Nice Threads

Andrea Higgins (b. 1970) developed an interest in textiles while shopping for fabric with her grandmother. For Higgins, fabric patterns evoke more memories of people than photographs do. This realization inspired her to portray individuals through painted representations of textiles.

Take a closer look

At a distance, we recognize the overall patterns of the textiles. Upon closer inspection, we notice that the artist’s painstaking, uniform brush strokes replicate each fabric’s distinctive warp and weft—vertical and horizontal threads.

In her own words

“Fabrics are a fundamental aspect of the aesthetics of all societies.... My paintings are optical, abstract compositions and at the same time refer to the associations the individual viewer has to the particular fabric.”

Andrea Higgins, Hillary, 2002; Oil on canvas; 52 x 40 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, D.C.; © Andrea Higgins; Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco

Andrea Higgins, Swatch (Continental), 2005; Oil on canvas; 24½ x 21¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, Washington, D.C.; © Andrea Higgins; Courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt