

## Not Your Grandma's Quilt

by RANIA RICHARDSON on Dec 17, 2013 · 11:17 pm

### Alt-Quilters meld art and craft in local show

If you think quilts are "mumsy" guess again. In the jewel box sized American Folk Art Museum, a few historical and traditional quilts hang on the walls of the "alt\_quilts" exhibit, but they are only there to highlight work by three contemporary artists who use quilting techniques to create surprising modern forms.

For Sabrina Gschwandtner, Stephen Sollins, and Luke Haynes, quilting is not just an ode to geometries and patterns, but also a melding of fine art and craft. From a distance, the modern pieces match the traditional ones in style. On closer inspection, one sees components such as 16mm filmstrips and FedEx envelopes used in lieu of fabric. The absorption required for this painstaking work is surely a meditative practice for its makers, and the results are a treasure for its admirers.

Gschwandtner is a New York City based visual artist, known for her expertise in knitting. Political and feminist themes run through her assemblages of found footage from old textile industry films deaccessioned by the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Mimicking the sewing of fabric, Gschwandtner hand threads film strips together. In "Wave Hill Sunroom Square," for example, celluloid, not the usual pieces of fabric, create a traditional quilting star pattern. Her presentation on light boxes illuminates details of workers in motion, and also bits of leader footage and film credits.

Stephen Sollins uses postal paraphernalia— mail, parking tickets, bank statements, invitations, and the Tyvek fabric of FedEx envelopes— to create meticulous paper quilts in traditional patterns such as "wedding ring" and "tumbling blocks." To design "Untitled (Return to Sender, after Mary Jane Smith, 1865)," the New York based artist deconstructed on paper "Log Cabin, Barn Raising Variation," an historic quilt by Mary Jane Smith, from the museum's



vast collection of over 600 pieces. The precise analysis of numbered squares is displayed before both quilts.

While the work of Gschwandtner and Sollins is repetitive and formally rigorous, that of Luke Haynes is more fanciful and stylistic. Working with reclaimed fabric such as clothing scraps, the Seattle based artist composes designs inspired by photographs and creates expressive portraits. In "[Iconography #7] Rags to Riches," he features a superimposed image of Kanye West and Jay Z constructed with mundane denim fabric, quilted over with glittering metallic thread. A comment on the nature of stardom, the piece uses 1,000 stitches, with the help of a long-arm sewing machine.

The free American Folk Art Museum is housed in the space previously inhabited by Orloff's, a beloved diner and meeting point for visitors going to Lincoln Center, across the street.

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