

REVIEW: RHODE ISLAND

Social Fabrics: Textiles and Contemporary Issues

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A soft, suspended carcass slowly rotates in the Cushing Gallery of the Newport Art Museum: the red, floral, and striped clothing scraps, patched to look like muscle striations, gives way to a tropical vignette of resplendent birds perched on vines embedded in the sculpture's "flesh." Tamara Kostianovsky's *Carcass with Tropical Landscape* (2021) animates the links between fast fashion, consumption, and the environment, while gesturing towards the possibilities of new life emerging from waste.

Textiles evoke so much about being in a body: from the comfort of being wrapped up in an heirloom quilt, to the ruggedness of denim designed for labor and worn for fashion, to the delicate, fingertip-detail of cross-stitch. *Social Fabrics* brings together an exciting array of artists working in varied media to illustrate how intertwined textile is with our embodied social experience, both literally and figuratively.

The animated embroideries of Aubrey Longley-Cook (*RuPaul Cross Stitch Animation Workshop*, 2013; *Runaway*, 2010) reveal both the tidy precision of cross stitching and hoop embroidery and the chaotic connections behind the "final" images, or

"the stubble behind the makeup." LJ Roberts, in *Censorship Protest Mask* (David Wojnarowicz), (2011), employs embroidery as a form of both tender attention to and fierce insistence on the iconic image of Wojnarowicz's mouth sewn shut, a rebellion against silencing of queer voices. Alison Saar's delicate yet bold linework, printed on the tissue-thin handkerchief of *Red-bone Blues* (2017), has a lovely visual and thematic resonance with Roberts', in her use of portraiture to attend to marginalized Black subjectivity.

Such resonances can be found throughout the show, in both medium and subject matter. Jesse Krimes's quilts, at once domestic and mythic, are sewn from clothing collected from currently and formerly incarcerated people, monuments to a population rendered invisible, while Elizabeth Duffy's surveillance textiles imbue the most familiar objects, from paper napkins to fuzzy slippers, with the technologies of surveillance and control. Juxtaposed with now-canonical projects like the AIDS Quilt RI and the International Honor Quilt project initiated by Judy Chicago illustrates just how vital textiles have been to artistic critique. Visit the Newport Art Museum and notice what tugs at the threads of your social fabric.

— Elizabeth Maynard



Tamara Kostianovsky, *Big Carcass with Tropical Landscape*, 2020, clothing belonging to the artist, meat hooks, chains, 84 x 22 x 16". Photo: © J.C. Cancedda and Courtesy of Slag Gallery and Tamara Kostianovsky.