

unpicked and dis-mantled

Co-curated by Danica Maier and Gerard Williams.

Danica Maier and Gerard Williams have been invited to curate the British so-called 'Narrow' Exhibition for the *Kaunas Art Biennale: Textile '07*. Organised by the Lithuanian Artist Association. The *Kaunas Art Biennale* has been running for 12 years and this will therefore be its 6th exhibition.

The overall Biennale comprises of 1. A major exhibition selected from a 'Wide' open submission representing artists from all over the world. 2. A group of three individually curated 'Narrow' exhibitions, which will be representative of aspects of three different countries including 'unpicked and dis-mantled' representing Britain, 'Sheer and Shallow' representing Brazil, and 'Skin to Skin' representing South Africa. (see further information on the biennale website at: <http://www.bienale.lt>) 3. A range of other satellite exhibitions, performances, research projects, residencies and site specific works.

Exhibition Details:

The exhibition will open on the 30 November 2007 with many events, performances and talks running throughout the opening weekend. The Biennale will run until the 3 March 2008. The previous exhibition *Textile '05* attracted many hundreds to the long weekend of opening events, as well as a subsequent 20,000 visitors. The organizers of the Biennale, the Lithuanian Artists Association is producing a catalogue of the whole Biennale, in which each 'Narrow' exhibition will have its own section. This will include text by the curators, two pages of text and image as well as a biography for each artist. We are planning to tour the British exhibition to a venue in the East Midlands region and possibly London in which we envisage including 5-10 additional artists selected from the 'Wide' open submission section of the biennale.

Position Statement:

The main focus of the *Kaunas Art Biennale* has been to represent and disseminate something of the immense and rich variety of concerns addressed through the work of artists who engage directly with the physical materials and processes of textiles. There are numerous focuses possible within this field. A growing part of the overall range of textile related art practices worldwide is that of the work of artists who engage critically with textiles, but whose practice outcomes do not involve the presence of the physical material itself. Issues addressed through this approach are of course often similar to those addressed by artists exhibiting physical textile materials; there is much common ground. However, this once-removed approach to exploring cultural aspects of the role, meaning and significance of textiles opens up new critical territory. It affords both fresh perspectives on more traditional textile practices, as well as upon an area of discussion around the place of textile centred art practices within the realm of contemporary art practice: the 'high art' of the moment seen from both within and without.

Aim:

As part of the *Kaunas Art Biennale: Textile 07* we are curating a group exhibition of 10 British based artists working with, for example aspects of the histories, ideologies and methodologies of textile practices without using textiles as the medium of their practice outcomes. The aim of the exhibition is to represent a constituency whose practices have lead to adopting approaches that function in this way as the most effective means of exploring and communicating textile rooted concerns.

Territory:

Many current textile studio practices go far beyond making and technique, they transcend object and material. In general terms, history, language and politics are implicated and embodied. Craft, domesticity and identity, including gender issues and aspects of post-feminism might be some of the more obvious interlinked territories addressed through the use of, and reference to, textiles in art practice today.

Many artists are now working with both old and new technologies in ways that relate deliberately and directly to textile-rooted issues. No surprise this, as textiles have been associated with technology since the beginning of technology itself. Artists have developed methodologies that deploy obsessive, repetitive

making or actions, perhaps including reference to and use of (surface) pattern. Construction and deconstruction, dismantling and unpicking are put to work. Technological interfaces, new to old and old to new, including incompatibilities, glitches, and the product of breakdown have become artists' tools.

This territory of ideas and concerns is explored and communicated through a multitude of material outcomes: painting, performance, photography, film, drawing and installation works can all speak as much of textile concerns in these ways as weaving, felting and embroidery. Artists who use such diverse media and means to talk effectively and in new ways about the ideologies, methodologies, histories and values behind textiles will be our particular focus for this exhibition.

