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 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact

Shannon Stratton
 Director of Programming, Threewalls, Chicago, USA

Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

The anti-heroic is a popular style at present and, considering the renewed interest in painting, this anti-heroicism is less about leveling an 'old-boys network' and more about dismantling the machine.

It is significant that 'technology' has been embraced by both men and women alike. Its coolness distances the viewer from domesticity, nostalgia, narrativity and the body, and because technology isn't tactile, has left room for a 'low-tech' to flourish. As a result, the dominant dichotomy is no longer between art and craft, male and female - but between warm and cool, high tech and low tech, the accessible and inaccessible. Because of these reestablished binaries, 'handicraft' is released from past stereotypes and becomes a participant in a new, postmodern dialogue about nature versus culture. It is even palpable that with the rapid evolution of technology in the recent decade, the centuries old stereotype of the natural being associated solely with the female has dissolved: men and women alike want to be closer to the natural as the technological infiltrates and even consumes much of their lives.

In today's technological environment, a longing for the unmediated, the simple or the authentic has become norm. It may be a result of the first fully-grown electronic generation making its way through a world overwhelmed with information about the past. With no single decade to long for (all time melding together into a pre-tech lump), popular culture has become significantly reinvested in all things grassroots and low-tech. Many 'crafts' are experiencing a renaissance, for example the fashionable, 'handmade' aesthetic with more and more twenty-somethings learning to crochet and knit, that may point to a popular reaction against the high-tech, the polished, and the cerebral by way of the intimate, romance and working class simplicity. Witness the birth of the 'new romantic'.

As Romantics sought to deconstruct dualities like high and low, they gravitated towards landscape (considered an inferior genre in the earlier part of the century), and found in it a means to transcend pedantic depictions and problematize a fixed relationship between high and low. Likewise, the 'new-romantics' have gravitated towards hobby or low-tech materials and have embraced a consciously elegant sloppiness in order to transcend technology and frigid conceptualism.

Rousseau saw man's recovery from his fall from innocence, as being found through the exploration of his own natural predilections; when considering the work of the 'new romantics', it seems that we're trying to recover the lost world in much the same way. The unquestionable faith put in technology over the last decade-economically, artistically, and culturally has resulted in man's latest topple from innocence. It is through this new work, made with 'whatever is lying around' and with whatever skills one has lying around, that an effort is being made to hone pathos in the emotional void left by technology.

As apart on my ongoing investigation into the 'contemporary tactile', Magnified Vulnerability will address the predilection in contemporary visual art practice to use outdated handicraft technology in order to address more complex narratives. Artists will include: Anne Wilson, Carol Jackson, Luanne Martineau, among others.

[continue...](#) / [view as pdf](#)

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft
Guest Speakers
Index of Papers
Sponsors
Contact



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[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

Magnified Vulnerability: Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

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The following text is apart the author's body of work focused on curating and writing about trends for referencing and utilizing fiber-craft traditions in popular culture and art. The portion of this text about Luanne Martineau, was excerpted and published as apart for her residency exhibition at ThreeWalls in Chicago, Illinois. Still an aspect of an on-going project, the author plans to continue to realize small curatorial projects in partnership with her writing.

I.

MADE WITH LOVE

Years ago my ex- husband's grandmother made me a vest. A cherry red acrylic, hand-knitted vest with no buttons, that was probably too boxy and too large for my frame. I loved it. It traveled with me when I moved and I kept it when the husband and I split. It sounds like it should be well-worn, shabby from love, but it is quite pristine. I have probably worn it twice. In fact my roommate insisted I part with it when we helped one another clean out overrun closets. I stubbornly refused. It meant something to me, in part because it was made for me (and I really had quite a lot of affection for Margaret, the maker), and because something made it the last vestige of the truly, genuine hand made article. It was a simple pattern, completely outside of any existing fashion, popular or thrift-store chic, and it was made by someone unaffected by any trend in making or expressive arts.

At the same time, the vest was not made out of necessity. Therefore, its existence struck me as poignant. It passed all the emotional tests to be awarded the label 'genuine', a term that (while being bandied about with 'authenticity' and 'sincerity'), as a result of its prominence in art, might be on a slippery path to dishonor.

But I like poignancy, and pathos. Not to be confused with nostalgic sentiments, because what I see as poignant is not necessarily the same thing as that which is longing for or reminiscent of the past. And although I see it as a response to modernism and the heroic, in many ways the recent focus on sincerity, authenticity and weakness simply proposes another kind of utopia, one in which the fittest might be the most (emotionally) cunning.

