Sentimental & Tactile

By

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The comfort of textiles and working with fibers comes from its materiality, the familiar experience of surface texture. By collaging different surfaces we gain new experience and feeling from the contrast of neighboring materials. Focusing on objects that are found in domestic settings such as quilts and curtains, and removing the functionality from them transforms them from objecthood to image, then back to object-hood. Working with various existing archives such as the digitized Cooper Hewitt Collection and recontextualizing textiles through the lense of printmaking, we can discuss what is worth remembering and what is deemed insignificant. However, we can choose what we give importance to, including the things in our everyday lives. I am taking items associated with the home such as quilts and reforming them into abstract depictions of comfort. Using documentation of process and archives as tools, we can explore the role of comfort in craft.

The sentimental can come from the evidence of use or making, it is evidence of care. The comfort of textiles like blankets and quilts comes from more than aesthetics but also its tactility. The sensation from touch gives us an automatic emotional response from objects much like a memory. Growing up in a home where I didn't have a lot of family, and moved around often, sentimentality was never encouraged. As much as I was drawn to cozy goods, it was inconvenient to accumulate things as I knew I would be picking up and leaving soon. I became used to living off of the essentials. But still, these soft, comforting pieces of home called to me. So I recreate the items and memories I have

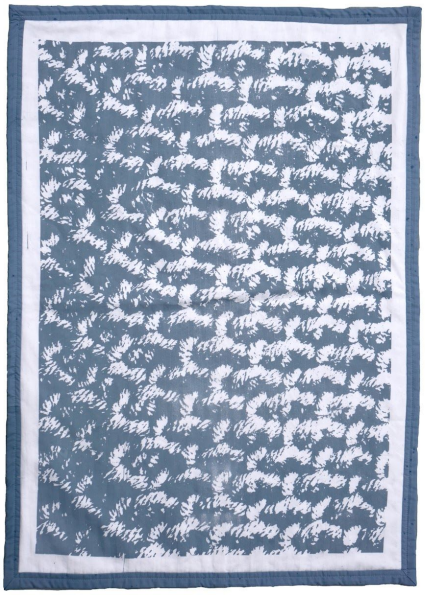
always been drawn to by creating a personal archive. This systematic documentation is appealing because it is organized and concise. Somebody cared enough to take the time to put it all together and carefully remember all of it. This is the opposite of how my mind works. Everything is scattered and all over the place so by creating new textiles based off of these memories of sensation, I can freeze time.

Depicting the material through focusing on the folds, wrinkles or stitches, evidence of its use and how loved they were, in transparent layers reminds the viewer of touch and the instant emotions it can trigger. Anni Albers clearly describes the natural sense for texture that we all have and how essential it is to restore our memory of touch:

"Structure, as related to function, needs our intellect to construct it or, analytically, to decipher its material, on the other hand, it is mainly non-functional, non-utilitarian, and in that respect like color, it cannot be experienced intellectually. It has to be approached, just like color, non analytically, respectively. It asks to be enjoyed and valued for no other reason than it's intriguing performance of a play of surfaces, but it takes sensibility to respond to Matiere...in addition an acute sensitivity to tactile articulation to discover meaning in that of Matiere. Thus the task today is to train the sensitivity in order to regain faculty that was once so naturally ours."[1]

[1] *Anni Albers. Tactile sensibility, 1965*

In the piece, *Blanket (reference Figure 1. page 1 and Figure 2. page 2)* not just the patterning is depicted but also the folds and wrinkles in the fabric. The main ideas of these pieces are not of textiles but of representing textiles as a marker of memory. Juxtaposing images of used material onto repurposed fabric focuses the viewer on the tactility of the object. I demonstrate nostalgia and comfort by silkscreening imagery of crochet, lace or knitting onto repurposed fabric in pieces *Quilt No. 1 - 3 (reference Figure 3-5. page 4).*



ARCHIVE

I am documenting illustrations of memory through repurposed imagery found in digital archives. There is focus on the details rather than the whole, gravitating towards the idea of remnants, and retracing them. In the edition *Blanket, (reference Figure 1. page 1 and Figure 2. page 2)* this piece was sourced from an existing scan of a quilt[2]. I hand traced and silkscreened four layers onto Kitakata. One layer depicts the pattern, but the remaining three are tracings of

[2] *Cooper Hewitt Collection Database*

the shadows and folds. This quilt exists as a whole in Cooper Hewitt's original database, the revised imagery was based on what portions of these pieces felt neglected and needed to be remembered.

Archiving and printmaking are both traditional means that can be structured and re-ordered. They are both products of decisive process and documentations of something ephemeral. Sigmund Freud says, *"if I just trust my memory… I am able to supplement and guarantee it's working by making a note in writing."*[3] What is memory but a system of note taking, of remembrances.

The act of remembering is recalling a moment that happened in reality. You can argue that the retelling of the story is an act of reproducing. You have no certainty that it will remain unaltered. This occurs within printmaking and archiving. They are both retellings of an original that grasps at what once was. While Freud believed that we would escape possible distortions, it is false to believe that a retelling is anything but what it is. A gesture at what we once saw or experienced.

