

A close-up photograph of a textile craft project. The image shows numerous small, teardrop-shaped leaves embroidered in various shades of green, teal, blue, and orange onto a white fabric. At the bottom, dark brown and white threads form the trunks and branches of trees. The text "Craft/Work" is overlaid in the center in a white, italicized font with a black outline.

Craft/Work

2014

August 2014 by Craft/Work

Cover art by Camille Canales.

Cover and all other uncredited photos by
Nora Renick Rinehart.

Craft/Work Logo by Lucy Knisley.



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Rachel Wallis

Rachel Wallis is a crafter and self-taught artist. She's organized a number of small shows and art based fundraisers and is a contributing member of El Stitch y Bitch, a knitting and sewing group here in Chicago.

Nora Renick Rinehart

Nora Renick Rinehart considers herself both an artist and a crafter. Her practice has included making pieces to show in galleries, selling wares online and at craft-fairs and simply making for the sheer joy of it. Her current passion resides in teaching all things textiles in Chicago.

From the Curators

Before Craft/Work was Craft/Work, it was a conversation between friends. In a bar, probably, over beers after a long day of work. During the spring of 2013, Rachel Wallis was working as a fundraiser for nonprofits while I, having recently left the stability of a full-time job, was eking out a living as a freelance/teaching artist. Despite our differing occupations, we both identified as makers. A few years earlier, Rachel had taken one of my sewing classes at Lillstreet Art Center and our conversations eventually moved out of the classroom. We started asking each other questions not only about the relationship between fine art and craft, but also how identity, labor, history, value, race, and community effect what we make and why we make it. Maybe it was the beers talking that night, but all of a sudden, our voices didn't seem like enough. We wanted more

thoughts and more opinions. Figuring out how to make that happen was the next challenge.

We envisioned a multi-platform project aimed at jumpstarting a conversation about the often-fraught relationship between fine art and craft and, thanks to a supportive and interactive community, both online and locally, that is what we achieved. Over the following year, Craft/Work held six artist talks followed by hands-on technical workshops. We also curated an exhibition that featured the work of 13 diversely talented artists whose work, through technique or content, investigated these questions.

One of our main goals for Craft/Work was inclusivity. The conversation about art vs craft is not new in academia. However, financial limitations in the way of egregious

tuition costs prevent many makers from participating in the “official” debate. This exclusivity seemed extraordinarily problematic for us. We wanted to challenge this structure by making our events as welcoming as possible. Through a successful Kickstarter campaign, we were able to ensure that all our programming was free and open to the public. In order to extend our community even further, we also made sure to record our events so that we could make them available online.

This booklet is our attempt to document and share all of the work that has gone into - and come out of - Craft/Work so far. In the following pages, you will find descriptions of each of our panels with audio links and a full catalog of the work displayed in the exhibition.

However succinct this publication

may appear, Craft/Work is not over yet. Indeed, we hope to continue growing the project for years to come, through social media, online publications and additional in-person programming. We encourage you to get involved by following our blog, Facebook page and Twitter. If participating in Craft/Work has taught me anything it's that the worlds of both art and craft are made stronger as long as these questions continue to be asked and answered by an open and inclusive community.

Welcome to the conversation.

-Nora Renick Rinehart
Craft/Work Co-Founder

Craft/Work Programming

**by Rachel Wallis and
Nora Renick Rinehart**

Craft can be all sorts of things: it can be a verb (as in, “to craft”), an adjective (“it’s crafty”) and a noun (“to have a craft”, i.e. a skill). It is an appropriate descriptor for such widely ranging arenas as self and family taught handicrafts to haute couture fashion production. Our first Craft/Work event explored this topic. Titled “Drawing the Line: art, non-art, craft and non-craft” the presentation showcased three artists whose studio work and professional careers exist in the grey areas that defy easy categorization: Lucy Knisley- a comic artist/graphic novelist, Jessica

Pleyel- a fine-art taxidermist, and Nora Renick Rinehart- a seamstress-for-hire. The discussion centered around the structures present in our varying fields that define validation, most predominantly in the form of gender-equalized access and monetary compensation.

