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Getting Warmer

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A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Department of Art and Design

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Fine Arts

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by

Jessica Jones

May 2007

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Patricia Mink, Chair

Anita DeAngelis

Catherine Murray

Keywords: Digital Printing, Quilts, Fiber, Geography

## ABSTRACT

Getting Warmer

by

Jessica Jones

This thesis is in support of the exhibition entitled Getting Warmer, on display in Slocumb Galleries at East Tennessee State University from March 19 to March 23, 2007. The exhibition represents an exploration in the medium of fibers, incorporating digitally printed photographs on fabric and quilted structures. The collage of photographic textures and the stitched lines of machine embroidery reflect the artist's interest in the formal qualities of mapmaking and topography. Conceptually, the work is concerned with the idea of material as landscape and artwork as personal geography. This thesis addresses the artistic and cultural influences, the artistic process and previous works, and the conceptual development of the work.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Getting Warmer* is a series of non-traditional quilts combining photographic imagery with quilted fabric structures. These quilts are composed of my own digital photographs printed onto fabric. For this work, I have chosen to photograph clothing, and while the photographic imagery is of fabric itself –fabric digitally printed onto fabric, there is a visual playfulness between the printed image and the actual fabric making up the quilt itself. Printing images of fabric onto fabric, as a self-referential idea, reinforces the notion of self-examination and introspection. By examining material to be used in the work itself, I am examining the fabric that surrounds me. The quilts in the exhibition *Getting Warmer* explore a “personal geography.” My work is a way of searching: discovering new processes and materials and exploring visual and spatial relationships with form, imagery, and material.

In this series of pieces, I have photographed fabric as intimate landscape and a mapped personal environment. Maps are essentially patterns that establish relationships between parts of something large or complex. These pieces are not merely the examining of pattern and material but the examining of a more personal landscape. Personal geography is, for me, the examination of complex relationships with others and with an environment -both the physical and social landscape. This kind of geography, as it relates to personal language and a sense of place, has been used by many artists, and these works in the traditional form of quilts reinforce the personal nature of this exploration. These pieces are about my longing to reconcile not only visual and spatial relationships but also personal relationships that seem both distant and close, both real and simulated.

Quilts carry associations with the domestic, the familial, and the comforting. They reference use in the home, and in announcing events in families and communities, they mark time and place. Quilts have also historically been outlets for women’s creative expression. For me, the form of a quilt in combination with the imagery of clothing and the technique of digital printing creates a dialogue between traditional and contemporary issues of intimacy and femininity.

This show is entitled *Getting Warmer* for a number of reasons. Since the work is composed of photographs of clothing, the title may refer to the warmth of clothes or the warmth of human body heat, and the form of a quilt represents the warmth of a blanket, or bed. Many of these pieces have imagery of printed flowers, which could also signify the warmth of spring. However, the title *Getting Warmer* is a direct reference to the Hot/Cold game that children play. An object is hidden, and in order to find it, someone simply wanders, hearing someone else say “you’re getting warmer” or “you’re getting colder” depending on whether the person is moving towards or away from the object. A mental map to the object is made by experimentation, discovering what is the right way to move as well as the wrong way. In finding out what will and will not work in a piece, I see making art as a similar game of searching, play, and surprises.

## CHAPTER 2

### BEDFELLOWS:

#### QUILTING, EMBROIDERY, AND THE DIGITAL PRINT

A quilt can be defined as sewn layers: layering materials and stitching to adhere them. The pieces in this exhibition are layered fabrics, stitched together, and cut square. They are mostly flat and have binding on the edges, and in structure and in construction they are formally rooted in traditional quilted forms.

The materials used in these works were chosen for their ability to be printed (to pass through the printer and hold ink on the surface without “crocking” or rubbing off) as well as for appealing texture, transparency, and weave structure, all of which affect color, print quality, and ultimately composition. The fabrics I have used include cotton, rayon, linen, and silk (habotai, chiffon, gauze, and organza) as well as found household material (tablecloths, bed sheets, clothing, lace, curtains, and linens). In many instances, the fabric was chosen to re-create in texture or weave structure the fabric that was photographed.

