

Reviews

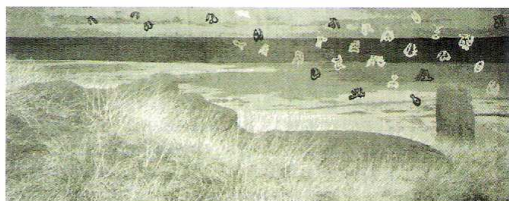
Jacquard 2x2 Montréal/Tokyo

Maison de la Culture Côte-des-Neiges
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REVIEW BY JOE LEWIS

AS A CLASSROOM and workshop facility, since 1980 the Montreal Centre for Contemporary Textiles (MCCT) has provided an international roster of weavers, designers and artists the opportunity to explore the possibilities of the jacquard loom. It is from these workshops that the weavers in this exhibition have come to join Louise Lemieux Bérubé in a showcase of jacquard woven Art fabrics.

The jacquard loom, which originally used punch cards, now weaves cloth in a more efficient way than was possible at the beginning of the 1800s when it was invented. Today, the imagery is processed through software that embeds weave structures in specific colours or shades. Mitsuko Akutsu, Emiko Nakano, Louise Lemieux Bérubé and Julianna Joos have all created image-based work using different source material. The individuality of each becomes apparent while the choices of weave structures and yarns combine to produce distinct surfaces, drape and texture to the fabric they weave.



Emiko Nakano, *Dreaming Moai*, 2009. Handwoven jacquard: cotton, elastic yarn. 87 cm h x 220 cm w. Photo: Mareo Suemasa

Mitsuko Akutsu was born in Tokyo and is a professor at the Aoyama Gakuin Women's Junior College. Her work is about 'self' as developed from photographs of the streets of Montréal, each with her shadow in it. She is interested in the human traces that express or record the passing of time – such as scuff marks or other evidence of natural wear. Her newest work, a long diptych, marks a change. The early works consist of individual images that are, in essence, landscapes; these have now been fractured and sections are juxtaposed to create patterns. The shadows and other markings have become more stylised, taking on the appearance of the oversized brush-stroke of Japanese calligraphy. The diptych has the feeling of traditional scroll paintings.

Also from Tokyo, Emiko Nakano is a former professor at Tokyo Zokei University. She works with images from her travels and draws inspiration from the rough textures of the Moai



Mitsuko Akutsu, *Time J-14*, 2009. Handwoven jacquard: cotton and linen. 84 cm h x 108 cm w. Photo: Shinichi Sato

statues of Easter Island that were formed from compressed volcanic ash. *From Where and To Where? II* uses cotton and elastic yarns in black and white with a supplemental brocade. These pieces have a subtle 3-dimensional surface which is soft and, contracted by the elastic, voluptuous.

Louise Lemieux Bérubé from Montreal is the author of *Le Tissage Créateur* (Creative Weaving), a comprehensive text book on weaving. She works with photographic imagery of dancers in motion and uses Tencel, linen, wool, stainless steel and copper wire "yarns" that effectively remove the drape from the finished fabric. Using imagery which is full of movement on a fabric with none is an interesting choice. This work, while appearing to replicate photographs, is more complicated than the surface image. Like Emiko, she chooses materials and structures that produce a surface contrary to the imagery presented. These three weavers have brought knowledge of textiles and weaving to their work. Julianna Joos, on the other hand, is bringing knowledge of the printing process to hers.

Julianna Joos is a Canadian artist from Montréal who started jacquard weaving in 2004 after many years in print-making. Frayed knots, part of her print work, have become both a source of material and subject matter for her. She explains that "the knot is used as a metaphor. Tying the knot shows a quest for stability; the meaning of this act is straightforward. The significance of an untied knot is more complex: it can symbolize a crisis or even death, but also a solution to a crisis or freedom." In many ways this work is about stripping away the underpinnings of her printed images. Her images in woven form become their own surfaces.

In Jacquard weaving, the whole cloth needs to be seen beyond the image on the surface. Painting has taught us to look at what has been added to the surface of an already coherent object. Weaving is the making of the object. Seeing four makers use the loom to create individual vocabularies adds to the critical understanding of jacquard weaving as a medium. *Jacquard 2X2* Montreal/Tokyo proves the value of the MCCT as a centre for research and creativity. ■