

Labels

*Fast Fashion / Slow Art*  
January 30–August 2, 2020

Sustainability, in terms of both labor and the environment, has become a pressing issue with regard to fashion. This is especially true when we consider “fast fashion:” inexpensive, trendy clothing produced for a mass market. This exhibition provokes conversations about the global production and distribution of clothing and textiles and explores important and timely questions:

Is it possible to protect workers’ rights and ensure safe working conditions while keeping up with consumer demands?

How does technology affect the experience and conditions of labor?

What skills does the mass production of textiles require?

What are the merits of local and handmade garments?

Can design and technology offer sustainable solutions to the environmental impact of fast fashion?

What role do art and popular culture have in raising consumer consciousness?

The works by artists and filmmakers in this show respond to these questions through metaphor, poetic sensibility, irony, protest, and humor. They ask us to slow down and consider the complexities of the garment industry that is part of our everyday lives.

Organized by the Bowdoin College Museum of Art in cooperation with The George Washington University Corcoran School of the Arts and Design, The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum, and the Luther W. Brady Art Gallery. At Bowdoin the exhibition is supported by the Riley P. Brewster ’77 Fund for the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, the Stevens L. Frost Endowment Fund, and the Roy A. Hunt Foundation.

JULIA BROWN

born 1978, Ann Arbor, MI; lives and works in Washington, DC

*Live feed: printer-error identification station and operator at an Italian luxury-silk textile factory; Or, before “Leaving the Factory,” the meditative disposition’s instinct for privacy*, 2010  
HD color video, sound, 2:49 minute loop

Courtesy of the artist

A worker searches for machine-printing errors in a luxury silk textile pattern. Hers is one of the few remaining human interventions in a formerly artisanal process. The title invokes both a silent film by the Lumière Brothers depicting workers leaving a factory in a socially cohesive group—in contrast to the checker’s isolation—and to the poetry of Louise Glück, which often grapples with the pain of loneliness and isolation.

MARTIN DE THURAH

born 1974, Copenhagen; lives in Copenhagen, works around the world

*Stories*, 2017

video, black-and-white, sound, 2:04 minutes

Courtesy of the artist and Epoch Films, New York

In this dreamlike video shot in Berlin, a young woman peels off layers of T-shirts and tosses them away as she walks along the street. While her actions are mysterious and unexplained, the video speaks to a culture inclined toward incessant consumption and heedless disposal of inexpensive goods.

CAROLE FRANCES LUNG

born 1966, San Francisco; lives and works in Long Beach, CA

*Frau Fiber vs. the Circular Knitting Machine*, 2015

digital video, black-and-white, sound, 4 hours, 32 minutes

Courtesy of ILGWU archives

Carole Frances Lung explores the landscape of global textile and clothing manufacturing via her alter ego, Frau Fiber. In this real-time video Frau Fiber sits placidly in front of an industrial knitting machine and at the end of four-and-a-half hours completes one hand-knitted sock to the machine’s 99. Lung’s workshop, the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers and Uniforms (ILGWU), is an homage to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which was active from 1900 to 1995.

CAT MAZZA

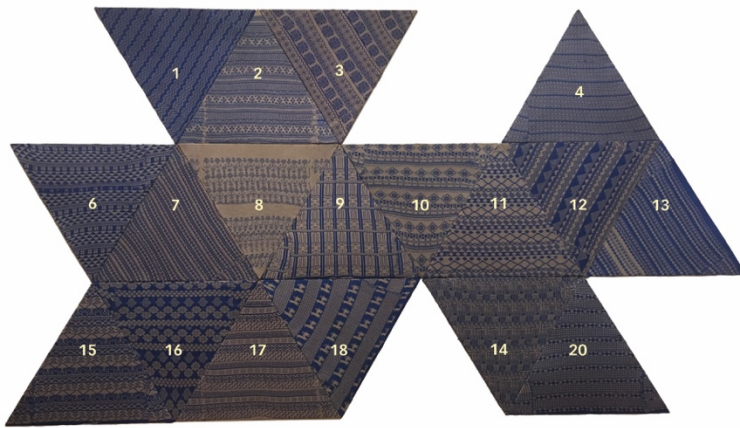
born 1977, Washington, DC; lives and works in Massachusetts

*Electroknit Dymaxion*, 2019

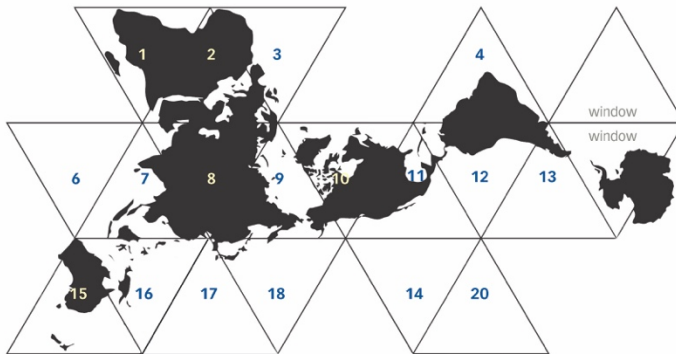
machine-knitted cotton on wood panels, and documentary materials