Image quality of the photographs is not particularly important to me. Although some images are slightly manipulated in Photoshop, most images that I print are fairly true to the original photograph. Images are inkjet printed onto paper-backed fabric with either a desktop C80 series Epson printer or a 9600 Epson printer. Digital printing on fabric, as it pertains to my work, is similar to techniques of surface design (like printing dye onto fabric) or printmaking. However, the digital printing process can achieve a texture that cannot be produced any other way. While I want some photographic elements to remain, the final piece of art is not dependent on a photograph being crisp and highly dimensional: the image is cut apart and collaged along with different materials. Not only are images repositioned and sewn across, but they are printed on fabric that has a forgiving gridded structure. Therefore, the quality of a photographic image printed onto fabric is less of a concern.



Figure 1: Original Photograph for *Modeled*.



Figure 2: *Modeled*.  
Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered. 28x35 2006

The embroidery in these quilts is machine stitching, done on a Janome 6500, a sewing machine designed for “free-motion embroidery.” Stitching functions as a structural element by adhering layers and as a formal element by creating line, shape, and texture. It can mimic and enhance the printed image and can become similar to drawing, as shading and outlining. Stitching also creates physical texture because sewing through several layers creates dimension.

These quilts are composed by collage. The photographic images are printed several times onto different fabrics, cut apart, and repositioned. In addition, the images are collaged in layers by layering translucent fabrics, and stitching, removing, and replacing sections. When printing the same

image onto different fabrics, some fabrics appear differently in print quality and color. This is due to how each fabric holds the ink on the surface, what printer or computer was used, and whether or not the fabric was treated with commercial products to enhance the print. I saw these slight printing discrepancies as new design elements, and slightly shifting color and texture as well as printer errors were resolved through collage.

I incorporated other materials and techniques to enhance texture or mingle with the photographic image. In one instance, netting from a bath sponge was stitched down onto the piece because in scale and pattern it mimicked the lace that had been photographically printed. It provided a physical version of the photographic image. In

another piece, a photograph of a coat was printed out, and material from the seams of the actual coat itself were stitched onto the quilt. (The printed material and the physical material from the source are nearly indistinguishable). Another technique used was physically manipulating the fabric. Fabric was gathered, pleated, and twisted; this was



Figure 3: Detail of *Ruffled*. This shows netting material adhered to surface.

done by hand or with the aid of a small smocking machine. The manipulated material increased the complexity of the pieces, and gave the viewer a reward upon closer inspection when seeing the interaction between the printed photographic image and the actual physical texture of fabric. This also creates a sense of play, through the effect of trompe l'oeil.

My work breaks from convention by using non-traditional printing processes, a stitched line akin to drawing, a method of composing through collage, and a type of trompe l'oeil between image and material. By employing these techniques, my work in fiber has commonalities with mixed media and painting.

The formal qualities of the quilted structure are crucial to my work. More traditional recognizable quilted structures share with my work an aspect of arrangement, repetition, and pattern and a physical, dimensional surface. In my work, physical texture can both enhance and confound the photographic texture that is printed onto the fabric. Some of the photographic qualities are very evident and some are not; these pieces are quilted, but their dimension does not necessarily correspond to the photographic image. The photograph shows volume and some sewing techniques and materials stitched to the surface flatten that volume. Formally in this work, I am attempting to resolve these two things: the printed photographic image and the actual texture of the fabric and material. The techniques of digital printing and quilting have a formal connection in their

structures; they are all inherently based on grids. The small, square pixels in digital printing are similar to the large squares of traditional pieced quilts, relating back to the gridded structure of fabric itself.

## CHAPTER 3

### MENDING:

#### ARTISTIC INFLUENCES OF PAINTING AND FIBER

Quilts, in having associations with family tradition, comfort, and the home, can carry powerful meaning through their material. Clothing is often used in quilts because it is ready-made fabric that, when exhausted as clothing, can be viable material for making quilts. One quilt artist, Missouri Pettway, from Gee's Bend (a rural African American community in Alabama) quilted the work clothes of her husband who had died. The quilt was made for her daughter Arlonzia to comfort her while she was grieving for her father. Arlonzia remembers her mother saying "I'm gong to take his work clothes, shape them into a quilt to remember him and cover up under it..." (Arnett 67). She used fabric from pants legs and shirrtails and incorporated into the design the obvious stains and wear of the material. This also gave the work physicality and history. This work is an example of the intimate, familial relationships that quilts can signify.

