

STITCH!

A textile and fiber art group exhibition featuring

Lovid • Mary Tooley Parker • Michael C. Thorpe • Stacey Lee Webber

July 8 - August 21, 2022

Today, many artists explore a range of media, showing how the visual arts can alter our perception of the world and the passage of time. Textiles have proved a conceptually powerful yet flexible medium in the hands of many who use it to fuse diverse themes and material elements. *Stitch!* gathers the works of four artists—each drawing on different aspects of the medium to distort, distill, sample and even embellish the familiar. In manipulating and often reworking pattern, imagery and materials, these extraordinary artists create works that imbue moments in time with a sense of immediacy, heightened by the familiarity of textiles.

Mary Tooley Parker's exploration of color and texture in the deceptively simple medium of rug hooking brings seemingly ordinary interiors to life with details, such as open eye glasses and rumpled seat cushions, to suggest a human presence recently departed from the space. Parker deftly arranges a grid of tightly packed loops of fabric and fiber to depict a snapshot from a summer day in *Baby Pool*, contrasting the softness of human forms with fields of verdant color. The photographic nature of that her compositions and the tactile sense of their subjects, reworked using the hand technique of rug hooking, plays with concepts of replication and translation.

The vibrant nature of figurative polychrome embroidery in Stacey Lee Webber's work offers a new take on historical portraiture in mediums of exchange. In the *Rainbow Costume Series*, Webber refashions iconic images of US Presidents on currency in primary and secondary colors. Colorful costumes and accessories rendered in layers of hand stitching contrast with the rectilinear nature of engraved paper money—columns of four uncut bills. Twisting our recognition of these familiar "founding fathers," Weber's work irreverently questions shifting perceptions of value and their connections to images of the past.

Michael C. Thorpe combines textiles and paper, creating work that explores a range of concepts from self-presentation to the portrayal of people and moments of the past, while challenging the viewer to acknowledge their role as observer. *In dem guts*, Thorpe reframes his artistic practice of quilting by

placing the viewer at the end of the process. This conceptual reference to the body is made material in his self-portrait, which incorporates a T-shirt with graphic reference to a work made the day after the murder of George Floyd, *Untitled* (now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Whether portraying the recent victims of the tragic shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas or NASA astronaut and physicist Ronald McNair (1950-1986) in *guy fly*, Thorpe conveys his subject's humanity in solidly colored and printed textiles applied in deceptively simple arrangements augmented with quilting stitches laid down with arresting economy.

A sense of relentless reverberation in contemporary life is palpable in the tapestries of LoVid, an artist duo comprised of Tali Hinkis and Kyle Lapidus. Combining imagery of the human form with repeated samplings from the visible world, LoVid invites viewers to reflect on the fractured yet endlessly replicated imagery offered in today's visual culture. Their use of textiles with a range of surface qualities from reflective satin or matte nylon canvas in combination with glass beads and vibrantly colored threads demonstrates their command of this multifaceted medium. Experimenting with dye sublimation printing techniques, LoVid taps into the transformative process inherent in replication and while acknowledging continually changing states of matter in works such as *Year of Perpetual Reflection*.

Stitch! brings this moment of the recognition of the power textiles as an artistic medium into focus. The diverse work of artists LoVid, Michael C. Thorpe, Stacey Lee Webber, and Mary Tooley Parker shows how the use of fiber, thread, cloth and pattern speaks to the need to break away from confining classifications and prescribed narratives. While all use some aspect of the textile medium in their artistic practice, their work engages the viewer in a range of ways. Whether exploring degrees of abstraction and repetition or the representational and narrative possibilities of the medium, the work on view by this amazing group of artists opens new doors by leveraging the tactility, familiarity, and immediacy of textiles.

Essay by

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