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KNITTING AS ART

By

Deborah Levine

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Fine Arts
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2013

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Deborah Levine

A Thesis Approved on

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Thanks to Lida Gordon for guiding my journey from craftsperson to artist.

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ABSTRACT

KNITTING AS ART

Deborah Levine

December 6, 2013

Hand knitting is my chosen technique for making art. Because knitting is traditionally thought of as craft, my work must overcome several obstacles in order to be valued as art. First, objects made using craft techniques and materials are often functional; even when it is not, we view them as such and value them less than art. Second, the materials and techniques used for knitting are not traditional fine art materials. This has changed; process and materials are what much contemporary art is about. Yet the bias against craft techniques and materials persists. Finally, knitting is viewed as woman's work and so is undervalued. I have resolved this in several, first by using materials which create work that is much larger than typical knitting and second by using a material that creates a fabric not easily identifiable as knitting.

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INTRODUCTION

The compulsion to create art cannot be ignored. My first response to the compulsion was to knit. I made garments and rarely followed other people's patterns, relying instead on my own sense of what I wanted the garment to be. For this reason my friends called me an artist. But I did not accept this designation; the compulsion was not satisfied.

When I moved to Louisville, I joined Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists. Members of this group gave me an inkling of how I might break out artistically but I didn't have the materials or the courage to do so. When I began taking classes in the art department of the University of Louisville, the breakthrough happened.

From the first classes I took with her, Lida Gordon encouraged me to use knitting in my art. I embossed knitting onto sheets of handmade paper. I dipped knitted pieces into paper pulp. I finally realized that the knitting could become art without help from other media. This thesis work is the result of that realization.

I now refer to myself as an artist as well as a knitter. I hope to expand the growing appreciation of knitting as an artistic form by showing it in unusual ways – by changing scale or otherwise altering it so that the viewer does not simply say, “My grandmother did that.” I want my knitting to be an in-your-face answer to the question, “What do **you** do,” to say “THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I DO!”

ART OR CRAFT

A few definitions are necessary. According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, art is “the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination... producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power” (87). To Al Shands, local art collector, “Artists take you out of your intellectual box; they let you look at the world in unusual ways.” (“Line on the arts” 67). I put it this way: art is deliberately created, unique work that is worthy of contemplation. While some might say that stones washed up on the beach are art, they are not art by these definitions though a photograph or an arrangement of them could be.

On the other hand, craft is “an activity involving skill in making things by hand,” or, in the plural, “work or objects made by hand” (*New Oxford American Dictionary* 394). The work can be a painting, a chair, or a stone wall. Using these definitions, art and craft do not exist as a continuum, with a dividing line somewhere in the middle. Instead, they are two different things. Art is an expression of an idea, a concept, while craft is a process or set of techniques used to make something. Whether a work is art or not depends on the intent of the maker. Constantine and Larsen express it this way: “The quality of art lies in the concept and quality of insight, not in materials or tools.” (*Beyond Craft* 8)

The idea that fine art is somehow different from, and better than, craft has not always existed. Some would say that this opposition began with Immanuel Kant, who believed in the autonomy of art, that art exists solely for art’s sake and is never utilitarian

(Willette). Other sources suggest that it began with “the emergence of the great European academies of art” and that, “by the end of the 19th century, art was separated into at least two broad categories: namely, fine art and the rest - a situation that reflected the cultural snobbery and moral standards of the European establishment” (“History of the Definition of Art”). Craft was a part of the rest.

Glenn Adamson, currently director of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, previously director of research at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, is of another opinion. In his 2013 book *The Invention of Craft*, he proposes that craft as a concept did not even exist until the industrial age. Before then, people made things because they had to and, though they might have been finely crafted, they were considered neither art nor craft. With industrialization it was no longer necessary to make things by hand. As a result, handmade objects, which we now call craft, became luxuries rather than necessities and were defined in opposition to things that were machine-made (Adamson, *Invention* xiii). Defining craft in opposition to fine art is, Adamson suggests, a much later phenomenon, arising perhaps as late as the mid-twentieth century when we began to see the work of some craft makers in museums and galleries which had formerly only shown fine art (*Invention* xiv).