Before beginning work in fibers, I was working primarily in paint and collage. I realized that cutout paper images, the material with which I was working, were much more interesting to me than the compositions the paper was helping to construct. I began to look at the work of Eva Hesse, who combined the ideas of painting and drawing with the physicality of other materials. Hesse's work is, at times, very simply constructed but still visually mysterious and magical. Hesse understood the potential of materials to evoke and transform. I wanted to find a way to use materials that would be evocative and mysterious and would hold my attention the way that Hesse's work did. Although I had studied painting and drawing, that knowledge did not give me a basis for truly understanding materials. Like Hesse, I wanted the ability to reexamine everything that I encountered, to make all material viable for making art, and to become sensitive, responsive, and creative with regards to materials. This was ultimately what led me to study fibers.

Warren Seelig, writing in *American Craft*, notes the desire of many artists to recapture materials to which they feel "desensitized" (Seelig, 43). He writes how we do not encounter enough raw and natural materials, how we live in climate-controlled,

hermetically sealed environments, and how we experience reality through television screens. He believes that because of this, experiencing real, raw materials can be a “startling revelation,” and we have a natural desire to experience these materials, or more specifically, a “profound physical and psychological need” (44). Seelig writes:

“Recognizing that we are all enveloped in this atmosphere, it is not surprising that artists more than ever are choosing materials like body fluids, animal carcasses, hair, bone, dirt and other kinds of organic and industrial debris, not only to shock the viewer, but also to resensitize us... to the world of the physical” (43).

Seelig also notes that in textile and fiber-related media, the “empathy with materials” is especially prevalent. Addressing the desire for connection and re-sensitizing specifically in fiber artists, he writes “For many artists involved in fiber-related media, a sense of knowing comes through *materiality* and manifests itself in the need to build and to fabricate” (44) [emphasis mine].

Materiality goes beyond the experience of materials that seem new and fresh to our de-sensitized eyes and hands. It is also, according to an interview with Dennis Doordan, “the issues, themes, potentialities, and limitations that arise out of the materials employed in the making” (Fricke, 8). Therefore, materiality can be the understanding of any material and the understanding of the formal capabilities and conceptual underpinnings of that material. Seelig also expands the definition of materiality in a similar way:

“To some, materiality suggests ideas about surface and form because of the material’s inherent properties, but also, and more importantly, because of the way material seems to contain or to have absorbed unique information meaningful to whoever makes contact with it” (44).

Materiality was essentially what I was responding to in Hesse’s work and also in the quilts of Gee’s Bend. It was a combination of newness and familiarity, recognizing formal potentialities of material and recognizing the associations inherent in materials. That material carried inherent meaning eventually became a central theme of my work in fibers, causing me to recognize this same idea in other art, and to ask why certain materials were chosen by artists.

As I began to work in fibers, I remembered work I saw in the summer of 2000 in London at the newly opened Tate Modern. On exhibit were the works of Tracey Emin: starkly confessional appliquéd quilts with grotesque phrases and misspellings. I responded to Emin's way of forcing sexuality into the materials and form and her acknowledgement that quilts, tents, or clothes can be sexually charged objects. The forms of quilts, beds, clothes, etc. are chosen specifically for the meanings and associations they already carry with them. Simply, there is a reason for a piece to be in the form of a quilt rather than paint on canvas, and the ideas of Tracey Emin are dependent on these forms already laden with meaning. While researching Emin's work, I found the piece, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995*, (1995), that led me to further understand the play between form and content. In this piece, whose title marks a date like many traditional quilts, or a birth and death like a tombstone, Emin has appliquéd names of people she has "slept with" onto the interior surface of a tent. In order to see the names, one must crawl into the tent itself. The term sleep in the title suggested a broader meaning than the purely sexual connotation, as Emin has included the names of her parents and others that one can recognize as representing different intimate or familial relationships. The way that the viewer must crawl inside the piece and see the walls of the tent lined with quilted material reinforces that idea of intimacy, and ultimately fabric is intimate in that it always surrounds us. Her appliquéd quilts also reference the historical quilts of the suffrage movement in Britain by the Suffrage Atelier, declaring women's right to vote (Parker 191). In this sense, the quilts are already announcements and statement-makers before the text is read.

