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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Sew What? takes textile arts as its starting point and includes contemporary artists whose work transforms the material of fiber. Sew What? revels in the diversity of textiles, and how these materials are transformed through various techniques by contemporary artists.

The word textile, from Latin texere, means to weave, to braid, to construct. Most textile arts begin with twisting or spinning and plying fiber to make yarn (called thread when it is very fine and rope when it is very heavy). The yarn is then knotted, looped, braided or woven to make flexible fabric or cloth, and cloth can be used to make clothing and soft objects. Techniques of dyeing, printing, embroidery, needlework, knitting, quilting and sewing all are a part of textile arts.

Often connecting significant personal and cultural narratives, the artists in Sew What? move across temporal and spatial boundaries, connecting old and new ideas, just as they provide important links between people, places and ways of life. Bringing together a diverse range of contemporary works, Sew What? celebrates the ways in which contemporary artists explore and extend the textile and fiber medium.


OVERVIEW OF TACTILE BOOK

Tactile Tours provide an opportunity to “see” by activating the users senses. In order to preserve, or keep safe, the artworks in our galleries, we have created this Tactile Book as a way to explore the works of art without actually touching them. Young children learn by engaging all of their senses.

ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST

Lindsay Kessler comes from a long line of artists and educators, and holds a Master’s Degree in Art Education, as well as Bachelor’s Degree in Theater Arts and an Associate’s Degree in Graphic Design. Lindsay has years of experience working in all aspects of theatrical design and performance, including many years of running children’s theater and working in academic and community spaces. She has been a professional graphic designer at the local and corporate levels, and has experience teaching and running art-making workshops for students of all ages throughout her home state of Florida. She is currently a Visitor Services Associate, Development Intern, and School Groups Teaching Artist at the Children’s Museum of the Arts.

CREDITS

CMA’s Art for All initiative is aimed at making the Museum accessible for all children including those with special needs by providing professional development to its staff and collaborating with key partners, which include parent focus groups, community-based organizations, and experts in accessibility to identify best practices. This project was made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
Sew What?

Tactile Book
Adrian Esparza, *Skyscape 2*, wood, nails, paint, serape, 2014
Skyscraper 2 by Adrian Esparza
(2014) wood, nails, paint, serape

LOOK
Look at the colorful serape hanging on the wall. Notice how a single thread connects the corners of the serape, each thread on the wooden table. Each hole in the serape is separated, so when you step on or pull on the serape, it can move. The threads on the loom are actually threads that are woven together. This is the same method you used when you wove the serape in the threads on the frame.

MAKE
Make your own serape with yarn. Pull the yarn around the pegs and then pull the yarn on the loom to see what shapes appear. Try making a pattern or a textile of your own. How long do you think it would take to weave a whole serape this way?

SHARE
Share the weaving you have done on the loom with someone. Show them how you created your own pattern with the threads. Maybe they will see a new shape in your artwork.

Serape: The serape is a long, brightly colored, striped shawl, often worn in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Serapes are made from wool, cotton, or silk, and are often decorated with geometric patterns. They are worn over the shoulder or wrapped around the body. Serapes are traditionally woven on a loom and are an important part of Mexican culture.
Skyscrape 2 by Adrian Esparza
(2014) wood, nails, paint, serape

MATERIALS
Plastic loom, fabric, yarn

LOOK
Look at the colorful serape hanging on the wall. Notice how a single thread connects the cloth to the many lines strung on the wooden frame. Cloth, like the kind this serape is made from, is woven from thread or yarn. These lines are actually thread unraveled from the serape. Find the colors you see in the serape in the threads on the frame.

MAKE
Make your own shapes with yarn. Pull the yarn around the pegs on the loom to see what shapes appear. Try making a pattern or a textile of your own. How long do you think it would take to weave a whole serape this way?

SHARE
Share the weaving you have done on the loom with someone. Show them how you created your own pattern with the thread. Maybe they will see a new shape in your artwork.

Serape: The serape is a long blanket-like shawl, often brightly colored and fringed at the ends, worn in Mexico and Latin America, especially by men. The term serape can also be used to refer to a very soft rectangular blanket with an opening in the middle for one’s head. Some serapes are made with matching hoods for head covering.
Timothy Paul Myers, *Untitled*  
In Collaboration with Andrew Barnes & BIGHEAVY Studios, grey felt, 2016
Unftitled by Timothy Paul Myers
In Collaboration with Andrew Betancourt & LightWave Studios
(2016) grey felt

LOOK
Look at the environment and notice how everything is covered in grey felt. All the parts of this room are the same color. This is called monochromatic when everything is made in one color or varying tones of one color. Do you recognize some of the objects in this room? Touch the felt to the right to see how the pieces in this room would feel.

MAKE
Make a drawing or sculpture that is monochromatic by using varying shades of just one color. Think of a colored pencil, marker, or charcoal. Draw several versions of the same object to create different hues of a single color.

SHARE
Share your artwork with your family or friends. How does the color you chose make them feel? Share the felt in this book with someone. Which does the texture of felt remind you of?
MATERIALS
Felt, vinyl, fabric

LOOK
Look at the environment and notice how everything is covered in grey felt. All the parts of this room are the same color. This is called *monochrome*: when everything is made in one color or varying tones of one color. Do you recognize some of the objects in this room? Touch the felt to the right to see how the pieces in this room would feel.

