

March 20th - May 2nd 2015

Reading the Line

Alma Alloro

Maggie Groat

Anne Low

Tanya Lukin Linklater

Lis Rhodes

Reading the Line

To start, I want to talk a little about weaving. If you're a weaver, or know how textiles are woven, you can skip to the next paragraph. If not, or if you need a refresher, then this is a useful introduction to enter into this exhibition. I didn't set out to make a show about weaving and admittedly I don't know much about it, but here's the gist of what I understand about how weaving works: a series of taut, latitudinally oriented threads (warp) are interlaced with longitudinally oriented threads (weft) to make an interlocking grid. The interplay of the warp and the weft—which threads are on top and visible, which are beneath, or invisible—create patterns that both give a weaving its structure, but also shape its appearance. And though the tools used to weave thread into cloth have evolved over time, the basic principle has remained the same for thousands of years.

This structural explanation of weaving provides one way to approach the works in *Reading the Line*, an exhibition that looks at the line as both a compositional tool and a conceptual base. Specifically, I am interested in the relationship between the visible and invisible threads that make up a weaving, and how a weaving's finished form is built upon its negotiation of things we can see and things which are

hidden from view. In each of these works line is also a physical gesture—be it in the hand drawn line, the action of the shuttle passing through warp on a loom, the lines of thread stitching together a quilt, or the choreographed movement of a dancer in space—which recalls a tradition of craft, labour and production.

For the last several years, Low has been honing the millennia-old craft of weaving by hand with a loom. These three recent weavings of Low's are, for all intents and purposes, functional objects: a blanket, a bedsheet, a pillowcase, pieces of upholstery tape. Through their compositional arrangement as sculptures, Low's works manifest a dual position: they are at once weavings, while also being about weaving. In *A coverlid for the shoulders of either* (2014-2015), a handcrafted cedar cane hangs from the ceiling with a coverlid (or bedspread) draped over its hook. Adorning the end threads of this textile are flat copper plates, which, through gravity, give form to the draped cloth. These copper embellishments not only provide a stark contrast to the textile's colour, but also gives this otherwise loose and flat object a sculptural form. The design of the cloth is what is called an overshot pattern, a style which gained popularity during the shift to industrial textile production as mechanized looms were unable to produce them. I can't help but think here of the relevance of copper as the conductive element that became the structural foundation of electrical and information networks after the Industrial Revolution.

Low's placement of the element, literally weighing down the coverlid, activates a dialogue between traditional modes of labour and contemporary production.

Maggie Groat's *Lines for Alternatives* (2015) approaches history and textiles from a different position. As an artist who works with found and salvaged materials, Groat was drawn to a ubiquitous IKEA dish towel called TEKLA. A plain white cotton towel with two parallel red lines running near its outer edge, the IKEA textile is fashioned after a traditional European design, which itself was a design inspired by the practice of repurposing grain sacks. Here, Groat takes the mass-produced textile and reclaims it as handmade in the form of a meticulously stitched quilt. Expanding upon the context and history of the TEKLA towel, Groat displays the finished quilt folded upon a shelf (itself built from salvaged lumber from the Western Front basement) alongside a constellation of visual references. These images include a stock photo of the towel from IKEA's website, a traditional French flour sack, a Daniel Buren painting, and an image of a youth holding up a Two Row Wampum¹ taken from the book *Wampum Belts* by Tehanetorens. Rather than dictate a single history or context from which the work springs, this collage suggests multiple lines of research or readings one might have.

Tanya Lukin Linklater's *Slow Scrape* (2014-2015), is a work that has at its origins the James Bay mitt, a moose hide mitt which Chief Theresa Spence was often

seen wearing in public during her 44-day hunger strike in 2012-2013. Interviewing her relatives in Northern Ontario about the process for making these mitts—trapping, hunting, tanning hide, sewing and beading—Lukin Linklater translated these oral histories into a series of visual poems. For Lukin Linklater, this creative process of negotiating oral traditions, writing, and visual forms links back to the James Bay mitts worn by Spence during her Idle No More protest and the political process surrounding treaty, land use and aboriginal rights. In this iteration of the work, the original text is left unseen and unread, replaced by seven drawings which are inspired by the visual composition of the poems. Furthering this negotiation of form and process, the work is activated through a collaborative performance with Vancouver-based dancer and choreographer Ziyian Kwan, with whom Lukin Linklater worked to translate the poems and the drawings into a movement score.

Using simple lines defining a sequence of geometric shapes, Alma Alloro's *10 Seconds (Quilt Animation)* (2013) recalls figures like Hans Richter, Oskar Fischinger and Mary Ellen Bute, whose experiments in film and animation sought to create abstract visualizations of music. Though working in a net-based format, the animated GIF, Alloro's works are less digital than they appear. The intricate line drawings that make up the GIF animations are a way of exploring how a digital aesthetic can be realized through handmade means. In transposing the

digital with the manual, Alloro's work exposes the process of its own making.