Although we had anticipated that the panelists would want to spend time parsing out what was and wasn’t craft, that particular topic seemed pretty far from our collective minds. In the end, we didn’t have any problem assigning the word “craft” to a wide range of activities. Perhaps having a term that can be so broadly applied suggests that defining what craft is is not the most important goal.

To quote craft scholar Glenn Adamson, “We all have a very good idea of what craft is and what we should be thinking about is not defining it ... The question is: given that craft is such-and-such -



*Jessica Pleyel leading a crochet workshop after the panel
“Drawing the Line: Art, Craft, Non-Art and Non-Craft.” January 7, 2014.*

and we know what it is - what can we do with it, how should we think about it, what are it's possibilities, what are it's problems, what are it's limitations."*

So maybe this is where Art comes in. Fine Art has long been held as a bastion for the conceptual; triumphing the academic/ intellectual motivation for an object's existence over it's functionality or utilitarian purpose. Examples of this distinction can be found as early as the Renaissance when modes of production shifted from Medieval

standards — communal shops that profited from a location — to a new system of value structured around the name of the individual at the top of the shops' production chain: from the collective successes of "the glassblowers of Venice" to the individual fame of "Stradivarius" violins. Thus, the "artist" was born and craftspeople transitioned from the autonomous group that created the middle class to makers working for someone else.

The evolution of craft into fine art was the core of our talk, "Continuing

Conversations: the past, present and future of the art vs. craft debate" which featured the artists Keeley Marie Stitt, Molly Roth and Nora Renick Rinehart. As the role of the artist continued to evolve, the separation between object and production became more and more extreme. Until the introduction of "modern art," the acknowledgement of how a piece was made was almost completely overlooked. In Rinehart's presentation for this panel she went on to argue that it was the Feminist Art Movement of the 1970's that changed

the landscape of the conversation indefinitely. By integrating the personal narratives of makers - in their case, specifically women makers whose work had been traditionally ignored by both commercial production and fine art - into a gallery setting, the work done by this movement called attention to the power of personal storytelling and the need for inclusivity. It taught both the art world and the people consuming it that our identities are not a liability.

Identity provided the inspiration for much of the work in the "Identity and



*Identity and Craft Panel
January 21, 2014*

*CraftsPerspective Lecture for the Museum of Contemporary Crafts' podcast series. February 21st, 2009.



*Jesse Seay leading a hand-made speaker workshop after the panel
“Craft and Technology.” March 4, 2014.*

Craft: Race, Class and Gender” panel which featured artists Noelle Garcia, Jasmin Guerrero, Carrie Ann Schumaker and Jeff Rhodes. From Garcia’s traditional Native American beading on quotidian objects like staple guns or beer bottles to Schumaker’s elaborate gowns made of deconstructed romance novels, the panel’s participants simultaneously embrace and problematize the roles and identities placed on them by society and the art world.

Issues around authenticity and appropriation are often prevalent in both the content of work and the mode in which it’s made. Rhodes says

his decision to utilize fibers had more to do with the resources available to him than the readings to which those materials would eventually lead. “I find myself in a place where i don’t have a dedicated studio space, I don’t have dedicated studio time so I make work in my home, on my couch or my dining room table. It’s a very domestic setting so it makes sense that I’m using a domestic process both logistically as well as conceptually.”* This story is familiar to women who have, in the past, often borne the brunt of responsibility around child-rearing and housekeeping. Rhodes, who still considers himself a painter, admits that a lot of people continue to associate work with fibers as “feminine.” Instead of allowing labels to limit the way their art is perceived,

*Identity in Craft: Race, Class and Gender. February 4th, 2014.

these artists have all found ways of taking advantage of the communities they are a part of.

