


KATHRYN
MARKEL

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FINE ARTS
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Following the Thread
A Group Show

August 3rd – September 2nd, 2017

NEW YORK, NY — July 5th, 2017 — The distinct divide between the worlds of art and craft has been rapidly shrinking. Artists who work with textiles are being welcomed into the contemporary art world like never before. *Following the Thread* celebrates a selection of these artists who are experimenting with and being inspired by textiles and the techniques used to work with them in a modern way. Drawn to the aesthetics or the cultural and political connotations of textiles, their work looks to the tenets of painting, applying notions of space, form, and color to their manipulation of fabric and thread.

Emily Barletta's embroidery on paper uses the language of painting and drawing to create abstract works with thread. With references to landscape and biology, she explores color and form on a small scale. The materials allow for vivid evidence of process, lending an intimate sense of Barletta's hand in each piece.

Eric Blum's layered arrangements of ink-washed, wax-infused silk are rooted in modern painting techniques yet activated by the experimental manipulation of his media. Their parts don't always seem to go together, while the whole wavers at the edge of recognition. He is drawn to unexpected juxtapositions and awkward harmonies with menacing undercurrents that don't make a nuisance of themselves.

Sarah Irvin's *Quilt Series* deconstructs quilting and builds it up again into something entirely removed from its two-dimensional form. She reworks cotton, thread, and wood into structures that only allude to tradition. Subverting the notion of quilting being "women's work" and therefore tidy, delicate, and commercial, her pieces reimagine its materials as building blocks to form strong, architectural sculptures.

Sydney Licht updates the conventions of still life by shifting the subject matter to signifiers of contemporary consumer culture and studying them with a painter's eye, skewing perception and abstracting familiar forms. She is drawn to the materials that make up the world around us -- the packaging, bags, and containers that are often overlooked despite




Debra Smith, *Rising Up*, 2017,
pieced vintage silk, 40 x 30 in.

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being some of our most common sources of visual intrigue. With her series of paintings centered around fabric and sewing supplies, she breaks that focus down even more, elevating the tools used to create so much of what we consume into subjects worthy of study.

Holly Miller creates monochromatic abstract works with a restrained vocabulary inspired by lines found in everyday life. Body language and touch are translated into visual means by making a physical layer of “drawn” lines on the paintings’ surfaces, giving the impression of concealing the painted ground while revealing it simultaneously. These vertical lines are drawn with a needle and thread, and are then saturated with color. The small shadows of the yarn across the surface are incorporated into the work, suggesting a quiet tension between presence and absence, reality and illusion, material and ethereal.

Gina Occhiogrosso’s preoccupation with the materiality of painting has led to expanding her language to include materials and processes outside of painting’s usual conventions. She pierces, slices, or punctures her surfaces and incorporates craft-based materials to lower the material hierarchy of the piece. Yarn is a natural match for her interest in working with line, and she uses it to alternately enhance or disrupt the line work of her paintings. In other pieces, she uses layered cotton as a foundation to challenge traditional notions of field and space.

Marilla Palmer’s mixed media works navigate the unexpected overlap of the organic and artifice. Dried flowers and foliage are delicately combined with fabrics, holographic paper, and sequins to embellish renderings of found branches and plants. While at first glance they may appear to be a celebration of the femininity of nature, closer inspection reveals that she incorporates the decay of her natural materials into her work. The glamorous synthetics serve as a mask to hide this process and their fading beauty, questioning the power to fully transform through adornment.

Yolanda Sánchez’s textile work is inspired by Bojagi, a Korean art form that pieces scraps of fabric together to create textiles that were originally intended to wrap goods as a symbol of fortune. As the tradition evolved to include finer and more delicate fabrics, the stitching and seams were used to create linear elements that were viewed as essential to the design. Sánchez sees parallels in this to modernist aesthetic, and experiments with sizing, color compositions, and stitching techniques to play up that comparison. “With a Full Heart” is made completely of strips of silk leftover from her previous Bojagi projects arranged in the shape of a wonsam, a Korean ceremonial garment, with its outstretched sleeves symbolizing a readiness to protect, envelop, or fly.

Debra Smith approaches her textiles with the sensibilities of a modern painter and seeks to break the stereotypes associated with piecework. Working with vintage fabrics - primarily men’s silk suit lining and kimono - brings an historical and poetic weight to the work even before she begins to meticulously piece together her materials into abstract forms. The masculinity of the suit fabric and the femininity of the silks strike a harmonious balance that’s then thrown off by skewed geometry.

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