My introduction to the opposition of art and craft came when I was accepted into the Craftsmen’s Guild of Mississippi. While many guild members practiced traditional crafts like quilting and split oak basket making and were perfectly content being called craftsmen, others used crafts techniques for less traditional work and preferred to be called artists. At the time, I considered that pretension on their part, but after studying the art/craft dilemma, I understand that they simply sought the same status accorded to artists

in our society, a status often denied them because of the materials and techniques that they used for their work. I will now discuss several characteristics of craftwork that cause problems for its acceptance as art, based on ideas found in Glenn Adamson's book *Thinking through Craft*.

The first obstacle to craft being considered art is that work done in craft techniques often has a use. When we look at a quilt, we see a bedcover, even if it is hanging on the wall. We see it as having a function and so do not value it as a work of art. This is true even if the quilt would not work as a bedcover, as exemplified by local artist Kathleen Loomis's *Crazed 16: Suburban Dream* (Figure 1), which is too heavy and stiff to ever be comfortable on a bed. But the perception trumps reality; we perceive the piece as quilt even though, in reality, it could not function as such.



Figure 1. Kathleen Loomis, *Crazed 16: Suburban Dream* 2012

Similarly, a Sam Maloof chair (Figure 2), though beautiful, is still a chair. Though it may command a high price for a chair, one having sold at auction in 2012 for \$80,500 (Grigsby), and despite the skill, design sense, and technical expertise that went into making it, it may never reach the value of, for example, Damien Hirst's 1991 work *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (Figure 3), sold in 2006 for \$8,000,000 (Vogel).



Figure 2. Sam Maloof, *Rocking Chair* 1986



Figure 3. Damien Hirst, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* 1991

Materials and technique also work against the acceptance as art of items made in craft techniques. When looking at Rembrandt's painting *The Night Watch* (Figure 4), we contemplate the image first. We do not immediately think about how the paint was applied or what kind of paint was used, though clearly there was skilled use of materials and technique to create it. Unlike what we feel when we see the Maloof chair -- the desire to touch it, to sit in it -- we are not drawn to touch the painting or otherwise interact with it. Our appreciation of a craft object involves recognition of the materials it is made from while our appreciation of a painting often does not.



Figure 4. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Night Watch* 1642

In the last century, however, there has been a change in the attitude of the art world toward materials. Previously art was about the image. But in the modern art period, art was seen as being only about itself, as “art for art’s sake,” its meaning being derived from the materials and the process used to make the work rather than from any image that might have been portrayed. Artists who had already established their reputations began using materials that had never before been associated with fine art. An early and extreme example was Marcel Duchamp’s 1917 *Fountain*, a urinal which he signed with the name R. Mutt and displayed in a gallery. Robert Rauschenberg’s 1959 *Canyon* (Figure 5) includes among its materials oil, house paint, fabric, metal, buttons, nails, cardboard, printed paper, paint tubes, string, pillow and a bald eagle. Claes Oldenburg used craft techniques (sewing) and materials (fabric) to create oversized soft sculptures such as *Giant Hamburger* (Figure 6). Sam Gilliam took his canvasses off the stretchers and treated them as pieces of fabric, suspending them in ways that allow them to share the space with the viewer instead of being in a separate space flat against the wall (Figure 7).



Figure 5. Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon* 1959



Figure 6. Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Hamburger* 1962



Figure 7. Sam Gilliam, *Light Depth* 1969

The actual skill involved in creating craft has often worked against craftwork's acceptance as art. As Glenn Adamson put it in his 2008 article, we often assume that if an object took great skill to make, then there is not a concept behind it. Conversely, "the lack of ... skill ... implies the presence of concept" ("When Craft Gets Sloppy" 37). Quilts with finely finished edges are dismissed as craft, as bed covers, as not-art because they exhibit such fine technique, regardless of any idea behind the work. So forgoing

technique might be a way for people using craft techniques and materials to make art from their craft, however annoying this may be to those who have worked hard to acquire their technical skill.