We continued the exploration of this concept of community with a panel titled “Community and Craft: Art, Activism and Politics.” While art is often created in isolation, craft has a rich tradition of communal work, from quilting bees to knitting circles and more. Each of the panelists presenting at this event make work collaboratively to create pieces that investigate larger social issues. Educator Nicole Marroquin even offered up terms to replace “art” in relation to her work including “action research” and “community cultural production.” Her work, she says, posits a scenario — the covering of murals in Pilsen, for example, as she did for the project “A

Day Without Art in Pilsen” — and asks the question: what would happen if... “I still don’t know [the answer] but that’s okay: that’s the art part.” Work that engages a community to this extent can feel like an emotional mine field. There’s a sense of responsibility toward the people you’re working with; the challenge of representing a myriad of voices with a communal act or object; and, arguably, a lot of contemporary projects that dabble in this realm, fail. When asked about the pitfalls of creating participatory art, Marroquin pointed out that, although so-called “socially engaged art” might like to colonize community arts, “it takes too long to get to know people and to engage in an authentic way. You have to be present and you have to participate in the community you’re engaged in.”*

Questions of money, value, careers and

* *Community: Art, Activism Politics. April 8th, 2014.*



Global Practices & Economic Sustainability: The Ethical Implications of Local and International Craft Production. February 18th, 2014.

the market came up in almost every conversation we had during Craft/Work. During “Global Practices & Economic Sustainability: The Ethical Implications of Local and International Craft Production,” panelists stressed the difficulty of honoring the time, labor, and artistry necessary to create beautiful handmade goods in a marketplace where textiles have become fast, cheap and disposable. Jen Beeman of Grainline Studio, Harish Patel of Ishi Vests and Maureen Dunn of Mata Traders discussed the challenges of integrating their community priorities with pre-existing capitalist structures. Their companies each attempt to challenge the ubiquitous separation between makers and consumers. Grainline Studio, a producer of downloadable sewing patterns, even presents production as the product; teaching its customers a skill through instruction and online tutorials. All three companies attempt a synergy between acting locally and thinking globally. They see their work selling patterns, dresses and vests as a first step towards creating a broader dialogue about agriculture, labor, design and tradition.

The techniques used by Craft/Work artists range from centuries old to cutting edge. Technology has launched a new offshoot of the craft community, found in hacker spaces and maker fairs. Its impact is seen in the world

of fine art as well. The artists on the “Craft & Technology” panel, Jesse Seay, David Demaree and Amanda Hagemann, integrate the newest and shiniest technologies into their making process, allowing them to produce both digital and physical objects that would not have been possible even ten years ago. Seay argued that technology can, in itself, be considered a craft. In her mind, the techniques she uses fusing wires and circuit boards for her speaker installations are clearly connected to knitting, weaving and other textile production. Working inside a digital realm has made us broaden our definition of an “object.” A hand-designed typeface is no less constructed than a physical item and its uses - as a vehicle for content - can be compared to any number of tools or transitory materials.

In order to link thought with action, each of the Craft/Work talks were followed by a hands-on, technical demonstration in a craft technique relating to the panel’s topic. These workshops ranged from Native American bead weaving to hand-made wire speakers. A full list of panels, participants, workshops and links to online resources can be found on the following page.

All Craft/Work events were open to the public and completely free, thanks to our generous Kickstarter backers.



Molly Roth, Keeley Marie Stitt and Nora Renick Rinehart during the panel, "Continuing Conversations: the Past, Present and Future of the Art Versus Craft Debate." February 8, 2014.

Craft/Work Programming

Drawing the Line: Art, Craft, Non Art and Non Craft

January 7, 2014

With panelists Jessica Pleyel, Nora Renick Rinehart and Lucy Knisley.

Followed by a workshop in Crochet by Jessica Pleyel.

Audio and video links available online.

Identity in Craft: Gender, Class and Race

January 21, 2014

with panelists Noelle Garcia, Jeff Rhodes, Carrie Ann Schumacher, and Jasmin Guerrero.

Moderated by Rachel Wallis.

Followed by a workshop in Native American bead weaving by Jasmin Guerrero.

Audio and video links available online.

Continuing Conversations: The Past, Present and Future of the Art vs Craft Debate

February 8, 2014

with panelists Keeley Marie Stitt, Molly Roth and Nora Renick Rinehart.

Followed by a workshop in Object Logic by Keeley Marie Stitt.

Audio link available online.