Its difficult to define the poignancy of the awkward, but if I had to give an example, it would be of similar hand-knit vests that I come across at the Salvation Army, garishly colored and awkwardly designed, that appear to have never been worn (let alone looked at), and promptly pitched into the donation bin. These sweater-vests and crew-necks that have clean white labels sewn into the neck with "made with love by Gramma" in cursive embroidery. I buy them now and then--when I feel particularly bad for them--and then tuck them away in my closet, wearing them occasionally and exposing myself to such ridicule as my roommate saying I look like "the 4th grade paste-eater".

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#)
[Guest Speakers](#)
[Index of Papers](#)
[Sponsors](#)
[Contact](#)



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Magnified Vulnerability:
Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

I do not claim that my sweater rescue is unique. There is a real popular revival in the investment and affection for craft that wavers between embracing the object and appreciating the maker (collecting up hand-knit scarves, felted slippers and hooked rugs), and learning the crafting skill itself for relaxation, functional application (making winter gear, gifts) and economic relief (reconstituting the manufactured as a thrifty solution to expensive fashions) and then of course, the adoption and remarketing of the trend by career makers (designers and artists).

The artists who are making with hobby materials, are increasingly creating work that seems to transcend political arguments between art and craft, and have neatly devised ways to proudly demonstrate that the well 'crafted' object makes for smart art. The art of the assembling is apparent and, in fact, often pertinent to the work itself by finding methods which frame the work conceptually and bridge a gap between what it means to craft, be creative and be active in social commentary. Concurrent with this is another, less defined trend, emerging amongst artists who are embracing crafting and in-turn motivating and/or administrating public craft projects. Zines such as *Slave to the Needles* and *KnitKnit* give knitting and fiber craft in general a sort of cult status, while the organization *The Church of Craft* achieves its cult stripes by locating themselves in grass roots traditions and organizing roaming craft meetings throughout the U.S. and Canada. *The Church of Craft's* founder, Callie Janoff, is even an ordained minister.

When I first became engaged in this on-going inquiry into the popularity of [fiber based] handicrafts with popular culture, and then as an academic barometer - with visual artists, I was convinced that artists had truly reinvented the wheel (or attempted to) through this driving need to 'craft' in opposition to 'program'; seeing crafting as a direct retaliation to the technology that had come to permeate some of the more tactile or social aspects of our culture. I viewed these practices as reactionary, ones that proposed that we were alienated by our own inventiveness and seeking new (or should I say old) methodologies for exercising our corporeal presence. I have not necessarily abandoned this initial reasoning, to some degree I still believe that to be true, as culture works cyclically and in a series of reactions. But I am tempering that view with the possibility that rather than strictly 'reacting', 'responding' would be a more accurate view of our actions as cultural participants and contributors.

Although focused on changes in the American economy and workplace, Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* acknowledges and attempts to chart the "forces beyond our control" that "are exogenously reshaping our work, communities, and lives" (Florida, 2002, pp 16) . Florida does not necessarily blame technology and places the views of the "techno-utopian" or "techno-pessimist" as extremist vantage points, but he does set out to investigate the "why" of our culture's recent huge investment in creativity and individuality. Much of what drives his research into the economy, parallels my curiosity about hobby-craft and popular culture, and how its utilization in art is both the commentary on and result of, the same subtle shifts in the social and cultural that he is studying.

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft
 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact

Shannon Stratton
 Director of Programming, Threewalls, Chicago, USA

Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

II.

TRANSCENDING THE NOISE

"With electronics, our sensory life is processed differently, and the relationship of touch to sight is made more complicated because of the abundance of unrelated sounds and images"

-Jeffrey Rian (1996)

I will not claim to have coined the phrase, but I have adopted the frequent use of 'jury-rigged' as the descriptive term for many of the art practices I am surrounded by. For me that term brings to mind the 13 year old in the garage managing to build a go-cart from empty paint cans, an old garbage bin, and the abandoned lawn mower. And it works. It is the meticulous application of a piece of chewing gum to end of a stick used to retrieve mom's wedding ring from the drain, or the coat-hanger device that is cleverly fashioned to unlock the car. These little solutions are well designed, functional and immediate. That is the art of jury-rigging: making do with what is lying around. And whatever is lying around, is not likely very refined.