KNITTING ART, KNITTING CRAFT

For knitters, there is a further bias related to our cultural perceptions of knitting that does not apply equally to all craft processes . These perceptions are part of our societal mindset. We cannot separate them from the actuality of knitting itself; when we see knitting we have certain ideas about it (Barthes 36) and such cultural mindsets have been one more stumbling block to knitting being viewed seriously in the institutional art world.

There are several different but related connotations of knitting in our culture. First, knitting is thought of as woman's work. People watching me knit often say "My grandmother did that," (or worse, "My grandmother crocheted," not even recognizing that I am knitting, not crocheting). The idea is that our grandmothers and mothers are working quietly in the background of the home front, making things for those they love. The sweaters, blankets, etc. represent warmth, security, motherly love, often of a smothering and/or unwanted kind. (Figure 8). This was not the original truth of knitting.



Figure 8. Colin Firth as Mark Darcy in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 2001

Originally, hand knitters were organized into guilds which were exclusively male (Macdonald xvi). But as machine knitting took over the production of necessary items such as socks and sweaters, hand knitting was more and more given over to women, and women of means who had leisure time pursued the hobby to create decorative work, inconsequential luxuries rather than necessities. Though in wartime women's knitting circles filled a great need, providing socks, washcloths, and headgear for soldiers, this fact did not enhance the value of the craft. The fact that wounded soldiers were often given knitting projects as rehabilitation also reinforced the connotation that knitting was not work for real men.

As a result of this change in social status, knitting had become stereotyped as boring, old lady work. This myth is made a lie by at least several characters in well-known fiction. Agatha Christie's Miss Marple seems to be a quiet spinster who sits and knits rather than actively participating in her small town's life. But she is actually a very sharp detective. By paying attention when people think that all she is doing is tending to her knitting, she solves crimes that baffle the (male) police force. Madame Defarge in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* is always knitting; unbeknownst to most, she is recording in her knitting the names of those destined for the guillotine. Less well known but perhaps even more powerful is the character in one of Ruth Rendell's short stories who uses her very fine steel knitting needles, suitable for creating the daintiest lace, as tools for killing her husbands.

But in spite of these fictional wielders of knitting needles, by the 1960s knitting in America had largely settled into being pretty boring – practiced in their free time by women who followed patterns rather than thinking for themselves. Knitting was far from

being art, far from being a challenge to its own myths. As even fine art created by women has been slow to be accepted into the historical canon of art, this acceptance was even slower in coming for knitting, not generally thought of as art and perceived as women's work. But with the rise of the feminist movement and feminist art in the 1970s, it was suddenly possible to be a knitter and an artist.

Feminism changed the art world in ways that are still important today and created an environment in which art knitting is no longer an oxymoron. The self-proclaimed superiority of modernism over previous art movements reinforced art as an isolated activity, with artists standing apart from the mainstream of society ("Sweeping Exchanges" 363) rather than actively participating in it. Feminism, in its insistence on the personal as political, offered a "socially concerned alternative" to the idea of art being only about art ("Sweeping Exchanges" 362). Feminist artists felt free to express their experiences not just as people but as women and as members of society. Thus women's crafts such as embroidery, quilting, and knitting, became a part of the feminist artist's toolkit.

While there is currently no cohesive feminist movement, Lucy Lippard, in her 2007 review of the current state of feminist art in *Art in America*, maintains that the influence of the feminist movement is still significant ("No Regrets" 75). With her statement "Feminists engage with the world. Not to do so is among the most unethical decisions an artist can make" ("No Regrets" 78), Lippard conflates the terms feminist and artist. This conflation holds true among art knitters, as they deal with all sorts of social concerns, including global class struggle, the environment, and peace ("No Regrets" 76).

Knitting as art became possible in part because of the influence of feminist art, which brought women's work into the mainstream art world. But art knitting's first well-known practitioner, Mary Walker Phillips, did not need the influence of feminism to figure out that, at its creative best, knitting is art.