Global Practices & Economic Sustainability: The Ethical Implications of Local and International Craft Production

February 18, 2014

With panelists Harishi Patel of Ishi Vests, Maureen Dunn of Mata Traders, and Jenn Beeman of Grainline Studio.

Moderated by Rachel Wallis.

Followed by a workshop in Shibori dye by Nora Renick Rinehart.

Technology in Art and Craft

March 4, 2014

With panelists Jesse Seay, David Demaree, and Amanda Hagemann.

Moderated by Nora Renick Rinehart.

Followed by a workshop in hand-made wire speakers by Jesse Seay.

Craft and Community: Art, Activism Politics

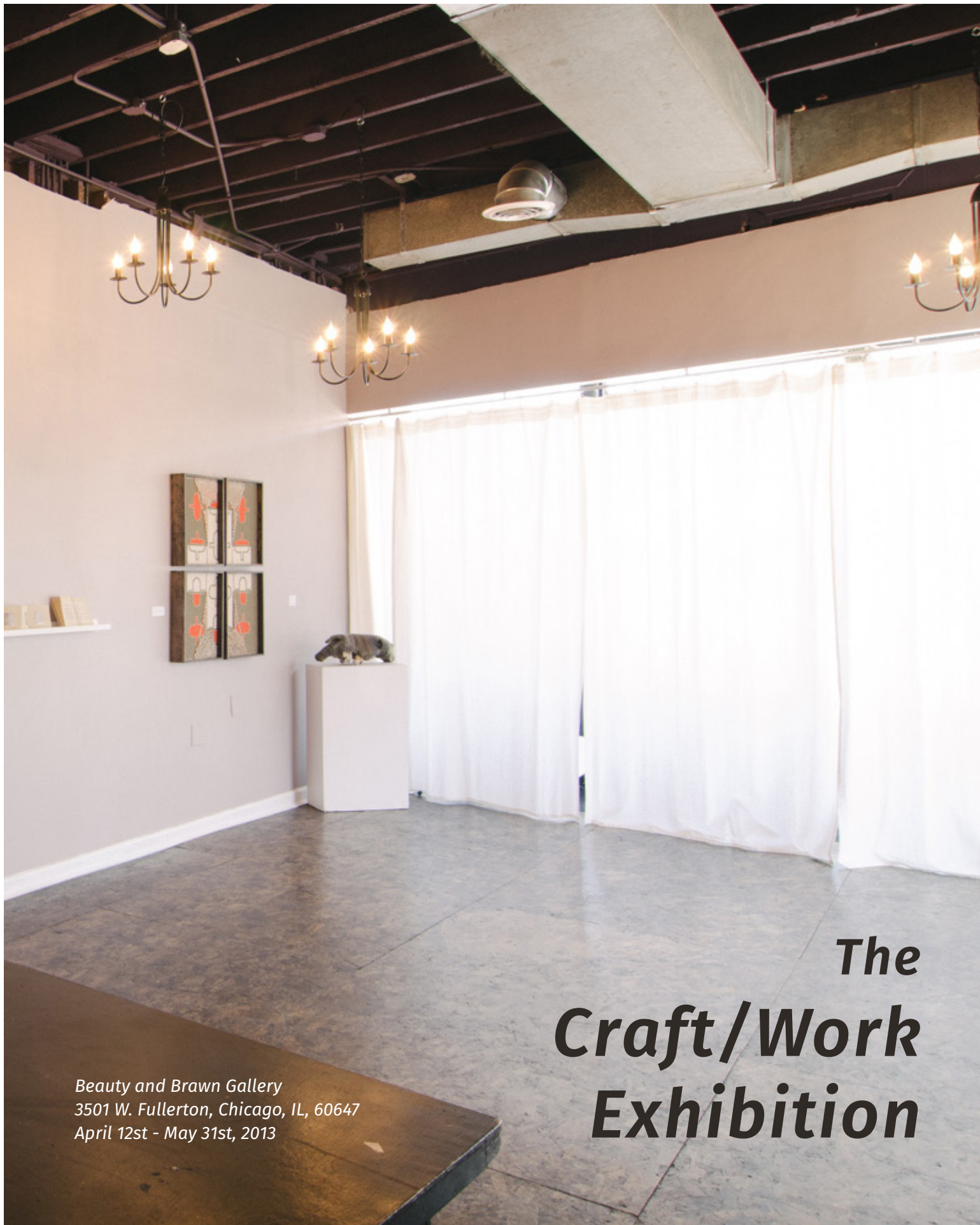
March 18, 2014

With panelists Thelma Uranga, Nicole Marriquin, and Rachel Wallis.

