

## STUFFED! EXTREME FIBERS AT THE MUSKEGON MUSEUM OF ART

Posted by *arthack1* on September 6, 2015 · 2 Comments

*Extreme Fibers: Textile Icons and the New Edge* opened Thursday, August 20, at the *Muskegon Museum of Art*. I generally avoid receptions unless it's that of a friend, but I was determined to see *Extreme Fibers* as soon as possible because the last exhibit curated by fiber artist Geary Jones, "*Innovators and Legends: Generations in Textiles and Fiber*" was excellent, and I didn't manage to see it until its final days.



Susan Hensel, "Deconstructing Power" (detail)

*Extreme Fibers* features a collection of works by 27 artists designated as "visionaries in the field", accompanied by additional examples selected by jurors Ferne Jacobs and Namita Gupta Wiggers. *Extreme Fibers* showcases an extraordinary sampling of contemporary textile art. There is *plenty* of the standard art textile fare: large loom-woven pieces, quilts, and Japanese-inspired basket forms, but these are not the most noteworthy examples. Those that involve interventions upon existing textiles are among my favorites, like Rena Wood's "*Runner*" (2014), Sara Rockinger's antique hankies embroidered with hair, and *Susan Hensel's "Deconstructing Power" (2013)* comprised of dissected suit jackets. Many examples were produced using digital imaging and state-of-the-art machinery, while others offer cynical commentaries by incorporating elements from defunct technology like VHS tape, or *Pamela DeTuncq's "Flock"* (2011), a sculptural grouping of six felt-clad adolescents, completely engrossed with their cell phones.



April Dauscha, “Custody of the Tongue Veiling”, (2014), photo credit April Dauscha  
Some of the strongest pieces are informed by the body: absurd garment-inspired works like April Dauscha’s “Tools for Tongue Veiling” (2013), and its *accompanying video*, those suggesting medical interventions like Li Chai’s “Soreness” (2014), and others made of materials issued from bodies like gut or hair.



Kyoung Ae Cho, "052010-032011", 2014. Hair, silk organza, muslin, thread, calendar, photo credit: Kyoung Ae Cho

I had very high expectations for this exhibition because *Innovators and Legends*, was extraordinary. To my recollection there was not a single weak link, and the pieces were skillfully arranged to speak to each other formally and conceptually. The arrangement of *Extreme Fibers* is occasionally perplexing. For example, “*Red Pins*” (2008), by *Wolfgang Horn and Barbara Esser*, should have been placed with other garment-themed works, and *Amber O’Harrow’s*, “*Intestine Necklace II*” (2014), would’ve been better placed in close proximity to *Patricia Hickman’s* “*Light Passage*” (1995), made of stitched hog casings molded over door hinges.

*Extreme Fibers* includes so much work, that the content could easily be divided into two or three exhibitions. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that there were three individuals involved in the selection process. Some of the work is undeniably excellent, but there’s a lot of repetition. Why more than one amorphous zipper sculpture? Why include as many as four examples from each of the “innovators”? One wonders why there wasn’t a concerted effort to cull, particularly since space is tight. There’s scarcely room for the visitor to step-back to see larger works, and occasionally it’s difficult to find corresponding labels/title cards. Hopefully the show has more dedicated space at *Dennos Museum at Northwestern Michigan College*, where it can be seen December 6 through March of 2016.

All that aside, fiber art aficionados will be gratified to see the works of the notable contributors first-hand, more importantly, anyone unfamiliar with contemporary fiber art will be enlightened and inspired by the variety of techniques and materials employed.

Jones’ work is currently featured in a two person exhibition with David Johnson, “*Fiberx2: Tapestry Collaborations by David Johnson and Geary Jones*” at Lowell Arts 149 South Hudson Street, through September 26  
-Tamara Fox

### **Extreme Fibers: Textile Icons and the New Edge**

August 20 through November 1, 2015

Muskegon Museum of Art

296 W. Webster Avenue Muskegon, Michigan 49440

Hours: Sun., 12-4:30PM, Wed., 10AM-4:30PM, Thurs., 10AM-8PM, Fri., Sat., 10AM-4:30PM

Admission: Adults \$7, Students (with school I.D.) \$5, Free for members and children under 17

Dennos Museum Center at Northwestern Michigan College  
1410 College Drive, Traverse City, MI 49686.