





Ann Hamilton, *CHANNEL*, video still

## spinning

The momentary pleasure of weightlessly rotating around a wheel in the sky was the mechanical promise of a relatively new amusement on display at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. The grounds were thronged with people, and one could be lost in the crowd, but the experience in the sky was different. The Ferris wheel offered a bird's eye view to a weighted body. Around and around a central axle, the imagined flocking of this technological wonder spun with the roar and thrill of moving together.

History is the story of cultures configuring and reconfiguring the many relations of self to other-selves. A universal history of humankind may be impossible, but the idea of universality is seductive. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948 at the Palais de Chaillot, Paris. The productions of Universal Studios promise absorption and abandonment in moving images on screens, surrounded by loud sound. Projected light reels images into dark spaces built in turn-of-the-century exposition scale, animating the screen with narratives of good and evil, right and wrong. Particular circumstances of place and time pull against universalizing tendencies, but an appetite for a world of clearly drawn oppositions and outcomes is never stilled, and so the films spin their many versions of the story. We see but do not witness the wars, the

battles, the bodies in agony, the cities wasted, the forests and oceans poisoned. We sit in the reassurance of the darkness alone together yet we long for a release from a world of opposites, for turnings less mechanical in the ensouling of the world.

"Listen to the reed and the tale it tells, How it sings of separation..." wrote Jalāl ad-Dīn Rumi, a Sufi mystic and poet whose thirteenth-century words of universal love and service transcend the time periods, national borders, and ethnic divisions that carve a contemporary world. The lexical roots of the Sufis lie in *sīf*, the Arabic word meaning wool and *safā*, which means purity. Whirling Dervishes, the ones who wear wool on top of their heads, make visible to a wider public the physical meditation of their religious practice. From the distance and perspective of an onlooker, the motion of the felted wool skirts the dervishes wear creates the illusion of a stationary white ring around a moving center. Resisting vertigo, the dervishes whirl in a continuous rotation from right to left around the heart, braiding stillness and whirling in a discipline of abandonment and merging.

Perhaps one version of a contemporary vertigo lies in our confusion between entertainment, spiritual practice, and social change. The spinning movement Mahatma Gandhi initiated as part of the Indian independence struggle produced miles of cotton yarn. The

Khadi cloth woven from it became a symbol of a self-reliant economy free from English cloth and foreign clothing. The old English word for whirl is whorl. It is also the name given to the spherical weight on the end of a drop spindle which increases or maintains the spindle's momentum for drawing yarn by hand from strands of plant or animal fiber. When the shaft stills, the newly spun yarn is wound around the spindle. Successive lengths thicken above the whorl, and the accumulating weight makes the spindle rotate longer and more easily. We know from archaeological records that the making and weaving of thread is one of the oldest technologies, but the specific origins of spinning are lost, as is my sense of time when absorbed in repetitions of the spindle's turnings and windings.

Wool, spun from sheep's fleece, is the yarn densely twisted into the three strands of a bell ringing rope to mark the strokes and protect the hand from the chafing of the linen. The plush grip of wool twisted into linen plies plant with animal and is called a "sally"—so named for the motion of the rope leaping, dancing back and forth in response to the bell's weight and pull. The hand listening to the ear must know when to pull, when to hold, and when to let go; the counting rhythm of letting go and catching creates the pattern of the bells. (Weight and weightlessness are bound. Abandonment and restraint are woven. Sound and si-

lence are twined.) The order of the bells is counted, the movement of the hands reeling in and releasing, sets the score in muscle memory. On paper the score is a pattern of crossed lines that looks like knitted argyle. There are usually six positions but an almost infinite number of possible patterns in a change ringing score.

Cross-stitch is a form of counted thread embroidery in which each stitch is a uniform X. The pattern and the color of individual X's stitching an image into a cloth ground. The letter A can be formed from eleven cross stitches, a simple tree or figure from twenty, a landscape from many hundreds more. The hand sews with sureness, knows the exact pressure to poke the point of a needle up and smoothly through the linen backing cloth; up, down in a left-hand slant, up in the opposite corner, down in a right-hand slant. One stitch mirrors and crosses the other to complete a single X. Four holes in the cloth, two stitches for one mark, each mark next to another until the trail of thread and the direction of the hand make the figure A. The surrogate index of the needle is slower than the continuous line of a cursive hand writing with pen or pencil, but the slant is the same.

The time it takes to tap the keyboard to make an X on my screen is only a millisecond, the time to write less than a second, the time to stitch two or three times longer—not including the time to thread the



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needle and tie a knot. These marks are direct. Reading is swifter but less material. My finger may scan along, leading or following my eye, but for a sacred text the small sculpture of a hand caps a metal rod, a Yad, with an index finger pointing. The Yad separates human flesh from animal parchment, leads the eye across a surface. The hand directs and the voice follows, as the eye plows one line, then the other, then another, until the touched and sounded page turns.

"A time to gain, a time to lose, a time to rend, a time to sew" are biblical verses (from Ecclesiastes) adapted for the lyrics of a song written by Pete Seeger and popularized by the Byrds. The general view of stream of consciousness described by philosopher William James remarked on "the different pace of its parts, Like a bird's life. it seems to be an alteration of flights and perchings." For James an X might be a perching. When dates are carved into wood or stone an X represents the number ten. Gridded paper filled with X's of alternating colors chart the needlepoint pattern the hand follows. X, the twenty-fourth letter of the alphabet, rarely begins an English word and is the third least common letter. X is the horizontal axis in the Cartesian coordinate system and while we orient ourselves to the horizon we find a county on the map with intersecting lines of longitude and latitude. Often, someone points their finger and says "X

marks the spot."

What does it mean to say "I lose myself"? In his 1786 essay "What is Orientation in Thinking?" philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote "to orientate oneself, in the proper sense of the word, means to use a given direction—and we divide the horizon into four of these—in order to find the others, and in particular that of sunrise. If I see the sun in the sky and know that it is now midday, I know how to find south, west, north, and east. For this purpose, however, I must necessarily be able to feel a difference within my own subject, namely that between my right and left hands. I call this a *feeling*."

Seated on an airplane I do not feel that I am flying. As technologically wonder-evoking as the Ferris wheel was in its time, this is motion almost without sensation. We sit in our seats, we rise, we hurdle at great speeds through the sky, and we land somewhere else with hardly a wrinkle in our clothing. Physical transport without physical transformation: we are surrounded by motion but held in stillness. The speed of travel doesn't tempt our threshold for control. There is no spinning, and there is no blurring of the clouds outside the window.

A photographic image, when blurred and out of focus, may be seen as a mistake. The paradox of stillness in movement and movement in stillness is instant in film and photography. Technologies become ways of seeing and ways of

seeing become ways of being within the centrifugal forces of time and the intensities of speed that hold and make our sensuous consciousness. The camera in my hand is now a wand of light. It no longer "captures" or "takes" a picture with the window of an open aperture but optically scans as it moves across a surface. The resulting blur is not the speed registered by the chemistry of film materials but a consequence of the hand's motion, the hesitations and breath of the body. A drawing made with eye and light and hand. If the object and my seeing hand are moving in unison or in opposition, the image condenses the time of intersection. Each stroke of light over an object becomes an image at that moment of passage. Blur registering motion registers touch. Upon seeing the image, my hand is motionless, still, it registers the gesture of contact's touch, its invisible tremor is the hand's memory, a still frame in a blurred image.

The pacifist community of Shakers, known for their ecstatic behavior during worship, danced their separateness and togetherness in weekly gatherings in which the women danced on one side of the room and the men on the other. When the motion was exhausted they formed a circle and would wait for any appearance of a gift. In one account "two of the sisters ...commence(d) whirling round like a top, with their eyes shut; and continued this motion for about fifteen minutes; when they suddenly stopped and resumed their places, as steady as if they had never stirred..."

Dancing in a circle to music is a ritual of many cultures and time periods. The Hora is a circle or chain dance in which the dancers hold hands and each other and spinning counterclockwise, following a sequence of forward and backward steps. Everyone connected hand to hand, everyone in contact, one body to another, creating a larger motion.

Like a ball of yarn in relation to a length or strand of thread, the circle dance is in relation to the individuated line dance, folk dance, or disco. As with my individual screen and your individual screen, we no longer inhabit the same space but our faces are both illuminated by the screen's light.

"We think by feeling," wrote poet Theodore Roethke. We circle words, space, time, each other. We open our mouths, we listen to the abundant sound of things and their motions. Time, like cotton spinning into thread, must be loosely held, must allow the pulling forward and letting go in one continuous motion of drawing in and handing off. Our photographs and our objects accumulate material evidence of our holding on. We wear their imprint, like the sweaters of our grandparents, as surely as footsteps left in sand as gifts from another time. AH



Ann Hamilton, (*habitus • doll*) Doll, 1800-1820. Papier-mâché, Wood, Linen, Cotton, Paint, Silk. Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library. Gift of Katherine Gahagan, Michael H. du Pont, and Christopher T. du Pont in memory of A. Felix du Pont, Jr. 1999.0019.002.