Followed by an embroidery workshop with El Stitch y Bitch Collective.

Audio link available online.





The Craft/Work Exhibition

*Beauty and Brawn Gallery
3501 W. Fullerton, Chicago, IL, 60647
April 12st - May 31st, 2013*



Branch Tree Embroidery
Embroidery on cotton sateen. 2014

Camille Canales

Camille Canales was born and raised in Kingsville, Texas. In 2007 she received her BFA from SAIC with an emphasis in painting and drawing and fiber and material studies. Since 2008 she has been involved with Lillstreet, a local arts center, wearing multiple hats within the community: artist, educator, and arts administrator. Camille makes work that investigates time, material, and the everyday. She creates image-based objects that explore her own coded personal narratives.

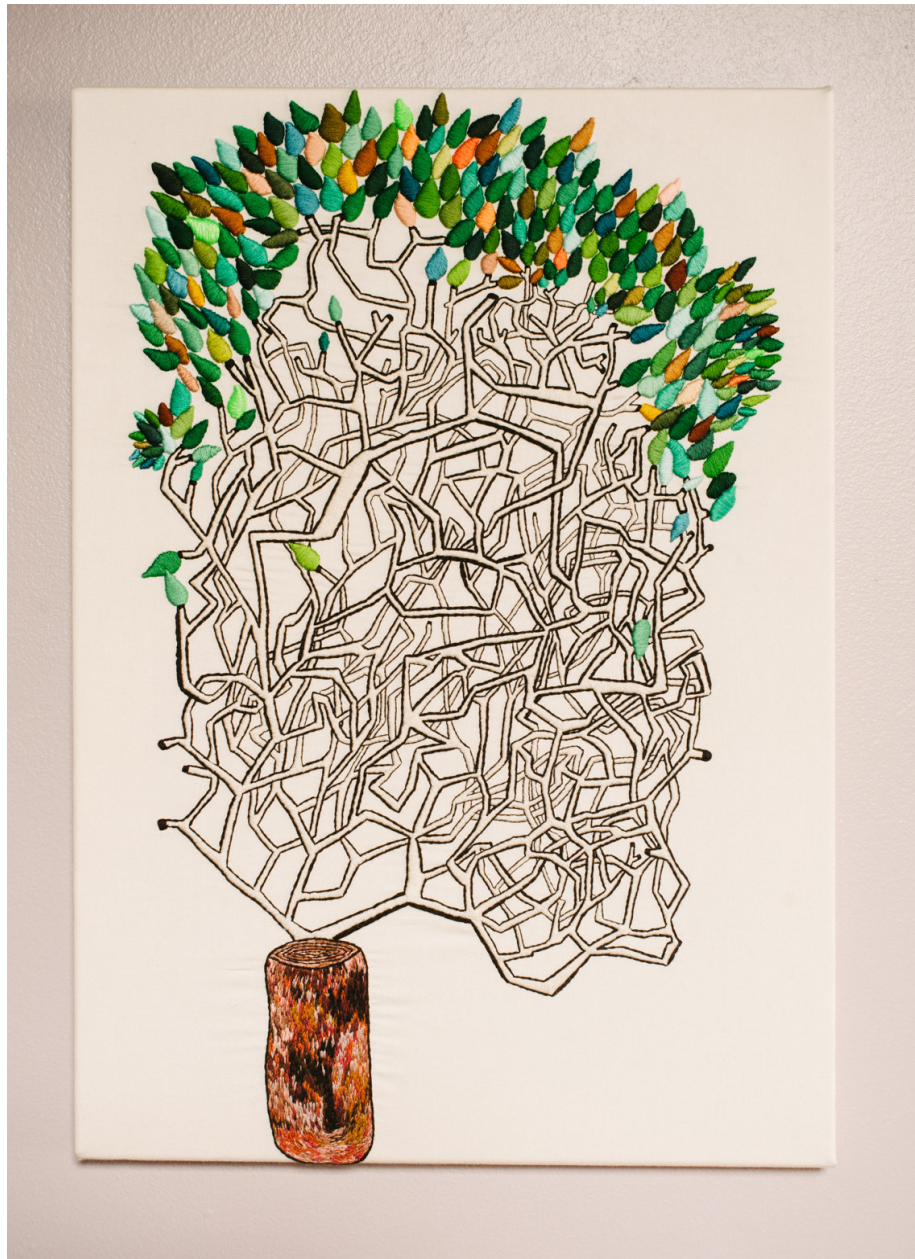


Photo by Joe Tighe



Other Side
Acrylic paint and embroidery floss on
stretched cotton fabric. 29' x 29'. 2012

Lindsay Evans

Lindsay Evans is an artistic jack of all trades from Pennsylvania. Her favorite things to do are to try out new crafts, bake coffee cakes, and take naps with her animals.



Photo by Joe Tighe



Native Tools: Beer
Felt, glass beads, thread. 2012

Nilla Wafers
Felt, glass beads, nymo. 2014

Painter's Tools: Heavy Duty Stapler
Glass beads, thread on stapler. 2011

Noelle Garcia

Noelle Garcia is a multimedia artist grappling with ideas of identity, family relationships and the American Indian experience. In addition to traditional painting, she works in fiber media including bead work, soft sculpture and basketry. Born in Reno, Nevada she now resides and works in the Chicago area. She earned her Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Painting & Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her Master's of Fine Arts in from the University of Nevada Las Vegas.





Rubaiyat
Bronze, sterling silver, book cover. 2013

Mornings in Florence
Sterling silver, pearls, book cover. 2013

Simpson and Simpson
Copper, sterling silver, book cover. 2013

