

Leslie Schomp Artist Statement

Much of my figurative sculptural and drawn work is stitched. I find that cloth “acts” like the body. It bundles, stretches, gathers and lays flat and can be excavated into when it is “unwoven”. Its outer layers reveal its inner forms. I am fascinated by creating actual and implied texture and making work that plays both as surface and form. In the studio, three related bodies of work are investigated that allow me to really push the medium of fiber.

Lately I have been pursuing a series of samplers that explore the nature of stitching, painterly color, and physicality of the cloth to express underlying interpretations of the text it displays. The slow and devotional history of stitching allows me to really ruminate on the words and their meanings. I enjoy how the history of samplers turns thoughts and text into objects. Most of my samplers are meant to spark conversation between the quotes displayed and the viewer reading them. I create open conversations for the reader about issues such as social justice, climate change and the responsibility of both the individual and larger society. These samplers join writers across time periods and form new contexts for their famous quotes. Additionally I use text to explore self-awareness and play with formal qualities such as color, texture and scale to interpret language in a more personal and emotional visual manner.

The hair miniature drawings are rooted in a tradition of using hair as a material that is humble, recycled, devotional, genetic and of “natural” origins. Images of the self and the natural world are displayed in found antique frames and grouped to create suggested stories and feelings. The frames emphasize both equality and individuality of each subject. The images explore ideas about various states of the self and the psychology of relating to the landscape. They explore a “longing” for seeing oneself as part of nature instead of apart from it. Victorian hair tokens and wreaths have long fascinated me as a source of inspiration. Hair, both sensual and disgusting, becomes a medium of tension, one that also reveals that a drawing can be both an illusion and an object. This smaller scale has taught me much about seeing drawing in a new way. Hair, a fibrous line, must be both economical and at the same time layered in density to create the illusion of value at this smaller scale.

My stitched sculptures combine human and animal bodies, skins and gestures to communicate ideas about various states of human psychology. Using laborious practices, I build forms through bundles of cloth. This work demonstrates my interest in fashioning a figure and re-imagining nature. I explore the primary experiences that both animals and humans have, such as hunger, protection of family, fear, depression, joy, aging, and love. Many of them are inspired by my research of historical and scientific botanical illustration as well as children’s fables, stereotypes of animal names in connection to women and observation of my surrounding rural community. All works seek to equalize the person to their environment and other species.