One fiber artist's work that I respond to is the work of Dorothy Caldwell. Caldwell creates drawings through the technique of mending. There are stitched lines in her work -a visual vocabulary borrowed from mending techniques. This provides an interesting form to the work through pattern and line quality, a personal language and iconography for the artist, and also an interesting conceptual point of reference historically. Caldwell uses mending as a language to discuss her own experiences and personal history. Jennifer Angus describes a recent display of Caldwell's work containing artifacts of mending that Caldwell had collected over the years, which reinforce her conversancy with domestic traditions. Mentioning Caldwell's relationship to these

objects, Angus writes, “Like a geographer or an archaeologist digging for clues to the earth’s past, Caldwell mined the items for their emotional poignancy... and infused her work with a mystery and longing which is simply magical” (22).

In response to the awkward, childlike quality of the stitched lines in Caldwell’s work, Angus asks if she considers these works to be maps. Caldwell responds:

“I like the word map in relation to these pieces. If a map is a pattern that organizes a series of observations about the land, then these could be called maps. The aboriginal people of Australia make paintings that to us are wonderful abstract shapes and patterns, but to them are maps of places, geological formations, events that happened there, and creation myths.”

Mending is not an end to itself for Caldwell; the work is always concerned with mending, but it is not merely about mending. Caldwell’s work is interesting to me not only because she deals with specific forms that are chosen for their inherent meaning, but because she allows her work to be freely associated with geography and mapping. Caldwell relates this idea of mapping a step further to a broader understanding, of not merely place, but of her own personal history.

## CHAPTER 4

### INTERSECTIONS

During my first year in Johnson City, Mars was closer to Earth than it had been in about 60,000 years; it was a bright glowing ball in the night sky. I went to an observatory to look through the telescope and see the glinting polar cap and I began looking at images of Mars sent from the NASA Mars rovers, *Spirit* and *Opportunity*, and the satellite images of the planet's surface. The photographs of Mars were collaged together to form a larger image or map of the landscape and topography. I responded to the way that the images were pieced, lining up perfectly in some places, but not in others, the slices of data revealing themselves by shifts in color or scale. I could not help but see a connection with the pages of fabric on which I had printed photographs and how they were assembled.



Figure 4: *Map 1*  
Digitally printed and discharged fabric;  
machine quilted and embroidered. 14x21  
2004

As I became more interested in maps, I came across the stick maps of the Marshall Islands. A person who traveled by boat between the islands sometimes cannot see any of the islands on the horizon, and the maps (made out of sticks, arranged in a way not unlike those I had been photographing) describe the currents of the water, rather than the islands themselves (Harmon 143). I was interested in how something unstable, like

water, could be mapped. I began to see everything in terms of mapmaking and realized that maps are something larger than just documentation of the visual world. In making simple arrangements of sticks, there could be a sense of direction and security traveling where there are no landmarks or points of reference. I identified with these maps and saw a connection with what I had been feeling in my environment: a map could be an anchor when drifting. This began a long investigation into cartography and the nature of maps.

When I moved to east Tennessee, the unfamiliar surroundings forced me to examine how I relate to my environment and to other people and how I can be artistically

resourceful with what surrounds me. I began by photographing the ground while walking, and by accident, this decision to document my surroundings in this way became my first interest in making maps in my work. The images that emerged in my first digitally printed pieces were predictably sticks, concrete, plants, rocks, etc. I saw these images as collecting information; it was searching, stumbling, and sorting.

I saw these two things, the stick maps and the rover photographs, as metaphors for my recent decisions and discoveries. I felt like I was essentially that person lost between islands, that isolated rover collecting data, trying to link information together. Both approaches to maps were attempts to find patterns and relationships between things, especially that of the observer to the environment.