EXPLORING PROCESS



[3] *Sigmund Freud, A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad, 1925*

Process is essential in my practice. The states of *Dutch Tile (Figure 6-8. page 5)* were my first endeavor into using existing textiles as the matrices for printmaking. These are Dutch Tiles from the Cooper Hewitt Collection that are modified digitally to leave just the surface texture. They are then laser etched into plexiglass. The plexiglas is wiped as if it were an intaglio and additions of monotype and drypoint were made. This is where the start of my basic concepts of working with textiles were forming.

These works focus on moments of ephemera, and the non-archived remnants of practices such as the unintentional texture of the tile. Taking on this subject gave me the opportunity to explore taking subject matter from places that seem unimportant because they belonged to the everyday. Through this we can see how art practices are actually created, through repetitious making, trying and failing, and the cycling through of thoughts, moments, and experiences.

These forgotten objects lying around the home are immortalized through my silkscreens. People have a natural gravitational pull to objecthood and ritualized practices and that in itself is artistry. This work emphasizes these objects so they are not neglected. I acknowledge the small practices that exist inside of the home that may be depreciated, such as a crocheted

stitch, or a detail of lace or the ruffle on the edge of a piece of fabric that are emphasized in in Quilt No. 4 *(reference Figure 9. page 6)*. The squares of the quilt are made from my own recycled imagery in *Quilt No. 1 - 3 (reference Figure 3-5. page 4),* all on repurposed fabric and accentuate the details that are undervalued. All of these elements demonstrate how prominent these textiles and imagery are in our everyday lives.

CRAFT

Julia Bryan-Wilson discusses the importance of craft and how its value is found in its material. Her writings on how craft transcends time and is a constant in our lives furthers my assertion that craft is of everyday importance to us and deserves to be universally recognized. Wilson says:

> *"Craft embodies its histories in its materials. It should not be seen as yet another trend within current art but rather is assertively and proudly uncontemporary."*[4]

Craft is denoting the form of work done with technique and skill accomplished by hand. It is structured in skill and learning. Its tradition has a history of being passed down much like a story. My family has worked in textiles for generations as tailors and dressmakers. My own means of creating is through printmaking. I connect with this past by creating and evolving textiles through a different perspective. Coming from a closed off family, intimacy has always been a struggle but by working and creating these pieces, I am creating a link between us. There is always something passed down between generations, something that is unique to each home. This project searches for that. It is not always something that I can reach out and touch. I create images as symbols of comfort that I can not only touch but have a direct hand in making.

[4] *Eleven Propositions in Response to the Question: "What Is Contemporary about Craft?" Julia Bryan-Wilson*

By retracing the layers, stitches and patterns the viewer gains insight as to why and how a textile was made. Adapting these skills, I make silkscreens on fabric and paper to translate existing sources like museums digitized archives that document donations of textiles into new physical and semi digital realms. These sources give me access to different items that aren't deemed important enough to show in an actual collection or museum. But, someone still took the time and care to photograph them and store them for people to find if they care to look. Breaking down existing works into its basic components and restructuring them through matrices allows me to recreate mementos of the home I never had access to. These new textiles remind viewers of the items that might have been in a home.

In *Curtain (reference Figure 10. page 8)* the ruffle presented to the left evokes a feeling of the soft and sentimental, something created for the aesthetics of the home. It reminds

the viewer of pattern and decoration while increasing the awareness of tactile sensibility by placing pattern on pattern, revitalizing the sense of texture.

This patterning and form is dated, creating a strong feeling of nostalgia. As if this piece is something you might have found in your family home but not quite touching upon a memory.

An essential part of this piece is borders and edges. There is a harsh edge that lives within the frilly design. Something sharp placed inside of something soft. We can keep craft within its history but still manipulate its imagery by layering textures on top of each other or placing them together. This gives you the contrasting feeling of home, a place that was once yours but now is colder and more distant.

CLOSING

"We are here revitalizing our tactile sense and are not dealing with real weaving."[5]

As summarized by Anni Albers we are not dealing with real objects, we are dealing with the illustrated memory of textiles. These quilts based in and representing fabric are reflections of process and making. By implementing these systems as a matrix, I create artifacts of comfort. When I think of comfort I think of safety. It brings me back to home. These details can be passed by, we forget that these objects of comfort should be cherished and remembered. I, the artist, have the control in this matter. We can be historians, dedicated documentaries, and create our own inventory of history made up of what we deem valuable. We are creators, organizers, the people with a gentle touch who take the care to piece things together in some semblance of form. I am representing the object as a symbol of comfort reminding the viewer of the pleasure of touch and feeling.