Courtesy of the artist

Cat Mazza combines digital media with needlecraft to explore relationships between textiles, technology, and labor. Textile motifs created with a grid are a global phenomenon. For this project, Mazza worked with the Lattice20 Collective (Nia Duong, Maria Gonzalez, Anthony Pierre Jr., Erica Imoisi, and Remy Hunter) to research grid-based designs found in various archives accessible to the Boston-based group. They converted the designs into knitting patterns using an open-source computer application and formatted the interior of a 20-sided structure based on Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Map, both to conjure the patterns' circulation and geographic origins and to probe the relation of craft and technology in contemporary textile production.



View of Cat Mazza's *Electroknit Dymaxion* as installed in *Fast Fashion/Slow Art* at the Corcoran School of the Arts & Design at George Washington University in 2019.



Artist Cat Mazza and the Lattice20 Collective created this schematic that indicates how the regions of the dymaxion map were associated with the textile patterns. Dymaxion graphic designed by Lattice20.

SENGA NENGUDI

born 1943, Chicago; lives and works in Colorado Springs, CO

*The Threader*, 2007

digital video, color, sound, 5:23 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Sculptor and performance artist Senga Nengudi filmed this video in New York at what remains of the original Scalamandr  textile factory. This historic mill, like many industries in the American Northeast, moved much of its production to the South, where machines and labor are less costly. Nengudi records the dancelike motions of Amir Baig, a highly skilled worker employed in an increasingly mechanized industry.

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO'S *PLANET MONEY*

*Planet Money Makes a T-Shirt*, 2013

interactive website

  2013 National Public Radio, Inc.

This example of participatory journalism traces the making of a T-shirt from harvesting cotton in the United States, to spinning that cotton into yarn in Indonesia, to sewing the men's and women's T-shirts in Bangladesh and Colombia, and shipping the final products back to NPR's listeners in the U.S. Based on Petra Rivoli's book, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*, this project focuses on the production of a ubiquitous, ordinary product in order to examine complex issues surrounding conditions of international trade and workers' rights.

MARTHA ROSLER

born Brooklyn, NY; lives and works in Brooklyn

*Martha Rosler Reads "Vogue,"* 1982

video, color, sound, 25:22 minutes

Courtesy of Martha Rosler and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Originally produced with the New York public-access TV show Paper Tiger Television, *Martha Rosler Reads "Vogue"* is a feminist critique of the world of high fashion, as well as a pioneering use of video as an art form. Through her deadpan narration Rosler exposes the manipulative

influence of the fashion industry, the desire for luxury goods its media create, and the conditions of sweatshop labor that make the production of such glamour possible.

*Sweatshop—Deadly Fashion*, 2014  
video, five-episode web series

Courtesy of *Aftenposten*, Oslo, Norway

Produced by *Aftenposten*, the largest newspaper in Norway, this series seeks to inform a popular audience about the conditions that generate fast fashion. In the first of these five episodes, three young Norwegians blithely describe the large wardrobes they have accumulated. Two of the three became activists after traveling to Cambodia, witnessing the poverty and harsh working conditions in the factories there, and realizing that it is the exploitation of such labor that makes the production of the clothes they buy so profitable.

ROSEMARIE TROCKEL

born 1952, Schwerte, Germany; lives and works in Cologne

*Yvonne*, 1997  
video, black-and-white and color, sound, 14 minutes

Courtesy of Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig, Germany

In *Yvonne*, the namesake baby and other friends wear hand-knitted garments that play star roles in this humorous narrative. The video evokes a sense of domesticity and the intimacy of the handmade. Trockel filmed it after having made a series of machine-knitted works, exhibited as paintings, which challenged assumptions about wool as indicative of women's labor and the primacy of painting in a male-dominated art world.

WANG BING

born 1967, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China; lives and works in China and France

*15 Hours (Shi Wu Xiao Shi)*, 2017  
16:9 film, color, sound in Chinese Mandarin and dialect with English subtitles—in two parts, 7 hours, 55 minutes each, Edition of 6 + 2 AP

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

In this film Wang Bing documents the effect of China's rapid economic growth on the lives of the workers who made it possible. It records one full workday at a garment processing facility in Huzhou, China. Many of the laborers there are migrants from rural China. Everyone is paid on a piecework basis and works at top speed, often for seven days a week.

The film will be shown in consecutive segments for the run of the exhibition.