Artists working in the jury-rigging tradition are readily exploring traditional craft materials and discovering and refining techniques common to hobby-craft or folk-art practices. This work ranges from the consciously sloppy to the meticulously adapted, and in all likelihood, as their practice matures, the consciously sloppy becomes more refined, until the application of materials is intricately married to the art-object and their art-practice as a whole.

This gravitation towards that which has been formally considered 'inferior' by academia, has its roots in Romanticism. The Romantics sought to deconstruct dualities and gravitated towards landscape (considered an inferior genre in earlier part of the 19th century) to find a means to transcend pedantic depictions and problematize the fixed relationship between high and low. Likewise, many contemporary young art-makers ('new-romantics'), have gravitated towards the 'inferior' hobby material or low-tech manifestation and embraced a consciously elegant sloppiness in order to transcend technology and frigid conceptualism, resulting in the unmediated, the simple or the authentic becoming a prototypic topic for young, contemporary art. Heavily influenced by early 90s practices (artists like Mike Kelley, Robert Gober, Beverly Semmes, Paul McCarthy, Polly Apfelbaum and others); these emergent artists have been marinating in pedagogical environments populated by those mentors educated in process art, Arte Povera, feminism and Beuys during the pluralistic 1970s.

In the 1990s, the iconographic became the cornerstone of practices concerned with narrating the fields of bodily experience and personal and racial identity. Theories and practices identified as male/academic/white/heterosexual were put aside and the body became a dominant concern. In turn, the domestic and traditionally female sphere became a popular point of reference for the conveyance of narrative; craft materials were embraced as avant-garde, discussed within the postmodern idiom and potentially relieved of their marginal roles. During this time, Mike Kelley was making stuffed animal sculptures and exhibiting them widely. Kelley's adolescent sensibility combined with a punk, DIY aesthetic, charmed young artists and influenced their approach to art-making. His use of used materials, hobby craft, lowbrow technique and assemblage held countercultural appeal. Kelly embraced the hobby material ([Fig. 1](#)) as a medium with which to critique societal norms, having flatly stated that he hated nostalgic art, but was able to utilize and manipulate items taken from the domestic in order to critique these very notions. Additionally, he found the dimension of the feminist paradigm convenient for the dismantling of the heroic and the authoritative. "Minimal arts", as described by Kelley, are "reductive, essentially heroic primal forms [which] lend themselves easily to the role of the authority figure. Thus it is only right that we should want to defame them" (Taylor, 1995).

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 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact



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 Director of Programming, Threewalls, Chicago, USA

Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

Because of Kelley, artists who appropriate the low-tech aesthetic become participants in a discourse about the vernacular and the lowbrow as synonymous with the anti-heroic and the authentic. Kelley's interest in regressive behavior and the loss of idealism has permeated these materials and framed their intention. Rather than positioning the low-tech practice as merely rooted in pop culture, the work can be isolated conceptually and considered for the varied intent with which it is made. In addition, it should be considered alongside the cultural barometer, identifying the opposition low-tech proposes to the digitally manipulated photograph, the web-based project or the powder coated sculpture. It seems significant that slick, tech and electronic practices had been embraced by both men and women alike, its coolness effectively distancing the viewer from domesticity, nostalgia, narrativity and the body, subjects frequently associated with the feminine and periodically considered pejorative and academically inferior. At the same time, as culture becomes reinvested in the tactile and the low-tech flourishes, there has been a dissolution of age-old stereotypes associating the natural solely with the female: it appears that men and women alike desire tactility as technology infiltrates and even consumes much of our lives. As a result, the dominant dichotomy is no longer between art and craft, male and female - but between warm and cool, high tech and low tech, the accessible and inaccessible. Because of these reestablished binaries, 'handicraft' is released from past stereotypes and becomes a participant in a new, postmodern dialogue about nature versus culture (or at least an attempt to reconcile the two). If technology is the latest heroic (art) form, than the handicraft must be the antithesis.

Much like Florida, Chicago based artist and writer, Ryan Weber (whose body of work has been focused on the romantic and the authentic) believes that the theory of the techno-reaction "rings hollow", writing that reactionary practices "sit dangerously close to a sentimental reflection on an imagined past" (2003). Weber clarifies that the postmodern Romantic is "voicing a kind of vulnerability that has been conspicuously absent in the recent past," a kind of vulnerability that I believe is present and articulate in crafted objects - particularly those in the fiber medium. As Weber goes onto describe our time as one of "a paradigm shift", he finds that artists are busy redefining the value and role of art in culture, but not in response to market forces or a globalized economy deeply effected by technology. I find it more difficult to separate the two (the object from the globalized economy), as one can almost parallel the increased use of fiber and hobby materials in art or the increasing popularity and academic validation of folk and vernacular art, with an escalation in technology and its merge with the everyday.

