



Grayson Perry, *Map Of Truths And Beliefs*, 2011, wool and cotton tapestry, 78 3/4 x 185 1/8 in.
Collection of Eileen and Richard Ekstract, image courtesy the Artist and Victoria Miro, London © Grayson Perry

LABOUR AND WAIT

SBMA Exhibition Explores Contemporary Culture's Obsession with the Handcrafted

On View July 2 – September 22, 2013

*Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor and to wait.*

—from “A Psalm of Life” (1838) by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

April 3, 2013 – *Labour and Wait*, SBMA's major summer exhibition, features 15 international artists and artist-collaboratives who bring 21st-century urgency to age-old virtues of hard work and craftsmanship. The exhibition title is adapted from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem “A Psalm of Life” (1838), which extols living life to its fullest and alludes to the rewards of physical labor.

Comprising over 38 sculptures, videos, and drawings, *Labour and Wait* highlights contemporary culture's preoccupation with authenticity and the handcrafted as well as issues related to manufacturing and labor. The presentation also addresses the resurgence of a Do-It-Yourself aesthetic in art of the past two decades, highlighting the contradictions and connections between the handmade and the heightened technological advancements of our current era. Emphasized are works that illustrate current-day representations of the analog. Are such works viable in today's world? Are such tendencies an action of or a reaction to technological progress? These questions, among others, are explored throughout the exhibition, catalogue, and related public programs.

Consumer demand for the handcrafted, the artisanal, and the small-batch has been prevalent in recent years in everything from apparel, to food and drink, to retail sites such as *Etsy*. Why this dominant desire? Thought-provoking answers have been presented in articles, symposia, and manifestos outside and inside of the academy. As Adam Sachs articulated (in “Artisanal America,” *Details.com* Aug 2010), “Certainly an ailing economy deserves some credit. When everything is falling apart, it helps to know how to put things together. And isn't that the secret message of so much artisanal longing? That when everything goes to hell, we'll all become potters and learn to make bread. The sheen of Wall Street gone, bubbles burst, it's better not to be flash these days. The true signs of taste—of connoisseurship, of knowing what matters—are letterpressed in small type on recycled paper, embossed on hand-dyed leather, elegantly announcing: Objects made simply are more valuable than they appear.”

In the fine or “high” arts, “craft” is a word and a concept that has been traditionally shunned, but embraced in recent years by younger generations who utilize craft just as readily as they do other techniques in creating their work. Allison Smith, one of the artists in the exhibition, in an interview with contemporary craft scholar Julia Bryan-Wilson commented (*Modern Painters* Feb 2008), “For many of my political artist role models, the critique of the commodification of art entailed a rejection of hands-on making—and *craft* became a bad word. So bringing back the political-activist spirit to something interactive and bodily is really important.”

Artists in *Labour and Wait* include highly influential figures who began exhibiting in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the renowned British artist, **Grayson Perry**, recognized for making and exhibiting ceramic pots inspired by medieval design embellished with highly contemporary and sexual subject matter. He has since added to his repertoire epic tapestries, which, like the pots, speak to venerated traditions and purposes, but are saturated with contradictory references including fast food icons and urban slang. Several ceramic pots and a large tapestry represent the artist in the exhibition. Also featured are 2 major works by Los Angeles artist **Tim Hawkinson**, who creates meditations on nature, machines, mortality, the body, and human consciousness utilizing common store-bought materials and found objects (including such unassuming materials such as fingernail clippings and eggshells). One of his works in the exhibition, *Foot Quilt* (2007), recreates in large scale a human footprint with silver polyester fabric and batting, a provocative stand-in for skin. Another sizeable mechanized work, *Orrery* (2010), depicts a woman at a spinning wheel made from plastic bottles. Many of the elements—even her head—spin like the planetary globes of an antique orrery, alluding to the dichotomies between the individual and the universal.



Left to right: Dewar and Gicquel, *Mammoth and Poodle*, 2010, wool tapestry, approx. 15 x 30 ft. Collection of Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson, 21c Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, image courtesy Galerie Loevenbruck, Paris. Allison Smith, *Stockpile*, 2011, unfinished wood and mixed media, 144 x 216 x 216 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Haines Gallery, © Allison Smith. Tim Hawkinson, *Orrery*, 2010, plastic bottles, shopping bags, inkjet prints, twine, string, wire, foam, springs, tape, lead, and steel, 93 x 96 x 96 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, © Tim Hawkinson, 2010

Significant works by other artists in the exhibition include sculptures and drawings by **David Thorpe** (British artist living in Berlin), whose work highlights the relationship of the object with its maker, emphasizing the interconnectedness between work and lifestyle. Inspired by the aesthetics and theories of the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th century, his sculptures employ historic construction methods and motifs that reference utopian ideals evoking not only the past but also the future. Also featured is a large-scale installation titled *Stockpile* (2001) by Bay Area artist, **Allison Smith**. Works by Smith are inspired by early American craft techniques and the practice of historical reenactment (especially that of the Civil War). As noted in the exhibition catalogue *The Old Weird America* (organized by the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in 2008), “Smith looks to the past—to the ways earlier generations expressed themselves in what they made and how they lived—for information on how to live in a time of war, and how to navigate the slipperiness of gender and identity as well as the artificial divide between art and craft.”