[5] *Anni Albers. Tactile sensibility, 1965*

Works Cited

Richards, Mary Caroline, *M.C. Richards: Centering: Life Art*. Asheville, NC: Black Mountain College Museum & Arts Center, 2016

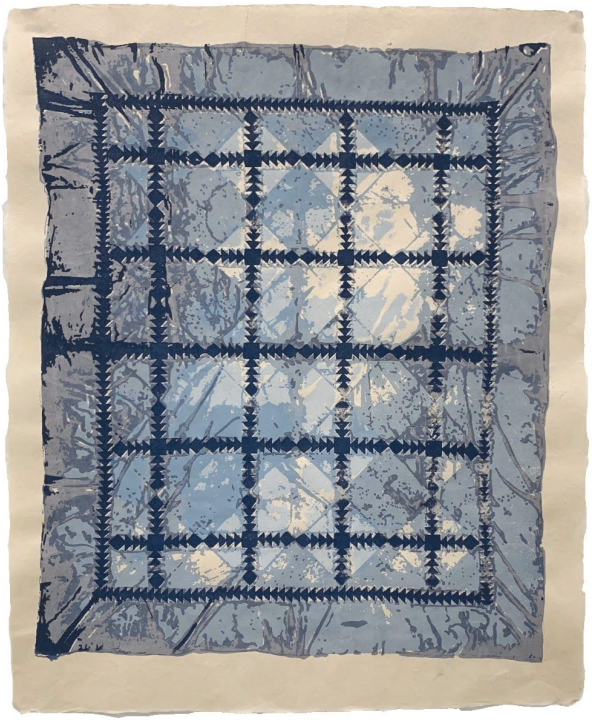
Sorkin, Jenni. *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community*. S.l.: S.n., 2016.

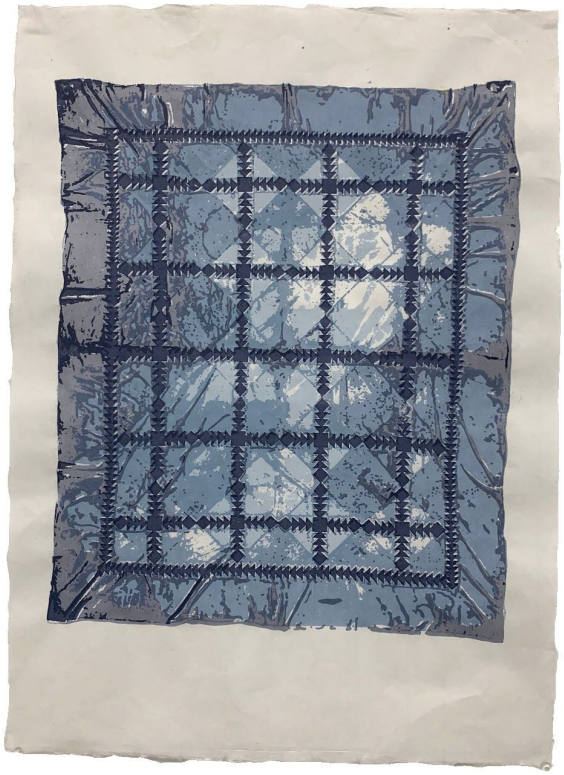
Harrod, Tanya. *Craft*., Whitechapel Gallery, 2018

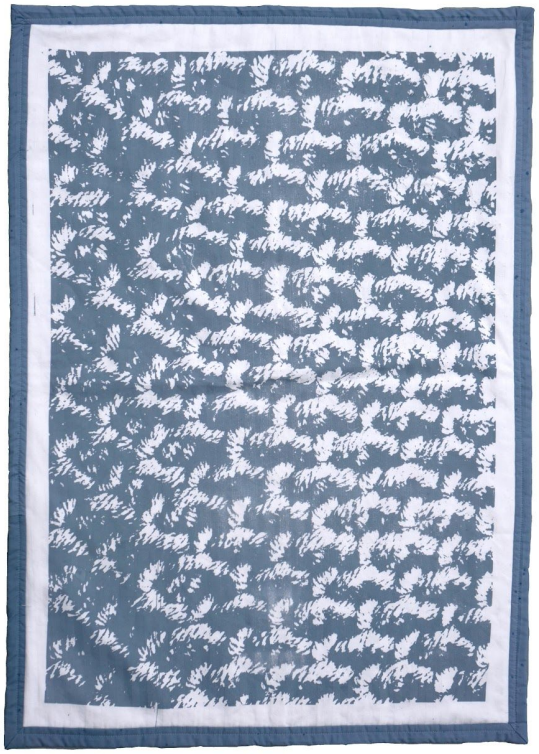
Merewether, Charles, *The Archive*, Whitechapel, 2006

Anni Albers. *Tactile sensibility,* 1965

Sigmund Freud, *A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad,* 1925

	Curtain 43in x 30in Silkscreen on found fabric. 2020
	Blanket (Version 1) 17in x 21in Four layer silkscreen on Kitakata paper. 2020

	Blanket (Version 2) 18in x 25in Four layer silkscreen on mulberry paper 2020.
	Quilt No 1. Silkscreen on found fabric 33 x 24 in 2020

	Quilt No 2. Silkscreen on found fabric 33 x 24 in 2020
	Quilt No 3. Silkscreen on found fabric 33 x 24 in 2020

Quilt No 4.

Silkscreen on found fabric

58.5 x 48 in

2020