ART KNITTING – A BRIEF HISTORY

Art knitting can be defined as artwork in which knitting is used to put forward an artistic idea. A search of Larsen and Constantine's two books on the history of textile art from its inception in the early twentieth century up to the 1970s reveals only a few examples of artists who used knitting. These are, for the most part, artists who had established their careers in other media and then saw how knitting could play a part in their work; they were not craftspeople who tried to convince the art world to accept their work.

An exception is Mary Walker Phillips, who is credited with being the "first professional art knitter" (Searle 10-11). Though she was originally a weaver (Searle 10), Phillips began to study knitting when she found an old copy of the classic *Mary Thomas' Knitting Patterns*. Thus inspired, her 1963 MFA thesis at the Cranbrook Academy of Art was an exploration of how knitting could be used as a medium for contemporary art (Searle 11). In spite of her chosen medium, Phillips thought of herself not as a craftsperson but as an artist. As was appropriate for the Modern Art period in which she was working, her knitted artwork was the expression of the possibilities inherent in her chosen materials and techniques (Figure 9). It did not reference any of the cultural connotations of knitting such as woman's work or women's garments. She used non-traditional materials such as wire, paper, mica, and seeds along with more traditional knitting fibers such as silk and linen (Fox). She incorporated complicated stitch patterns and knitting techniques such as clustering and double knitting to create wall hangings

meant for display rather than any functional purpose and so transcended traditional notions of the craft. As Richard Rutt said in his *History of Hand Knitting*, Phillips' work "is elegant and has the distinction of creating forms from knitting rather than creating forms in knitting that are derivative from other crafts or more natural to other crafts" (206). Phillips is considered to be one of the most influential knitters of the twentieth century. Her work is in the permanent collections of many museums, among them the Museum of Modern Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago (Fox).

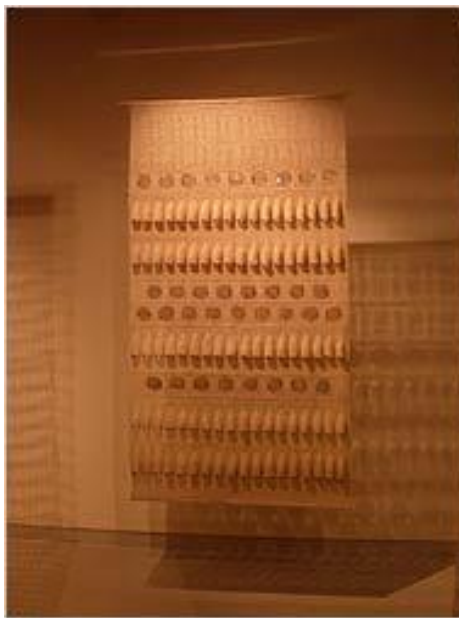


Figure 9. Mary Walker Phillips, *Near East* 1963

In 1971, Phillips published *Creative Knitting*, encouraging others to follow in her footsteps and be more creative in their use of this craft technique. Phillips stated that her goal for the book was to "establish an awareness of knitting as an independent art style" and "to ask the knitter to rethink the long-accepted practice of developing someone else's designs and, by taking a new view, to see knitting as a fresh experience in creative expression" (Phillips 9). When this book was reviewed in mainstream (not art world) knitting publications, it brought the idea of knitting as art into the consciousness of

knitters (like me) who had previously had no idea that they could be more than craftspeople.

From Mary Walker Phillips to the explosion of knitting as art in the twenty-first century there is a gap in time in which a small number of artists explored knitting as art (Searle 9). The next wave of art knitters was inspired less by Mary Walker Phillips' modernist works and more by the wearable art movement. While it might seem from the previous discussion of bias against craft in the art world that this is a step backwards in the acceptance of knitting as art, wearable art had already received critical sanction from the art world with the Museum of Modern Art's 1946 exhibit entitled "Modern Handmade Jewelry" (Schon). The show included work by well-known artists such as Alexander Calder as well as emerging studio jewelers such as Margaret De Patta and Sam Kramer, and "had an objective of bringing together the 'artist as jeweler' and 'jeweler as artist'" (Schon).