Ashley Gilreath

Ashley Gilreath is a metalsmith/enamelist who can't resist buying dusty old books; preferably with water marks and inscriptions on the inside cover. Her conceptual artwork explores family relationships and can be described as artifacts of genealogical history. She views her jewelry as abbreviations or small studies of her observations and ideologies regarding ancestry. She has a B.F.A. in Metal Design from East Carolina University, and am currently living and making art in New Jersey.



Photo by Joe Tighe

Photo by Joe Tighe



Album
Needle lace on cotton. 2008

Diary
Drawnwork on cotton. 2007

Jasmin Guerrero

Jasmin Elisa Guerrero is a fiber artist currently living and working in New York City. She received her BFA from UMass Dartmouth and is a member of the Casualiving collective.





Photo by Joe Tighe

*Empty Cups and Full Heart
Paper. 2012*

Abigail Heuss

Abigail Heuss is a metalsmith and an object maker. She is fascinated by jewelry and household items because they are objects of intimacy. She makes vessels, reliquaries and jewelry because she wants her work to be handled. She is drawn to stories about how we connect to each other, and the cultures, and physical spaces we inhabit. She chooses her materials based on the story she wants to illustrate, often drawn to materials like paper, fabric, wood and found objects. She treasures the preciousness of ordinary things, the way objects patina with use and evolve to fit their owners. The things we own help to define us and we do the same for them.





Photo by Joe Tighe

Mending Ways: Horse, Colic
Horse skull, acrylic/wool blend yarn. 2013

Jessica Pleyel

Jessica Pleyel is a conceptual artist and curator located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her studio practice is multi-faceted, and includes sculpture, costume design, performance, video, and playwriting. Major themes within her practice encompass familial relations, feminism, gender identity, and the performative nature hunting.