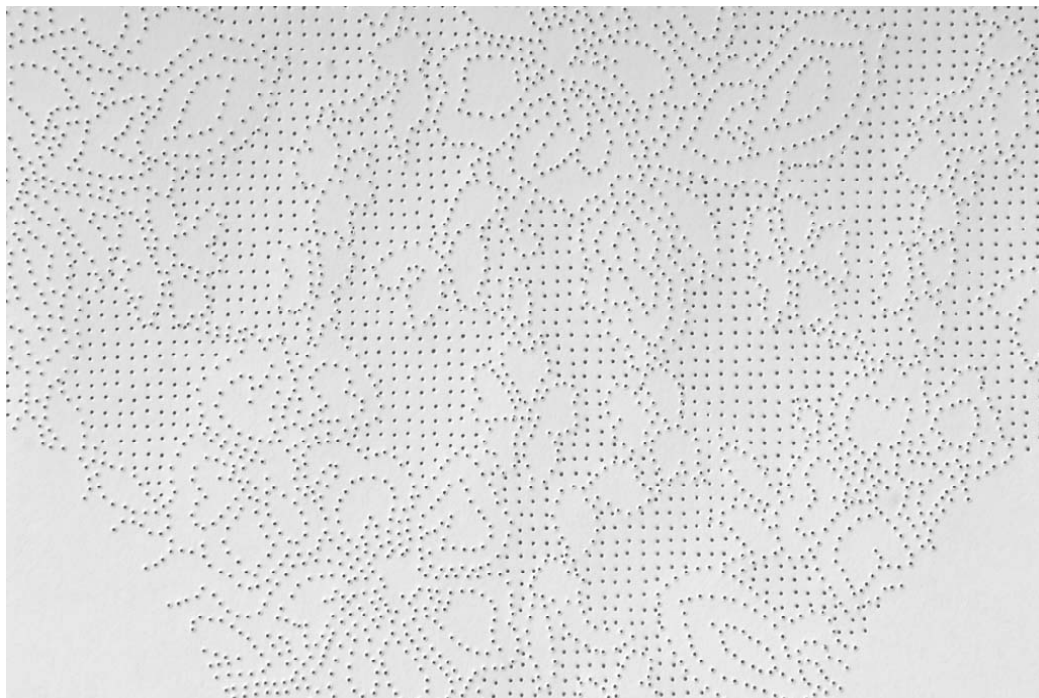
'Unpicked and Dismantled' exhibiting artists: **Catherine Bertola** –'prickings' / installation, **Christine Ellison** –performance, **Craig Fisher** – wall painting, **Amy Houghton** –video installation, **Katharine Nolan** –manipulated photo works, **Danica Maier** – drawing, **Hetai Patel** –body pattern/performance, **Gary Simmons** – paintings, **Miranda Whall** – 'whallpaper', **Gerard Williams** – sculpture/installation.

Participant Artists: their working methodologies and artworks

Catherine Bertola: 'pricking' / installation

Bertola's work is site orientated, process based and often temporary in its nature. Using the given history and context of 'sites' as a starting points, from which to physically interrogate and enhance the poetics of the 'space', embedding her own perishable trace and adding additional layers of meaning for the viewer. Meticulous and laborious methods of making over a sustained period of time, is also a key element of the work. This intimate and private process of making is as much part of the work as the finished pieces themselves, as is the relationship that these processes and acts have with the history and role of women in the home.

The series of work *Prickings* and *Anatomy*, developed out of research into lace, and a fascination with lace as both a object and a status symbol, through its manufacture and associations with women's social history. The works are based on 'prickings', the templates used in the production of hand-made bobbin lace, and which represent the point in the production process when lace transfers from the hand of the maker into the fabric for the wearer. The work challenges and subverts the forgotten status and history of lace as both a feminine object and form of invisible labor.



Anatomy #10 (Detail), 2006, paper, 59.4 x 84cm

Christine Ellison (aka: Dr. Polly Fibre): 'Craftwork' - performance

POLLY FIBRE IS A CONSTRUCTED CHARACTER: THAT OF A FEMALE MUSICIAN EXPERIMENTING WITH TECHNOLOGY IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY. HER MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO DRAW THE HAPTIC OUT FROM DIGITAL INTERFACES.

