

Catherine Reinhart

Hope is a tender and elusive state. Often I am surprised to find it lingering amid the stacks of dishes and hidden with my toddler's lost shoe. Between the wall and the bed frame, that small found victory provides what I did not know I needed. I seek these victories inside my studio as well, continually exploring materials while asking myself how I can give the overlooked value and worth.

My artistic voice is one of second chances. I create works from a state of irrepressible hope, a pessimist compelled to optimistic art. The scale of my pieces began shifting after completing my graduate studies in 2012 at the University of Kansas. In 2013, my daughter's entrance made me a mother. Overwhelming and pervasive, my ideas expanded out between breastfeeding, snotty noses, and arguments about the budget. The works gradually became lap-sized, allowing me to create within the two dwindling hours of naptime.

That same year, I was gifted an (atro-

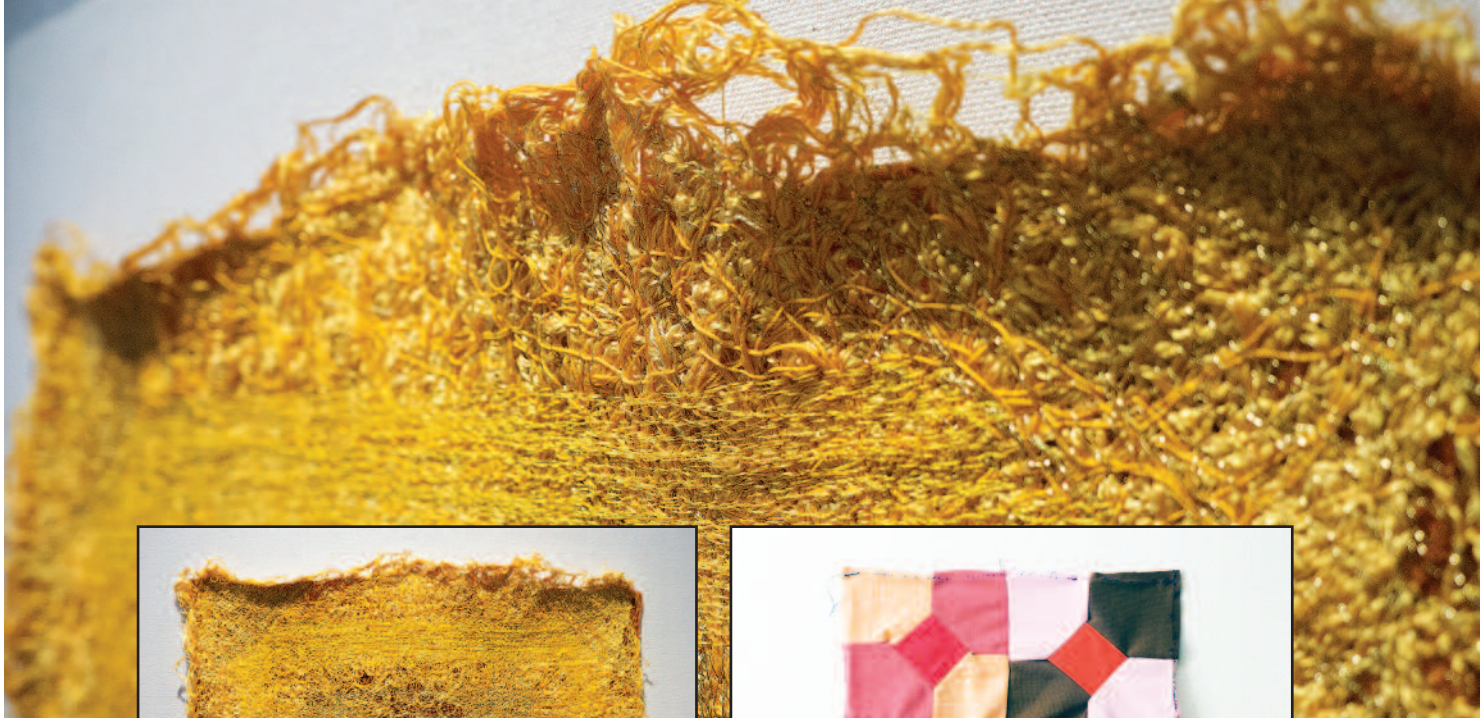
cious) quilt top. Unfinished and unwanted, the quilt was made entirely of double knit polyester. It was the kind of quilt that many 80 year-old women own, made of squares of hot pink, caution orange, and the occasional floral monstrosity. Yet, it was strangely alluring and I welcomed the challenge of creating pieces from something so obviously discarded.

What followed is a series of more than 30 thread *Sketches*, inspired by sections of the quilt I selectively curated. While the pieces started out as simple material studies and formal experiments in color, deeper concepts surfaced through the act of making. I am finding hope and comfort in taking something twice removed from its origin as a nefarious garment, the leisure suit. By redeeming these leisure suit blocks to a position where they are noticed, I am elevating them.

These *Sketches* first appeared in *home[maker]*, my 2014 solo exhibition at the Octagon Center for the Arts in Ames, Iowa. Conceptually, this show explored the challenges and joys



CATHERINE REINHART *Forms of Collection: of layering* Found quilt blocks, thread, string painting, free-motion machine stitching, 39" x 60", 2014.



ABOVE: CATHERINE REINHART *Forms of Arrangement: of surfeit*
Velvet, silk, gold threads, string painting, free-motion machine stitching, 22" x 20", 2014. With detail.



RIGHT: CATHERINE REINHART *Sketch XV* Found quilt blocks, thread, string painting, free-motion machine stitching, 22" x 20", 2015.
Detail TOP.

I encountered as a maker of both art and a home. The piece *Forms of Arrangement: of surfeit*, with its rich materials and surface, represents the abundant blessings I have found through this period of exploration.

Our culture has stripped motherhood and homemaking of its worth and value. It is my sincere desire to help viewers reconsider this graceless notion. Through the use of discarded textiles and the ritual actions of the domestic arena—stacking, sorting, washing, pilling—I am endowing glory to the homeward-oriented life.

Amidst this season, I have found other companions, fellow artists—mothers. We have whispered our fears about motherhood and art making across messy kitchen tables and along

base boards lined with dust bunnies. This community is essential and continues to be a lifeline in my studio work. Hope thrives in my ever-changing artistic practice and I welcome it in.

Currently, I am creating a series of works inspired by the Carrie Hall Quilt Block Collection at the Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence, Kansas. This project was made possible through a generous Personal Development grant from the Surface Design Association. Works in progress can be viewed on my website and blog.

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