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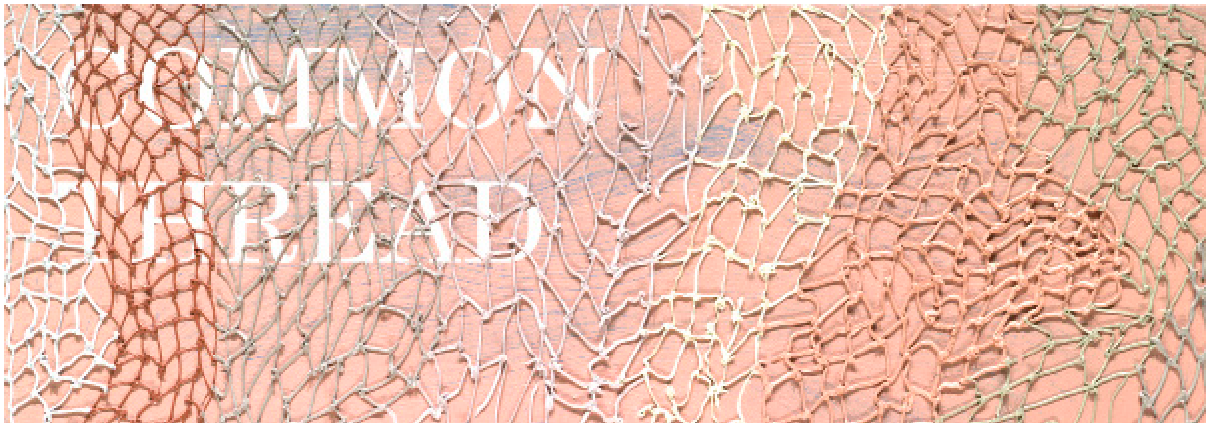

Common Thread

Anni Albers, Wendy Edwards, Tamara Gonzales, Michelle Grabner, Sarah Esme Harrison, Ellen Lesperance, Danielle Mysliwiec, Sasha Pierce, Angela Teng, Leslie Wayne, Summer Wheat

July 23 – August 28, 2015
Opening: Thursday, July 23, 6-8pm

Mixed Greens is thrilled to present *Common Thread*, a group exhibition of paintings by Anni Albers, Wendy Edwards, Tamara Gonzales, Michelle Grabner, Sarah Harrison, Ellen Lesperance, Danielle Mysliwiec, Sasha Pierce, Angela Teng, Leslie Wayne, and Summer Wheat. Their work employs repetition, pattern, illusion, and extensive manual labor to create complex contradictions among the work's inspiration, material, and imagery. All the artists address the fluidity of gendered territories and eschew the "iconic brushstroke" in favor of fiber art's poetic possibilities within the discipline of painting.

Two pieces set the historical and political stage for the exhibition: an **Anni Albers** study and an **Ellen Lesperance** gouache knitting pattern of a sweater Anni Albers was wearing in1928. The grid, a basic ruling principle of the Bauhaus where Albers studied weaving, is the dominant visual force in Albers' work. Lesperance, in turn, deconstructs Albers' sweater into a geometric grid pattern. Lesperance's sweater paintings demand the consideration of important female activists and, in this case, the celebration of Albers' status as a pioneer and significant contributor to contemporary art.

If the work of Albers and Lesperance foreground the grid, the works of **Tamara Gonzales**, **Michelle Grabner**, and **Wendy Edwards** use the grid and textile construction as the underlying architecture for their abstractions. Gonzales spraypaints fragments of lace in glyph-like dreamscapes. Grabner uses flashe to create an optically mesmerizing tondo—its radial pattern appearing simultaneously hand woven and mechanically derived. In a looser handling, Edwards utilizes pure paint to create a three-dimensional net atop her ground. The sweeping lines contain the thin, floating gestures beneath. The artists' geometric compositions produce open narratives, allowing the loaded histories of their inspirational textiles to tell cultural, historical, and material stories.

Using paint as a stand-in for actual fiber and pushing painted dimensionality to its wall-based limits, **Sasha Pierce**, **Danielle Mysliwiec**, and **Angela Teng** transform paint into surfaces that confound the eye and force the viewer to question the act of looking. Painting is explored, disguised, and celebrated without the use of a brush. While Pierce's abstractions create the illusion of textiles through tiny, carefully placed stitches of paint, Mysliwiec and Teng shape the paint on and off the canvas, using threads made of acrylic to achieve a woven surface.

Finally, **Sarah Esme Harrison**, **Leslie Wayne**, and **Summer Wheat** use paint to refer to specific textiles with varying degrees of representation. Wayne's work takes on the properties of common cloth and resplendent fabric, hanging on the wall as if waiting for use. Harrison's rugs, although entirely flat, are equally illusionistic and artificial. Trompe l'oeil from a distance, both artists' work is revealed to be more gesturally improvisational upon closer inspection. The tight weave we see from afar becomes abstracted and physical. Summer Wheat pushes that physicality to an extreme, using a love-worn blanket and tapestry as departure points. The texturally sumptuous paintings embody the emotional connection to her inspirational textiles while pushing the medium to new limits.

Common Thread celebrates the expansive potential of abstracted painting and its relationship to—and reliance on—textiles. Surfaces embody paint's ability to be thick and flowing, flat and dimensional, tough and delicate, playful and revolutionary. The works are technically masterful, using the histories of painting and fiber art to become effortlessly hybrid in both form and content.