Polly's performances are a series of indiscreet* compositions that explore aspects of her contemporary culture, particularly relationships between music and fashion, through a post-digital aesthetic. The work reverts analogies that have become absorbed by digital technology -renegotiating terms such as RGB, CUT & PASTE, INTERFACE through materials, objects and machinery. Processes of construction are unravelled to reveal their core elements. These become the raw material to build new compositions in a performative context where there is an emphasis on the deconstructive and reconstructive processes. The work aggravates the stereotypical binaries that tentatively hold so many social constructs together: high-art-craft, masculine-feminine, live-mediated, digital-analogue.

FOR *UNPICKED & DISMANTLED* Polly has several pieces in progress at the moment and the idea is to present them at this exhibition as a suite (or more like a party shuffle)...

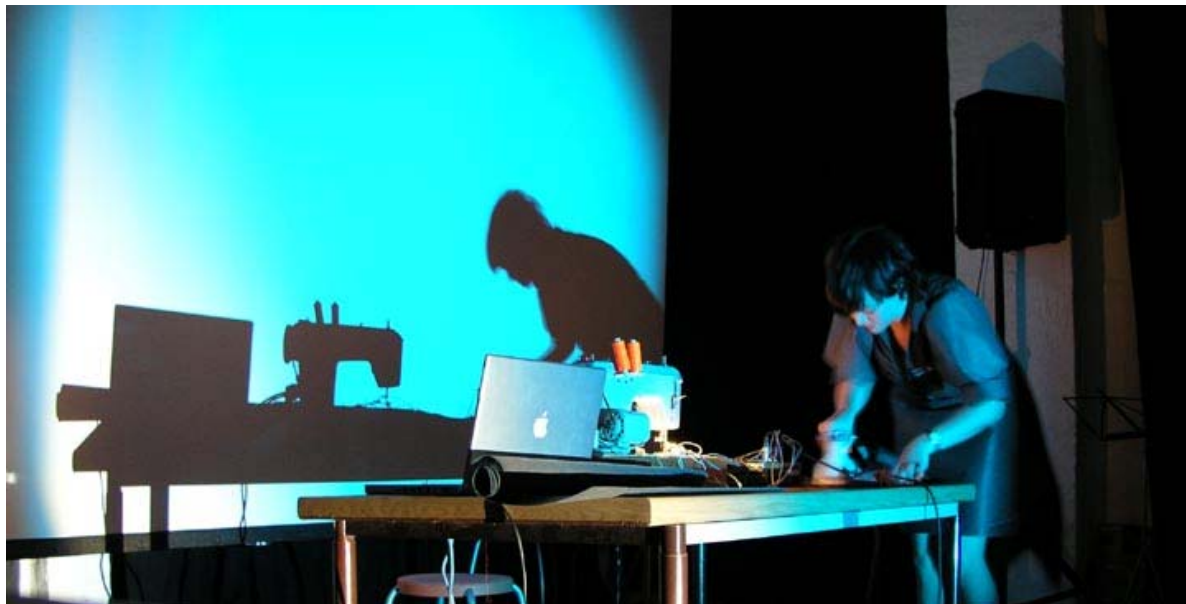
TUNES FROM THE iPOLLY

Cut & paste

Zip it to me baby

Rhapsody in RBG

Let's interface the music & dance



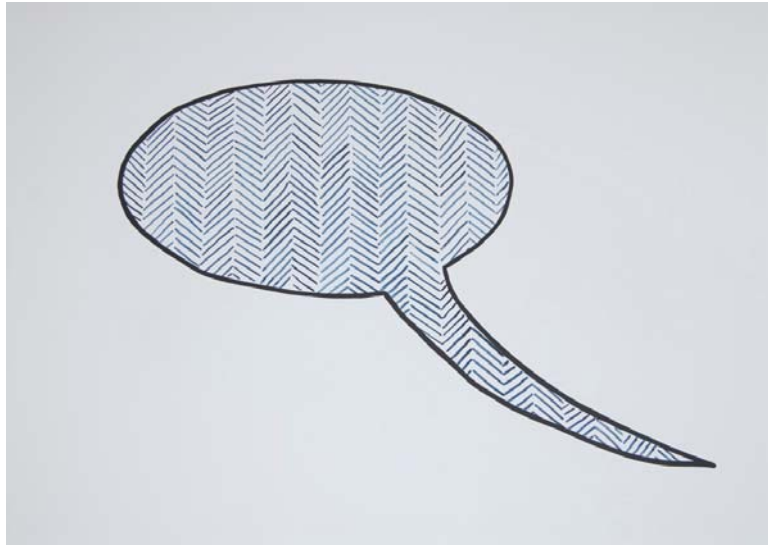
Dr. Polly FIBRE, performing *Craftwork* 2005

