labels of your trousers, coats, dresses and shoes a curious geography lesson would be in the making. From China to India and from Taiwan to Africa, textile industries have flourished in the late 20th century as international markets compete for Americans' insatiable need for comfortable and affordable clothing. If you had performed this same survey about sixty years ago, your list might be just as enlightening; in the 1940s Kansas City was rivaled only by New York in the production of pre-made clothing for the United States. Employing over 7,000 workers at its height, Kansas City's Garment District was essential in the realization of mass garment production. Located a mile-and-a-half north from the Crossroads Arts District — where contemporary Surface Design Association members are creating a tradition of textile exhibitions — the Garment District rose during Kansas City's birth as a crossroads of industry and cultural entertainment.

Imagining Kansas City as a crossroads seems a little hard, due to its current reputation as a fly-over state. In the years following the Civil War, however, Kansas City became prime for its location at the junction of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers. The strength (and population numbers) of Kansas City ignited with the construction of the Hannibal Bridge in 1869. With the first bridge over the Missouri River, Kansas City became the central point for 11 national railroads (today, it remains the second largest railroad hub in the United States). This advantage made shipping to and from Kansas City extremely cost-effective for local businesses.

Prior to the construction of the Hannibal Bridge, Colonel Kersey Coats established the area to the immediate west of the Quality Hill neighborhood as a residential district. Due to its prime location, this area — bordered now to the North and South by 6th and 12th Streets and to the East and West by Washington and Wyandotte Streets — quickly filled with companies making and selling fabrics, shoes, clothing and hats. The Garment District fumed with activity as the entire area filled with vendors collecting products to resell to stores throughout the United States, models bustling to their next rendezvous and working women unionizing into groups such as the



International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Original companies included: Swofford Brothers Dry Goods Company, Barton Brothers Shoe, Mary Dean Dress Company, Burnham-Hanna Dry Goods, Montgomery Ward and Company, Danny/Debby Dare Manufacturing Company and Styline Manufacturing Company

During the 1930s, Kansas City became referred to as the *Paris of the Plains*. It was the city's entertainment venues rather than its fashion design that yielded this standing; designs produced in Kansas City were created to outfit the Midwesterner, the worker and the homemaker. Rather than couture clothing, designers of the Garment District created affordable and quality garments that maintained traditional styling. Its most prominent designer was Nellie Donnelly, who encouraged American mothers out of potato-sack like dresses and into her \$10 pre-made dresses that were flattering and form fitting.

It was Donnelly herself that contributed to Kansas City's innovative production methods that lead to the district's success. The first step towards Kansas City's success was its ability to purchase large quantities of raw materials from the east coast. Manufacturers would then hire local designers to recreate traditional suits, hats, dresses and coats. Once designed, manufacturers would step around the tendency to employ individual tailors for each garment and would instead organize a division of labor. Through this method, businesses could produce much quicker, but this was not the only advantage. Assembly-line workers would be trained to master a single technique: dyeing, cutting, steaming or stitching hand-bound buttonholes. Each stage the garment went through contributed to its quality. At its highpoint, the Donnelly Garment Company was "the largest garment factory in the world under one roof."

Demand for Kansas City's garments ran into a decline in the 1960s when various influences pushed the bulk of business elsewhere: Western distribution centers in Denver, Los Angeles, Dallas and Phoenix began evolving, and the industrialization of rural areas forced more people to relocate in cities where more buying options were available. Concurrently, independent sellers in the United States began losing bids to garment industries overseas. In 1973, the Garment District was placed on the National Historic Registry, and by 1980 it had diminished to half a dozen businesses.

Due to their establishment on the National Historic Registry, most of the original buildings within the Garment District remain in their original condition and have recently been restored into residential lofts and commercial office spaces after decades of abandonment. Capturing this history, the Historic Garment District Museum was founded in 2002 through the support of Harvey Fried and Ann Brownfield at the corner of 8th and Broadway (within DST's Poindexter Building's lobby).

No strangers to the district's history, Fried and Brownfield both worked within the district in their youth. Fried is the owner of the Fried-Segal Company, a garment wholesaler started by his father. As president of the Downtown Community Improvement District, Fried is committed to preserving the district and educating the public of its history. Brownfield, a designer, moved to Kansas City from St. Louis in the mid 1900s to begin her own manufacturing business. Within the museum is a black-and-white photograph of Brownfield in her youth working on one of her designs.

With photographs, timelines and artifacts, the museum maintains an important element of Kansas City's rich history. Though the museum brings together many marvelous artifacts belonging to local private and public collections, the experience leaves much to be desired. The exhibition itself can be difficult to view due to its appointment-only hours, the tiny exhibition space provides only enough room for a brief summary of the Garment District's history and the lack of interactive displays proves too distant for younger viewers.

Regardless of the museum's limited funding, the importance of the project has not gone unnoticed. Across the street from the museum is Garment District Place a park dedicated to the city in 1990 by Kansas City Parks and Recreation. Within the park, a 19-foot-tall steel sculpture of a giant sewing needle and button (designed by CDFM2 Architecture) resembles the Claus Oldenburg inspired needle-and-button sculpture located at the heart of the New York Fashion District. In 2003, the Jackson County Historical Society presented the Historic Garment District Group with an award to commemorate the group's investments in education. And, in 2006, the Downtown Council of Kansas City presented Harvey Fried with an Urban Hero Award — an award "bestowed on individuals and businesses whose contributions have made downtown a better place to live, work and visit."