The new, blank beginning of a series of works can be confusing and intimidating. Instead of printing my map-like images on blank fabric, I dyed and discharged dye to get a visual texture in the fabric that I could react to in the printing process and compositional decisions. I then digitally printed over the fabric to see if the two processes could interact. I worked with digital images of sticks, rocks, and plants and I wanted the texture that these images could provide; however, there were not enough layers or enough history and information in the surface of this work. Ultimately, I decided I was not using the materials or the digital print together effectively.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAPPING

Dennis Wood, author of The Power of Maps, describes how maps are rarely about what we see; they are only about what we understand. Maps are also never really what they show us. Mapping can speak volumes about something with a few patterns; human brains understand much more information than simply that there are lines and



Figure 5: *Map Study I*  
Digitally printed cotton; machine quilted and embroidered. 9x7.5  
2005  
First watercolor map, printed on fabric.



Figure 6: *Map study II*  
Digitally printed cotton; machine quilted and embroidered. 7x9  
2005  
Second watercolor map, printed on fabric

shapes. However, Wood also proposes that maps always expose their makers' intentions, and this should not necessarily be avoided in mapmaking, but understood and possibly embraced. In my work, as a response to this, I began making maps very literally, using the help of found maps and downloaded satellite images. I constructed maps of places that had significance to me and often these places were locations where I had slept, making an attempt to relate the work back to beds and sleeping. These maps were drawn in charcoal and watercolor, were photographed, digitally printed, and stitched. I was concerned with creating formal map-like qualities recreating the marks in digitally printed quilts with drawn and stitched lines and colored sections like map symbols. For me, maps combined both pattern and language. They were coded, as Wood describes:

"It is, of course, an illusion: there is *nothing natural about a map*. It is a cultural artifact, a culmination of choices made among choices every one of which reveals a value: not the

world, but a slice of a piece of the world; not nature but a slant on it; not innocent, but loaded with intentions and purposes; not directly but through a glass; not straight, but mediated by words and other signs; not, in a word, as it is, but in... *code*" (Wood,108).

I became interested in how maps exposed their makers, how they employed visual codes, and how they created such interesting visual texture. I saw a connection between the meaningful patterning in maps and the meanings of quilt patterns, often suggested by their names (Flying Geese, Wedding Ring, Drunkard's Path), which describe experiences in the natural and social landscape. By understanding mapmaking ideas, translating them into quilts, and relating them to my personal environment and experience, I could move towards more autobiographical work in a way that was not explicit. I used my work as a form of personal research, and the coded language of maps provided freedom for this research to occur.

In my search for unique maps, I came across this excerpt from Lewis Carroll's "Hunting of the Snark":

He had brought a large map  
Representing the sea,  
Without the least vestige of land:  
And the crew were much pleased  
When they found it to be  
A map they could all understand. (683)

Maps are interesting to me in their contradictions; they are deceptive and never as objective as they seem. They often describe things that are visual and are themselves visually rich, but maps are ultimately about perception of the mapmaker or of the social environment in which they are made. Maps tell us relationships of selected things that are part of something too large and complex to be understood entirely at one time.

The map described above is impossible to actually use as a map. It is a blank sheet of paper and the confusing thing about this map is that it shows no relationships between anything.

I decided to embrace my sense of drifting and searching, the unknown and unpredictable. I found that there are many stories of mapmaking being about absurdity

and confusion, and this is another contradiction in maps. Rather than exhibiting knowledge of something, a map can show that one is searching. Maps can describe being lost rather than found. Maps can be simultaneously useful and misleading. Lewis Carroll also has an example of this use of maps and mapmaking from “Sylvie and Bruno Concluded”:

“That’s another thing we’ve learned from your Nation,” said Mein Herr, “map-making. But we’ve carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?” “About six inches to the mile.” “Only six inches!” exclaimed Mein Herr. “We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!” “Have you used it much?” I enquired. “It has never been spread out, yet,” said Mein Herr: “the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.” (556)

In response to this, and quoting Carroll in my work, I began making quilts that were the size of beds. I wanted to reference that absurdity of mapmaking and the



Figure 6: Di Sotto in Su  
Digitally printed linen; machine quilted and embroidered. 56x70  
2007  
Quilt made about the same size of a bed.

obsession of the maker. These pieces were derived from photographs of beds, and were scaled one to one, exactly the scale of the location that they described. While these pieces were interesting, the increased scale did not contribute to the result. Quilts have no trouble referencing beds. Emin’s piece *My Bed*, 1998, would really follow this out to its conclusion by just displaying the bed, the object representing the place itself. A piece that truly incorporated the location of a quilt on a bed, with the

obsessive, absurd measurement and documentation of a map, is a piece by Anna von Mertens. Her piece *Self-Portrait* (1999), in which, using a laser leveler, she created a topographical map of her body lying on a bed under a layer of fabric. The fabric was then

quilted in the topographic patterns and then displayed on a bed, and the viewer can look down onto the recorded topography “The overall composition is reminiscent of a thumbprint” (Hemmings, 27). What I was searching for in my work was to maintain the quilted form in a meaningful, important, and specific way. The identity of the artist and meaning of the piece are located in the form and process.