Craig Fisher: wall paintings

Fisher employs textiles/craft, which are traditionally perceived as being associated with women. Using these materials, he sets out to question people's assumptions about what he's allowed to be as a man: how masculinity is defined. Fisher is particularly interested in playing with boundaries, mixing techniques of art and craft while referencing both high and popular culture. Making work that operates in a space between disciplines, the work is not identifiable as any one thing, be it image or object, craft or art, furniture or sculpture, high or low, masculine or feminine, functional or dysfunctional. He explores these boundaries as potential spaces of slippage, of accidents, which allow for discoveries beyond confined and referenced fields of art production. The audience will hopefully perceive this 'state-in-between' as a challenge to their habits of looking.

For the exhibition Fisher will make large-scale wall paintings of a textile conversation: speech bubbles filled entirely with textile patterns. In dialogue with each other they begin to consider and question how textiles and pattern holds cultural and gendered meaning as well as allowing us to start to think through notions of the decorative and ornamental. These witty speech bubbles will exist sporadically through the exhibition space and generate a dialogue with each other and potentially the other works within the show.

Fisher's interests lie within the oratory notion of the cartoon speech bubble and how it stands in for language and communication. By replacing text with textile pattern he asks the viewer to consider the cultural, historical, political and gendered associations that are embedded within cloth/textiles and to question some of their own assumptions, perceptions and habits of looking.



Amy Houghton: *Mary Croom's Dress* (video installation)

Houghton's practice involves exploring how we use and read antique textiles and photographs as stimuli for nostalgic longing, as indicators of our authenticity, a tool to search for origin and as a connection to reality. Her particular focus in this area has been in the reading of indexical evidence found in these objects or part objects that are removed from their context, i.e. absent from their owner and without the full knowledge of the objects' experiences. Houghton's work involves pseudo forensic and archaeological processes to examine and reanimate, through stop frame and video animation. She uses these techniques with the textiles and photographs she has collected in an attempt to get them to unravel and reveal their stories and bring them to life. Through the process of forensically unpicking garments she has attempted to discover their construction and use. She uses reminiscence techniques and free associative writing from archival material to speculate about the absent owner and events the object has been through. She is interested in the concept of questioning the boundaries between reality and fiction in a narrative. Which gives her the motivation to consider the ways in which a semi fictional narrative can be created from the reading of physical objects through processes of scientific analysis, educated speculation and subjective and collective memory.



Mary Croom's Dress, 2006, video projection

Katherine Nolan: manipulated photo works

What is the nature of the textile? Let us start by asking yet more questions. What is the seam? Is it in the fall of delicate lace when it becomes curvaceous and pronounced, where a stocking top curls up and presses too tight on a sensitive inner thigh, or when an invisible join creates monstrously beautiful bodies? What is pattern? Is pattern in the zigzagging glossy yellow ribbon and folds of pink skin that are impossibly symmetrical, or a pleasing distraction from grotesque corporeal form? In these photographic pieces the body is submitted to the same processes as the cloth: cut up, cut out, shorn, clipped and then arranged to make a new whole sewn back together. The process creates pattern, folds, seams, crevices, gaps, flaps and forms all at odds with the photographic qualities of these works that stake a claim to the real. These pieces fray the edges of the traditional role of the textile and its related processes. The use of textiles processes and materials mediated by digital technology to frame the female body, speaks to the traditional relation between the textile and the feminine. Thus producing challenging imagery that masquerades under a guise of the trivial and decorative. There is a tension between the inaccessibility of the whole feminine body and the happenstance of the new representation. The female body, often sexually accessible within art and the media, becomes a patchwork of frills and body parts that weaves between the seductive and repulsive.