Arline Fisch set up the Jewelry and Metalsmithing program at San Diego State University in 1961 and soon after began using textile techniques such as knitting with wire to create flexible elements in her wearable works of art (Figure 10) (Searle 11). She was inducted into the American Craft Council College of Fellows in 1979, named a Living Treasure of California in 1985, and received the ACC Gold Medal for Consummate Craftsmanship in 2001. Her works can be found in permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London among others.



Figure 10. Arline Fisch, *Pink and Silver Circle* 2005

Kathryn Cobey was another early practitioner of art knitting, using knitting to create sculpture rather than wearable art. Katherine Cobey is an artist, poet, and feminist. She learned to knit as a child but it remained a hobby for her while she developed a successful career as a poet. But in 1986, when Cobey was forced by a back injury into relative inactivity, she took up knitting more seriously as an activity that she could do while recovering. Knitting then revealed itself to her as a format for visual expression that eventually supplanted the verbal medium of poetry as her creative medium (Searle 59). Her work, in which she often uses found materials, explores such issues as homelessness (Figure 11), petroleum products' influence on the environment, and her mother's descent into Alzheimer's disease.



Figure 11. Katherine Cobey, *Ritual Against Homelessness* 1992

Karen Searle wrote the book on *Knitting Art* and has been practicing it herself for over twenty five years. By her admission she is a feminist with all of the social concerns implied by feminism. She began to knit and crochet in college. After trying to create three-dimensional forms in weaving, she realized that knitting and crochet would be easier techniques for this task. A workshop with Mary Walker Phillips in the 1980s propelled her further along her path. Searle considers herself a sculptor, for whom “the act of knitting connects me symbolically with all women who have ever knitted” and feels that the investment of time in her knitting sets her work apart from mass-produced culture (Searle 150). Searle’s work includes human forms made out of wire and linen; *Body Bags* (Figure 12), works which simulate the sagging and drooping of women’s bodies as they age; and *Goddess Thrones*, chairs whose embellishments are inspired by the myths and legends of many cultures. Searle believes in Jung’s idea that the body is the container for aspects of the self and this plays into her work (Searle 151). She is a craftsperson in that she lets her materials tell her what they can and can’t do, but she makes art by using the objects that she creates to express “the essence, or the metaphor in

a personal emotion or experience, and putting it forth in a form that both summarizes it and communicates it” (Searle 152).



Figure 12. Karen Searle, *Body Bag X: Patched-In*, 2005

In the twenty-first century there has been an explosion in the popularity of knitting as a hobby, especially among younger people. Perhaps they see it as an affirmation of the value of hand work in an impersonal technological age (McFadden 8). With the breakdown of definitions in this post-post-modern era, artists have been undaunted by the formerly oppositional definitions of art and craft and do not feel limited by them, so the use of knitting as an art form has blossomed as well. The 2007 exhibit “Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting,” mounted by the Museum of Art and Design in New York, featured many art knitters in a celebration of contemporary artists’ engagement with traditional craft materials and techniques, specifically fiber, to create work designed to “overthrow the status quo.” (McFadden 8) I will discuss a few of the art knitters featured in this show, who by “taking preconceived notions of what knitting...has been and can be...have started a new and lively dialogue about how and why art is made” (McFadden 18).

Lisa Anne Auerbach's work (Figure 13) is technically expert and uses traditional techniques of Fair Isle and Scandinavian knitting to produce wearable garments such as shawls, skirts, and sweaters. But she knits into the garments political statements about current news. Though the shape and techniques of her garments will never go out of style, the news and slogans that they bear will become dated. This undercuts the traditional, timeless appearance of the garments and makes them new (and makes them art).



Figure 13. Lisa Anne Auerbach, *Keep Abortion Legal* 2006

Sabrina Gschwandtner, a New York-based visual artist, exemplifies the collective aspect of feminist art. In 2002 she created *KnitKnit*, “an artist's ‘zine dedicated to the intersection of traditional craft and contemporary art” (Gschwandtner). Each limited edition issue brought together a community of creative knitters to share information about their work and each copy had a handcrafted cover. Though *KnitKnit* is no longer in publication, copies can be found in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art; the New York Public Library; and the Fine Arts Library, Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University. Gschwandtner has also staged interactive events in which viewers

can participate in the knitting (McFadden et al. 80). Her work for the show Radical Lace and Subversive Knitting was an interactive project in which knitting was done by visitors to the show, according to patterns based on wartime knitting. This work explores issues related to social and historical contexts of knitting. (McFadden et al. 80).