Lis Rhodes' *Light Music* (1975-77) is a 16mm film for two projectors, which explores how a photo-optical soundtrack (as is commonly used on 16mm film) can contain both image and sound. Motivated by the lack of attention paid to women composers, Rhodes saw this work as being a musical composition as much as a visual one. The film was created from a series of line drawings (a selection of which are reproduced in the gallery alongside editing notes and film stills) which Rhodes filmed on an animation stand. Using the camera to zoom in and out of the drawings, she generates a rhythmic visual pattern of scrolling line, as well as a shifting series of tonal noises that can be read by a projector.

In a recent lecture about an exhibition of hers, Rhodes said:

Only in the silent prints on display here—in this exhibition—can the image of the sound be read - as it was written on the film surface. The score is read in the mind—but nothing can be heard. The interaction between the notation of the sound and images—is heard when the film is projected. But at the moment of projection—nothing can be read. The audience never necessarily sees or perceives the close relationship between the image and sound—though this might be deduced. There is a very present political sense in this. The slant of the reading of the notation—the explanation if you like—

*is oblique to what is seen to be happening. What is said to happen does not always happen.*²

Rhodes' work as a composer in this film is ever present, though the musical score or notation of this composition is, like the position of women composer's Rhodes speaks about, hidden from view. Which brings us back to our weaving lesson. As the warp and weft of a weave pass over and under each other, a pattern emerges based on which threads are visible and which are hidden. In each of these works is this same tension, with lines making a support structure containing elements, narratives and histories both seen and unseen.

- Pablo de Ocampo

¹ The Two Row Wampum is a design that marked the signing of the peace treaty agreement between Dutch settlers and Haudenosaunee in 1613 in upstate New York. The parallel lines represent the Indigenous and European cultures each travelling side by side in the same river while respecting one another's path. In the image caption, the Haudenosaunee explanation of the Wampum is partially visible, "You say that you are our Father and I am your Son. We say 'We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers.'"

² Transcript of artist lecture delivered at Fondació Miró, Barcelona, March 2013.

Artist Biographies

Alma Alloro lives and works in Berlin. Her practice explores the interplay between traditional craft mediums and digital culture, examining formal and emotional aspects of modern technology. Her work has been shown at Sommer Gallery, Tel Aviv; Preview Berlin; GLI.TC/H festival in Chicago and Amsterdam; Furtherfield Gallery, London; Transfer Gallery, NYC; Hypersalon, Miami Beach and the Musrara Mix New Media Festival in Jerusalem, among others. Alloro studied art and education at the Midrasha School of Art (Israel) and received her MFA in Art in Public Space and New Artistic Strategies from the Bauhaus University in Weimar, Germany.

Maggie Groat is a visual artist working in a variety of media including collage, sculpture, artists' books, textiles, site-specific interventions, and field studies. Forming an ongoing research-based practice, Groat's work explores studies for possible futures, alternative and marginalized ways-of-knowing, salvage practices, and relationships and reconnections to material and place, from a hybrid indigenous/settler perspective. Through reconfiguring and recontextualizing found and salvaged materials, she assembles images, sculptures, tools and situations that enable moments of envisioning and the potential for action. Groat studied visual art and philosophy at York University before attending The University of Guelph,

where she received an MFA degree in 2010. In fall 2014, Groat was the Audain Artist Scholar in Residence at Emily Carr University in Vancouver. This year her work is included in exhibitions at AKA Artist-Run in Saskatoon, SK; Erin Stump Projects, Toronto, ON; Rodman Hall Art Centre Brock University, St. Catharines, ON; Le Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides, St. Jerome, QC; Winsor Gallery, Vancouver; and Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops, BC. She currently lives on the southern shore of Lake Ontario.

Anne Low lives and works in Vancouver, Canada. Solo exhibitions include *Some Rugs and Blankets, The Taut and the Tame*, Berlin (2012); *Weavings*, Belvedere Project Space, Vancouver (2012); *Women's Assembly: Two Scenes from a Radio Play*, Hex Projects, London (2008). She has collaborated with The Grantchester Pottery as part of *The Grantchester Pottery Sets the Stage*, Jerwood Space, London (2015); *ARTIST DECORATORS*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2013) and *Studio Wares*, David Dale Gallery, Glasgow (2013). Her weavings made in collaboration with Gareth Moore were shown as part of his work *a place, near the buried canal* for dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012). She has apprenticed at the Marshfield School of Weaving in Vermont (2013-2014).