Lady Black Lace (artist/model no.1), 2003, digital print on board
Miss Yellow Ribbons (artist/model no.3), 2003, digital print on board
Madame Red Shoes (artist/model no.2), 2003, digital print on board

Danica Maier: drawing

Maier's work deploys and subverts repetitive pattern, thereby the comfortable meets the uncomfortable. A soothing and familiar repeat is overlaid by contradictory imagery that is in conflict with the expectation of the medium. Sexual, pornographic imagery and slang bring what is expected to be mere decoration into question. The work relies on an unusually direct relationship with the viewer, one that is articulated through a variety of means: Lace ribbon is used to create large wall 'drawing' installations. Meticulously embroidered dot matrix images are produced on canvas. Colour pencil floral word patterns cover the surface of large Mylar sheets. Initially, the work appears pretty and decorative, yet once the viewer begins to experience the work from various distances within the space the imagery reveals its true self.

Making up the complex rhythmic lace structures of the large wall installations are many repeated anamorphic line drawings of sexual antics. These representations are only clearly perceived as the viewer sees the work from particular angles and distances. Maier's embroidered dot matrix's images are taken from pornography. Up close the viewer sees only the elaborate surface texture of labour intensive embroidered knots, only when they move away from the work is the image understood. The colour pencil floral drawings work in the opposite way, creating an apparently empty decorative pattern from a distance. Only as the viewer goes in for a closer look, do they understand that the decorative structure is created from repeated slang words for female genitalia. For the exhibition Maier will be creating new drawing using quintessentially English textile designs.



Pussyface, with detail, 2003, pencil on mylar, 2.5ft x 3ft

Hetai Patel: performance

With the beginnings of Patel's practice rooted in identity politics, over the past four years he has been interested in the displacement of Indian culture to the U.K. and the (im)possibility of trying to understand an Indian mindset from a British born perspective. As Patel has not experienced Indian culture in the totality of its original context he looks at trying to bridge this gap. Patel's research has taken him down such avenues as semiotics, physics and Indian classical music, with the exhibited results having included photography, video, installation and live performance.

During several of Patel's earlier works he undertook self-imposed rituals decorating his own body with dyes that are traditionally used in Indian ceremonies. He sees the durational element in these works as an attempt to compensate for the lack of a rite of passage for the British Indian. For *unpicked and dismantled* Patel will further develop this mode of work and intends to perform a piece negotiated with a Lithuanian textile artist.

Working through conversation in its various guises, from an initial verbal or visual dialogue, to a physical exchange during the performance. Patel will ask the Lithuanian textile artist or designer to improvise a pattern of their choice onto his back over a set period of time (approximately 4 hours). Through a live visual relay projected onto the wall in front of Patel, he will simultaneously try to copy their pattern onto the front of his torso. There may be play between which artist draws and which copies or perhaps both could happen during the performance. There will be negotiation of pattern chosen/improvised by the

Lithuanian artist as it is likely to be very different to a traditional henna pattern. Patel will also be asking the artist to consider how any craft based techniques they use in their own practice might be transferred to the use of a henna cone.



Copy/Paste, 2006 (performance documentations still 1)

