

National Museum of Women in the Arts
High Fiber: Women to Watch
Guide by Cell Audio Guide Transcripts



202-747-3417

Welcome to the National Museum of Women in the Arts cell phone audio guide for “High Fiber: Women To Watch 2012,” which is on view through January 6, 2013.

To hear artists in the exhibition discuss their works, look for the blue cell phone icon on the labels in the exhibition and press the item number indicated followed by the pound key. Interrupt any audio recording simply by pressing another number and the pound key. Press the star key for instructions.

We hope that you will enjoy the exhibition and this audio guide.

Ligia Bouton, Six Photographs of People I Don't Know: Photograph 5, The Bouquet, 2007; Fabric, metal, sisal rope, burlap, and sand; New Mexico Committee (1:31)

Hi, my name is Ligia Bouton and I want to tell you a little about my piece Six Photographs of People I Don't Know, The Bouquet. This piece is inspired by the photograph also on display in this exhibit. In 2006 I started looking at old photographs on eBay, and I was startled by how moving these kinds of photographs can be. The people depicted are lost somehow, orphaned, without their families and their friends to tell us about them. I wanted to give them back some identity by giving them a new story.

In this photograph in particular, I was interested by how normal and unglamorous the couple in this wedding portrait appear. The inscription on the photograph's frame situates them in rural Michigan.

I started thinking about all the daily work that makes a life, as well as the literal work of preparation that goes into a wedding. So, here, Bouquet becomes a symbol for the wedding itself and also a symbol for the larger married life.

I positioned the bouquet in a state of delicate suspension, supported by pulleys, rope, and burlap seed bags weighted with sand. As these devices reference both backstage theatrical rigging and the daily life of rural communities, I'm trying to explore both the ceremonial theatricality of weddings as well as the precarious relationship of wedding finery and the necessary work of everyday life.

Debra Folz, Spiro Table, designed 2008, fabricated 2012; Thermoformed acrylic and monofilament; Massachusetts State Committee (2:14)

My name is Debra Folz; I design furniture objects for exhibition and production through material exploration and conceptual curiosity. A consistent focus has led to the incorporation of textiles and embroidery techniques for furniture forms.

The three pieces on display include a XStitch Stool, a Spiro Table, and a Sight mirror. All of these pieces investigate the investment of large amounts of time and hand work into industrially produced materials. I believe this has produced an object that lives between mass-produced and one-of-a-kind.

The XStitch Stool was the first piece where I started to explore these ideas. I saw perforated steel as an opportunity to be a canvas for embroidery.

The Spiro Table explores similar ideas of handcraft and time investment, but in this piece I was very interested in maintaining a sense of transparency. Acrylic serves as a canvas for embroidery and the embroidery material is fishing line. Upon further investigation, you can see that within each void of the table's surface, there's multiple layers of color articulated through repetition.

The Sight mirror utilizes another type of canvas for embroidery, mirrored stainless steel. I had wanted to apply these ideas to a mirror form, but in order to remove the material that I needed to—to create opportunities for embroidery—I needed to select a mirrored stainless steel, as opposed to an actual mirrored glass. In this piece, I was interested in not only embellishing an object's

surface, but also using that as a language to put the viewer in a context. The sight of a gun usually has certain associations of danger or hunting or being in a fight. I was interested in softening those ideas and that impression.

Louise Halsey, Dream Façade, 2005; Wool weft on linen warp; Arkansas State Committee (3:07)

The four tapestries in this exhibition are part of a series that I started in 2005, during my graduate studies at Goddard College. I use a floor loom for my tapestry work, which is not a traditional way to do tapestry. I yarn the wool to the weft and linen to the warp. Some of the colors are ones I have dyed, and others are purchased.

The first in this series, which is not shown here, was based on my childhood home in Charleston, South Carolina—with flattened space and bright colors.

Dream Façade was next, and the image of the house came to me in a dream. While weaving what was to be a crack on the front of the house, the size of the crack got out of control and became the fire that you see here. Now, I was expressing with imagery feelings about my father's anger as part of my recollections from childhood.

Next in the series is House/Moon, where I was influenced by an exhibit of Navajo saddle blankets, many of which had secondary patterns. The arrow here has a tip that becomes the roof of the house. The moon was not in the original drawing, but as I was weaving, the sky seemed too empty, so I wove the crescent moon there. A Chinese poem my mother had written on a file card noted, "After my house has burned down, I have a better view of the rising moon." In retrospect, I saw a relationship between these two weavings.

The weaving Crackhouse was my reworking of the idea that motivated Dream Façade and referred to both the actual cracks caused by a major earthquake in Charleston in the late 1800s, and to its many other meanings. There are cracks in families, cracks where we hide, and of course the drug that destroyed lives. With this tapestry, I thought I had gotten to a place in my work where my sense of humor, my technical skills, and my desire to communicate about current issues were well aligned.

