2009

Uncommon Threads

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Artists
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uncommon threads
This catalogue is published to accompany the exhibition “Uncommon Threads” at the Walsh Gallery at Seton Hall University, on display from November 2 - December 11, 2009.

Curated by Jeanne Brasile and Howard Hurst

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Front Cover Image:
Julie Floersch “Things Fall Apart” 45"h x 55"w, found denim, cotton, wool, spandex, cotton jersey & fusible interlining, 2009
Photograph courtesy of Devon Banks
uncommon threads

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fine art - Art created primarily for aesthetic reasons and not for functional use. Examples of the fine arts are painting, drawing, sculpture, and printmaking

“Uncommon Threads” is an exhibition of contemporary art which explores the potential of fabric as an artistic medium. The central issue is how both fine art and craft inform the artistic process of the participating artists. Intrinsic to the exhibition’s guiding narrative are the prophetic teachings of two separate and unprecedented schools formed in the first half of the 20th century.

The California College of the Arts in San Francisco was founded in 1907 by Frederick Meyer. An avid follower of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Meyer created the college as a reaction to the decline of rural handicrafts in industrialized society. Integral to the college’s mission was the eradication of what were considered arbitrary divisions between the disciplines of “high” art and craft. Meyer’s vision was prescient, for just twelve years later, Germany’s Bauhaus School, in operation from 1919 to 1933, was founded by Walter Gropius. One of the main objectives of the Bauhaus was to unify art, craft, and technology – just as Meyer had envisioned. The school became a hotbed of creative activity where artists, designers, and architects fed off of one another’s ideas, blurring the lines between the utile and the decorative.

“Uncommon Threads” seizes the precedent set by Meyer and Gropius, traversing the dubious boundaries that estrange “fine art” from “craft.” Further-more, the exhibition addresses the modernist assumption that form is best met by function, by introducing artists who draw upon both traditions. In doing so, we demonstrate that creativity can be informed by approaches which are seemingly at odds.
As the name suggests, the show highlights work which defies common conceptions surrounding fiber art. Long thought to be a second-tier woman’s craft, both the diversity of exhibited artists and ambitious scope of their work illustrate the way in which fabric is being used to claim a place often reserved for traditional studio arts such as sculpture and painting. Participants range in age, sex, geography, academic training and artistic paradigm. The disparate nature of the artists help illustrate the dizzying variety of approaches being applied the same medium.

The exhibition unfolds using conventional crafts as its starting point. Though quilting, crocheting and needle-work are based in tradition, these crafts are transformed by a variety of challenging and innovative perspectives. Using this concept as a baseline, the exhibition explores the experimental nature of fiber art in such forms as installation, sculpture and mixed-media art, projecting it into the 21st century, while evoking craft, which is at the root of fiber art.

By creating an immersive textile environment the variability of the approaches becomes apparent. The tactile and sumptuous nature of fabric serves to unify the display while suggesting the inexhaustible capabilities of the material.

Jeanne Brasile and Howard Hurst
July War
Cotton thread, crochet
46” x 9”
2007
Karen Ciaramella

Centered
twisted raw wool hand felted into canvas with needles
68” x 44”
2007
Nick DeFord

Give, The Devil
page torn from library book, embroidery, Scotch Tape (c)
7” x 7”
2009
Julie Floersch

Things Fall Apart
Found denim, cotton, wool, spandex, cotton jersey and fusible interlining
45” x 55”
2009
Colleen Gutwein

Portrait 2
acrylic, ink and string on canvas
6” x 6”
2009
Ryan Higgins

No Mustard
Feather dusters, wood, foam, vinyl, plastic, rubber
70" x 26" x 55"
2008
Einat Imber

Trap
steel and textile
28” x 40” x 24”
2007
Scavenger
Silk and woodstain on concrete
49” x 64”
2007
RMS Properties (from the Foreclosure Series)
needlework on digital image
approx. 12” x 14”
2009
Travis Martin

Transition (Until I Ran Out)
Dyed cotton thread and rope
114” x 16”
2005
Plants
Silk, cotton, wool, felt, thread, polyester batting, wire, washers, wood, shelf brackets, drywall, studs, paint
dimensions variable
2006-2009
Courtney Puckett

Spaghetti
miscellaneous fabric scraps
dimensions variable
2007
Wrapped Pillars
Crocheted and hand-dyed cord, string, rope, ribbon, thread, twine
Dimensions variable
2007
Katie Truk

Lean (from the Traction Series)
wire and pantyhose
8” x 47”
2001
Everyday 1
Hand embroidered, hand-dyed linen, cotton, embroidery floss
55” x 60”
2009
The Walsh Gallery extends its gratitude to those who made this exhibition possible:

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