

Fictitious Fiber

Tansey Contemporary
652 Canyon Road

Fiber (noun) 1. a thread or filament from which a plant or animal tissue, mineral substance, or textile is formed.

FICTITIOUS FIBER. EXACTLY. THE CLOSEST THING TO A THREAD OR A FILAMENT IN

this exhibition is likely the nylon fishing line used to weave elements in two of the works. And yet the look and feel of textiles, fabric, and “cloth” abound throughout the twenty-seven pieces on display. Here are nine artists who offer us the drape and flow of fabric rendered in wood, glass, clay, oil paint, and seed pods. Curator Jane Sauer’s selection of artworks and program coordinator Paige Diem’s layout offer a corresponding visual flow.

The gallery devotes three rooms to the show, and the entryway holds three works by three different artists that hint at the range and scope of what is to come. *Nesting Ovals* by Susanna Starr is a lace tablecloth in mahogany, blending doily with tabletop. Starr hand cuts the lacy texture into the wood veneer, and the sheen from the darks and lights of the grain transforms the piece into grandmother’s heirloom tablecloth just before it is smoothed into place for dinner. Starr’s two other contributions, *Oak Round* and *Cherry Round*, share a wall in the next room. Her wood-cutting technique and vision for the cherry wood treatment blend her devised, cut-lace edges with the wood’s natural, lacy grain.

Tom Eckert’s *Crushed* greets us from a pedestal in the entryway, and along with his two other works nearby, *Dryope* and *Seven*, is astonishing in its silky texture. How can these sculptures be made of wood? Their surfaces have the shimmer of satin, the stretch of linen, and the translucency of organza. Nancy Newman Rice greets us with *Infinity II*, one of her five oil paintings in the show that all present temporary structures like ladders and scaffolding as though they were the interwoven elements of tapestries rendered in iridescent stained-glass colors.

Ran Adler’s weavings of hundreds of mahogany pods result in sweeping cape-like coverings. Adler cuts the pods into pointed elliptical shapes so that we can see their golden-red fibrous interior. He coats the pods with polyurethane, drills four holes in each, and weaves them together with heavy-gauge nylon fishing line, in the case of *The Elder* and *Nature’s Tapestry*, and with wire for *The Shaman III* so that it can be deliberately folded and shaped.

In a manner similar to the way Tom Eckert gives us wooden cloth, Kait Rhoads offers glass



fabric. *Red Alder* is a luscious sea-green, opening-night boa that begs to be tossed teasingly around the neck—except that it is constructed from at least two hundred individual life-sized glass red alder leaves, held together with stainless steel and aluminum wire that would likely throttle a fashionista. *Sunset* is a glass tapestry from Rhoads’s *Soft Sculpture Series*. Here, she has used copper wire to weave together her meticulously crafted, hollow murrine blown-glass beads. Her colors flow seamlessly, like a watercolor wash, from a deep blue high in the sky through paler and paler blues into sunset oranges on the horizon. Puffy white clouds are woven to bubble forward from the surface, casting perfect cloud shadows.

Harue Shimomoto weaves her glass in an entirely different way. She suspends by wire small panels of fused, slumped glass in layers, one in front of the other. The layers are a few inches apart and overlap. This creates depth and a sense of woven cloth in motion. Color variations in the glass rods and arcs—some with the delicacy of spun sugar—cause the pieces to shimmer. In *Crazy Moon* four layers of curved glass threads, in every possible shade a winter sky can offer, sweep around an opening that is the full moon peeking through clouds to cast light on a frozen landscape.

Shadow is an important theme woven throughout *Fictitious Fiber*. Glass rods and leaves, seedpods, and wooden lace are all lit to cast fortuitous shadows behind, beneath, and within the art. The subtle ash and charcoal grays become part of the overall images the pieces present. Rather than group the artists’ works, Diem often places them *nearby* rather than *next to*. In this way there is interplay among the artists, for example when the twelve birds in Ann B. Coddington’s *Flock* (ceramic slip-cast glazed birds from woven originals) fly toward Shimomoto’s *Crazy Moon*. Curator Sauer’s ability to challenge our concept of the fibrous invites us to see the tactile surfaces of textiles and the motion of fabric in unexpected media and through a wide range of artists’ visions. Folded-neck sgraffito stoneware by Melanie Ferguson and earthenware basket constructions by Jim Kraft complete the exhibition.

—Susan Wider

Ran Adler, *The Elder*, driftwood, mahogany pods, 84 x 24 in.