## CHAPTER 6

### FALLING, FLYING, DREAMING

The sense of an aerial view is important in my work: an observing eye with the ability to see everything, like the view of a map. As with satellite imagery, an aerial view is one of surveillance, control, and mastery and I am reminded of my father's words to me in talking about his experience flying airplanes and seeing the landscape from the air: "After I learned to fly, I was never lost." However, I often have dreams of falling from the sky, and while the aerial perspective can be a view of control, it is for me, a view of instability. I met the possibility of including dreams as a part of my work with some trepidation. Dreams can be very revealing and personal and cannot be controlled. Flying and falling have similarities and are, in some ways, exactly opposite. Like my interpretations of two aerial views and the opposing ideas inherent in mapmaking, the photographic image of fabric and the actual fabric material have a similar relationship. Both appear dimensional, but one is deceptively dimensional. The image and material are the same and opposite, like the image in a mirror, which is a perfect reflection of reality but is still only a flat reflection.

After working with the concepts of maps, aerial views, and personal searching, someone showed me a small delicate map, no bigger than a handkerchief, printed on fabric. Despite its fragility, it was printed on what felt like very strong silk; it was made for durability. It was a map of Europe (one half of Europe printed on each side) to be worn in the pocket of a paratrooper's uniform. I admired how it was square in shape and the size was a reference to handkerchiefs one would put in a pocket. This map was a tool, not unlike the parachute. The idea of parachuting seemed to perfectly combine my ideas of falling and flying. I thought about how many times I had seen a cartoon character pick up an article of clothing or a bed sheet and jump out a window, floating safely to the ground. Fabric represented security and delicacy; this, again, combined opposites. It could shield one from heat or cold, carry one safely to the ground, and help one find one's way across the earth. This contradictory map-printed material, seemed like a personal and intimate piece of clothing. Combining this notion of security and delicacy

with the associations of clothing, I began to make digital photographs of my own clothes to create maps, which ultimately led to the pieces included in *Getting Warmer*.

## CHAPTER 7

### SURPRISES

When making art, I have noticed that I work intuitively, and in doing this, I can look back at a piece or series and discover decisions I did not realize I was making in the work. I noticed in the middle of making the series of pieces in *Getting Warmer* that I had primarily photographed flowers. This had not occurred to me at the beginning of the series, and I had done this without intention- I was simply photographing clothing that was important to me and that had interesting pattern and texture. I began to make this a conscious decision in the work in terms of content, because the flowers essentially worked alongside the concept of mapmaking in that they referenced the actual ground that I had originally been photographing. They also referred to beds in wordplay, like “a bed of flowers”, and they maintained the idea of textile printing and patterns. To me, in their printed pattern and texture they resembled satellite maps and aerial perspectives. Flowers also referenced Dutch still life painting, which used a type of coded, categorized information.

The clothing construction and embellishments evident in the photographs of fabric informs the titles of these pieces. Dressmaking terms: *Pressed, Seamed, Gathered*, etc. refer not only to a technique or aspect of dressmaking, but each also has a more personal meaning. For example, the term *Collared* can mean a collared shirt, but “to



Figure 8: *Collared*  
Digitally printed cotton, rayon, silk organza, silk chiffon and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered. 27x35  
2007

collar” can mean to detain in conversation. They are all in the past tense to suggest an interaction that has taken place. I wanted these titles to become a direct reference to clothing and an indirect reference to people with whom I interact on a very personal level.

