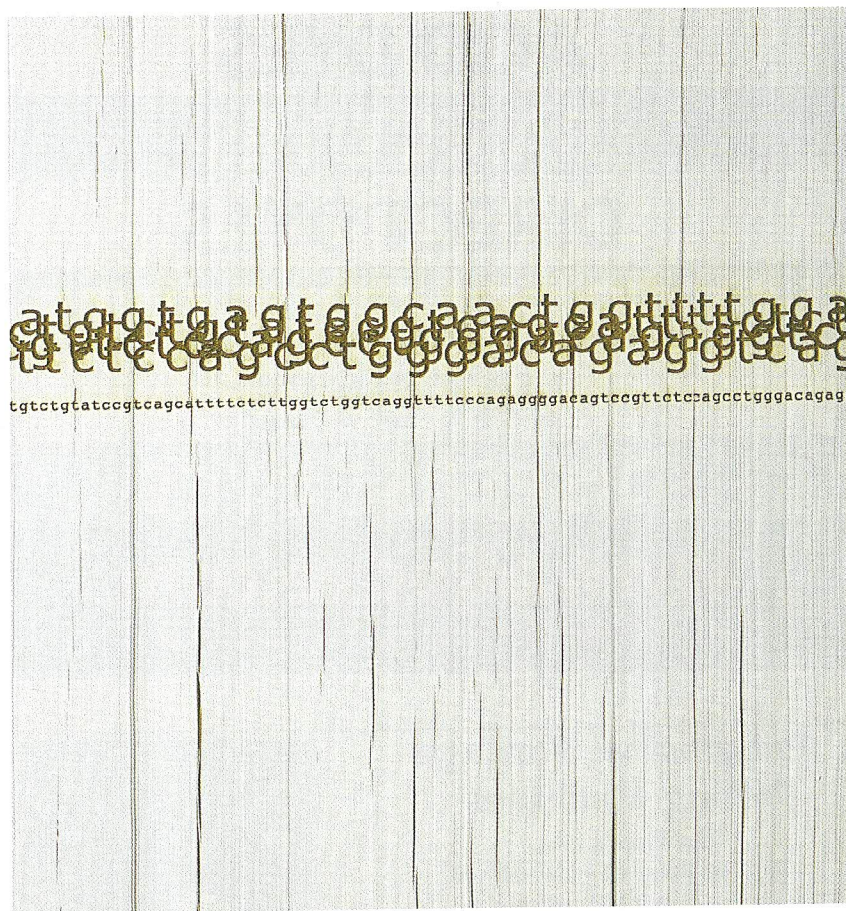


# Transcending Process



Jane Lackey, *Stanza 3*, 2003; dictionary pages, engraving, gesso, lacquer frame; 19 by 18 by 2.5 inches.

For her debut as an exhibition curator, Norma Minkowitz assembled a medley of works supporting her belief that there is a movement “towards a more conceptually based direction, blurring the boundaries between the arts, while retaining the individuality and unique qualities of fiber” (as written in her curator’s statement). An internationally recognized artist herself, Minkowitz drew a distinguished group of participants from among her peers. The postcard announcing “Transcending Process” (at the Brookfield Craft Center in Brookfield, Connecticut, August 24–October 12) read like the textile equivalent of a film laden with Oscar winners—among the 13 exhibitors were Lia Cook, Olga de Amaral, John McQueen, and Rebecca Medel.

Happily, though, the sum of the parts was not just a series of disconnected cameo appearances.

While Minkowitz’s own artwork was not included, her aesthetic sensibility permeated the small gallery. The works were not only perfectly proportioned to the space but also placed in relationships that established well-rounded dialogues among them. For example, on purely visual terms, the metallic sheen of looped wire in Carole Beadle’s triad of funnel-like forms was echoed in Tracy Krumm’s lacy cylinder; those pulled the eye to the glistening staples in Jerry Bleem’s biomorphic sculpture, which related to both the amazing undulations in Ferne Jacobs’ baskets and Pat Hickman’s placenta-like translucent sac of gut and netted cord.

Conceptually, too, there were intriguing correspondences and contrasts. For example, a number of pieces exemplified ways in which artworks are incorporating text. In Jane Lackey’s starkly minimal piece, the viewer confronts the edges of compacted dictionary pages. The gesso-stiffened all-white surface, interrupted only by a narrow band of what appear to be random alphabetical elements—in fact, A, C, T, and G refer to the chemicals that make up DNA—belied the depth of intellectual content. On the opposite wall, Kiyomi Iwata’s unfurled scroll with gold-leaf “pages” gilded over with Asian characters, also had bookish connotations, but lushly offset Lackey’s austerity.

Unlike the cryptic textual references of Lackey and Iwata, the words on Christine LoFaso’s piece were explicitly printed on a fabric that veiled an underlayer of ambiguous images. Following a theme that is characteristic of LoFaso, both the words and the organic images were related to bodily functions.

In Krumm’s *Cold: Atomizer Bag*, a faucet labeled “COLD” emerged from a form crocheted in the shape of an actual atomizer; it also resembled a grenade. In the straightforward objectness of this work, there was a structural logic that could be taken at face value as a visual pun. Or, one could ponder the broader implications of forms that suggested release of hidden contents.

Another mind-teasing work was Margo Mensing’s box containing a set of ready-made traditional tea towels. A documentary-style narrative inscribed on the box described a generous gesture toward a servant by the mother of Robert Louis Stevenson. But was this fact or fiction? The story, reinforced by vintage photographs attached to the box, was persuasive. However, Mensing previously has demonstrated a penchant for faux documentaries. The viewer was left wondering.

---

Driving to the Brookfield Craft Center through torrential rain and Sunday interstate traffic, I questioned whether the exhibition would be worth the effort. It was, indeed.

—**Patricia Malarcher**

*Patricia Malarcher, who lives in Englewood,*

*New Jersey, is the editor of the Surface Design Journal and a studio artist.*

A CD that includes individual images of the works in the show, plus installation views and artists' statements, is available. See Resources on page 78 for details.