

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Uncommon Threads: A Survey of Contemporary Quilts

Violette Alby · Scott Andresen · Denise Burge · Lisa Call ·
Eliza Fernand · Katherine Knauer · Paula Kovarik · Eileen Lauterborn ·
Eleanor McCain · Paula Nadlestern · Yolanda Sanchez · Daphne Taylor ·



November 17 – December 17, 2011

Exhibition Reception: Thursday, November 17, 6-8PM

Kathryn Markel is pleased to announce a group exhibition entitled *Uncommon Threads: A Survey of Contemporary Quilts*.

The tradition of quilts and quilting has primarily been considered as a utilitarian object first and as an artistic medium incidentally. But the rise of feminism and the revaluation of "women's work" led to a renewed appreciation of the artistic potential of the medium, and to an exploding number of quilters. This exhibition focuses on 12 contemporary artists who use quilting techniques in their work. Some have come out of the traditional world of art quilting, and others are younger artists who have embraced the medium because its deep associations further their artistic practice. Each of these artists emphasizes a different aspect of quilting and has a different agenda. This exhibition shows how an old-fashioned medium is being repurposed for a new generation.

Violette Alby turned to quilting as an alternative to paint, and wields fabric and thread as if it were paint. Her abstracted figures have a shamanistic fervor that is reinforced by the heraldic, banner-like associations of the quilted fabric. **Alby** is interested in the recycling aspect of quilting and only uses found materials in her work. As a result, her fabrics show a wear and history that add to the intensity of color and form. **Alby** lives a life truly "off the grid" in New Mexico and had an exhibition of her quilts at White Columns Gallery in 2007.

Scott Andresen also plays with the adaptive reuse aspect of quilting. He constructs objects with papers and plastics he finds on the street. He typically joins three or four of these disparate pieces of trash together using the most traditional and elegant form of quilting. The ephemerality of the found junk makes an interesting visual contrast with the solidity of the quilting medium and refers again to quilting's recycling aspect. **Andresen** received his MFA from Yale in 2009 and has shown his work at the Jack Tilton Gallery.

Denise Burge's family is from the Smoky Mountains and she revels in the nostalgic, narrative aspect of quilts, which are a part of her heritage. Through raw, raucous imagery and strong color, "Tug Fork River" tells of the horrendous coal sludge that devastated the Kentucky landscape in 2000. The violence of the imagery and the use of recycled materials in this work reflect nature's violent way of reusing and regenerating. With bold cartoony imagery, **Burge** takes the quilt, which normally signifies comfort and home, and turns it into tale of environmental violence. **Burge** teaches at the University of Cincinnati and is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant.

Lisa Call is a self-taught artist, living in Colorado, and obsessed with color and pattern that is typically based on natural forms, biological or geological. She hand-dyes all her fabrics, and combines bold colors in hand cut patterns to create improvised structures that refer to the strictness of the traditional quilt patterns and also turn them upside down. Extensive over stitching creates an energetic counterpoint and gives these compositions a jazzy energy. **Call's** work has been exhibited in public institutions around the country and is in the collection of the University Hospitals of Cleveland.

Through the creation of quilted objects, performances involving quilts and other soft sculpture, **Eliza Fernand's** works emphasize the communal aspects of quilt making. Currently she has been taking a quilted tent on a cross country tour. The tent has been set up in parks, schools, alternative art spaces, artist's studios and malls. At each stop, **Fernand** engages local artists and quilters and has them record their quilt anecdotes for posterity. "Remnant Balloon Balls", which is in this exhibition, consists of quilted scraps formed into hanging balls. Once again this quilted piece refers to the recycling aspect of the quilt.

At first glance, **Katherine Knauer's** quilt is a traditional patterned quilt. Looking closely however, one discovers that the images and patterns Katherine uses, tell a contemporary story of war or environmental destruction. This piece "Second Wind" is straight from the headlines, and refers to new uses of wind power. Katherine designed all of her fabrics and had them specially printed for this piece. She has used a medium associated with hearth and comfort to tell a story of environmental degradation. **Knauer** also only makes one or two quilts a year and most of her quilts have been exhibited around the country.

Paula Kovarik is obsessed with visual communication. She has had a successful graphic design business in Memphis for over 20 years and has recently turned to quilting as a medium to reflect and expand on the communicative powers of thread and fabric. Quilts have always told stories, and **Kovarik** sees her use of thread as being the connective tissue that brings her stories to the viewer.

Eileen Lauterborn's quilts are informed by her background as a painter, and her emphasis is on

line and color. Her abstract images consist of thick skeins of lines moving back and forth into space and the quilting thread forms a counterpoint to the linearity of strips of colored fabrics. These strips function as gesture and create a space filled with energy. **Lauterborn** has participated in quilt shows around the country.

Eleanor McCain works with the historical quilting patterns based on the grid and takes them up a hundred notches. She reinterprets conventional quilting patterns by throwing grid against grid in brave, bold color combinations. One expects predictability in a quilted pattern. **McCain** is the master of the unexpected and an acknowledged contemporary quilt master. Her work has been in countless exhibitions and is in the collection of the Mint Museum of Art.

Paula Nadelstern is one of the great names in contemporary quilters. Much of her imagery is based on the kaleidoscope and the resulting crystalline bilateral imagery, which she uses to play on the nature of many traditional quilting patterns. The quilt in this exhibit is typical in that the image is the natural crystal of the snowflake. The piece seems monochromatic at first, but **Nadelstern** has used hundreds of shades of blue and her dazzling use of fabric and thread animate the subject. **Paula Nadelstern** is the first living artist to have a one person exhibition at the Museum of American Folk Art, and has shown her quilts around the world.

Yolanda Sanchez is an abstract painter recently introduced to the world of fiber through the ancient Korean fabric tradition of Bojagi. She has studied with Chunghie Lee, a Korean Bojagi master, and has exhibited her Bojagi works at an art festival in Korea. **Sanchez** has made a new piece specifically for this exhibition.

Daphne Taylor's works emphasizes an entirely different aspect of the medium. Born in Philadelphia, **Taylor** is steeped in the Quaker tradition. She stitches her quilts by hand, and considers her stitching as meditative mark making. Stitches are spontaneous and obsessive and a minimal reductive image seems to arise almost imperceptibly out of the energy of the mark making. **Taylor** only completes one or two quilts a year, and has exhibited most of her quilts in quilt exhibitions around the country.

Kathryn Markel Fine Arts is located at 529 W. 20th Street 6W, New York, N.Y.

Gallery hours are Tues. - Sat. 10AM - 6PM.

Media Contact: Debra Marcoux Phone: (212) 366.5368 Email: info@markelfinearts.com