The most recent piece in this exhibit is Supersize My House, based on an article I read in the magazine *Sierra* about the consequences to the planet of building large homes. There was an illustration that caught my attention of a large home sitting atop a small one. This is my interpretation of the image. The piece at the top from which the weaving hangs has a row of houses from Monopoly, a game created to demonstrate the impoverishment of renters by landlords, and other aspects

of capitalism. These wooden houses seemed a fitting way to finish this image.

This series has some newer tapestries dealing with issues of extreme weather events, as well as fracking—an actual threat to the water supply where I live in the Ozarks of Arkansas.

My energy as a social activist and my skills as a weaver have come together for me with these tapestries. I feel fortunate that instead of just losing sleep at night over the many issues that are a threat to the planet, I can work to address some of them by creating woven images for others to view.

Tracy Krumm, Yoke/Folded, 2006; Crocheted copper, fabricated steel, found wood, pigments, and patina; Greater Kansas City Area Committee (2:18)

My work deals with form and space, and object making. To find my way into the world of contemporary art, I embraced the craft processes of crocheting and blacksmithing and now I piggyback what I can do with this with my ongoing research on gender issues, feminism, popular culture, craft history, and social anthropology.

I think the work is self-explanatory, or at least I hope it is. I want it to live somewhere between the worlds of mystery and familiarity, and I want it to be powerful and intimate at the same time. Each piece is about perfection on some level, but it's also about accommodation and balance, and duality in relationships. It is medieval. It is a jewel. It's protective. It's a strainer and a sifter, or a filter. For me, the work stands in as a metaphor for these things, and I'm interested in transforming both physical and conceptual substance within my work.

Ultimately, it has to speak to some (unintelligible) of what went into it. I think to be successful, the whole must be greater than the sum of its parts, and it has to engage the viewer in some sort of a relationship. I'm still trying to figure out how to do this. I really am committed to the use of craft-based practices as an essential part of my artwork. I have learned many ways of art making, but I cannot just simply choose another process outside of doing things by hand, and have the same meaningful relationship with the outcome of my work.

My personal connections to labor and culture and to history and the environment are such a huge part of my own life and my lifestyle. My work is inextricably linked to the way building form with my hands by integrating material, pattern, and structure. I can't make my art without engaging and thinking in a meditative stitch-by-stitch process right now. If there was something else that made sense for me in the way that crochet does, I would probably shift to it.

There's always this debate about expanding our vocabulary as artists. Or maybe it's just a constant challenge. How do we do this? For right now, as long as there are still new things for me to discover with the way that I'm thinking and doing and making in my studio, then I'm going to continue to go as deep with this work as I can get.

Beili Liu, Toil, 2008; Silk organza; Texas State Committee (1:27)

Hello, my name is Beili Liu. I am a multidisciplinary artist, who often works with textile and fiber materials to create site-responsive installations. My making is rooted in a genuine connection with the material. The material is very important to me, and so is process. I rely on both traditional and innovative, unique processes that have evolved and invent in my studio.

I love the hand making process. To me, repetition is the way of weaving my efforts and energy into the work. That energy is what I believe that my viewers respond to when they come to visit and encounter the work.

For Toil, I slowly sliced silk organza into two silk strips using a burning incense stick. I then hand-rolled them into organic coned-shaped elements of various lengths. Each element stems perpendicularly from the wall with the support of a single sewing needle in its center. These silk columns extend horizontally into space. I like to see them as if twisting and twirling, and almost growing out of the wall's surface. If you're interested, please visit beililiu.com for addition works and information. Thank you.

Laure Tixier, Plaid House, 2008; Wool felt and thread; Les Amis du NMWA. (1:50)

Question of habitat, architecture, and city planning runs through my works. I use different mediums like drawings, animation movies, artist books, sculptures using buttons, textile, concrete, porcelain.

The project presented in National Museum of Women in the Arts are sculptures out of felt, The Plaid Houses. They are inspired by the first architectural fictions built by children using blankets. The blanket becomes many different houses, originating from different cultural, geographical, and historical contexts. From the hut to futuristic architecture, the Mongolian yurt and the modernistic avant-garde.

The sculptures are based on a series of 150 drawings [that] consist of a range of habitats. Here, you can see, seven of the 48 maquettes, and one of the nine sculptures created for Mudam—Museum of Modern Art Grand Duke Jean in Luxemburg—in collaboration with Felt Museum in

Mouzon in France. The geometry is soft and bright. The angles aren't supposed to be straight. These architectures are bodies with felt skin; a felt, red skin for this one. This Plaid House come from Prinsengracht houses built in the 17th century in Amsterdam.