Ann Hamilton, (*habitus • doll*) Doll, 1800-1820. Papier-mâché, Wood, Linen, Cotton, Paint, Silk. Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library. Gift of Katherine Gahagan, Michael H. du Pont, and Christopher T. du Pont in memory of A. Felix du Pont, Jr. 1999.0019.002.

Intellectual Powers.

Talents, 'tis true, gay, quick, and bright, has God  
 To virtue oft denied, on vice bestowed;  
 Just as fond nature livelier colours brings  
 To paint the insects than the eagle wings:  
 But of our souls the highborn loftier part,  
 Th' ethereal energies that touch the heart,  
 Conceptions ardent, labouring thought intense,  
 Creative fancy's wild magnificence;  
 And all the dread sublimities of song,  
 These Virtue, these to thee <sup>alone</sup> belong;  
 These are celestial all, nor kindred hold,  
 With aught of sordid or debasing mould;  
 Chilled by the breath of vice, their radiance dies,  
 And brightest burns when lighted at the skies;  
 Like vestal flames to purest bosoms given,  
 And only kindled by a ray from heaven.

Grants Rest of Learning  
 in the East.

Regard due to the feelings of others.

There is a plant that in its cell  
 All trembling seems to stand,  
 And bend its stalk, & fold its leaves,  
 At the reaching hand.

Yes—time moves fast." "That's so. Old classmate  
 say.  
 Do you remember our Commencement-day?  
 Were we such boys as these at twenty?" Nay,  
 God called them to a nobler task than ours,  
 And gave them nobler thoughts and manlier powers,—  
 'Tis in the day of fruits and not of flowers!  
 These "boys" we talk about like ancient sages  
 are the same men we read of in old pages—  
 The bronze re-cast of dead heroic ages!  
 We grudge them not, our dearest, bravest, best—  
 Let but the quarrel's issue stand confessed;  
 'Tis Earth's old slave-god battling for his crown,  
 and Freedom fighting with her vizor down!  
 Better the jagged shells their flesh should mangle,  
 Better their bones from Rahab-necks should dangle,  
 Better the fairest flower of all our culture  
 should cram the black maw of the Southern vulture,  
 Than Cain act o'er the murder of his brother,  
*Unum* on our side—*pluribus* on the other!  
 Each of us owes the rest his best endeavor;  
 Take these few lines—we'll call them

NOW OR NEVER.

Listen, young heroes! your country is calling!  
 Time strikes the hour for the brave and the true!  
 Now, while the foremost are fighting and falling,  
 Fill up the ranks that have opened for you!  
 On whom the fathers made free and defended,  
 Stain not the scroll that emblazons their fame!  
 On whose fair heritage spotless descended,  
 Leave not your children a birthright of shame!  
 Stay not for questions while Freedom stands gasping!  
 Wait not till Honor lies wrapt in his pall!  
 Brief the lies' meeting be, swift the hands' clasping—  
 "Off for the wars" is enough for them all!  
 Break from the arms that would fondly caress you!  
 Hark! 'tis the bugle blast! sabres are drawn!  
 Mothers shall pray for you, fathers shall bless you,  
 Maidens shall weep for you when you are gone!  
 Never or now! cries the blood of a nation  
 Poured on the turf where the red rose should bloom;  
 Now is the day and the hour of salvation;  
 Never or now! peals the trumpet of doom!  
 Never or now! roars the hoarse throated cannon  
 Through the black canopy clotting the skies;  
 Never or now! flaps the shell-blasted pennon  
 O'er the deep ooze where the Cumberland lies!  
 From the foul dens where our brothers are dying,  
 Aliens and foes in the land of their birth,  
 From the rank swamps where our martyrs are lying  
 Pleading in vain for a handful of earth;  
 From the hot plains where they perished  
 Furrowed and ridged

aching hand,  
 conscious nerve,  
 the breast,  
 careless hand,  
 — distressed.  
 touch severe,  
 the mind,  
 secret tear,  
 fined.  
 formed,  
 ed to know,  
 lane, that wakes,  
 re to use.  
 to raise,  
 the shade,  
 to heal,  
 ver made.

Christiana S. Widdiefield, Poetry (detail), 1823-1826. Manuscript. Courtesy of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Am.18835. Photo credit: Carlos Avendaño.



Norwich worsted pattern book (detail). Norwich, England, ca. 1785. Courtesy, The Winterthur Library; Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera. Col 50. 65x695.6, #1061-1072.

## weight

Water promises weightlessness to a ship's tonnage as it does to an animal or human body. In water we experience a buoyancy impossible to feel on land, except perhaps in the hiccup of suspension that occurs on a fully extended swing, just before the pendulum's inevitable backward pull.

The railroad tracks bisecting Pier 9 once offloaded goods from water to land. Ships with cavernous hulls, vehicles of buoyancy riding half above and half below the water's horizon, came loaded plump with goods from as far away as South America and as close as New York. Stacked high in boxes, the goods—often perishables such as fruits from other climates—were lifted by pulley and rope and distributed by rail, bringing the taste of another locale to Philadelphia. The passage, like a lifetime, was temporary. It began with a hand on one continent and ended in a hand on another.

In economic terms, "goods" are tangible items that satisfy a human want or need. A thing found useful. Free goods are those things that are unlimited, that require no payment or effort to acquire. Economic goods are items that are in limited supply relative to demand. The water and air that make the boat buoyant might be considered as a law of physics but also, at least at one time, as a free good, the weight it carries is an economic one.

Listed on a ship's bill of lading "cloth goods," often used synonymously with "fabric goods," refers to material made into a finished piece. Yardage is the terminology for something woven or printed but unfinished, hence a raw good. Finished

goods made of cloth include many membranes for covering the body: socks, hose, undergarments, gloves, hats, coats, dresses, suits, sweaters, blankets, tarps, tents. The bill of lading is the written document that accompanies traded goods to help guarantee payment. Lading also refers to a fraudulent accounting practice of balancing the books in order to hide a shortfall or theft.

Hand and ship are alternate modes and scales of traveling and conveying goods. A ship holds its cargo in the same darkness made when my hand closes around an object or another hand. The darkness, like the cave that is my mouth, my ear, my nostril, my vagina, is not a thing but a space, a portable darkness. The mouth can be willed open and intentionally closed. The ear and nose, though always open, are protected by fine hairs that grow outward and toward the center. The growth pattern of the hair that warms the body and grows outward from the top of the head is called a hair whorl. Counterclockwise whorls are more common in left-handed people than in right-handed, but it is not clear whether there is any relationship between hair-whorl direction and either handedness or sexuality.

Some people carry twin hurricane whorls, which swirl in opposite directions. Scalp patterns, like the arches and loops on the ends of the fingers, are unique to each person and almost impossible to abrade or erase.

In skilled hands the centrifugal force of the spindle whorl twists animal hair or plant fiber into yarn. If the fibers are long and the hand particularly skilled, the yarn will

be strong. Whorl is a motion but also the weighted disc attached to a spindle to increase the velocity of the spin. The making of thread, the transformation of material into form, is the basis of all knitted or woven cloth. At the center of the whirling, the spinner is still. The motion of the hands working is a form of thinking. Hands (*manus*) seek their work, their service (*munus*), finger its absence. We are bound by cloth and words. When I give you my word, I give you my hand. When I break my word, I withdraw my hand. In the epic tale of the *Odyssey*, Penelope wove by day, unraveled by night. The incomplete cloth of her making and unmaking stilled time while binding the realm of the human to the realm of the gods. In the bible, Joseph was symbolically sold by his jealous brothers, and his coat of many colors, a sign of his father's favor, was torn and covered in the blood of a slain goat. In traditional coats of arms, now almost impossible to decipher, the goat symbolized political ability.

Depending upon the thickness of the thread and the fineness of the cloth, many miles of thread might make up the three yards of cloth needed to make a coat that will protect a body through multiple gales and snowstorms.

Slip an arm into the sleeve of a coat, assume its warmth and cover, inhabit it. Its shape is your neck, your arms, your torso. In contrast, a curtain, larger than a coat, bigger than a tent, but smaller than a house, covers over. Disappear into it. Stand inside the space of the circling ring. The circle is an inside and an outside, is a whole, is a hole.

From essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, I know my eye is the first circle. I can wrap my right arm to the left around my torso, then cross my left arm to the right around my arm and chest, but my fingers are not long enough to touch, to complete the circle the way the end and the beginning envelop the middle in the symmetries of a ring composition. Our extremities are paired; they have, like books and clothing, a right and a left, a front and a back, an up and down. But hearts do not participate in the symmetry of appendages; we have only one heart. It acts with two hands. One hand might try to undo or contradict what the other hand has done. One hand may act at cross-purposes to the other, but usually the right and the left are coordinated, are linked, do their work in unison.