MAKE
Make a drawing or sculpture that is *monochromatic* by using varying tones of just one color. Try pressing a colored pencil harder or more gently against your paper to create different hues of a single color.

SHARE
Share your artwork with your family or friends. How does the color you chose make them feel? Share the felt in this book with someone. What does the texture of felt remind you of?
 Untitled by Louise Bourgeois

LOOK

Look at the portfolio in front of you. The fabric you see is taken from old clothes, sheets, and towels. The artist made this “fabric drawing” by weaving, interlacing long threads passing in one direction with other threads at a right angle to them. It’s easy to remember “over, under, over, under” when you weave fabric or thread.

MAKE

Make your own weaving by practicing with the fabric to the left. Weave each strip over and under the next, then under the next, then over the next step, then under again. If you do this correctly, your weaving will be whole fabric.

SHARE

Share your weaving with everyone. Let someone else weave the fabric strips together. Did they weave them in the same way that you did?
Untitled by Louise Bourgeois  

MATERIALS  
Felt, various fabrics

LOOK  
Look at the portrait in front of you. The fabric you see is taken from old clothes, sheets, and towels! The artist made this “fabric drawing” by weaving: interlacing long threads passing in one direction with other threads at a right angle to them. It’s easy to remember “over, under, over, under” when you weave fabric or thread.

MAKE  
Make your own weaving by practicing with the fabric to the left. Weave each strip over one strip, then under the next, then over the next strip, then under again. If you do the next piece in opposite way, you can weave a whole tapestry!

SHARE  
Share your weaving everyone. Let someone else weave the fabric strips together. Did they weave them in the same way that you did?
Susan Beallor Snyder, *Broken*, natural manila rope, 2014
Broken by Susan Beallor Snyder
(2014) natural manila rope

TRY IT YOURSELF!

LOOK

Look at the rope sculpture. Do you see ropes twisted? Braided? Knotted? What shape is it? How are the ropes arranged? Are there many ways to turn a line of ropes into a 3-dimensional sculpture?

MAKE

Make your own rope sculpture. Can you braid, twist, or knot? What other ways can you use to join the ropes together?

Share your rope sculpture with the people around you. What new shapes do you see in your sculpture?
Broken by Susan Beallor Snyder
(2014) natural manila rope

MATERIALS
Rope, yarn, felt, parachute cord, plastic lanyard

LOOK
Look the rope sculpture. Do you see ropes twisted? Braided? Knotted? Wrapped around each other? There are many ways to turn a line (a rope, string, or yarn) into a 3-dimensional sculpture!

MAKE
Make your ropes into a knot, twist, or braid. What other ways can you find to weave the ropes together?

SHARE
Share your rope sculpture with the people around you. What new shapes do they see in your sculpture?
Sheila Pepe, *A Place For Quiet Looking And Dreaming*
various knits & crochet fiber, steel, and hardware, 2016
A Place For Quiet Looking And
Dreaming by Sheila Pepe
(2016) various knits & crochet fiber, steel, and hardware

LOOK

Look up at this installation overhead. Does the shape of this piece remind you of anything? This creation was improvised, which means that the artist came up with how it would look on the spot. She didn’t plan it out beforehand. Look at the shadows the piece casts on the wall. What shapes do you see?

MAKE

Make your own improvised yarn artwork with the colorful yarn on these pages. Use the loops outside the page to change directions. You can twist, twist, tie the yarn, and stretch it all the way across the canvas.

SHARE

Share your improvised yarn drawing with everyone. Tell them how you made your creation by making a new one together!
A Place For Quiet Looking And Dreaming by Sheila Pepe
(2016) various knits & crochet fiber, steel, and hardware

MATERIALS
Felt yarn, paper clips, rubber bands

LOOK
Look up at the installation overhead. Does the shape of this piece remind you of anything? This creation was *improvised*, which means that the artist came up with how it would look on the spot, she did not plan it out beforehand. Look at the shadows this piece casts on the wall. What shapes do you see?

MAKE
Make your own *improvised* yarn artwork with the colorful yarn on these pages. Use the loops outside the page to change directions. You can twist, braid, tie the yarn, and stretch it all the way across the canvas.

SHARE
Share your *improvised* yarn drawing with everyone. Tell them how you made your creation. Try making a new one together!
Robb Putnam, *Dunderhead*, 2016
Dunderhead by Robb Putnam
(2016)

MATERIALS
Fabric, plastic, bubble wrap, leather, yarn, rubber bands, utility mat, paper

LOOK
Look at this large sculpture of a dog. It was made from garbage that the artist found in a dumpster. Textiles can be made up of things other than fabric. Do you see any unexpected materials you recognize?

MAKE
Make a sculpture or textile of your own using recycled materials. You can use plastic, yarn, felt, old clothes, rubber, and many things you’d find around the house. Do you recognize any of the materials on this book?

SHARE
Share your sculpture or textile with someone new. Tell them how you made your creation. Can they tell what materials you used? Name your sculpture the way the artist named Dunderhead.