Tanya Lukin Linklater's practice explores the interstices between visual art and poetry, performance, pedagogy, indigenous languages, portrayals of women and children in film, and the body through experimental choreography, performance, video, and text. Her works have been exhibited at Museum of Contemporary Art Santiago, Chile; SBC Gallery, Montreal; Open Space, Victoria; Urban Shaman, Winnipeg; Images Festival + Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto; People of Good Will organized by Postcommodity, Guelph; grunt gallery, Vancouver; Nuit Blanche Winnipeg, Museum of Contemporary Native Art, Santa Fe; TRIBE, Saskatoon; Latitude 53, Edmonton; and elsewhere. She is Alutiiq with family from the Native Villages of Port Lions and Afognak in southern Alaska and makes her home in northern Ontario, Canada. In 2015, Lukin Linklater will exhibit at the Culver Center for the Arts in Riverside, California, and Ontario Scene, Ottawa.

Lis Rhodes is a major figure in the history of artists' filmmaking in Britain and was a leading member of the influential London Filmmakers' Co-op. In 1979 she co-founded Circles Women's Film and Video Distribution, the first British organization to distribute the work of women film and video artists. She currently lives and works in London, where a survey exhibition of her career, *Lis Rhodes: Dissonance and Disturbance*, was held at the ICA in 2012. Her films are distributed by LUX.

Special Events

Performance by Tanya Lukin Linklater

Saturday, March 21st @ 2pm
Western Front Gallery
Free Admission

Drawing on themes of women's labour and First Nations craft traditions, Tanya Lukin Linklater will present a performance in the gallery in collaboration with local dancer/choreographer Ziyian Kwan.

Screening of Lis Rhodes' *Light Music*

Thursday, April 9th @ 8pm
Grand Luxe Hall, Western Front
Free Admission

Western Front presents a screening of Lis Rhodes' 1975 film, *Light Music*. An iconic work of expanded cinema, the immersive two-channel 16mm film explores the indexical relationship between image and sound, using its structure to comment on the unseen role of women in 20th century music and art.

List of Works

1. Alma Alloro

10 Seconds (Quilt Animation), 2014

Pen on graph paper, animated GIF, 31
1/2 x 41 in (framed) and animation
dimensions variable

2. Anne Low

*The Scottish bon vivant sleeps humbly
under linen sheets*, 2015

Linen, paint, pencil on paper, red cedar,
silk, steel, 29 1/4 x 78 in

3. Anne Low

Shallow Lake, Depression glass,

2013-2015

Beeswax, cast iron, cherry wood, glass,
linen, wool, 9 x 23 x 1 1/2 in

4. Anne Low

A coverlid for the shoulders of either,

2014-2015

Copper, cotton, wool, red cedar,
dimensions variable

5. Lis Rhodes

Light Music score, 1974-1975

each 11 1/2 x 16 1/2 in

6. Lis Rhodes

Light Music, 1974-1975

Drawings on paper and animation cell,
each 11 1/2 x 16 1/2 in

7. Lis Rhodes

Light Music, 1974-1975

16mm stills, each 8 1/2 x 12 in

8. Maggie Groat

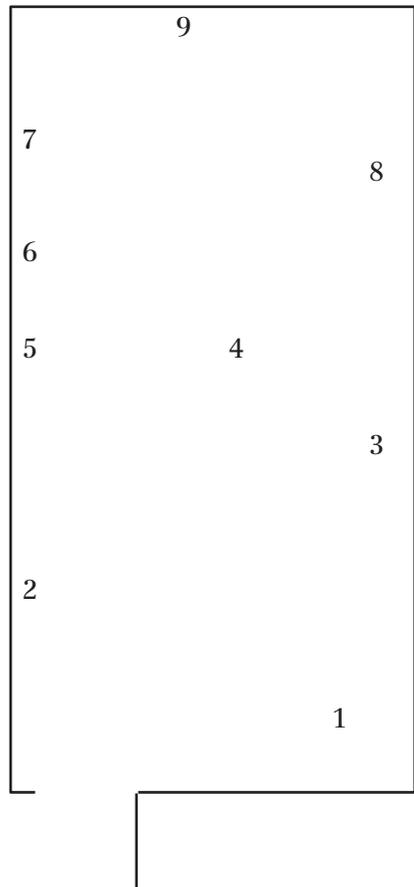
Lines for Alternatives, 2015

TEKLA cotton tea towels, salvaged
flannel, salvaged cotton sheet, cotton
thread, found images, salvaged wood,
33 x 13 x 5 in

9. Tanya Lukin Linklater

Slow Scrape, 2014-2015

Ink on paper, each 9 x 12 1/4 in





Western
Front

303 East 8th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia
V5T 1S1 Canada

Tuesday to Saturday
Noon to 5:00 pm PST



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The Western Front gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the BC Arts Council through the Government of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver, our members and volunteers. The Western Front is a member of the Pacific Association of Artist-Run Centres (PAARC) and the Independent Media Arts Alliance (IMAA).