A hand, directed by the eye stretches forth; it may be his hand, or her hand, the hand of his daughter, the hand of my brother, the hands of her two sons, a friend's hand, the hand of a stranger. The hand pulls threads in short lengths from the knitted sweater. A hole is opened. The hole and the thickness of the thread is the feeling in my heart, is the horizon, is the weight of our making, is a fragment of the story. AH

Man färbt in e. flottenverh. von  
 1:20 & alle Zusätze i. d. Rezepten be-  
 ziehen s. auf 50 gr Baumwolle & 1 ltr.  
 flotte.

Die kaltfärbenden Algole werden  
 in e. besonderen Gefäß zueul. conc. verkipt  
 (Teigware 1:10 verdünnt) & dann der flotte  
 zugegeben, der man vorher 1-2 Tropfen  
 Na. OH & 1 cem Hydr.-Lösung <sup>1:10</sup> zugesetzt  
 hat. Man färbt 3/4 - 1 St., quetscht ab,  
 läßt 15-20 Min. oxydieren, spült Säur-  
 ert (2 cem H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> per 1 ltr. Wasser), spült  
 seift (5 gr. Man. Seife per 1 ltr. 1/4 St. ge-  
 kocht, resp. bei 60-80°C., wenn nicht kochend)  
 und spült (oder trocknet gleich mit der Seife).

Warmfärbende Algole werden in  
 der flotte verkipt (1/4 St.), dann sofort u.  
 d. Material eingehen. Nach d. färben  
 braucht nicht oxydiert zu werden.



## ANN HAMILTON

Ann Hamilton is a visual artist internationally acclaimed for her large scale multi-media installations, public projects, and performance collaborations. Her site responsive process works with common materials to invoke particular places, collective voices, and communities of labor.

Hamilton has received the National Medal of Arts, MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, NEA Visual Arts Fellowship, United States Artists Fellowship, and the Heinz Award. She was selected to represent the United States at the 1991 São Paulo Biennial and the 1999 Venice Biennale.

She received a BFA in textile design from the University of Kansas in 1979 and an MFA in Sculpture from the Yale University School of Art in 1985. Hamilton currently lives in Columbus, Ohio, where she is Distinguished University Professor of Art at The Ohio State University.

## *habitus* MOTIONS

Reading  
Walking  
Turning  
Spinning  
Reeling  
Scrolling  
Unraveling  
Gathering  
Tied End-To-End

## *habitus* ELEMENTS

### PIER 9

A Newspaper  
Twelve Curtains  
Twenty-four Ropes & Pulleys  
A Table & Wood Benches  
*CHANNEL*, A Poem by Susan Stewart  
*MIRROR*, A Poem by Susan Stewart  
A Shipping Container  
A Video Projection  
Knitted Sweaters  
Raw Fleece  
A Drop Spindle  
Light, Air, Sound  
A Landscape  
A Lap

### THE FABRIC WORKSHOP AND MUSEUM

A Newspaper  
Textile Sample Books  
Dye Books  
Dress Books  
Commonplace Books  
Pattern Books  
Samples of Lace  
Cotton, Wool, & Linen Blankets  
A Small Loom  
A Small Wheel Skeinner  
Dolls  
Steel Carts  
Commonplace Pages



Ann Hamilton, (*habitus • coat*). Artist/maker unknown. *Amish Doll with Clothing* (coat), c. 1900-1970. Wool, Cotton. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased with funds contributed by Mrs. Samuel M.V. Hamilton, and with the Katharine Levin Farrell Fund, the Joseph E. Temple Fund, and the Costume and Textiles Revolving Fund, 1996. 1996.149.1a – c.

## regarding *HABITUS*

Held by cloth's hand, we are swaddled at birth, covered in sleep, and wound in death. A single thread spins a myth of origin and a tale of adventure, interweaves people and webs of communication. Coat and tent are the first portable architecture for the body, a flag carries the symbol of nationality, a folded blanket is a story of trade. Like weather, however changeable, cloth envelops experience.

With cloth we cover our extremities. A glove holds my hand; a wool cap covers the top of my head; a sock, my foot; a sweater, my heart; a blanket, my lap. A coat buttons my arms and torso into one warmth. I sleep under a sheet, dry myself with a towel, hold a cotton napkin in my lap, secret a thin handkerchief in my pocket. A curtain shutters or reveals my window view. The thin white finely knitted cotton closest to my skin breathes with my heat, absorbs my moisture, is insulation between me and everything else.

The first white cloth, made from woven strands of plant fibers about 7000 B.C., was found wrapped around an antler. Naked flesh is vulnerable. The thick cotton pad shielding a hand from heat on the stove is cousin to the fabric cushioning a hand from the abrasions of a bone tool thousands of years ago.

Just as the work of a weaver and a loom is to hold horizontal and vertical threads in balanced tension, cloth is exchanged as a symbol of a social agreement or bond to maintain or forge social concordance. Dowries of linens representing years of handwork were once exchanged along with marriage vows. A luminous bolt of white cloth at the center of Benjamin West's 1771–72 painting *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians*, in the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, represents the offer of manufactured goods in exchange for

land. Taking and giving, bond or betrayal, are held in cloth's many windings.

We speak of a tightly or loosely knit social fabric, of a complex tapestry of cultures, of political and technological webs. Not all relations and not all fabrics are woven. Felt is a fabric made by bonding long fibers into dense sheets with heat and friction. Contemporary non-wovens are often produced for a single use, can be anti-microbial, flame-resistant, disposable. Thin versions line envelopes, thicker ones wrap bedding, but neither will likely pass to another generation as do the coveted scraps of dress fabric which pass in mother-daughter scrap books or in a hand-stitched quilt made of silk squares from ties, vests, and coat linings worn by ancestors whose identities are anonymous.

*Habitus* is filled with scraps, with strands, with pieces and fragments of texts and of textiles at the scale of the lap. *Habitus* is the turn-of-the-century Bancroft-Eddy-stone textile sample books, sitting beside a Japanese merchant's striped cotton swatch book, beside the looped and crocheted lace samples made by South American needlework students for a turn-of-the-century world's fair, beside the slanted cursive of verse and inspirational texts hand copied into commonplace books, beside dolls with faces, beside dolls without faces, beside hand-linked pattern books, beside dye books of wound thread, beside stitched pages of sewing exercise books. *Habitus* is the cut pieces of nineteenth-century Pennsylvania printed cotton that resemble twenty-first century canvas decking, the linen bedcovers and woolen blankets that covered eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sleepers, the shuttles that carried the thread that wove the blankets, the model of a loom and a skeining wheel. *Habitus* is the hands from previous generations inhabiting

these objects, miniatures, and fragments—evidence of the mutual shaping and possibilities of bodies and materials.

*Habitus* is the words found by one reader offered on printed paper to another, a reader reading, the capacity of words to touch at a distance greater than the reach of a hand.

*Habitus* is the landscape made from reelings and turnings, unravelings and gatherings, spinning and scrolling, continuous and discontinuous threads, in circles and in lines.

*Habitus* is the cadence of the eye reading, the hand reeling *CHANNEL*, the words of the poem and the river you stand upon, the wetness you remember but do not feel. *Habitus* is the plush woolen grip in the linen rope, the ropes pulled downward to be released upward, the weighted wheel the rope pumps, the sounded air, the cloth propelled into motion. *Habitus* is the inside and the outside, the concealing and the revealing, the enveloped and the enveloping, in a field of spinning curtains. *Habitus* is the sweaters, the strands of yarn pulled from their interlocking stitches, the holes made that cannot be filled. *Habitus* is the naked sheep, their sheered fleece, the drop spindle, and the spinner drawing the long fibers into twisted yarn. *Habitus* is the hand and weather turning, the stillness in the motion, the eye reading, the hand reeling *MIRROR*, the words running backwards as the river never can. *Habitus* is sitting and moving together, absorbed by words, sound, cloth, each other. We cover ourselves. It is a commonness. This is our condition. AH

\*poems by Susan Stewart



Ann Hamilton, (*habitus • coat*). Artist/maker unknown. *Amish Doll with Clothing* (coat), c. 1900-1970. Wool, Cotton. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased with funds contributed by Mrs. Samuel M.V. Hamilton, and with the Katharine Levin Farrell Fund, the Joseph E. Temple Fund, and the Costume and Textiles Revolving Fund, 1996. 1996.149.1a – c.

## regarding *GRATITUDE*

The process of following a thread passing up and down through a cloth, joining the invisible underside to the visible topside, is a form of listening. The interval between stitches seaming two surfaces together is thinking at the pace of the body. Busy hands make a space that allows attention to wander. Productive wandering is how projects are made. *Habitus* began with the history and motions of needle and thread forming one stitch and one conversation at a time.