The inclusion of flowers, the reference to dressmaking, and the quilt form that uses embroidery in this series

bring to this work an element of femininity, as these things are all associated with women and women's domestic work. In *The Subversive Stitch*, Rozsika Parker notes that embroidery was a way that women proved femininity (Parker 6). Both quilts and embroidery are seen as comforting (154) signifying domesticity. In a contradiction that I enjoy in embroidery, it signifies femininity but also carries a subtext. Parker argues throughout this book that women often used embroidery, other needlework, quilting, etc. not only to express creativity, but to express discontent.

At the very beginning of this series of works involving mapmaking, I was reading Virginia Woolf's book Mrs Dalloway. There are many references to flowers and even sewing in the book, and there are also many maps available of Clarissa Dalloway's walk throughout her day in London. The book is Woolf's critique on the social expectations of women, especially those in the bourgeois society. This is evident in the opening line: "Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (Woolf, 3). This book combines the idea of a place in time and a woman in a specific location, both geographically and socially. It uses flower imagery in connection to its examination of the feminine.

It is possible that I was including flowers somewhat ironically, both to acknowledge the historic relationship of quilt making and embroidery as signifiers of femininity and also to relate my work to the artwork of the feminist movement in the twentieth century that reclaimed that iconography. This vocabulary seemed appropriate to deal with my own response towards femininity. Although these flowers were derived from flower patterns found on feminine clothing, like the flowers in Mrs. Dalloway, they are used as symbols, and personal iconography.

## CHAPTER 8

### WHERE AM I GOING?

Bruce Metcalf has said of craft that it must be made substantially by hand, it is medium-specific, it is defined by its use, and it is defined by its past. In a statement about the relationship of craft to art: “Anything can be art,... But not anything can be craft” (Metcalf 40). These pieces are of that nature. My work conceptually hinges on the formal aspects of the craft-based medium of quilts and recalls the ideas and associations quilts have attached to them. What is interesting to me about quilt making is that it is a medium that cannot completely escape its past, as Metcalf points out, and it has immediate associations. Therefore, because these pieces are recognizably quilted, I align this work with contemporary, conceptual work that is rooted in craft forms.

I first came to make quilts because of the opportunity to work with materials and further understand them. A large part of my research has been about re-sensitizing to physical textures around me and searching for that visual, tactile response and connection, an “empathy with materials” (Seelig, 44). Quilts, with their historic and social connotations, became interesting to me formally the more I worked with their materials, but they had a particular resonance with my ideas involving intimacy and personal history. Jennifer Angus describes a similar discovery about mending clothing:

“I recently purchased some barkcloth from the 1950s and made it into a dress. But when I put it on and moved my arms, the cloth ripped in two places. I assumed that the cloth was so old it was brittle and deteriorating. Disappointed, I took up needle and thread and rather crudely tried to repair the tears, thus creating a thick patch in one place and a ridge of fabric... in another. With these two mends, I created a kind of topography on the dress, which suggested a type of landscape. Thus began a chronicle, a history of my dress’s wear and to some degree, my own story.” (Angus, 20).

The response to this work from viewers is surprising. Some see the imagery connected very literally to mapmaking, and, seeing the folds of fabric, they imagine rivers and run-offs, hills and natural bridges. One response in particular resonated with me as what I want for the end goal of this work. On seeing a piece in this exhibit, a viewer said that it reminded him of the experience of putting his hand deep in between

the cushions of a couch when he was a child. I am satisfied with the physicality of the work evoking such a memory, remembered location, and tactile experience.

In learning about myself through this work, examining my isolation, and searching for a connection to my physical and social environment, I discovered that working with fibers provides that connection. Material, pattern, and fabric are all part of human experience. Fabric is in constant contact with everyone, and these quilts carry that familiarity along with processes that are unfamiliar and unexpected. These quilts are autobiographical, yet they deal with my private life in a way that is mysterious and covert. My work also does not merely play off materials in an ironic way, but speaks through them, understanding that they have associations for everyone, incorporating conceptuality with materiality. My work is about searching, and searching has become the goal itself. I am reminded of the famous T.S. Eliot quote: “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

## CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITION



Above is an installation view of *Getting Warmer*, exhibited in Slocumb Galleries at East Tennessee State University from March 19<sup>th</sup> until March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007.



*Ruffled*      34x27"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; bath netting; machine quilted and embroidered.

2006



*Modeled*            28x35"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, and silk chiffon; machine quilted and embroidered.