Rousseau saw man's recovery (from his fall from innocence) as being found through the exploration of his own natural predilections (Vaughn, 27) ; when I consider this jury-rigged, low-tech or hobby-world work, it seems that there is an effort underway to recover a lost world in much the same way. The Romantic's predilection toward the sublime as a strategy for expressing their desire, that is, the use of the chaotic and/or fragmented as an expression of transcendence, is fitting with these materials. Invoking their lowbrow associations as distasteful or the evident 'hand' as symbolic of the mortal and corporeal, the handicraft becomes the sublime, 'primitive and wild' by comparison to the last few decades of refined, technological and cerebral art. The unquestionable faith put in technology over the last decade (economically, artistically, and culturally) has resulted in a topple from innocence. And it is through this new low-tech work, made with 'whatever is lying around' and with whatever skills one has lying around, that an effort is being made to hone pathos in the emotional void left by technology.

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft
 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact

Shannon Stratton
 Director of Programming, Threewalls, Chicago, USA

Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

III.

THE IMPOTENT LANDSCAPE

"The highest achievements of our material civilization--and at their best our hotels, our department stores, and our Woolworth towers are achievements--count as so many symptoms of its spiritual failure,"

-Lewis Mumford (1922)

At the early part of the 20 th century, Western society underwent drastic transformations due to the increased tensions between industrialization and culture. As new technology unfolded, artists responded with work that delved into what it meant to be human against the stark contrast of the machine. Questions about the authentic verses imitation resonated within the writings of Walt Whitman and Henry James, and were confounded by photography as documentation and modernist architecture. This pivotal moment was bound by Romanticism on one end and Modernism on the other, as it grappled with whether the machine was indicative of progress or the scourge of culture.

Irony is the chief method for framing the unachievable desires that the Romantic longs for. In *Romantic Desire in (Post)Modern Art and Philosophy* (1990), Jos de Mul cites Friedrich von Schlegel for his characterizing of the Romantic as an oscillation between enthusiasm and irony . Carol Jackson's tooled leather signs offer (the enthusiastically ironic) testimonial to her culture's pivotal moments of excess ([Fig. 2](#)). Describing her work as existing primarily in the domain of painting, Jackson (like the folk-artist who indulges in religious epitaph), creates texts that are simultaneously celebratory and warning: frank, stylized engravings which are the dark forecast of impending decline. Her tooled, stamped and enameled drawings of real-estate and commercial signage question the tension between the natural and cultural through the symbol of building and development. The liminal moment that is 'contracting', where the land has been acquired from itself (nature subjugated), and remade into luxury real-estate (culture celebrated), is magnified by Jackson who invokes an Arts and Crafts ghost, hovering between industrial revolutions.

As de Mul points out, "irony embodies the capacity that people have to reflect upon their impotence, to distance themselves from it and thus...to rise above it" (pp 10). Jackson's signs negotiate that point of irony by combining man's vanity in architecture and ownership with the complex sign-system inherent to the 'skin'. The animal skin is associated with luxury, but also with handicraft and subjugated nature. It also the human body or skin, on which Jackson engraves an extravagant tattoo ([Fig. 3](#)).

In the 19 th century, the industrial revolution made it possible for machines to mimic handcrafted things, Jackson takes that handcrafted thing to mimic the grandiose signifiers of that initial progress. Her signs are an ironic benchmark between the Romantic and the Modernist, compounding turn-of-the-century American optimism with the irony of a weary post-modern culture, sifting through the past century's junk.

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft
 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact

Shannon Stratton
 Director of Programming, Threewalls, Chicago, USA

Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

As new artists work to dismantle technology, they revisit an early 20 th C model of the authentic with the savvy of one in on the joke. *Return of the Real*, Miles Orvell's text on the authenticity and imitation in American culture, charts the evolution of the perceived 'real' from the industrial revolution to a post-war era. His fundamental argument centers on Walt Whitman and Leaves of Grass. Orvell sees Whitman as giving definitive shape to the American 'authentic', describing Leaves of Grass as an exemplary whole whose power lies in an "act of social ethics...providing an ideal remedy of sorts for the inadequate definition of "being human" that was evolving out of the nineteenth century's response to technology and industrialization"(pp 29). As American realism took shape, it came to mean many things, with Whitman embracing the 'low' subjects, the vulgar and the ugly along with the beautiful.

