

"The Handmade Goes Digital"

Thursday, May 24, 2007 at 6:30 pm

The Museum of Arts & Design is located at:

40 West 53rd Street

New York, NY 10019

### **The Handmade Goes Digital**

How do artists express the rhythms, textures, processes and meanings of knitting through video? This screening includes flat, pulsating, animated textile patterns, neoprimitive knit costumes in action, utopic communal labor processes, and a story that literally unravels.

Curated by Sabrina Gschwandtner.

#### ***Program notes:***

**"Knitting Nation," by Liz Collins, 2005/7, video:** Liz Collins is an internationally recognized artist, designer, and educator known for creating groundbreaking apparel, textiles and installations. "Knitting Nation," Liz's ongoing, collaborative performance and site-specific installation project, was presented at "The Muster," a 2005 Public Art Fund event conceived by artist Allison Smith in which fifty enlisted participants fashioned uniforms, built campsites, and declared their causes publicly to an audience of spectators on Governor's Island in New York City.

"Knitting Nation" explores aspects of textile and apparel manufacturing, laying bare the process of making machine knitted fabric. The project functions as a commentary on how humans interact with machines, global manufacturing, trade and labor, iconography, and fashion.

*Three short excerpts from "Knitting Nation" are interspersed throughout "The Handmade Goes Digital" program.*

**"Talking Stitch" (excerpt) by microRevolt, 2006, video:** microRevolt, founded by artist Cat Mazza, is a collective responsible for a series of art projects that combine knitting, machines, and digital social networks in order to initiate discussion about sweatshop labor.

This video tackles the relationships between the handmade and the digital, advertising and labor, production and consumption. Depicting interviews with people who have been working in anti-sweatshop activism, like Erica Zeitlin of "No More Sweatshops," a nonprofit focused on legislative policy change, here Cat Mazza's software Knitoscope turns regular footage of talking heads into flat, pulsating, abstract patterns.

**"The KnitKnit Sundown Salon" by Jason Spingarn-Koff and KnitKnit, 2004, video:** The KnitKnit Sundown Salon, held at Fritz Haeg's LA-based "Sundown Salon" in 2004, was organized collaboratively by Sara Grady, Sabrina Gschwandtner and Fritz Haeg. The daylong event included art installations, performances and a film/video screening. Guests were invited to bring projects to work on and wear clothes they'd made.

From a review in the Miami New Times: "The prize for most subversive work here has to go to the KnitKnit Sundown Salon, for its truly monumental appreciation of handcrafted

knitwear. The repetitive creative process of knitting, offset by the dramatic unraveling of labor so symbolic of forces in life and nature, and the depiction of neoprimitive knit costumes in action actually dare to suggest a new social order, to hint at some secret truth to be discovered in the knit and purl."

**"Video III" by Forcefield, 2000, video:** Forcefield, an artist collective from Providence, Rhode Island, forged an interdisciplinary practice including music, performance, installation, textiles, printmaking, and video. Oscillating between humor and menace, their willfully crude videos employ vintage analogue signal-processors and defunct electronics, the anonymous artists shrouded in knit outfits. "Video III" is a selection from the *Forcefield Video Collection*, which features the group's earliest videos. These loosely wrought narrative vignettes combine Forcefield's shrouded figures, handmade props, and a range of evocative backdrops, brought together by hyperkinetic editing, video effects, and vivid electronic soundtracks. "Video III" combines glimpses of a frenzied, cultish congregation, sketches reminiscent of a children's TV program, and a rich, noisy electronic soundtrack.

**"Walkie Talkie Man" and "The Making of Walkie Talkie Man" by Michel Gondry, 2004, video:** Michel Gondry is a highly acclaimed music video director and filmmaker. For this piece, Gondry placed the band Steriogram in an imaginary woolen world and forced them to face a monster made from knitting needles and wool. This character, a parody of classic ogres like King Kong and Godzilla, goes on a rampage. Everything in the clip is knitted: from the band's instruments to their recording studio and even the film camera that Gondry uses in his cameo role. Sound waves, tape reels, film rolls and other little details are all represented by wool and yarn.

**"Gary" by Rachael Matthews of London's Cast Off, 2004, Super 8 film transferred to video:** Rachael Matthews, an artist, socialite, curator, shop owner, and knitting celebrity, co-founded the London group Cast Off, which encourages people to take their knitting into unexpected places like bars, nightclubs, skating rinks, and beaches. Through her handcraft pattern books, Rachael advocates knitting and crocheting things like fried eggs, wedding cakes and hand grenades. "Gary," is one in a series of films and videos that Rachael made and put on her website (<http://www.castoff.info/album.asp>) to entertain Cast Off members. Gary is a friend of Rachael's who can knit while riding a bicycle.

**"Film to Fiber" by Cat Mazza, 2006, 16 mm film and video:** Cat Mazza is an award-winning new media artist and the founder of microRevolt, a collective responsible for a series of art projects that combine knitting, machines, and digital social networks in order to initiate discussion about sweatshop labor.

"Film to Fiber" is a clip from a found educational film about textile production. The footage has been run through Cat's software Knitoscope, which takes digital video, lowers its resolution, and alters it into images of stitches; the stitch in this piece is crewl embroidery.

The screening will include Q & A with Sabrina Gschwandtner, Cat Mazza, and Liz Collins. A wine and cheese reception will follow.