SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHECKLIST

Joyce J. Scott, American, born 1948
Mammy under Undue Influence, 2007
Blown, cast, and lampworked glass, beadwork (peyote stitch)
Purchased through the Virginia and Preston T. Kelsey 1958 Fund, 2007.51

Sierra Teller Ornelas, American, Diné (Navajo), born 1981
Forbidden Love, two weaving set, January–July 2009
Wool, vegetable dye
Purchased through the Alvin and Mary Bert Gutman ’40 Acquisition Fund, 2009.54

Julie Allen, American, born 1970
Maryjane, 1999
Paper, thread, foil, glue
Gift of Hugh J. Freund, Class of 1967, 2010.89.14

Nikẹ Davies Okundaye, Nigerian, born 1952
Untitled (adirẹ quilt), 2002
Indigo-dyed cotton and thread
Purchased through the William B. Jaffe and Evelyn A. Jaffe Hall Fund, and through gifts from the Dickey Fund and the Leslie Humanities Center; T.2003.6

A Space for Dialogue, founded with support from the Class of 1948, is made possible with generous endowments from the Class of 1967, Bonnie and Richard Reiss Jr. ’66, and Pamela J. Joyner ’79.
A dichotomy between craft and art has long been present in critical Western art history, founded largely on a deep-rooted system of aesthetic values. These definitions and values have often ignored the contribution of women artists. The most obvious example of this is women's capacity within the world of craft—a term typically associated with a form of "low art"—largely created by women in the domestic sphere to which they have been relegated. Women have shifted roles and issues into the realm of craft for centuries, taking part in a matrilineal system of knowledge passed from generation to generation. Some contemporary women artists have chosen to use traditional techniques associated with craft and utilitarian objects to produce unique and innovative works of art, in the process challenging the largely male-dominated art world to overtly acknowledge their talent as artists. The contemporary artists included in this exhibition have each inherited artistic traditions from their mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and other relatives that include needlework, adire techniques, and weaving. While they are aware of the sociocultural significance of their chosen media, whether associated with their own heritage or connected to the origins of the medium itself, these artists transcend the materiality of their work through the messages they infuse into it. They address contemporary subject matter like popular culture, identity, race, and sex as a means of engagement with the viewers. Above all else, however, these women are creating objects that are not only perpetuating traditions but also creating a new space for craft within the art world for, as Mary Jane Jacob points out, "Our practices change; successive generations take and alter tradition; and changing circumstances transform meaning even when traditions are dutifully followed" (73).

Likewise passing their knowledge from one generation to the next, Navajo women have practiced their weaving traditions since the colonization of their land, when sheep were introduced and Diné women became renowned weavers of wool blankets (Staab 102). This tradition continues to remain significant within many Diné families. Sierra Teller Ornelas is a sixth-generation weaver who uses traditional techniques and materials to create weavings that present contemporary messages. In her weaving titled Forbidden Love (below), Ornelas comments upon her own romantic relationship using video-game imagery. She states, "I would call it contemporary Navajo tapestry... This is my landscape, my pop culture landscape; the one I interact with every day." Like Scott and Okundaye, Ornelas hopes that her work "invites the general public to see Navajo weaving as an art form." (Native American Art at Dartmouth 72).

An experienced seamstress, artist Julie Allen also addresses contemporary subjects through traditional techniques. Known for her use of ordinary materials to make unique works of art, Allen explores the "realm of domestic desire" by using ballrooms into fanciful layered cakes and recreating her underwears out of Swam Wrap and tape (McKenzie Fine Art Gallery). Here Allen has formed her work titled Margane (next page) out of paper sewn together to depict a classic women's door with a sole made of Godiva chocolate wrappers. Allen presents a popular icon of style in a medium that alludes to the stereotypes of femininity as delicate and fragile, with the added twist of the gold chocolate wrapper on the bottom of the shoe. Perhaps Allen is commenting on a woman's perceived identity in general—she must be light and dainty and turn down (trod upon) sweet pleasures—or perhaps she is evoking the chocolatier's appropriation of the story of Lady Godiva, who rode naked across Coventry, England, in an effort to eliminate the taxes imposed on the townpeople by her husband. Whatever Allen's inspiration, her unique pairing of everyday materials with fine needlework sustains her firmly in the mainstream art world of today.

The four artists represented in this exhibition each challenge the divisions of craft and art largely upheld by Western definitions of aesthetics through the work they create. By combining innovative techniques with the maternal and familial traditions of their various heritage and subjects relevant to contemporary society, three artists both subvert the domestic labels associated with their medium and redefine these traditions for the next generation's benefit.