Today, technology still embodies a sense of awe and mystery as well as an undeniable sense of removal and mediation, with authenticity relating to tactile awareness and actual physical experience. Because authenticity is more of a fugitive concept--at the least, a search or investigation common to most ideological struggles--it seems plausible that much of today's low-tech work is about the potential for the authentic, or the search itself. Often this work appears unfinished or is so, with loose ends left dangling. Mike Kelley describes his work as never 'finished', and that imperfection reflects both the incompleteness of things in the world by illustrating the loss of the ideal.

The stinking garbage heaps, rotting nature, and piles of shit that dot the junk-yard landscapes of Luanne Martineau's drawings, depict a troubled American landscape--one that has as much in common with the 19th century, social realist comic she mines for material, R.F. Outcault's *The Yellow Kid* -- as it does with the currents in contemporary culture, economically and politically (Fig. 4). Orvell describes the junk-yard as the "anti-world of the technological civilization...a system of disorder, of things gone wrong, of waste, a negative in the balance sheet of civilization"(Orvell, 287). Martineau takes the junkyard as point of departure, locating the racial, intellectual and aesthetic tensions of the 20 C. as the detritus on which current culture is built.

Martineau has long expressed an interest in the tensions between realism and abstraction, and her means of work: drawings made on typewriters, soft sculpture with a knitted, tartan or felt shell, and detailed embroideries of wastelands, negotiate that position by her combination of the vernacular with abstracted forms. Three of her large sculptures, *Knitted Accumulation Sculpture* (2001), *The German General* (2002), and *Lubber* (2003) are all made from fiber materials and constructed into gigantic pillowy forms, each an abstraction from an ongoing investigation into the narrative of institutionalized discrimination. *Knitted Accumulation* (Fig. 5) is a pile of saggy, tartan poo-forms; the patterns derived from the ones depicted in *The Yellow Kid*, that narrated the life of the ghettoized Irish-American immigrant in 19th C. New York City. *The German General* (Fig. 6) on the other hand, branches away from the Outcault material, sculpting a faded and cartoonish submarine from industrial felt, vaguely resembling a childish floor pillow or riding toy. Modeled on material derived from a Sid Ceasar skit on the 1950s TV program, *Your Show of Shows*, *The German General* is not what or whom you think it is. In the skit, Sid Ceasar plays a childish German man being dressed by his valet. After watching the 'help' scramble to meet the General's needs, we discover the twist in the end - the General is nothing but a lowly hotel doorman (Turner, 2002). Much like this skit, we find the same of Martineau's sculpture: it is not what we think sculpture (or fiber) is either. It is an amusing twist on our sense of the abstract or the sociopolitical. At first glance, all of our prejudices are prepared for the abstract (dry?) and soft sculpture (pop art?) - but in reality it is the dry that is wit and the pop that is political. Her application of materials is masterful, allowing room for entry, followed by ample chance for surprise.

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft
 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact



Shannon Stratton
 Director of Programming, Threewalls, Chicago, USA

Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

Ideas about authenticity have close ties with the American sublime and are related to ideas of alienation and awkwardness, two adjectives embodied by the spirit of artwork made in vernacular traditions. Ralph Waldo Emerson argued that the sublime is located within the individual and that "what drew us into another's work was our own alienated majesty." (Orvell) Responding to the sublime relies heavily on a sense of otherness and an audience who will appropriate and struggle to overcome that sense. Most of the humble materials chosen by artists who work in this fashion have a history of otherness built into them. Hobby craft has a long association with sentimentality, nostalgia and cheapness - terms that make it difficult to locate handicraft outside of the domestic sphere, and conversely, has painted the domestic sphere as an undesirable place to be located.

Martineau combines the narrative and the materials of the othered, but in a double bind: her 'aliens' are an uncomfortable, difficult to address group, situated in a precarious political place between oppressor (white, European, male, modern art) and the oppressed (ghettoized, white, European, social realism). Similarly, Martineau's deft use of handicraft (fiber) materials removes them from the solely female or domestic domain by invoking the history of dress and adornment through the subtle application of patterns and/or fabrics to indicate rank and status. Fashion as a modifier of identity is situated in a similarly uneasy place, on the one hand the privilege of the oppressor, while on the other, the mark of the oppressed. Combining these associations with some of her abstracted, modernist forms, begs a reevaluation of much of the symbolism that has become institutionalized. Her work levels debates between high-and-low/art-and-craft/privilege-and-ghetto by posing the contradictions inherent to each binary through the hybridizing of form and subject.

