



ABSTRACT IMAGES WOVEN IN FINE THREADS TO BE EXHIBITED AT CONTEMPORARY CRAFT

PITTSBURGH, PA—October 1, 2012—Photographs of a textile mill floor—subtle scars, stains and roughened surfaces, the only evidence of a refrigeration plant that once occupied the site—are transformed into abstract images woven in fine threads on a Jacquard loom. Through these weavings, on view at the Society for Contemporary Craft (SCC) as part of the *Bridge Exhibition Series*, New York artist Betty Vera searches beneath the superficiality, noise and visual clutter of everyday life to reveal the underlying solitude, deep silence and fleeting nature of existence. Also featuring solo exhibitions highlighting Kevin Snipes' ceramic vessels patterned with figurative drawings, and Melissa Cameron's saw-pierced recycled objects that investigate pattern and the interdependence between elements and organic systems, the biennial *Bridge Exhibition Series* opens with a public reception on Friday, November 9, from 5:30 to 8 pm and continues through March 30, 2013.

With her use of a digital Jacquard loom, pixels become threads as the artist creates woven images that blur distinctions between computer technology, weaving, painting and photography. In her tapestries, aesthetics of form, texture and space reference human relationships, the environments people inhabit or the intangible forces of nature, such as the wind that pushed some trash against a fence to accumulate in the shadows or the graffiti occupying an otherwise empty wall. Vera explores aspects of reality that are often unseen, ignored or forgotten. About the work, the artist comments, "Industrial and urban surfaces record our own comings and goings—often without our realizing it—but sometimes intentionally as we scrawl cryptic messages for passersby to discover. Leaving traces of ourselves everywhere, we continually impose new layers of history over the old."

Vera grew up in the Midwest and attended Southern Illinois University before graduating from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, with a B.F.A. in drawing and painting. She studied textile design at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) and Parsons School of Design in New York, and subsequently began merging painting and fiber art, and combining warp painting and tapestry weaving techniques to create two-dimensional art textiles. Vera earned her M.F.A. in Studio Art at Montclair State University in New Jersey, where she expanded her studio practice into fiber sculpture and digital weaving technology. She has studied Jacquard weaving at the Montreal Centre for Contemporary Textiles as well as The Jacquard Center in Hendersonville, NC; and currently lives and maintains her studio in the rural Hudson Valley.



Betty Vera, *Grid*, 2012, Cotton, Jacquard tapestry, 53" x 47"  
Photo: D. James Dee



Betty Vera, *Layered*, 2012, Cotton, Jacquard tapestry,  
46" x 52" Photo: D. James Dee

Vera has taught fiber art classes at Montclair State University and FIT, as well as intensive workshops at Penland School of Crafts, NC, Peters Valley Craft Center, Layton, NJ, and Harrisville Designs, NH. The artist's work is in corporate and private collections, and has been exhibited widely in galleries, museums and art centers across the United States. Her work has been critically reviewed in *American Craft*, *Fiberarts*, *Surface Design*, and *Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot*, and featured in *Interiors Magazine*, as well as *Weaving for Worship: Handweaving for Churches and Synagogues* by Lucy Brusic and Joyce Harter; *Fabrics: A Guide for Interior Designers and Architects* by Marypaul Yates; and *Fiber Art Today* by Carol K. Russell.

To complement the *Bridge 12 Exhibition Series*, educational programs are planned to encourage an exchange of ideas. On Saturday, November 10, from 9 am–3 pm, Vera will teach *Line & Space: An Intuitive Approach to Fiber Sculpture*, a studio workshop in which students explore simple strategies for constructing lightweight forms to exploit the expressive potential of line and its dynamic relationship with space. Class tuition is \$100, with a \$25 materials fee. Like many artists who love handweaving for its color potential and tactile qualities, Vera is also part of the digital age and uses new technologies in her work. In a slide lecture, *From Hand to Computer-Assisted Loom: Following the Thread*, also on November 10, from 5–6:30 pm, the artist examines the relationship between her handwoven tapestries and a more recent body of work consisting of computer-assisted Jacquard tapestries. Suggested donation is \$5. On Sunday, November 11, Vera shares her personal journey as a fiber artist in a Meet a Maker program, *Touching Threads: An Artist's Passion for Materials & Process*. Replete with “please do touch” examples, this presentation covers her involvement with handweaving, sculpture and computer-assisted Jacquard tapestry. Participants will look at her creative process, materials, techniques, influences and sources of inspiration, and receive tips on how to display and care for fine textile art. The program runs from 11:30 am–1 pm, and tuition is \$20. These programs are co-sponsored by the Fiberarts Guild of Pittsburgh. For more information or to register, call The Studio at 412.261.7003, x25.

An exhibition brochure documenting Vera's solo show includes biographical information, photo-documentation of the artist's work and an essay, *Urban Patina As Muse*, written by Patricia Malarcher, a free lance writer and studio artist based in Englewood, New Jersey. Malarcher was formerly the editor of the *Surface Design Journal* and was the recipient of a Renwick Fellowship for research in contemporary crafts. *Bridge 12: Melissa Cameron, Kevin Snipes, Betty Vera* is made possible, in part, by the Allegheny Regional Asset District, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Elizabeth R. Raphael Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation and other generous donors.

#### **About Society for Contemporary Craft (SCC)**

Founded by Elizabeth Rockwell Raphael in 1971 and located in its current Strip District home for more than 25 years, SCC is today one of the top 10 nonprofit organizations for the promotion of contemporary craft in the U.S., and an international leader in the field. SCC engages people in the creative experience through cutting edge exhibitions focused on multicultural diversity and non-mainstream art at both its Main Galleries at 21st and Smallman streets in the Strip, and a Satellite Gallery at BNY Mellon Center in Downtown Pittsburgh. SCC also offers studio classes in a range of media and a retail store with work not seen elsewhere in the region. Proceeds from The Studio and The Store support regional, national and international artists, and SCC's free outreach programs. The Strip District facility is open Monday through Saturday, from 10 am to 5 pm, and other hours by appointment. Class times vary. There is a suggested donation of \$5. The BNY Mellon Center Satellite Gallery is open daily until midnight. Visit [www.contemporarycraft.org](http://www.contemporarycraft.org) or call 412.261.7003 for more information or to be added to the mailing list. Visitors can also craft a conversation with SCC at [facebook.com/SCCPgh](https://facebook.com/SCCPgh) or by searching for SCCraft on Twitter.

#### **Links**

**Melissa Cameron:** [melissacameron.net](http://melissacameron.net)

**Kevin Snipes:** [kevinsnipes.com](http://kevinsnipes.com)

**Fiberarts Guild of Pittsburgh:** [fiberartspgh.org/guild](http://fiberartspgh.org/guild)

**Betty Vera:** [bettyvera.com](http://bettyvera.com)