Like all projects, this one began in solitude, but its main body is social and larger than any singular effort or gesture. It slowly materialized in response to circumstances of the architecture, place, and people who gathered in the process. A landscape of permission was made by the faith and care of willing collaborators and total strangers. It happened because a space was made for it to happen.

A project is made as much from conversation as it is from materials, from space, and from time, and it contains the energy and many influences of these exchanges. I am grateful for the ongoing process and condition of possibility created by The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) and the many institutional partners who joined the process.

Kippy Stroud, in founding and growing FWM over its first forty years, took the same risks artists take, recognizing process and creating conditions for it to occur unhindered. Her vision and legacy continue in a place where "yes" and "how" and "we can" extend throughout the organization, offering permission for any "what if." I think Kippy would be proud of what we are making.

The project began gathering around the page with Kippy Stroud and Stephanie Greene drafting the writing of its first imaginings. Going forward, Stephanie has been the guardian of the words and the project.

From the beginning I wanted to extend the ethic of collaboration at the heart of FWM to additional collaborations with Phil-

adelphia area libraries and textile collections. We were welcomed over and over again into archives where curators and staff generously shared information and enthusiasm and led us to the books and textile objects now on display in the galleries at FWM.

I am especially grateful to Interim Executive Director Susan Lubowsky Talbott for the recognition and clarity of her conversation, for listening and for asking difficult questions. Exhibition and Project Managers Christina Roberts, Nami Yamamoto, and Alec Unkovic generously fed the many strands of early research and then graciously wrangled endless details in the production. As a team, they thought with and ahead of me on every aspect.

Half of what you see in the exhibition in the galleries is thanks to the patience, care, and detailed work of Justin Hall, who organized the project's many object loans. For the Pier, Kate Abercrombie led the team of Anthony Bowers, Paige Fetchen, Joy Ude, and Andrea Landau to subtly work industrial Tyvek into a hand as atmospheric and supple as weather. Miles and miles of stitches guided by intern Ajay Lester joined the panels together. The organization of the commonplace fragments readers posted and shared on the project's Tumblr site is due to Layla Muchnik-Benali's careful and ongoing attention. Brittany Rafalak provided video editing assistance and expertise, with video installation capably overseen by Tommy Wilson. We have documentation of multiple site visits, research trips, and curtain testing thanks to Carlos Avedano's cheerful eye and ready camera.

The orchestration of weight, momentum, pull, and spin that propels the curtains and their soundings was eloquently engineered and fabricated by Steve Schultz and his crew. His long hours and enthusiasm for the project helped carry us over the many challenges of weight and drag and physics. Lonnie Graham's first photographs of the curtains and Mary Graham's walking them into motion

enabled us to see what the field of space and light and cloth might become.

At Pier 9, Lighting Designer Brian Scott came up with elegant and practical solutions to working with the Pier's raw beauty and season's changing sunsets. None of the work there would have been possible without the supportive collaboration and problem solving of the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation. Everyone should be so lucky as to have Timmy Lynch and Willie (Punch) Thompson on their team. Tim Kearney and his assistant Jeff Pond at CuetoKearneydesign patiently wrangled the documents and occupancy permitting. That process also benefited from Nick Stuccio's experience and leadership with the Fringe Festival. We are honored to be part of the 2016 Festival.

It is impossible to name each person who will ultimately make this project live. As of this writing, I do not know all the spinners who will preside over the project from the balcony at the Pier, the hands who will draw fragments of yarn from the sweaters and later tie and wind them into a continuous thread at FWM, the readers who will continue to contribute to the commonplace collection. But I know their contributions will be many and deeply appreciated.

I am indebted to Susan Stewart for conversations and collaborations over the last twenty-five years. I took my questions about forms for reading or writing by reel or wheel to Susan. At the heart of the project are two poems, *CHANNEL* and *MIRROR*, that came from this exchange. Making a condition for the poems to be read and experienced became, for me, one of the project's questions. I am also grateful for my recent conversations with poet Natalie Shapero, whose writing for this newspaper finds and imagines the many relationships of the project's objects and motions. From both of them I have learned a lot about the material of words.

The writing in this newspaper began during a collaborative residency at The

## SUSAN STEWART

Susan Stewart is a poet, critic, and translator. Her books of poems include *Red Rover* and *Calumbarium*, which won the 2003 National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry. *Cinder: New and Selected Poems* will appear with Graywolf Press in February. Her poems have been widely anthologized and have been translated into Italian, French, German, and Chinese. She often has collaborated with contemporary artists and composers. Her song cycle, "Songs for Adam," was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony with music by the Philadelphia composer James Primosch. Stewart is a MacArthur Fellow and former Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, she also has received an Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She teaches the history of literature and aesthetics at Princeton University, where she is the Avalon Foundation University Professor in the Humanities.

## NATALIE SHAPERO

Natalie Shapero is Professor of the Practice of Poetry at Tufts University and the author of the books *No Object* (Sarnalia, 2013) and *Hand Child* (Copper Canyon, forthcoming 2017). Her writing has appeared in *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *The Progressive*, and elsewhere.

Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center with dramaturge, performer, and writer Matthew Goulish and director Lin Hixson. I am grateful for their inspiration, their example, and their encouragement—and grateful to The Rockefeller Foundation and United States Artists for supporting our work together.

In the end, the project is for a particular moment in time. Objects lent to the exhibition will be returned to their respective collections, and parts will be recycled, stored, or remade into other projects. For some, touched by what they find, there will be memory; for the archive there will be photographs and video. For over twenty-five years I have worked with photographer Thibault Jeanson. His heart and eye and camera have made images that carry the felt qualities of what he finds. I am grateful he can be in Philadelphia for this project.

Finally, none of this would be possible without the support of my studio in Columbus, Ohio. Ever attentive to the studio's shifting needs and daily "art emergencies," Nicole Rome untangles the history and orchestrates the everyday with enormous skill, patience, and positive energy. In addition to overseeing the archives, she touched every aspect of the project. Photographer, poet, and graphic designer Jessica Naples Grilli choreographed all the parts of the newspaper in your hand. Jessica's eye and skill are part of every image made in the studio. Together with studio assistants and interns they ballast with humor and lightness the immersive ocean of work. At the genesis of the project Nicole Gibbs put all the good structures in place that allowed us to continue working even as she moved on to new projects and opportunities. Christie Whisman's love of Philadelphia led us to wander, on a cold fall day, into Pier 9 and begin the conversations that led to our work with the incredible team we found there. And, without the love and support of Michael and Emmett Mercil at home, no work would be possible. AH



## BLANKET

In the dark at the start of the world: Theseus wandered the labyrinth, dispersing behind him red thread from his beloved. It was only this bright unspooling that allowed him to find his way back, to follow the line that ran through the maze like a seam. In the dark at the start of the world: a council convened to plan the constellations, gathering light and dust in an outstretched blanket. Then came the impatient coyote, who seized the fabric and flung the stars skyward, scattering them without pattern. Anne Waldman: “How can I tell you my mind is a blanket?” The mandate of humanitarian aid: food and water and blankets, our necessities. That which we must gather and disperse, if we are to continue. The continuous woven line of the blanket is flanked by fringe at the edges: the finished and the unfinished, the enclosure and the venturing-forth. Penelope, in Odysseus’s absence, spent three years weaving a funeral shroud, only to unravel her handiwork each night by the near light of torches. A child reads this story—the story of the woven and unwoven—in the dark under a blanket, flashlight in hand.

## DOLL

Many dolls—in deference to the biblical prohibition on the keeping of graven images—do not exhibit a face. Their bodies are formed from two identical halves of fabric, the head and trunk and arms first laid out to face each other, then pinned and sewn into a single form. No contour is afforded to the face—no slope of nose, no dent of mouth—and so it is only by dressing the doll, by fastening the coat or knotting the bonnet strings under the chin, that the maker allows the face to distinguish itself from the back of the

head. Without its garments, the doll is a blank book, facing pages equally unmarked. The doll is intended to last. Should the fabric become discolored with use, a clean swatch might be overlaid on the absent face, on the layers and layers of former absence beneath it. To guard against children removing and losing the garments, the clothing is stitched to the body, unstitched to be laundered, then stitched again. Henry David Thoreau: “Every day our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer’s character, until we hesitate to lay them aside....”

## COMMONPLACE

The essential characteristic of commonplace books is their persistent *betweenness*. These volumes—often bound in the home from loose pages into which readers copy various fragments from printed books—reside in the space between private diary and public work. In this way, the commonplace book finds its genesis at the crossroads of reading and writing, where the hand’s output is limited to what the eye has already seen. Alice Morse Earle, in volume one of her book *Child Life in Colonial Days*, quotes from an account of the life of a keeper of commonplace books: “His writing on his commonplaces was not by way of index, but epitome: because he used to say the looking over on any occasion gave him a sort of survey of what he had read about matters not then inquired.”

