

VISUAL ARTS

'Mining' exhibition diverse and deep

By Debra Wolf
For the Journal-Constitution
Friday, August 29, 2008

REVIEW

"Mining the Surface: New Sensibilities in Art Textiles"

Through Sept. 20. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Prices: \$250 - \$12,500. Swan Coach House Gallery,
3130 Slaton Drive, Atlanta. 404-266-2636; www.swancoachhouse.com

Bottom line: In a show that encourages us to look closely at the range and skill involved in fiber arts, diverse themes and techniques come together in a lively exhibition.



Detail from Lisa Reich's "(in)CONSEQUENTIAL"

Bright strips of felt are wrapped tightly around neon-colored drinking straws. Stitched and grouped into organic circular forms, they resemble a coral reef or undersea animal crawling across the gallery floor.

This is the work of Leisa Rich, whose delightful "(in)CONSEQUENTIAL" takes on a changing configuration each time she arranges its individual components.

Just one of the contributors to "Mining the Surface," Rich works in fiber, which, by definition, includes fabric, paper, string, yarn, thread and other materials. Sewing, weaving, dyeing and printing are among the varied techniques that fiber artists master to create their diverse (and often sculptural) art.

Among the many notable works on view:

> Whitney Stansell re-creates two periods in her grandfather's life by crafting a pair of jackets from dress pattern paper, ink and thread. Called "Garment," the installation includes one suit coat and one prison uniform. It is a startling and poignant ensemble filled with remarkable and intimate detail, bearing witness to actual events in the artist's family history.

> Margaret Quiggle's "Cloth and Memory/Transparent Memory" combines two separately pieced and stitched cloths, one hung in front of the other. Photographic images and silhouette cutouts offer elements of recollection we can tangibly hang on to. Displayed (serendipitously) beneath a vent, air billows through the lightweight layers, invoking the hide-and-seek nature of fading memory.

> Judith Simmons presents caustic commentary on contemporary life. Her embroidered images contain anonymous characters resembling "everyman" — they seem to relate better to television than to the larger world, or each other. Accompanied by wry musings, each neatly executed composition brings deadpan humor to clever and reflective artworks.

There's plenty more to appreciate in this exhibition, including Jennifer Jenkins' striking fabric collage, a pair of wall hangings by Carol LeBaron, Tommye Scanlin's soft-spoken tapestry and Amelia Netto's abstraction of threads and twigs.