LISTENING IN SLOW MOTION

EXHIBITION STATEMENT

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This exhibition brings two bodies of work together, drawing and textile design. As a Sr. Lecturer in the department of Human Centered Design, my job is to teach textile design. I teach color and surface design, and a course in knit structure and design. Our department has hand knitting machines and a far more complex and sophisticated Shima Seiki electronic knitting machine. I don’t believe that the technologically advanced Shima Seiki knitting machine produces better fabric than the simpler hand powered machines. It simply has different capabilities. The quality of the fabric comes down to what the designer is able to coax out of the machine they choose to use.

The drawings in this exhibit are a daily habit, an opportunity to excavate.  With each drawing, I find the story along the way. I carve away at the space on the page with dashes, dots, curves, or strokes until I can see what the drawing is attempting to communicate. The title will pop into my head at some point during the process and that is when I know what I need to do to complete the drawing. Any drawing that follows my initial vision feels limp and listless to me. I want to learn something from the process, for the drawing to show me something I don’t expect to see, to discover something new.

The textiles in this exhibit interpret the notions that have bubbled forth from my drawings.  They are an exercise in listening to what the drawings have to say, then filtering their stories through the lens of knit structure. Each knit piece explores the act of drawing in tactile form. Drawings are felt through the eyes. Textiles are felt through the eyes as well and through touch. They are textured, flexible membranes that can take on various forms. Material exploration is approached through yarn choice, often by using yarns with opposing properties. Thick vs thin, stiff monofilament vs smooth yarns, and yarns that shrink against yarns that expand. Simplified patterning helps to bring out the material quality of the yarns, allowing the material to speak in a way that is hopefully parallel to the brushwork, stippling, line quality, or narrative of a drawing.

Many knit pieces were created on a single bed Passap Vario hand machine using yarn collected from waste on the floor of our knit studio. Others, including the garments in this exhibit were programmed and knit on our Shima Seiki electronic machine. Some have been overdyed using natural dyes such as cochineal, madder and indigo. Knitting is a slower process than drawing. It requires more planning. On the other hand, the results can be as varied and surprising as the results I sought through the process of drawing. Listening in slow motion is about learning from the drawing process and interpreting that process into a new language.

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