For some, commonplace books have served as a means of refining penmanship, copying exactly a passage, letter by letter, stroke by stroke. The activity of commonplacing sometimes even called on the hand to recall and replicate a bygone era, to mimic elegant script when the fashion of the

times instead demanded “uncial or semi-uncial letters to look like a pig’s ribs” (quoted by Earle from a life of Francis North, Baron Guilford). Commonplace books are sites of definition, sites of collection, sites of connection and convergence not elsewhere to be found. They are sites of holding, in the way that an early bookmark, formed from a bundle of thread and a single bead, can be said to *hold one’s place*. They are sites of dismantling, the text fragments wrenched away from the works to which they first belonged. And they are also sites of creation, referred to by Lucy C. Lillie, in her essay “Other People’s School-Days,” as “the carefully made up blank-book.”

Sometimes posited as a precursor to the commonplace book is the Medieval *florilegium*—the “gathering of flowers”—in which clergy preserved and strung together disparate snippets of religious texts. Also posited as a precursor, albeit of a different sort: Agostino Romelli’s moonshot design for a massive, ornate bookwheel. This dream device, sketched out by Romelli during the late sixteenth century, resembled most closely the modern-day Ferris wheel. Each book was given its own seat, placed open on its own shelf, and the reader could sit at the bookwheel’s edge and spin the device in a circle, until the book he was searching for appeared before him at the level of the eye. The bookwheel would allow the reader to move his gaze over several different books in a single sitting, turning the wheel either toward himself or away to scroll through the texts.

From the continuing movement of the wheel to the up-and-down scratch of the pen’s nib on the page is this constant marking and saving. This housing of fragments in the narrow tunnel between observation and reflection. This retaining and recording of quotations based on resonance, gut, su-

perstition. The nurturing of these passages, patternless and blooming into insight. “Compiled from various authors,” wrote the Reverend Thomas Austen, “as they accidentally came to hand.”

## DYEINGS ON WOOL

How clothing embraces, but does not fully envelop, the human form—the hand emerges from the sleeve, the eyes blink outward beneath the heft of the hat. In this same way, the covers of the dyeings book hold, but do not fully conceal, the knots of wool within. Even when the book is shut, shocks of color may protrude from the fore edge. The fore edge: the side of the book that sits opposite the spine. As the book may not close fully on its own, the dyer can fasten and then unfasten it using a snap, like a coat. Books of dyeings on wool have been at times referred to as *bulletins*, at times as *dictionaries*. The color is the word, defined by the process that made it. Defined by the dipping and wringing of hands, the overnight steeping in basins, the scouring at morning. Often, in order to achieve the color desired—bottle green, common crimson, Napoleon blue—the wool should be exposed to the air after dyeing. The air’s irregularities are a regular step of the process. If the shade is deep enough, wash and finish. If not, give another dip.

## LACE

Lace has many variations, often named for the locations in which they are created and so bearing traces of their original environs. At the same time, flora and fauna are often assigned names based on attributes of their bodies deemed to be lace-like, as though they are heirs to lacework, as though their bod-

ies postdate the made object: the lace-mark tree, the lace-border moth, the lace fern. The lace pigeon, so called because of “the peculiarity of their features: the fibres, or the web of which, appear disunited from each other throughout their whole plumage” (*A Treatise on Domestic Pigeons*, 1765). Each is different. A copy created by hand, without mechanical aid, is known as an eye copy. The unit of lace is the thread, but the unit of lace is also the open space, the eye. Within the pattern is the absence, and it is the repetition of this absence after absence that, ultimately, makes the thing complete.

## RINGING

The collective, organized tolling of a set of large bells in successive variations is known as *campanology*, or, more plainly, *change ringing*. The sound of the bells gives rise to, in the words of Wilfrid G. Wilson, an “expression of public feeling.” Exuberance or solemnity or wrath or mirth or pain—the same sequence of sounds might evoke different emotions depending on the events of the day, the shiftings of history, the upturns and downturns. The gape and the smile, the frown and the grimace. The opening of the bell is called the *mouth*.

Change ringing cannot be done in solitude. The practice is a social space in which the ringers must converge, form a circle—a knot—with their bodies, concur on sequence and pace. The ringers, in the process, do not look up at the bells, nor do they look at the ropes they hold in their hands. They instead look at their fellow ringers, at the ropes held by others, at the rising and falling surrounding like them a curtain. Ropesight: the ability to observe, from the movement of the ropes, which bell is tolling and which is about to toll. Ringing changes requires deft

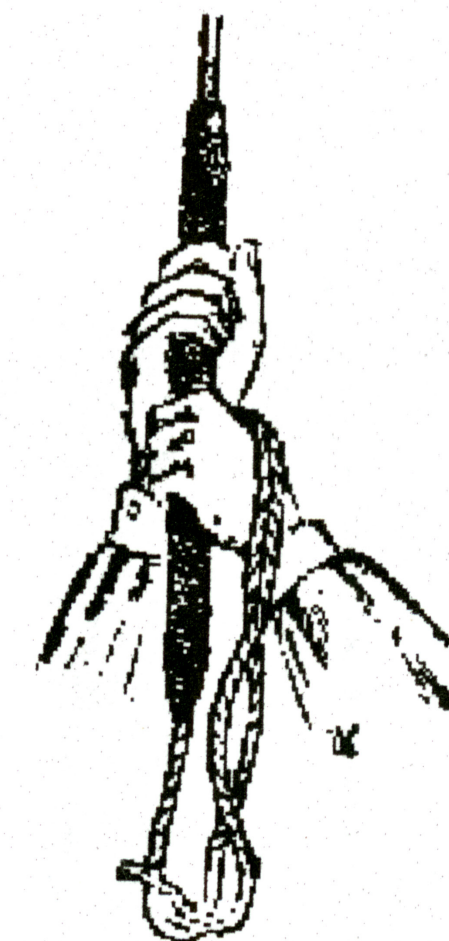
energy and instinct, the innate force of the inhabited body. It also requires restraint, times of silence and holding-off, the absence of movement when movement is uncalled for. The alternating swiftness and stillness of the sally. The sally: the plush section of the rope in the ringer’s grasp. The wooliness of the sally against the hand, its animal feel.

The ringing of bells is often associated with religious exercise. From Dorothy L. Sayers’s *The Nine Tailors*: “It seems strange that a generation which tolerates the uproar of the internal combustion engine and the wailing of the jazz band should be so sensitive to the one loud noise that is made to the glory of God”—and the sudden upward flight of the rope, as if in exultation. But the practice of change ringing can be so cerebral and complex that clergy members often forbade their congregations from engaging in it on the sabbath, the day that was reserved for rest from work. Katherine Hunt, from her article “Campanologomania”: “Ringers have to work as one body: all performing the same action, like rowers in a boat, but—unlike rowers—not at the same time....”

It is work, to move the body over water or the bell across the air. The order in which the bells are rung is referred to as the *nature of the rows*, and the most complex peals are those in which the ordering is not repeated. In this way, the ringing of the bells is like the movement of a living being: ever changing. It is like the dance of hanging fabric, dependent on chance and the shifts of air, the motion of the room around it, the pull and release. The collective, organized tolling of a set of large bells in successive variations is known as *campanology*, or, more plainly, *the Touch*.

## *the nature of the rows*

Natalie Shapero



## INFORMATION

The Fabric Workshop and Museum  
1214 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

### Hours

Monday–Friday 10:00 am–6:00 pm  
Saturday & Sunday 12:00–5:00 pm

### Admission

Free to the Public

### Municipal Pier 9

121 North Columbus Boulevard  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

### Hours

Tuesday–Sunday 12:00–6:00 pm  
Columbus Day, October 10  
12:00–6:00 pm  
Open until 8:00 pm on Thursdays

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(1977–2015)  
Marion Boulton Stroud (1939–2015)

#### Interim Executive Director

Susan Lubowsky Talbott

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## regarding SITE

The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) was founded in 1977 with a visionary purpose: to stimulate experimentation among leading contemporary artists and to share the process of creating works of art with the public. Providing studio facilities, equipment, and expert technicians, FWM originally invited artists to experiment with fabric and later with a wide range of innovative materials and media. From the outset, FWM also served as an education center for Philadelphia's youth who, as printing apprentices, learned technical and vocational skills along with approaches to creative expression.

Today, FWM is recognized as an internationally acclaimed contemporary art museum, distinguished as the only institution in the United States devoted to creating work with textiles and new media in collaboration with artists from diverse artistic back-

grounds—including sculpture, installation, video, painting, ceramics, and architecture. Research, construction, and fabrication occur on-site in studios that are open to the public, providing visitors an opportunity to see artwork from conception to completion. In fact, FWM's permanent collection includes not only complete works of art, but also material research, samples, prototypes, and photography and video of artists making and speaking about their work. FWM seeks to bring this spirit of artistic investigation and discovery to the wider public and to area school children in particular, to ensure and broaden their access to art, and to advance the role of art as a catalyst for innovation and social connection. FWM offers an unparalleled experience to the most significant artists of our time, students, and the general public.

Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC)—the stewards of Pier 9—is a 501(c)(3) created in January 2009, exclusively for the benefit of the City of Philadelphia and its citizens. The fundamental purpose of DRWC is to design, develop, program, and maintain public amenities such as permanent and seasonal parks, trails, and streetscape improvements to transform the waterfront into a vibrant destination for recreational, cultural, and commercial activities for the residents and visitors of Philadelphia as is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan for the Central Delaware. Daily programming throughout the entire year is changing the way Philadelphians see and converse about the waterfront, and is helping to create spaces and communities that connect residents and visitors to the waterfront.

## regarding APPRECIATION

Ann Hamilton has long focused on cloth as object and metaphor. She is an innovator in contemporary art, as was Marion (Kippy) Boulton Stroud, the visionary who founded The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) to encourage artists to experiment with textiles and new media. For almost 40 years, FWM staff have provided curatorial and technical support to realize the imaginings of our artists in residence. Hamilton's *habitus* is her third collaboration with FWM and her first staged in Philadelphia—the last one in 1999 represented the United States at the 48th Venice Biennale. Before Kippy died, she and Hamilton discussed a two-site project that dealt with words and cloth and the poetics of their commonality—ongoing themes for the artist. Their discussions laid the groundwork for *habitus*. It has been a special privilege to collaborate again with Hamilton, a valued friend and colleague whom I was fortunate to work with at the outset of her long and much celebrated career.

Hamilton's installation at FWM and at Municipal Pier 9 could not have taken place without the extraordinary contributions of our funders. I would especially like to acknowledge the support of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, and in particular Paula Marincola and Bill Adair: their belief in this project was instrumental to the realization of this work. We are grateful to Ward Mintz and the Coby Foundation for their most generous support of *habitus*. It is also my pleasure to recognize funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Harvey S. Shipley Miller and The Shipley-Miller Foundation.

Many institutions—including The Design Center at Philadelphia University, The Free Library of Philadelphia, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, The Library Company of Philadelphia, and The Rosenbach Museum and Library—lent works to the FWM installation; thank you for helping make *habitus* a reality. Special recognition goes to the Philadelphia Museum of Art—especially Dilys Blum and Kristina Haugland—and Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library—with gratitude to Linda Eaton and Jeanne Solensky—for their thoughtful guidance during the past two years of site visits. I am grateful to Marcella Martin at Philadelphia University, Caitlin Goodman and Aileen McNamara at the Free Library, and Elizabeth Fuller at the Rosenbach for their encyclopedic knowledge and for their collegial spirit. Thanks go to the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, which supplied much of the exhibition furniture and casework for the historical objects on loan. The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation generously donated the use of Pier 9. Thanks to Tom Corcoran and Joe Forkin and their key staff who helped in multiple ways. Susan Stewart, a frequent collaborator of Hamilton's created the two beautiful poems projected in the installation. I'd also like to recognize Steve Schultz—a longtime FWM colleague and engineer who helped bring Hamilton's ideas to fruition—and Brian Scott for his much-needed expertise in preparing the lighting design at the Pier.

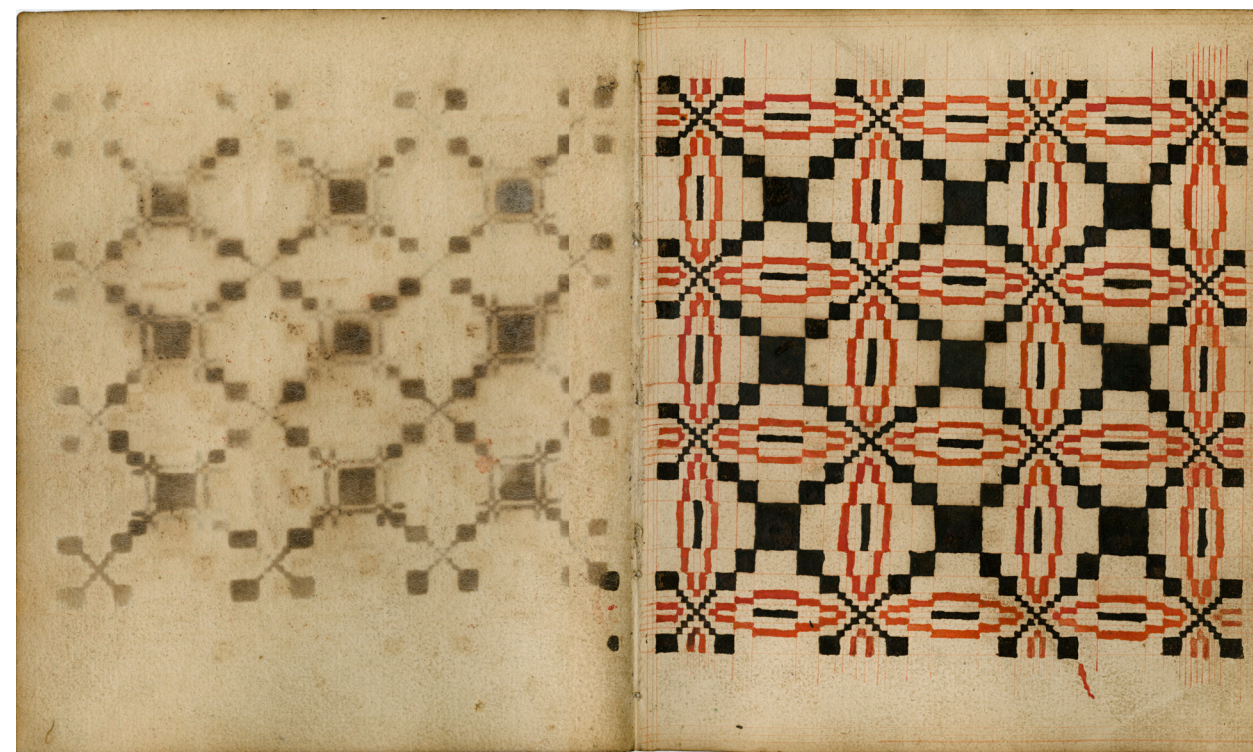
The FWM staff worked diligently over the past two years on *habitus*; I continue to be inspired by their dedication and commitment. Ann Hamilton, in *gratitude*, graciously recognizes their contributions. I add my

own thanks to every member of our staff who played a role in bringing this project to fruition. In particular, I would like to recognize our lead team: Stephanie Greene, who has been a force in this project from its inception; Christina Roberts and Alexander Unkovic, tireless project coordinators; and Nami Yamamoto and Kate Abercrombie who with FWM's studio staff made this installation a reality.

Finally, I give profound thanks to Ann Hamilton, whose dedication to this project was unbounded. *Habitus* will long be remembered for its visual impact and emotional resonance.

#### Susan Lubowsky Talbott

#### Interim Executive Director



Anonymous, [Pattern Book] (detail), c. 1770-1830. Manuscript. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia. Borneman Ms. 75, f. 107r.

## project CREDITS

#### Artist: Ann Hamilton

#### Engineering: Steve Schultz

#### Lighting Design: Brian Scott

#### Poems: Susan Stewart

#### Exhibition & Project Managers: Christina Roberts, Alec Unkovic,

#### Nami Yamamoto

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#### The Library Company

Rachel D'Agostino, Curator of Printed Books and Co-Director, Visual Culture Program

#### National Gallery of Art

Judith Brodie, Curator of Modern Prints and Drawings

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Joanna Fulginiti, Administrative Assistant, Costume and Textiles  
Kristina Haugland, The Le Vine Associate Curator of Costume and Textiles and Supervising Curator for the Study Room  
Beth Knight, Costume and Textile Intern  
Nancy Leeman, Deputy Director of Registration  
Sara Reiter, The Penny and Bob Fox Senior Conservator of Costumes and Textiles  
Timothy Rub, George D. Widener Director and Chief Executive Officer

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Elizabeth E. Fuller, Librarian  
Judith M. Guston, Curator and Director of Collections  
Jobi Zink, Registrar

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William Donnelly, Conservation Assistant  
Joy Gardiner, Director, Conservation  
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Kathleen Orr, Associate Registrar  
Lauri Perkins, Library Assistant, Winterthur Library  
Jeanne Solensky, Librarian

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Rodney Mader, English Professor and Faculty Director of General Education at West Chester University of Pennsylvania  
Donna Romero, US English, Theater Arts Coordinator, US/MS Drama Teacher at Friends Select High School

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Carlos Avendaño, Director of Photography & Registrar

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Anthony Bowers, Studio Assistant & Printer  
Samuel Brown, Visitor Services Assistant & Gallery Guide

Shelby Donnelly, Teaching Artist – Apprentice Program

Paige Fetchen, Studio Assistant & Construction Technician

Petra Floyd, Study Tour Coordinator & Visitor Services Assistant

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Nami Yamamoto, Studio Operations Manager & Projects Manager