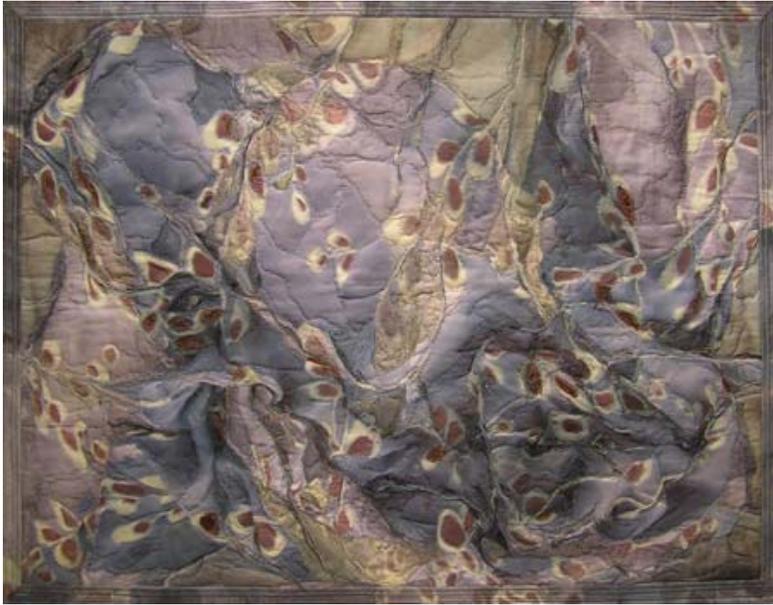
2006



*Collared*                      27x35"

Digitally printed cotton, rayon, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

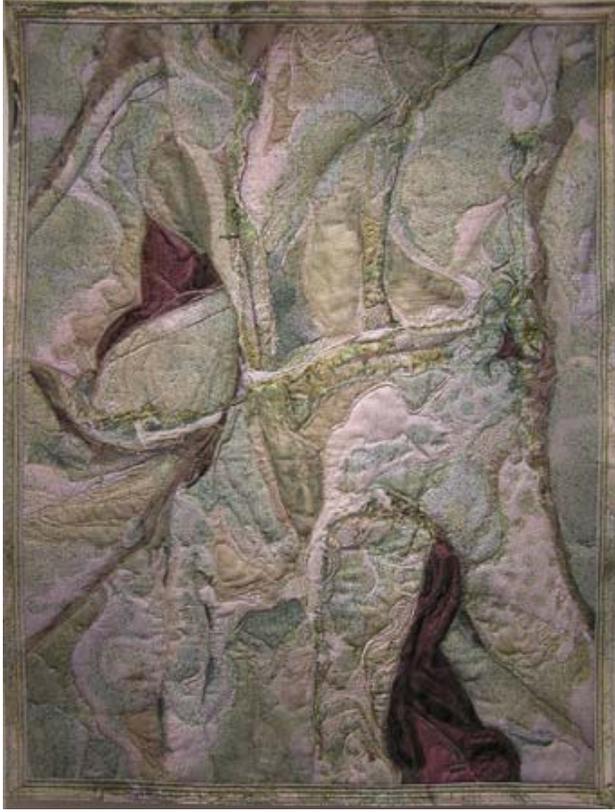
2007



*Gathered*                    27x35"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2007



*Seamed*                      35x27"

Digitally printed cotton, silk habotai, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2007



*Laced*      26x34"

Digitally printed cotton, lace, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2007



*Pressed*                    35x27"

Digitally printed cotton tablecloth, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk habotai; machine quilted and embroidered.

2007



*Gift 1*      23x18"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2006



*Gift 2*      22x17"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2006



*Gift 3*          25x16"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2007



*Gift 4*          23x18"

Digitally printed cotton, silk organza, silk chiffon, and silk gauze; machine quilted and embroidered.

2007

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2005

*“College Art Association Regional MFA Exhibition”*  
Lowe Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia 2005

## Group exhibitions

*“New Work”* Carroll Reece Museum, Johnson City,  
Tennessee 2007

*“ETSU Graduate Exhibition”* Carroll Reece Museum,  
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*“Weapon of Mass Destruction”* Johnson City, Tennessee;  
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