



Lost Thread

Philip Hare, Bettina Matzkuhn, Amanda McCavour, Sylvie Roussel-Janssens, Wendy Toogood, Anna Torma, Matthew Varey, Angelika Werth and Robin Wiltse

A thread is a basic building block.

Thread can also mean to make ones' way or pervade.

A thread is something that runs through the whole course of a thing, connecting successive parts.

Everything starts with a thread, from the cellular level on up, and the individual parts are often sacrificed, absorbed or obscured by the whole. You can see where one might get rather philosophical about the symbolism. You may lose the thread but is it ever really gone?

From the time of the poet Hesiod (8th century BC) on the Fates were personified as three very old women who spin the threads of human destiny. Their names were Clotho (Spinner), Lachesis (Allotter), and Atropos (inflexible). Clotho spun the "thread" of human fate, Lachesis dispensed it and Atropos cut the thread (thus determining the individuals' moment of death). Encyclopædia Britannica, 2018.

Thread is a term used by a surprising array of disciplines: zoology, mechanical engineering, mining, cooking, sports, science, classical mythology, communication and textiles, of course. It is an essential but often invisible facet of larger systems, innocuous and unassuming but integral.

The *Lost Thread* exhibition is an honoring of the elements that make up the whole. The long standing traditions that have spawned successive generations of approach and aesthetic within contemporary fibre and textile art. From the weaving work Gunta Stölzl in the early part of the century, to the famously feminist fueled work of Judy Chicago in the seventies, to the work of Nick Cave, Faig Ahmed

and Gabriel Dawe, and the amorphous opulence of Sheila Hicks. There is a well established and continuously evolving legacy of utilizing, subverting and reinventing the means and methodologies of what fibre can and can not do; a tenuous and tactile territory that seems to know no end.

Attached always to the fibre medium is an almost unthinkable inheritance of history, from Neolithic rudiments to the automated technologies of today. The designation of 'women's work' and the utilitarian curse of 'craft' are issues that are often foisted on the discipline. Not that either of these things is inherently bad – far from it. There is a persistent conceit which draws the line between what is considered 'art' and what is considered 'craft' and it is especially taught in the case of contemporary fibre and is an important issue to acknowledge, if only to repudiate such a perspective. There is a powerful meta quality to working within a preconception or stereo-type in order to challenge and/or investigate the issues at play but there is also a weariness of/for artists that their work simple exist as it is, without soaking up the inexhaustible cultural currents that characterize things so unequivocally.

Lost Thread is an exhibition which celebrates the many facets and far flung reaches of the art form which are represented by the nine artists on display. The artists range from across the country, from emerging to established, and the work examples the diverse spectrum of textile arts that are happening today: felting, weaving, quilting, tapestry, embroidery installation, sculpture, multi-media, and all points in between. There is a strong regional (Kootenay) representation, with the inclusion of Angelika Werth, Wendy Toogood and Robin Wiltse. Silvie Roussel-Janssens and Bettina Matzkuhn hail from the West Coast of Canada and Anna Torma the East. Philip Hare, Amanda McCavour and Matthew Varey make up the middle (or the centre of the universe if Torontonians are to be believed), and together they reflect the variability of medium and method.

The work of *Lost Thread* drops from the ceiling in fantastic filaments, it overwhelms the walls, it takes human form, and it harkens back to the opulent tapestries of antiquity with the most modern of

inflections. The work reflects back on itself (literally and otherwise) and it speaks to culture and subculture(s) and themes that are far removed from the quilting bee but somehow honoring and evoking similar intentions of creative community and communication. The appreciation of the present manifestation of materials should never be fully separated from traditional moorings, but the exhibition also illustrates their brilliant emancipation from expectations. The patterns and procedures have been usurped, turned on their head and reinvented, but the inclination to create remains, which is a powerful cultural and artistic lesson to be learned.

An artist is drawn to a discipline by a complex set of circumstances and that affinity and proclivity to a specific medium and/or methodology is often as fascinating as the stories they choose to tell and the forms those ideas take. The themes that run through the *Lost Thread* exhibit, and the means of their telling, are so much more than the pull and drag and specificity of thread through the eye of a needle. The sum of the parts are essential to the whole, both seen and unseen, reunited and lost.

Arin Fay, Curator

2018