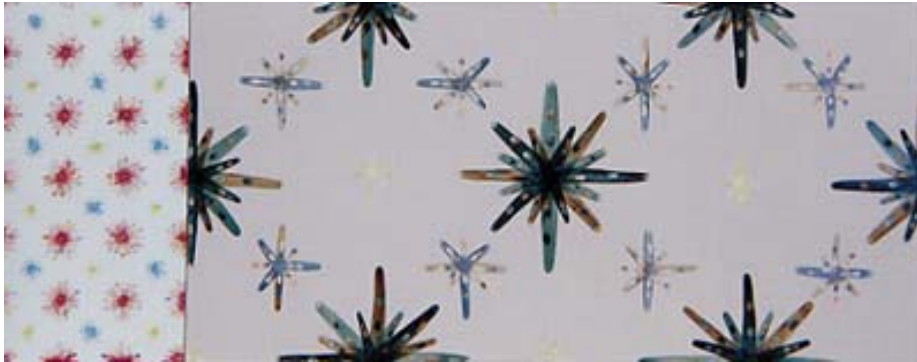
Gary Simmonds: painting

Simmonds makes paintings that flirt with decoration and disorder at the same time as setting out possibilities for 'abstraction'. The work alludes to the domestic, the craft of making and the emotional warmth derived from decoration and wallpaper design. In Simmonds' paintings ornamental motifs evolve from and are created by a process of repeatedly dragging paint with a squeegee from the outside in. Repetition and insistence on sameness within such a hand made process ends up highlighting differences, incurred by natural human slips and errors. A visual rhythm or pulse is established that sets out to counter the banal and the deterministic. By using the framework of the grid, combinations and permutations of different configurations of motifs are enabled, and an internal logic prevails, creating a space for intuitive and empirical play.

The substitution of a brush for a squeegee results in a smearing of colour that relates to both high modernism and mass production hues of the same period. Colour and form come together in Gary Simmonds paintings to create a gentle resonance of objects incorporated into dreams, which one comes across again when awake. They are paintings from which all the figurative action has been removed. It is left for the remaining mundane details to attempt to pronounce the facts. Simmonds conjures up the shadows of memories, in a way reminiscent of our sense of smell: we have none of the normal aspects of detail, yet the impression is precise and clear.



Formal Affair, painting



elegant greys and floral fancies, painting

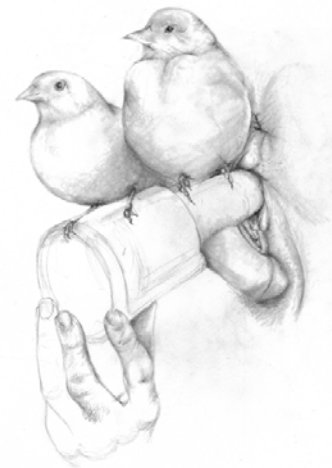
Miranda Whall: 'whallpaper'

In drawings, paintings, video, photography and animation Miranda Whall recurrently plays with representations of herself. Presenting portraits that explore self and representation of both her body and her experiences. By constructing fantasy scenarios where she co-exists with other things, inanimate objects or living creatures Whall makes humorous, unlikely and uncanny connections, dynamics and relationships. Whall constructs fictional contexts in which she can play out both extremely personal, exhibitionist and explicit representations of herself. Using her sexual, fertile, expressive self etc in order to draw attention to and discuss both the politics surrounding feminine identity and of trying to be the author and owner of her own sexual and feminine image.

For *unpicked and dismantled*, Whall will create wallpaper made from repeated motifs created from 'couplings' or group scenarios of animals, birds, fish and autoerotic self-portraits. These drawings will feature the 'Rampant Robin' or the 'Roger Rabbit', both of which are dildo's. The motifs will be hand drawn or painted in a delicate and intricate manner, either in pencil or loosely painted in watercolour or ink. This original work will then be printed onto the wallpaper using silkscreen and installed in relation to site.



Sue Lawley with detail 2004, archival inkjet print 111 x 263 cm



Rampit Robin...

Gerard Williams: sculpture

The work of Gerard Williams leads his audience to re-examine individual and collective culturally founded preconceptions. He aims to afford unusual vantage points in perceptual terms upon his chosen subjects. His work has made use of a great diversity of starting points, such as outlines taken from floor plans and maps; It has reacted, for example, to the demographics of place via cold hard CIA statistics on GDP; It might be that he begins work with a 600 year old wooden 'linen-fold' panel, or that he chooses to dress a series of ordinary windows in a regional town centre, as if they are inhabited. The starting points are varied but are very much part of the world as it already exists. Art critic Sally O'Reilly in discussion with Gerard Williams: *'You might say that you are interested in translating from one format or material into an*

object or image that is illogical – a mapping from sense to nonsense. What this invariably does, however, is not demonstrate the absurdity of your work, but often the absurdity of the original information..' (Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture, issue3, No3, fall 2005, pp274-290).



Umbria Cranberry Fold 2004. Made for the group exhibition *Fragments*, medievalmodern, London

GW/DM 24-Apr-07