Barb Hunt is a visual artist who learned to knit as a child and has returned to this textile practice as an adult. She knits pink replicas of land mines, taking advantage of the softness and pinkness of her knitting to bring a feminine touch to these destructive devices and thus setting up the kind of cognitive challenge that makes art. She does this as a “gesture of healing,” (Searle 143), finding that knitting is “a way to cope with grief and horror” (Searle 141). She has high technical skills and this is what allows her to recreate the landmines in such detail. She says, “I am stating my gender through my art. I knit. This is pink wool. I’m a feminist and a woman and I won’t pretend otherwise” (Searle 144).

Lindsay Obermeyer approaches knitting art from a more psychological aspect, making knitted works that are garment-like but with a twist. She subverts the functionality of the crafted garment by, for example, making the sleeves very long and attached to the sleeves of another sweater, or by joining hundreds of hand-knit caps with a single red cord, thus reflecting connections between people. It is textiles’ association with the body along with her own experiences with motherhood that provide her with the metaphors she uses in her work (Searle 73).

Cat Mazza’s work reflects concern for the downtrodden worker in the global economy. Her knits incorporate logos from companies that are known to use sweatshop

labor, the logos being symbols of “mass production and consumption” about which Mazza wants to raise awareness (McFadden et al. 84)

MY WORK

My task, both as a knitter and as an artist, is to find the best use for my materials, in a way that takes advantage of their characteristics while not forcing them to do something they cannot do. My first art knitting pieces were of mop cotton knit on broomsticks. This material, 1/4 inch in diameter, is well-suited to showing off complicated stitch patterns as each stitch is about one inch square. The point of this work is to make people look at the stitches. Knits are all around us. Many of our garments, such as tee shirts and socks, are knitted but most people don't really know what knits are. The stitch is the building block of a knit fabric. By exaggerating the scale of not only the finished product but also the actions involved in the process, I make each stitch matter. The work makes the technical aspects of the knitting process large enough that they can be easily seen and appreciated. For example, *Giant Lace Edging* (Figure 14) is four feet high.



Figure 14. Deborah Levine, *Giant Lace Edging* 2009

Several years ago a friend gave me a large quantity of vinyl-coated polyester yarn, used in weaving waterproof placemats, with an accompanying challenge to see what I could knit with it. This facilitated my next step in art knitting. This yarn denies me several of the pleasures I find in knitting as it does not feel good in the hand and does not create the orderly fabric that I find so satisfying. One might ask why I knit with it and the answer (besides that I always love a challenge) is that the yarn, in defiance of my technical skills, creates art.

This yarn resists orderliness. A quality of good knitting technique is that even tension on the yarn results in all stitches being the same size, the rows and columns of stitches being even and apparent. When I knit with the vinyl-coated polyester, the stitches appear not as rows and columns but as a more random, intriguing entanglement of fiber. This may be because I introduce twist into the yarn as I pull it off of the cylinder on which it is wound or because the yarn's stiffness causes it to draw unevenly through my fingers as I knit. Heat-setting -- a process used in making the placemats -- causes the fabric to relax, the stitches to become even, and the knit structure to be visible. But the trade-off is that the fabric becomes limp and lifeless. Without heat-setting the fabric is more interesting and its knitted structure is less clear. Because of the energy of the yarn, stitch patterns such as cables or lace do not show up clearly so I have for the most used only the simplest knitting technique, the knit stitch, to create this work. Despite the simplicity of the stitches, the resulting fabric is not simple. It has an organic look with wavy edges, which is not a characteristic of traditional good knitting technique and so helps the work transcend the craft of knitting. I have learned to accept these irregularities

and to use them to artistic effect. My mop cotton work is quite obviously knitting; this work defies such easy identification.