*Cross with Block 3 After M. Barney
(with Frame After A. Albers)*
Cotton duck with polyester thread, oak with
wood filler, four panels. 2014

Jeff Rhodes

Jeff Rhodes is an artist based in Skokie, Illinois. He received a BFA from the University of Illinois and an MA in Arts Administration from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Photo by Joe Tighe



Inverse Cartography
Silk organza, archival in, gel medium. 2013-14

Emily Schneider

Emily Scheider is a printmaker and fibers artist based in Milwaukee who has exhibited her work throughout Chicago and Southeastern Wisconsin. In her mixed-media compositions, she aims to explore the connections between urban environments, the materials they are constructed with, and the relics they leave behind.





Carrie Ann Schumacher

Carrie Ann Schumacher is a multi-media artist living and working in Chicago. Her B.F.A. in Digital Media was received from Elmhurst College in 2008. Subsequent to that she attended Northern Illinois University, where she received her M.F.A. in Painting in 2012. She is currently on the faculty at Kishwaukee College, where she teaches Computer Art, Adobe Illustrator, and Digital Imaging.



Photo by Joe Tighe



Photo by Joe Tighe

Something for Something
Satin and organza ribbon, latex paint,
lettering enamel on dyed muslin. 2014

Molly Roth

Molly Roth mines text and context, sentimentality, estrangement, and the quotidian as fodder to create works that are both beautiful and awkward. Through accumulation and careful consideration, Roth converts banal words and materials into decorative, self-describing statements on anxiety, nostalgia, value, and control. Her labor-intensive, text-based works vary from large-scale installations to paintings to small collage/drawings on newspaper and chipboard. Often disguising the written word inside of itself, she adorns it with obsessive decoration or covers it up with common materials. Molly lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.





Blank Pages (with Alex Borgen)
Paper, copper wire, solder, magnets,
electronics. 2014

Jesse Seay

Jesse Seay is an artist and professor at Columbia College Chicago. She holds an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MA in Media & Cultural Studies from UNC-Chapel Hill. Her work focuses on sound, both acoustic and recorded. Her sound-producing kinetic sculptures have shown at the Hyde Park Art Center, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, the Chicago Children's Museum, and is on permanent display at the University of Chicago. Her current practice uses knitting machines to manipulate traditional electronics into complex systems that function both as textile and as working circuitry.





Lourdes Arias, Monica Fuentes, Noelle Garcia, Teresa Garcia, Erika Hernandez, Claudia Marchan, Karla Olvera, Jackie Orozco, Rita Pizarro, Kristina Roque, Mary Scott-Boria, Thelma Uranga, Rachel Wallis, Johanna Wawro, Nathalie Williams

Untitled (Homicide Quilt)
Fabric, thread
4 ft x 6 ft

El Stitch y Bitch

El Stitch y Bitch is a fluid fiber collective based in the Pilsen, Bridgeport and Little Village neighborhoods of Chicago. We are a group of 20-30 mostly Latina women who range in age and artistic background. Some of us are formally trained artists and teachers, while others are self taught or continuing the craft traditions of our mothers and grandmothers. While we meet regularly to knit and sew together in public places, we have also collaborated on textile installations for the Mexican Museum of Fine Arts, the Milwaukee Latino Cultural Center and other venues. Our pieces bring traditional craft techniques like quilting, crochet and embroidery into fine art settings.



Photo by Joe Tighe

***Thank you to everyone who donated to the
Craft/Work Kickstarter campaign!***

Abby Armada	Hannah Nielsen-Jones
Adam Minson	Heather Beck
Adena Rivera-Dundas	Jacqueline Ramirez
Alexander Rocklin	Jamie Blumberg Newell
Alisa Lazer	Jancey Wickstrom
Amanda Hagemann	Jen Barkan
Amanda Worrell	Jenna
Amy Taylor	Jenna Werner
Becca Briggs	Jess Baker
Beck Kramer	Jessica Mott Wickstrom
Beth Coddington	Jessica Speer
Bonnie Weaver	Jessyca Dudley
Carol Rinehart	Joan Affleck
Catherine Clepper	Jody Weinmann
Cathie Kozik	JoEllen Chernow
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Frank Edwards	Kathy Wicks
Gail Inman	Katie
Gilberto Villasenor	katie mihaly

This project wouldn't have been possible without your support!

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thecraftworkproject@gmail.com

www.craftworkproject.com