Anne Wilson's new animation series *Errant Behaviors* (2003) ([Fig. 7](#)) offers the ultimate junction between high and low tech. Using the 'home' version of technology, the *imovie* program on the Macintosh computer, Wilson's new film relates the handmade to the machine via the careful construction of stop animation. Her sculptural scraps of crocheted black lace, filmed in stop motion, come alive while simultaneously becoming 2D; both the processes of lace-making and crochet, and traditional animation, relate via their shared step-by-step evolution and accumulation of structure, both dependent on sequencing and replication.

Close-ups of ignoble bits of lace and pins (inspired by her *Topologies* (2000) series ([Fig. 8](#)), a landscape comprised of reassembled black lace) exhibit the slightest of human and landscape forms. The nature of the stop-animation causes these stark black and white renditions (with an uncanny resemblance to something of Edward Gory or Aubrey Beardsley in their plain palette and strange gothic elegance) to eerily twitch like electrified lines. This repetitive loop of animation, with an avant-garde soundtrack (made partially of found sound) by Shawn Decker, makes for a somewhat sad, pathetic movie with strange moments of sublime humor interspersed throughout.

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)

ChallengingCraft
 Guest Speakers
 Index of Papers
 Sponsors
 Contact



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Magnified Vulnerability:
 Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

In Wilson's own words, "the behaviors of ' *Errant Behaviors*' have to do with aspects of impropriety, aggression and accident. They include...references to silent film comedies, including connections to furious Keystone Cops movements, Chaplin's pathos, and Keaton's technological conundrums on film" (2003). But the chaos of Chaplin's *Modern Times* is toned down by the somber character of Wilson's film. With its relation to her *Topologies* project, *Errant Behaviors* takes on the appearance of a suffering landscape ([Fig. 9](#)). *Topologies*, in its mourning attire, appears like a stark memorial to the natural and beautiful, a sublime depiction of femininity in a post-feminist culture.

While both projects, by way of the color black, evoke the unpleasant associations of death; it is Wilson's subtle comedy in these depictions of pathos that release either project from resonating as 'Gothic'. Instead, in keeping with the sublime as purveyor of awesome beauty, cause of terror or despair, Wilson's film is much closer to Chuck Agro's definition of the sublime as "something between dancing and dying":

"My impression of the Sublime is that it implies death -- it's a beauty that implies death. I don't think fear." (Haden-Guest, 2001, pp.55)

IV.

ELEGANT FAILURE

A long list of exhibitions has already addressed the aspect of 'women's work' or 'fiber's' move from the applied to the fine arts. Lois Martin wrote about a 1997 exhibition titled "Hanging by a Thread" in *Surface Design*, Fall 1998, celebrating the show for having been beautifully conceived, but lacking contributions from true 'fiber artists.' She discusses the feeling of malignment that the craftsperson holds when contemporary art borrows from their traditional vocabulary. Roszika Parker saw this merge of the fine and applied arts as a "benefit (to) painting rather than embroidery" (1989, pp.191), the relationship being a modification to masculinity rather than a transformation of the 'feminine arts'.

What was lacking in these assessments of fiber in contemporary art, was that the practice of using these more humble materials to realize a conceptual project, would advocate the 'hand' (the body, the natural, the mortal) as an important aspect of the ideological. In the past, allowing the 'hand' to show as an aspect to the elegance of the construction of the resulting object was perhaps too hindered by a constant renegotiation of 'craft' itself within the discourse of visual arts.

As the need to valorize the hobby material is over (as these materials are demonstrated to be in popular and common usage), what is relevant is the investigation of these practices as a cultural barometer. In *Sculpture in the Age of Doubt*, Thomas McEvilley (1999) defines sculpture as involving an empirical presence, while painting an implied, symbolic one. When describing any of the low-tech, hobby-material practices, the trappings of painting and sculpture in terms of history, materiality and grandiosity, fail to capture the subtlety of the work and leave the door open for more forgiving and neutral terms. The practice of the low-tech or the anti-heroic is an aesthetic, as much as a mandate, and one that doesn't necessarily favor a dimensional structure, but instead evidences humanity. With technology's isolating effect on the individual, mortality is made manifest in these handicraft projects, and in its evidence, illustrates a new romanticism that addresses the loss of idealism and the pursuit of authenticity. Acting as philosophical sketch, the low-tech signifies possibility and hope with its vulnerability, ultimately providing a rejoinder to the smooth edges of technology.

