



Left, clockwise:
Taylor Hokanson and Dieter Kirkwood
My Grandfather's Axe (detail)
2015
Original fabric sample made from plain weave cotton with chalk line patterning
Dimensions variable

Whitney Huber
Auspices
2015 (in progress)
Galvanized steel and mixed media
Dimensions variable

Scout Paré-Phillips
Impressions, Self Portrait Series
2011
Digital print
24 x 30 inches

Barbara Layne
Jacket Antics
2007
Twill-woven black linen, LEDs, and electronic components
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Studio subTela

Related Events:
All events are free and open to the public.

Exhibition Reception
Sunday, September 13, 3 – 5 pm

Gallery Tour & *Auspices* Performance
Sunday, September 20, 1 – 2 pm

Curator Camille Morgan presents a guided tour of the exhibition. During the tour, artist Whitney Huber invites visitors to sit with her and try their hand in the process of making a basic chainmail pattern to add to the artwork *Auspices*, included in the show.

Fabricating the Universe, Fabricating Ourselves
Saturday, October 31, 12 – 1:30 pm

The Art Center hosts an afternoon of presentations and discussion surrounding two pairs of artists and scientists working together to illuminate our universe and ourselves: Milwaukee-based photographer Dr. Laci Coppins and Marquette University psychology professor Dr. Nakia Gordon explore the biometrics of shared memories between siblings; and Isaac Facio (Fiber and Material Studies, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago) and Benedickt Diemer (Astrophysics, University of Chicago) will present their ongoing research investigating novel ways to visualize the structure of the universe using three-dimensional textiles.

Curator Tour & Tactility Talk
Tuesday, November 17, 6 – 7 pm

Camille Morgan will lead a thematic tour of the exhibition focusing on the artists' exploration of interactivity in their artworks while discussing our relationship to the objects around us.

Fashioning Technology: The Tactile Life of Makers
Saturday, November 21, 1 – 4 pm

Join a panel of *Warm Kitty, Soft Kitty* artists in a discussion on the effect of touch, loss of tactility, and how it is evolving because of technology-in-the-making. Artists include: Taylor Hokanson and Dieter Kirkwood, Fo Wilson, D. Denenge Akpem, and Betsy Odom.

Visit hydeparkart.org for more information on the program.

This exhibition is partially supported by the David C. & Sarajeun Ruttenberg Arts Foundation.

Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. As an open forum for exploring the artistic process, the Art Center fosters creativity through making, learning about, seeing, and discussing art—all under one roof. The Art Center is funded in part by: Alphawood Foundation; Allstate Insurance Company; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; Bank of America; Bloomberg Philanthropies; Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Foundation; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation; Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; Harper Court Arts Council; Harpo Foundation; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; Irving Harris Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; MacArthur International Connections Fund; National Endowment for the Arts; National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly; Polk Bros. Foundation; Reva and David Logan Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of its members and people like you.

All images courtesy of the artists
Design by the JNL graphic design

Cover:
Aileen Son
Pink Cigarette
2011
Digital print
12 x 9 inches

Above, left:
Tameka J Norris
Hit Stick #2, (Encounter Series)
2015
Wood stick, oil pastel, and digital print
60 x 4 x 2 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery

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www.hydeparkart.org



September 6 – December 13, 2015
Kanter McCormick Gallery

*Warm Kitty,
Soft Kitty*

The title, *Warm Kitty, Soft Kitty* comes from a verse sung in a lullaby I first heard in an episode of *The Big Bang Theory*. The lullaby is meant to be soothing, conjuring all our favorite sensory experiences of kittens, from their soft fur to their hypnotic purring; however it is also a warning as it tacitly recognizes the flipside of their sleepy nature—one in which they hiss, and pounce, and claw at any perceived movement when mistreated. When attributed to humans, this sensory dichotomy can carry graver consequences—contributing to a host of societal ills such as the recent uprising against ongoing police violence against black and brown bodies, lack of a living wage for the working class, deficits of media diversity, and the struggle for queer civil liberties. In an environment as vibrant and segregated as Chicago’s, our visual ignorance is literally costing lives and causing psychological trauma to ripple through entire communities while our political systems limp to catch up. The works in this exhibition act as evidence of the chasm that exists between our individual experiences of touch and how it can aid in self- and social understanding.

Bodily perception is unique to the individual—it is culture, memory, symbol, past and present, fragmentary and fetish.¹ These things are far from static; they are “an active, shaping force that is dynamic.”² This exhibit showcases artists who capture this phenomenon, urging visitors to exercise imaginative empathy. Through photography, video, fashion, sculpture, new textile technologies, and site-specific installation, the artists, designers, and makers document, fabricate, and in some instances, invite the viewer to literally engage in a spectrum of aesthetic touch.

Visual “sensations” on display range greatly. **Cole Don Kelley’s** photographs revel in the weird sensory delights we find in our homes and family gatherings—we see tinsel turned into ticklers, and traditions welcoming new additions to the family drip with questionable red nail polish.

The private moments of indoors move outdoors in the photography of **Jennifer Ray**, as she reveals clandestine wooded areas where gay men come together for sexual encounters away from the judgmental eye of society. We see what is left when they part ways.

Hit Stick by **Tameka Norris** is an attempt to quantify love, desire, maybe something else in the list of sexual partners written out list-style onto a measuring stick—documenting proof of touch. In Norris’ afro hair combing travail video, we watch grooming elevated to masochistic virtue leaving us to ponder whether the original 1975 video by Marina Abramovi brushing and combing her full head of straight European hair was really all that powerful.

In following the “beauty hurts” trope, **Aileen Son** carefully arranges and holds items connected to female grooming in glossy fashion magazine editorial style—tools that hurt to beautify and make women feel good at the same time.