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Tim Eads

Abby Lutz

Brittany Rafalak

Patrick Smith

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Emma Cohen

Katie Kaplan

Ajay Leister

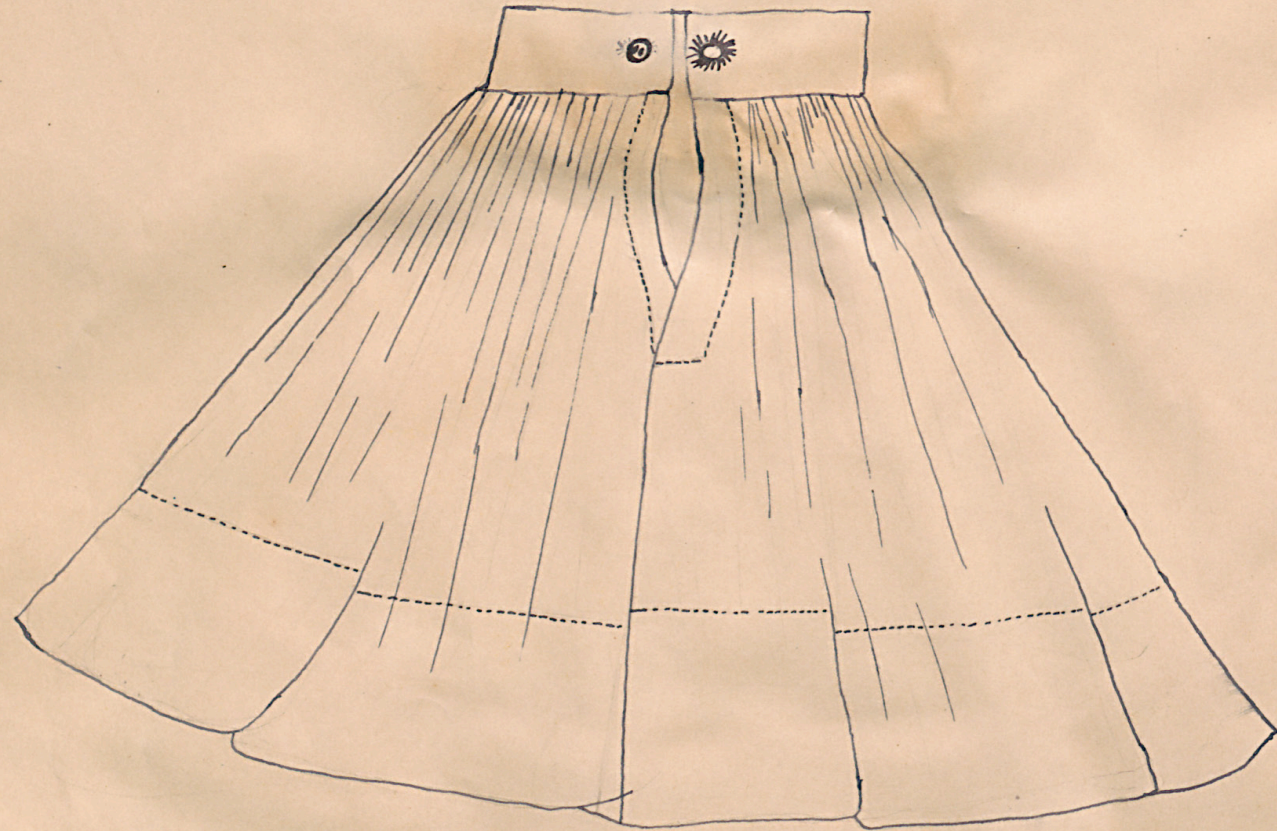
Layla Muchnik-Benali

Sara Savage

Connie Yu

26.

*The Muslin Skirt.*



27.





Ticking Case (detail), 1840–1870. Linen, Bone, Straw. Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library. Gift of Mr. Charles van Ravenswaay, 1972.0435.

## blanket

*No ideas but in things* are five words in the sixteen-word poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams, which like the three wheels such a cart depends on, gained momentum to generate miles of conversation. The words became an object known and turned by many hands. Words pass, repeat, set a pattern in motion, like stones tossed repeatedly into a pond. We look for their pattern, wait for their surfacing, their cloaking of the waters, invisible though present, echoing.

Without the consequence of a stone’s ripple, we live in an ocean of images migrating from screen to screen, living everywhere and nowhere in particular. We are blanketed by the clamor. We look for the pattern. Mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead wrote that “art is the imposing of a pattern on experience and our aesthetic enjoyment is recognition of the pattern.” Still, our drowning eyes long to be washed in what poet Walt Whitman called “the perfect silence of the stars,” but our fingers itch for feedback. The paper’s texture once sounded by the pen nib is now the light emanating from our screens. My hand extends, my finger longs to know, to touch, to affirm with contact and to say this is here, this is real, this is something. The screen returns smooth images and the digital moment that once was.

Philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin wrote that the invention of the match around the middle of the nineteenth century “brought forth a number of innovations which have one thing in common: one abrupt movement of the hand triggers a process of many steps.... With regard to countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the ‘snapping’ by the photographer had the greatest consequences.... The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were.”

The subject of the first durable color photograph created in 1861 by James Clerk Maxwell was a tartan ribbon tied with a rosette in the center, the ribbon tails outstretched upward like the wing of a moth but it has been reproduced wings down as well. Maxwell had the ribbon photographed three times, with red, green, and blue color filters, then had the resulting glass plate images projected on top of one another

by projectors equipped with corresponding color filters. The superimposed projections formed a single full-color image. This three-color approach remains the basis of nearly all color photography, film-based, analogue, and digital. A pattern seen, an image made from the saliva of time with light, chemicals, object, and invention.

Threads cross at right angles in a woven tartan. The pattern, called a sett, is a consequence of the structure, the position, and the color of the individual threads. When warp and weft are the same color the crossing makes a solid color. If the two colors are crossed, an equal mixture is made. A sett of two colors makes a mixture of three. Mixtures increase at a scale of four as the number of thread colors increases. Six differently colored threads make fifteen mixtures and twenty-one different colors.

A sett is also the name of the network of tunnels and entrances of a badger’s den. Without the second ‘t’ it is a folk dance based on coordinated pairs moving in a rectangle, feet echoing the formation of the quadrille once performed by four mounted horsemen in a 17th-century military parade. Words are bodies. They inherit other words and carry histories no differently than the patterns of horses and people. Tartans came to be called plaids, from the Gaelic *plaid*e (blanket). The word echoing its own origin came to describe not the pattern but the object of the blanket itself. Before blankets were plaids or tartans they were a specific fabric, a heavily napped woolen weave carrying the name of the Flemish weaver who invented the process. His name, Blanket, is now a rectangle of cloth that keeps us warm, is an all inclusive covering over, a thick layer, the felt between the roller and the paper on a hand press, the rubber surface that transfers an image in ink from the plate to the paper to a wall where it now may hang.

An image reproduced at The Fabric Workshop and Museum is a print of a watercolor and gouache on paper painted by Ruth M. Barnes, an American artist active in California in the thirties. The subject is a coverlet woven by Mary Williams of Falmouth, Kentucky, then in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science, and Art. We don’t know from the image

if Ruth chose to represent a pattern section of a larger cloth or if the coverlet exists only as a fragment. The date places the making of the cloth to 1937, the same year Kodak introduced a special projector for films with sound. The weaving would have filled Mary’s home in Appalachia with a rhythm made from the sound of the pedal down, the harness up, the shuttle across, followed by the reed beating the weft thread into place to join the threads that came before it. At the time, the quick opening and closing of a camera’s shutter could have produced a monochrome representation of the sample, but Ruth’s work, the reciprocal work of hand and eye, occurred over many sessions in colored inks. Her painting follows and faithfully represents every irregularity of thickness and texture in the wool weft and linen warp of the coverlet, and with her skill, our eye follows to become the finger touching the surface of the represented object. Even if we do not recognize that its repeating geometry is a twill and supplementary weft probably woven on a simple four-harness loom, we recognize in its irregularities that it is made by hand. The image is a kind of triple cloth. A thing made by hand first as a coverlet, then as a watercolor, then as a photograph and again and again with each seeing eye.

There were hundreds of home looms active in communities across America at the end of the nineteenth century making similar coverlets and bed coverings. Laid over wool blankets and cotton sheets, they “made-up” the bed. One slept under a blanketing of plant and animal fibers. The overshot geometric patterns varied from loom to loom and hand to hand but they were often the same colors. The dark blue dyed from indigo, the red from madder or walnut. About the time Mary Williams was weaving, Kodak was developing Kodachrome color film. Before photography, generations of families were documented as fruit on embroidered trees, as patterns woven into cloth, or as names written into family bibles. Where there were not images to pass from generation to generation, the linens and the coverlets and the blankets passed.