Various influences are evident in this thesis show. My interest in textiles is apparent in several works. *Whole Cloth* is my knitted version of yardage, comparable to what a weaver would produce when creating a bolt of fabric. *Unpieced* (Figure 15) was conceived of as a quilt that has not yet been put together. The layered pieces such as *Your Slip is Showing 2* (Figure 16) are like three-color paintings in which I have taken advantage of the transparency of the knitted fabrics to create a third color, though I have only used two colors of yarn. Hanging the work a short distance from the wall allows for shadows that increase the visual complexity of the work.



Figure 15. Deborah Levine,
Unpieced 2013



Figure 16. Deborah Levine,
Your Slip is Showing 2 2013

Dragon Tails Black and White (Figure 17) and the double knit pieces (Figure 18) are the only ones in which I have used more complicated knitting techniques. In the tubes, a ten-stitch bind-off with a compensating nine-stitch increase in the next round causes the areas of interest as well as the tapering of the tube, as one stitch is lost each

time these steps are taken. The double knit pieces are worked with both colors of yarn on the needle at the same time. On every other row, stitches for the front of the piece are worked; on alternate rows stitches for the back of the piece are worked. Increases form vertically raised areas; short rows form the horizontal ones.



Figure 17. Deborah Levine, *Dragon Tails Black and White* (detail) 2013



Figure 18. Deborah Levine, *Impasto* 2013

I have not chosen to be a painter, a weaver or a quilter; I have instead chosen to be a knitter, the endless pulling of loop through loop being my chosen meditation and method of creating objects for contemplation. Because the material I used for the pieces in this show and the forms that I created are not normally associated with knitting, the work is not easily recognizable as such and so does not immediately face the biases against craft and women's work. Instead of thinking that they know what this work is because their mothers did the same thing, I hope that viewers will see the work as art. Katherine Cobey proposes that, "after 900 years or so... we need to knit with more than just the sweet side of us."(Searle 57) I agree. Subvert the sweetness. Knit art.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

University of Connecticut 1971-1981

BA Cum Laude, English

BS Cum Laude, Environmental Horticulture

MS, Botany, "Functional Aspects of Dioecy in *Solanum appendiculatum*"

University of Louisville 2009-2013 MA, Fine Arts

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

1987-2005

Chimneyville Crafts Show, Craftsmen's Guild of Mississippi

1992-2001

Pioneer and Indian Festival, Craftsmen's Guild of Mississippi

2009-2013

Assistant to curator, Patio Gallery, Jewish Community Center
Louisville

2010 – Present

Chairperson, Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists

September 2013

Lecture "Knitting Art/Knitting Craft" at Carnegie Center New
Albany, Indiana

Invitational Exhibitions

1988

Sycamore Arts Council Invitational, Senatobia, MS

1991

MS Museum of Art Craftsmen's Guild Invitational, Jackson, MS

1995

Chimneyville Weavers and Spinners Guild, Cottonlandia
Museum, Greenville, MS

Group Shows

1998

Wild Women at Attic Gallery, Vicksburg, MS

1999

Wild Women at Artworks, Laurel, MS

2000

Wild Women at Nunnery Gallery, Jackson, MS

2013

Word on the Street – two person show at Firehouse Gallery with
Kathleen Loomis

Juried Shows

2005

Louisville Artisan's Guild Show at Baer Fabrics

2006

Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists at Kentucky Museum of

Art and Craft

2006 Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists at Actor's Theater

2008 Hite Art Institute Student Show, University of Louisville

2008 Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists at Jewish Community Center. Louisville

2009 Mazin Art Exhibition, Jewish Community Center, Louisville

2009 Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists at Actor's Theater, Louisville

2010 Hite Art Institute Student Show, University of Louisville

2010, 2011, 2013 Yew Dell Gardens Sculpture Show, Crestwood, KY

2010 Bluegrass Biennial at Claypool Young Gallery, Morehead State

2011 Louisville Area Fiber and Textile Artists at Louisville Visual Arts Association

2013 7Stitch at Claypool Young Gallery, Morehead State, Morehead, KY