By approaching the authentic through this raw depiction in form (humble or formally othered materials) and content (the junk-yard, the points of excess, detritus and death), an honesty is attained that counteracts the cynical veneer so prevalent in the past. Here, there is a resonating loneliness in the atmosphere as artists grapple with themes of alienation and longing in an effort to reconcile a culture that is synchronously wired

into the giant world network, while irrevocably alone at the terminal.

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

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Shannon Stratton
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Magnified Vulnerability:
Handicraft in Art and Popular Culture

[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

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[abstract](#) [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [references](#)

[ChallengingCraft](#) [Guest Speakers](#) [Index of Papers](#) [Sponsors](#) [Contact](#)



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Fig 1
Kelley



Fig 2
Jackson



Fig 3
Jackson



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Fig 4
Martineau



Fig 5
Martineau



Fig 6
Martineau



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Fig 7
Wilson



Fig 8
Wilson



Fig 9
Wilson

Fig 1



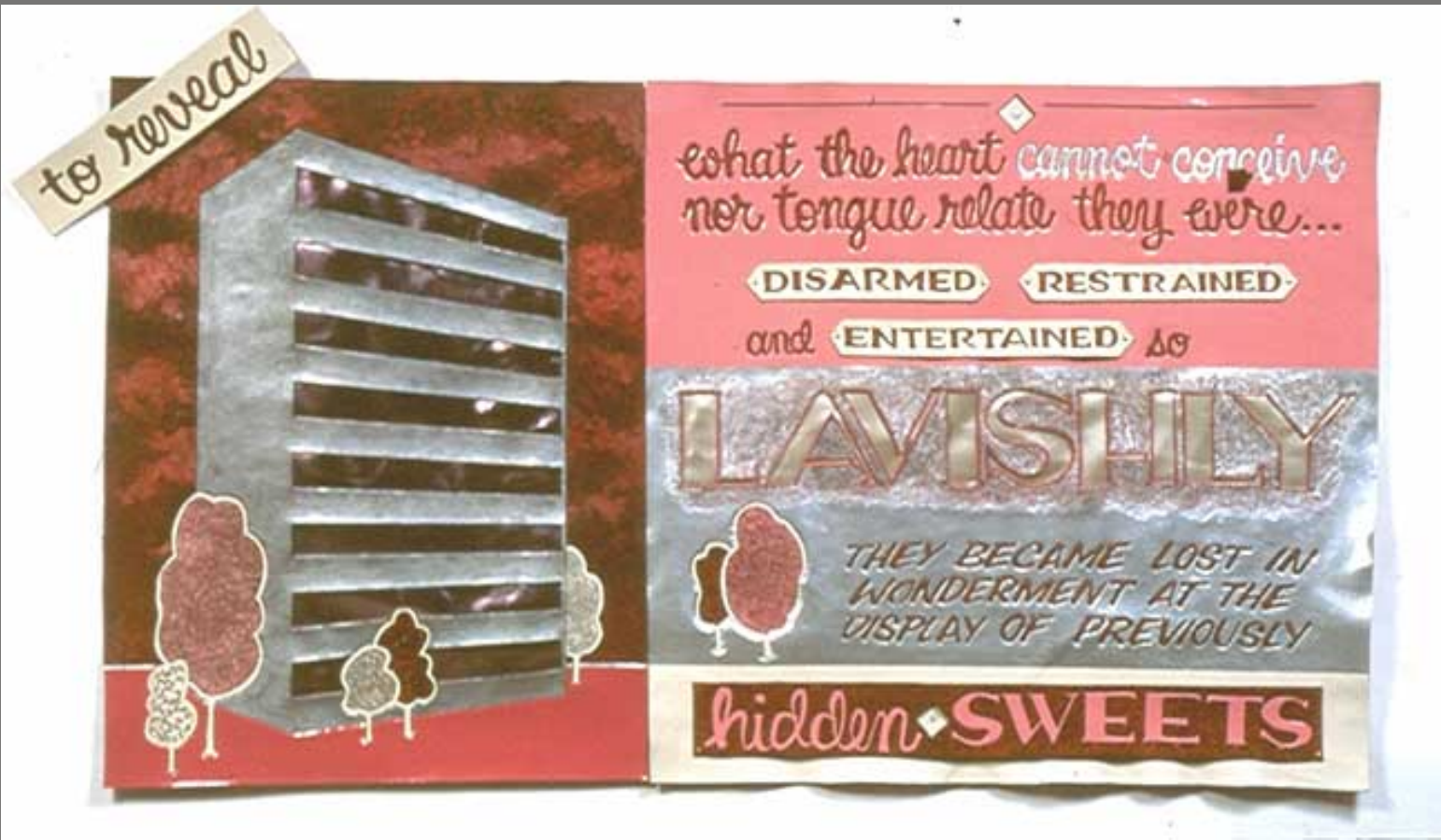


Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6



Fig 7

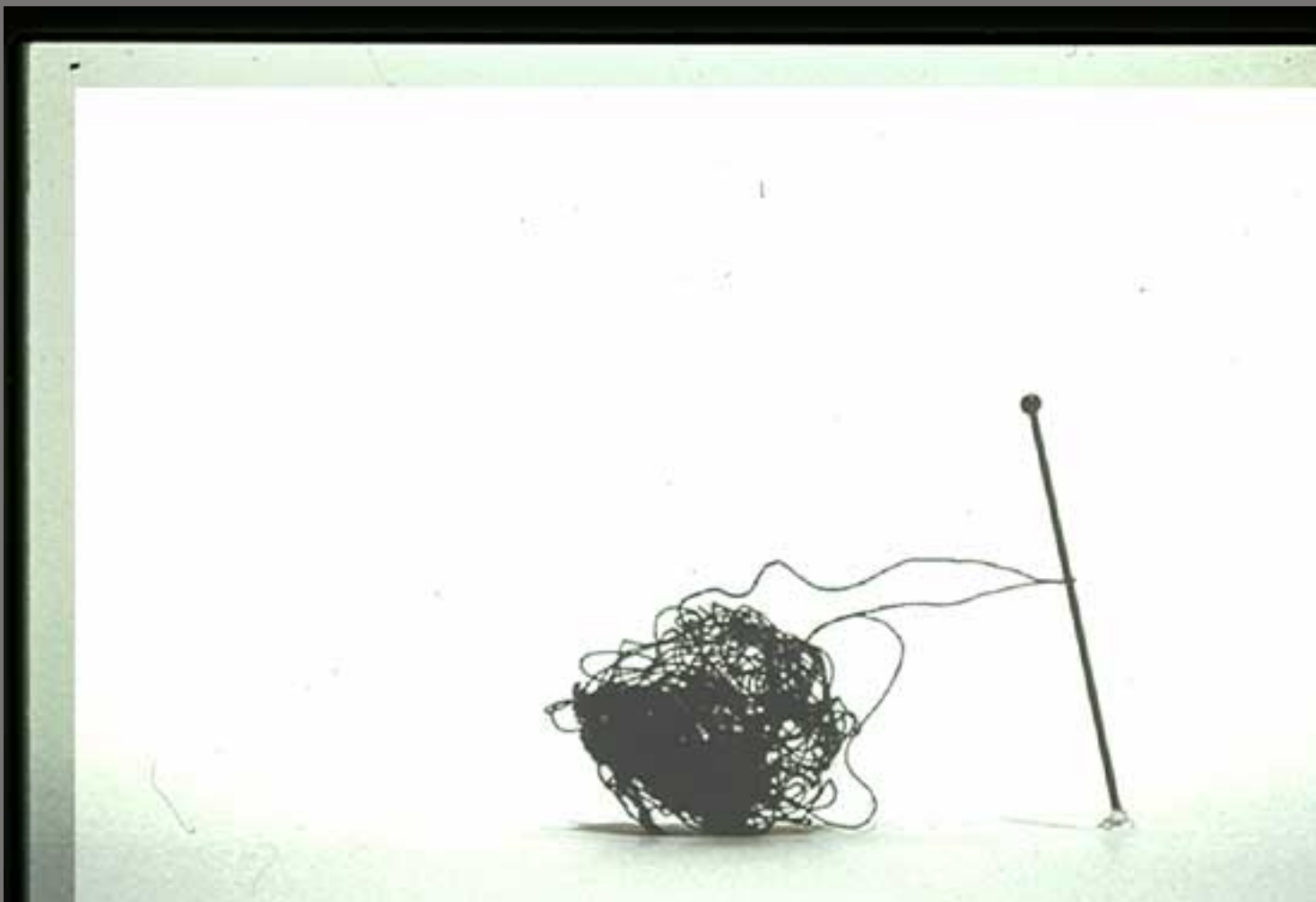


Fig 8



Fig 9