An enormous Peruvian-style tapestry, *Mammoth and Poodle* (2010), represents the 2012 Marcel Duchamp Prize winners **Daniel Dewar and Grégory Gicquel** (France). This collaborative team embraces traditional techniques such as stone carving, weaving, and ceramic-making in their desire to reintroduce craftsmanship within an over-industrialized, polished, and “serious” art world. According to reviewer Florence Derieux (*Flash Art* Jan/Feb 2007), “Like two professional amateurs, Dewar and Gicquel have created their own way of life in which fishing would be the equivalent of what playing chess was to Duchamp. Radically opposed to the notion of the ready-made, their practice involves instead great manuality [sic] and labor.” Film and video artist **Mika Rottenberg** (New York) is represented with an installation—*Fried Sweat* (2008)—and a collaborative work resulting from a project she and **Jon Kessler** were commissioned to produce for Performa II, titled *SEVEN (Cecil)* (2012). In both works, Rottenberg’s fantastic visions escalate the cycles of labor and production to levels of absurdity.



Left to right: Wim Delvoye, *Installation of 23 Circular Saws*, “Delftse Circelzagen” series, 1989, enamel paint on saw blades, wood cabinet, 85 1/2 x 44 x 23 in. Collection of Laura-Lee Woods. Mika Rottenberg and Jon Kessler, *SEVEN (Cecil)*, 2012, mixed media with three-channel video, Courtesy Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York © Mika Rottenberg and Jon Kessler. David Thorpe, *End Pattern* (detail), 2010, watercolor and pencil on paper, 44 3/4 x 199 in. framed. Collection of John Morace and Tom Kennedy, image courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, NY.

Other artists in the exhibition include seminal figures such as **Wim Delvoye** (Ghent) and **Peter Fischli and David Weiss** (Fischli lives and works in Zurich; Weiss died in 2012); as well as internationally celebrated artists **Theaster Gates** (Chicago) and **Josiah McElheny** (New York). Also included are works by **Tonico Lemos Auad** (London/São Paulo), **Andrea Bowers** (Los Angeles), **Colin Darke** (Derry, Northern Ireland), **Ricky Swallow** (Los Angeles), and **Jane Wilbraham** (London).



Catalogue

Accompanying the exhibition will be a substantial catalogue with essays by **Glenn Adamson**, Deputy Head of Research and Head of Graduate Studies, Victoria Albert Museum, and author of *The Craft Reader* (2010) and other publications; **Britt Salvesen**, Department Head and Curator, Wallis Annenberg Department of Photography, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; **William Gibson**, renowned science fiction author; and **Julie Joyce**, SBMA Curator of Contemporary Art.

Related Programming

The Museum's highly innovative and effective Education Department will offer education and outreach programming designed around the social and communal aspects of craft and art, including a series of public programs designed by Oakland artist Allison Smith, who explores the culture of historical reenactment and the role of craft in shaping national identity.

Andrea Bowers, *One Big Union*, 2012, marker on found cardboard, 157 x 105 in., collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego © Andrea Bowers

Artists Panel: Allison Smith, Jane Wilbraham (and another artist TBA)

Sunday, June 30, 2 – 3:30 pm

Three artists featured in *Labour and Wait* discuss their work and views on craft and labor in contemporary art.

Public Lecture: Grayson Perry

Sunday, July 28, 2 – 3:30 pm

The Turner Prize winning artist makes a rare and highly anticipated appearance.

Craft Happy Hour

Thursday, August 29, 4 – 7:30 pm

Inspired by the exhibition and informed by the desire to embrace the artisanal and local, this summer evening celebration invites the community to create, sample, listen, eat, drink, and even cook together. Featuring craft beer, artist demonstrations, performance art, and art installations—all in the spirit of Do-It-Yourself

Museum Back Plaza

Family Resource Center

The Museum's Family Resource Center is transformed as SBMA Director of Education Patsy Hicks collaborates with artist Allison Smith (also Chair of Sculpture at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco) to develop an imaginative array of community craft and performance experiences throughout the exhibition. Aided by social media, these events will challenge and engage visitors in ways that extend beyond the Museum.

Labour and Wait is made possible through the generosity of the Luria Family Foundation, SBMA Women's Board, SBMA's The Museum Contemporaries, LLWW Foundation, Jill and John C. Bishop Jr., and others.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.

Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, Chase Free Thursday Evenings 5 – 8 pm

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