During Kansas City's current extreme make-over revitalization, it is important for us educate ourselves in its history and to make a little room to commemorate how we got here. Tours of the Historic Garment District Museum are available by appointment only. To schedule a reservation contact Ann Brownfield at 913-205-8520 or [annieb75@earthlink.net](mailto:annieb75@earthlink.net). A sister collection is open to the public at Oggi's Furniture, located at 600 Central Avenue, in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. •

Facing page: (above left) Industrial sewing machine creating button holes. (below left) Vintage yellow coat (detail).

This page: (above right) Vintage floral hat with netting. (below right) Vintage Vogue dress and accessories.

All photographs courtesy Amelia Ishmael. Artifacts from the collection of the Kansas City Historic Garment District Museum.







Above: Stephanie Dotson, *Current*, ink and epoxy on wood and foam with felt.

Below: Althea Murphy-Price, *Rug*, 2007, synthetic hair clippings.



## Prainting and Prinstallation

Nick Malewski

The words in Prainting and Prinstallation, an exhibition at The Green Door Gallery, are hybrids of printing, painting and installation. In conjunction with the Southern Graphics Council, the show, like the hybrid words, complicated and widened the definitions and possibilities of the graphic arts. Most of the included artists created what can loosely be classified as print works utilizing unexpected materials and regular print materials in non-traditional ways. Others, however, though producing technically proficient work, didn't quite live up to the exhibition title.

Stephanie Dotson, one of the co-curators, pushed the boundaries of traditional graphic art. Her pieces do for printmaking what Samuel Mockbee did for architecture. The eclectic assemblage of forms, colors and materials congeal into an object that conveys more than accidental hodge-podge. The show statement points out the work of these print artists "won't travel those flat little portfolio cases." Indeed, Dotson's work looks more like wall-mounted sculpture. *Current* presents a cross-section of wood with the bark around the outside, a riverbank view of gentle rapids rendered under an epoxy surface, hanging appendages in the shape of fern leaves and black silhouettes of birds in flight affixed to the wall.

Hugh Merrill, a past president of the Southern Graphics Council, presented a series of four etchings entitled *Wind Begann* (two "n"s ?) to *Howl* that felt out of place with the exhibition concept. His are works of artistic maturity that share an affinity with the muscular geometric abstraction of Russian modernists like Olga Rozanova and Kazimir Malevich. The series displays a confident use of black ink to make the scribbled darkness from which dominating rectangles emerge, but Merrill's etchings do not challenge the limits of printmaking. Dotson, however, insists they are the "radical wildcards" because they represent "returning to tradition," which is the "last revolution for print artists."<sup>1</sup>

Mary Hood installed *Collective Pooling*, which was more conceptually and physically engaging than it was aesthetically pleasing. Three long pieces of paper, held up by office clamps, hung from above eye level and extended to the floor. Bright blue watercolor paints and stains look poured, like a Morris Louis painting, to render a waterfall down the length of the paper. During the course of the show, a plate of glass on a pedestal offered dollops of white oil-based printing ink for participants to dip their fingers into and add their prints to the paintings.

*Prainting and Prinstallation*  
The Green Door Gallery  
Kansas City, Missouri  
March 9 – 23, 2007

This is a literal re-conceiving of the printmaking process. It is also an experiment in social psychology because the creativity of the gallery visitor was unrestricted, yet the collective effort on opening night culminated in pointillist clouds near the tops of the papers.

Noel Anderson's gathering of vinyl records, cut in the shape of rectangular church fans with wooden handles, is especially rich with associations. Actually, even though the church fan is already a site for religious imagery and sponsor advertisements, it only provides the model for the ritual objects, called *iswnos*, used by the Blaknuss society referenced by the artist. There is as much material variation as iconography over the surface of the records. The labels, some printed and adhered by Anderson, are of hip-hop performers and make allusions to black culture. Velvet flocking and glitter renders familiar signs like the Cadillac logo. The rapper Chingy appears on a label. Significantly, his 2006 album, *Hoodstar*, features the song *Cadillac Door*, which is about keeping spirits up despite hard times in the ghetto. Messages of hope, the comfort of cool air and the musical stirring of emotions are embodied in these objects of ritual, cultural identity and aesthetic appeal.

Other works of interest include Melissa Haviland's *Everyday China (Overwhelmed)*. Over a patterned inkjet background on canvas is a charcoal drawing of a pensive woman with her chin rested on her arm behind two stacks of floral decorated cups and saucers. The tenuous stacks of crockery might be read as a reflection of the figure's mental struggle to balance her fragile hopes, which could come crashing down if handled with negligence.

Althea Murphy-Price's *Rug* consists of sprinkled synthetic hair clippings on a white platform. The black clippings originally formed intricate, circular doily patterns, but the ephemeral nature of the work left it susceptible to human traffic in the gallery and human curiosity about its texture. By the end of opening night, only a patchy reminder of what it used to be remained.

The words prainting and prinstallation look toward a broader horizon full of new forms and innovative practices in the graphic arts. This was evident in some of the works in this exhibition. Although it is important for printmakers to understand the conventions of their art, instead of fixing on tradition as a final destination — why not continue to mix and multiply disciplines in a revolution with no end in sight? •

Note: 1. Stephanie Dotson, e-mail to author, March 17, 2007.

## **SURFACE DESIGN ASSOCIATION**

The mission of the Surface Design Association is to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of textiles in the art and design communities, as well as in the general public. We inspire creativity, encourage innovation and further the rich tradition of the textile arts through publications, exhibitions, conferences and educational opportunities.

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