



museum of arts and design

Samantha Bittman: Interlace | The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD)

This spring, the Museum of Arts and Design launches 1ST SITE, a new project space located in the reception area of their 2 Columbus Circle location. 1ST SITE features work by artists and designers that interact with and interpret the interior architecture and ambiance of the “entry.”

This spring, to coincide with the opening of *Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro*, the museum will feature *Interlace*, a large-scale vinyl mural by Brooklyn-based artist Samantha Bittman.

Interlace wraps the entry-level elevator bank in a colorful, oversize weaving draft—the pattern weavers follow to work out their designs in advance, dress their loom, and subsequently weave a piece of cloth. This particular weaving draft represents a “sample blanket,” a textile that uses different warp and weft combinations in small sections in order to experiment with weave structures, yarn and color. Printed at this scale, the pattern is recognizable as a tool specific to textile work, while resembling the pixels associated with the digital.

The relationship between the handcrafted and the digital is a hallmark of Bittman’s practice. The artist sets her hand-painted, hand-woven textiles against the backdrop of digitally printed wallpaper, for which she creates graphics using Photoshop. She sets the resolution of the wallpaper (pixels per inch) to the thread count of the painting that will hang on it, such that the wallpaper becomes an extension of the painting as well as a support, fusing weaving, painting, and graphics in a multilayered exploration of pattern.

By juxtaposing a very old practice with modern software, Bittman highlights their similarities. There is a sameness between the grid-based warp and weft interlacements of handwoven cloth and the pixelated Photoshop file, pointing to the ability of both mediums to embody pixel-based pictorial information.

Bittman’s painting practice developed from an interest in the woven structure as picture. Working on a 12-harness floor loom, she weaves patterned textiles that she then stretches over a wooden frame before applying acrylic paint onto select threads. Matching the paint to the thread, she inverts the textile’s pattern, merging thread and paint to create optical illusions with shape, line and pattern.

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Referencing weavers and painters alike—from Anni Albers to Bridgett Riley—Bittman carves out a shared space between weaving and painting, drawing them together through an exploration of figure-ground.

Samantha Bittman is an artist and educator based in Brooklyn, NY. She has participated in residency programs at the Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation, Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, and Ox-Bow School of Art. In 2012, she received the Artadia Award. Recent solo exhibitions include, Ronchini, London, UK; Andrew Rafacz, Chicago, IL; Morgan Lehman, NY, NY; and Greenpoint Terminal Gallery, Brooklyn, NY. She has been included in numerous group exhibitions including David Castillo, Miami, FL; Shane Campbell, Chicago, IL; and Rhona Hoffman, Chicago, IL.