My body slips under the weight of a woven blanket. Folded in sleep, I am only the measure of a small rug,

my weight imprinted in cardboard or mattress, a commonness. The pattern of the blanket is the weave itself: blue alternating with yellow in plaid or stripe or check, brown twill alternating with natural solid red, white, and blue plaid, unbleached plain weave bordered with a red blanket stitch.

The blanket’s cloth cocoon is a space for reading. How to explain the permissions found in the page? How to describe the falling in and falling out, the motion of the mind wandering, the concert between the reading, the page, and the room where I lie? The eye follows the words in their regular parallel lines while peripheral attention slips in and out like a needle stitching through cloth, binding the printed words to the immediacy of the lamp light, the heat, the blanket weight, the plane and siren that pass outside. I disappear into it and it disappears into me. I become the page, the screen, the words and they become me, as have my house, weathered with scratched floors, and my clothes marked by worn knees. Body, word, and material mutually shape each other.

I follow where other readers have been. Paper holds the memory of other hands, the spine falls open to mark a former place. I feel the paper’s slickness or thickness. If the words are written by hand, I follow the slant, pause where the ink pooled and dried thick, register the width of the ink or pencil lead. I am touched by the cadence of a voice.

We begin where we are: a reader and a page carrying a writer’s words. Two waves meeting from the stone thrown. Within the reverberation, we lose ourselves, are absorbed by words, sound, blanket, each other. AH

...some hand, now forever quiet, had made at certain passages strong pen and ink marks, long since browned by time.

— George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)



Artist/maker unknown, *Needlework Portfolio: Lace* (detail), 1892. Lace and woven textile, some glued to paper. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004. 2004.111.665.



Jumeau Company, France, *Paris Exposition Doll: Female Doll*, c. 1870–1886. Bisque, Glass, Hair, Leather, Cotton plain weave. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004. 2004.111.639a–d.

## everyone

One is the first number in a sequence and the lowest cardinal number; it is solitary, singular, the only one. One, oneself, is also an indefinite pronoun. One is I, is you, is he, is she, is they, is them, is theirs, is ours, is we. One is everyone. One stands in for I, assumes the common, the shared, the mutual, the everyone. Everything. Everyday. Everywhere. Everybody. I am like you. I am not like you. I want to be like you. I want you to join me. I want to join you. I want to be an I but I also want to be a we. I want to be alone. I want to be together. All this in a single pronoun. All this in a single pronoun, in our singular plural.

The figure was made by Jumeau, a famous doll manufacturer in the late nineteenth century. It has a bisque head and a kid leather body with bendable joints at elbow and knee. The thin leather made from young goats or lambs and carefully stitched to make individual toes and fingers is the same thin skin used to make kid gloves, gloves now seldom worn but often used as a metaphor for careful handling. The origin of the hair is unclear—it could be human or animal—but the dress is identifiable as plain-weave cotton.

The museum collection records it as a female doll and describes it parenthetically as “Fisherman’s Wife from St. Pierre and Miquelon?” It is one of a series of dolls representing the indigenous people of the French colonies that were manufactured between 1870 and 1886 and shown at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. It is one of fifteen given by the French government to the Philadelphia Commercial Museum at the turn of the century and transferred to the Philadelphia Museum of Art when the Commercial Museum’s collections were dispersed after 2001.

The Exposition Universelle was made up of many national exhibitions. It presented the opportunity to display recent technological achievements like the Ferris wheel and the talking film. It was also a demonstration, within the cultural lens of the hosts, of the similarities and differences between nations. One form this took was the so-called ethnographic expositions or human zoos, which put people of non-Eu-

ropean origin on display, many of whom were hired and paid to perform “native” selves. We do not know the section of the exposition where the dolls were displayed, but we do know that some dolls have roles in magic and religion, mediate the supernatural and human worlds, and are used to cast spells or vanquish demons. We can’t know if the weave of Penelope’s cloth in the ancient Greek epic the *Odyssey* was similar to the one dressing this figure, if it was a cotton, a linen, or a wool, but the weaving and unweaving at her loom mediated and balanced the human and the supernatural. No doll and no world or universal exposition have vanquished racism.

A model of a person—the doll, often a toy for children—elicits and receives, though doesn’t reciprocate, touch or emotion. This female doll, perhaps the plaything for an adult woman, was not made to be touched but was made for display, to demonstrate a cultural type among other cultural types. Modeled by nineteenth-century hands, she is not a portrait but a stand-in, representing everyone but no one in particular. Her eyes are luminous but without light, her dress or coat, a deep blue, looks indigo-dyed and worn by the effects of light on cloth. The cloth is a plain weave; the threads—crossing in an up down, up down pattern—have equal weight. This is a light cotton that breathes in the heat. Cinched at the high waist and covering a white undergarment, it would be easy to move, and work in, it is finer than the sheets on a bed or in the curtains that filter light from the window, but it is the same cloth.

An undergarment is a category of clothing worn close to the skin: underpants, bra, undershirt, slip, socks. It is anything usually covered over by another garment. Fashion works to invert these categories. Madonna’s sculpted bra made an inner an outer. Someone once told me that if I wear a white undershirt and underpants, no matter the color of the top layer, I will be protected from absorbing dark energy, from people, the weather, things unknown. I was told that rough or fine cotton, loose or stretched tight, can influence the sound of the voice. But articles held closest to the skin, like vow-

el sounds, are usually not seen or heard alone.

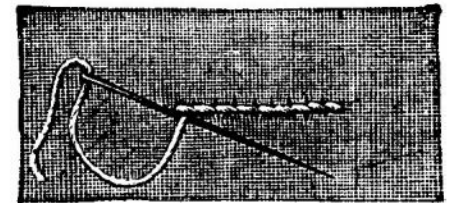
Recently, the multinational UBS Brandstudio took a full-page paid advertisement in the *New York Times* to promote an AI figure that is “smarter” than humans. Had they existed, AI figures would have been on display in Paris in 1900. UBS is investing in big data to deliver individualized information for wealth management. The advertisement pictures the figure of a young woman, a “smart” robot with perfect hair, skin, eyes, and teeth that are not made for chewing. Instead, she delivers data.

The eye of the AI figure, shown in close-up on the website (<http://paidpost.nytimes.com/ubs/what-it-takes-to-be-human.html>) is in many ways modeled like the female figure from the Paris Exposition, although it is hard to see her eyelashes through the case. In the Paris factory workshop girls melted sticks of glass with welding tools, to make different sized and colored irises. Eyelids close over eyeballs in the deluxe dolls, and Emile Jumeau received a patent for this mechanism in addition to a later patent for sleeping eyes that included eyelashes and gave the dolls a more lifelike appearance. The uncanny is the intellectual uncertainty of recognizing whether an object is alive or not. We count on our eyes and hands to know the difference and are uncomfortable when our senses are fooled.

I can touch the cloth in my hand and feel sure of its weight, its weave, its thread, but I am less sure what to call this body, like but not like mine. The poet Robert Duncan has written: “they’ can be differentiated into ‘he’ and ‘she’.” “We’ is made up of ‘I’s’, pronounced ‘eyes’, as Zukofsky reminds us, and ‘you’, in whom the word ‘thee’ has been hidden away.”

Soetsu Yanagi, the founder of the folk craft movement in Japan in the 1920s, was the philosophical pillar of *mingei*, which recognized (beyond the beautiful or the ugly) the ordinary utilitarian objects made in clay, cloth, and wood by people unnamed. The origins of a pattern came from a fabric of use, was recognized in objects passing from one knowing hand to another. How does

the maker know so precisely the degrees of pressure to ply and mold and shape material into form? The hand impatient with words is resistant to instruction by explanation. Words struggle to depict physical action. It takes three-hundred-fifty-eight words to describe what takes the hand as long as a motion and less than a minute to recognize. AH



### The Way to Hold the Hands

Take the shuttle in the right hand, between the thumb and second finger, and allow the forefinger to remain at liberty, and rest the under part of the shuttle between the second and third and on the middle finger. Place the thread round the three middle fingers of the left hand, so as to form a loop, keeping the second and third fingers a little apart, and bring the cotton again between the thumb and forefinger, letting the end fall within the palm of the hand, while the end of cotton which holds on to the shuttle passes over the thumb-nail.

### To Make a Stitch

Keep the hands in the position above described; pass the shuttle at the back, through the loop—that is, between the second and third fingers. Take the end of the shuttle which comes out from the loop between the forefinger and thumb of the right hand, and strain the cotton very tightly towards the right. When the cotton is drawn through the loop, this cotton must not be impeded by the fourth finger; it should, on the contrary, slide over it, and be drawn tight. It should divide the loop into two parts.

— Isabella Mary Beeton, *Beeton’s Book of Needlework* (1870)



*Textile fragment, woven (detail), 1700-1850. Wool. Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library. Gift of Charlotte and Edgar Sitig, 1969.0015.001.*



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Ann Hamilton, *MIRROR*, video still





Ann Hamilton and Susan Stewart, *CHANNEL*