The set of photographs from the *Impressions* series by **Scout Paré-Phillips** turn the dial up on private beauty and pain through her stark revelation of deep-ridged imprints left in her skin from tight-waisted pants, bras, and garter belts.

A Woman’s Work is Never Done is **Eliza Bennett’s** video projection equating the 19th century feminine virtue of needlearts with the harsh physicality of domestic labor. We are forced to watch her embroider the soft flesh of her own hand resulting in a design that resembles a colorful callous. According to Bennett, while “some viewers consider the piece to be a feminist protest, for me it’s about human value. After all, there are many men employed in caring, catering, cleaning etc...all jobs traditionally considered to be ‘women’s work.’ Such work is invisible in the larger society; with ‘A Woman’s Work’, I aim to represent it.”

Whitney Huber’s *Auspices* further supports the invisibility of domestic labor through the ancient fabrication of a chainmail blanket—a textile created to protect the wearer from mortal harm. As an ongoing artwork she has been working on for the last ten years, Huber invites viewers to handle and add to it—a laborious, painstaking physical process leading one to consider who protects the maker.

The influence of the human maker’s touch vs. the technology-based touch can be seen through the fashion design work of **Taylor Hokanson and Dieter Kirkwood** who use a computer-based processing code to affect clothing pattern permutations. While this may seem commonplace in the highly mechanized fashion industry of today, their process begs one to think about the dehumanization within an industry where the designer’s touch is disappearing and how that trickles down to laborer compensation.



Jennifer Ray
Impression, Go Deep Into the Woods
2008
Archival ink jet print
48 x 60 inches



Cole Don Kelley
Untitled
2011-2015
Digital print
6 ½ x 10 inches

Fashion technology needn’t always be ethically questionable. **Barbara Layne’s** *Jacket Antics* relies entirely on the human wearers’ physical connection to each other to silently communicate a variety of thoughtful LED display messages embedded across the jacket backs.

The tradition of tacitly expressing one’s desires can also be viewed in the handkerchief sculptures of **Betsy Odom**. Fashion has always played a role in attracting potential mates, and cultures often imbue accessories such as jewelry, hats, hand fans, and scarves with secret meaning. Odom’s *Handkerchiefs*, fashioned from a variety of materials such as wood, soap and styrofoam are a play on the “Hanky Code,” which according to the artist is a “pretty mythologized practice where if you wear a certain color handkerchief in a certain pocket and you go into a gay bar, then it indicates [certain sexually-related preferences].”

Invitations to touch are welcome in the works of **Fo Wilson** and **D. Denenge Akpem**. Wilson’s bedside tables almost become stand-ins for a furry companion that follows one to bed welcoming a soothing stroke before sleep. Akpem’s *Luscious Garden* is a huggable monstrous delight, hoping to be squeezed and petted—the calming pressures that help to keep us happy, and feeling loved and protected from infancy through adulthood.

Early memory and emotion are tackled through the photography and scientific bio-readings of siblings in the work of **Laci Coppins and Nakia Gordon**. What becomes evident is that the truth of “shared” memories between siblings can vastly differ, and the more powerful the imprint of a recollection, the faster our hearts beat and the higher our temperature becomes. Our bodies are the things that memories are made of.

Alexandria Eregbu memorializes superficial longing and her past to accept who she is and the afro hair that grows out of her head. In her diptych, a chocolate bar is melted into silky black hair and wrapped in gold foil; the other photograph is a young portrait of her great grandmother who wore that type of hairstyle when she was around the artist’s age. Here, sets of ideas are stacked against her—chocolate and blackness, chocolate and stickiness, popular desire and beauty, present and past. Eregbu explains, “I am interested in the fetishization and the lust of black hair, and my nostalgia of such lust as a child for a particular type of hair—shiny, straight, and black. Also for me, is an interest in the frequent consumption [of] a



Left:
D. Denenge Akpem
Luscious Garden
2015
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Photo by
Scott Vahan Tavitian

Right:
Eliza Bennett
A Woman’s Work is Never Done
2014
Video
8:17

particular type of image in popular culture and media advertising.” Whether the media honestly depicts it or not, there’s always a piece of blackness people want to reach out and touch.

Finally, we are heralded into the afterlife by **Flying Lotus featuring Kendrick Lamar**, in *Never Catch Me*, a collaborative track directed as a dreamlike short story by **Hiro Murai**. This music video was made for Los Angeles-born, experimental music producer and rapper Flying Lotus for his album titled *You’re Dead*. In it he tackles the physicality of mourning, death, and supernatural phenomenology while Kendrick Lamar’s rap lyrics float above:

“If touch can remind us of anything, it can remind us not just of who we are, but who we can be.”

A morbid optimism pervades the song, yet it’s still jarring to see dead children lying in coffins. Viewed in the context of Chicago, one is painfully reminded of all the violent young loss—an experience unequivocally felt on the city’s South Side where this particular grief is a perpetual burden.

Whether painful, pleasurable, foreign or familiar, each artwork in *Warm Kitty, Soft Kitty* meets viewers where they are and then challenges them to work through difference and seek common ground in the collective energy of the space. It encourages all of us to look, take a step back and flex our individual sense of touch and memory in order to go beyond our own bodies.

If touch can remind us of anything, it can remind us not just of who we are, but who we can be.

Camille Morgan | Curator of *Warm Kitty, Soft Kitty*

¹ Stewart, S., 1999. Prologue: from the museum of touch. In M. Kwint et al., eds. *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*. Oxford: Berg, 1999.

² Samuel, R., 1994. *Theatres of Memory*. London: Verso.