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Embodied Craft in Lia Cook's Textiles and «The Lady of Shalott»

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INTRODUCTION

Theoretical distinctions between craft objects and industrial products often turn on the operation of the artisan's body in relation to machines, tools, and materials. Colin Campbell identifies control of the body as the defining issue: «The contrast is not really between hand production and machine production, but rather between a production system in which the worker is in control of the machine and one in which the machine is in control of the worker» (Campbell [2005]: 28). Distinctions between craft objects and art objects, on the other hand, often turn on the body of the viewer, purchaser, or user of the object in question. Arthur Risatti asserts that «the basic functions of craft objects, all spring from the same purpose, that of fulfilling the body's needs»; for example, «chairs and beds support the human body; blankets and clothes cover the body» (Risatti [2007]: 72). Margaret Boden describes psychological responses to craft work as «enactive» or «arousing impulses to bodily action» (Boden [2000]: 294), whereas works of art incite «indicative» responses, which arise from « visual processes» (Boden [2000]: 292) and encourage the intellectual processing of information. I would like to engage with this discussion of embodiment and craft by looking at the work of Lia Cook, a contemporary textile artist who combines digital machine weaving and hand weaving. Cook's large-format textile installations address the engagement of body and technology, both in her creative process and as a thematic of the works' aesthetic argument. While textile artists such as Norma Minkowitz have used sculpted figures of the female body to

approach issues related to embodiment, Cook's creations are more useful for a discussion of craft embodiment because they incorporate her artisanal process, and its associated embodied operations, into the craft works themselves. My argument will frame Cook's work with a discussion of 19th century artworks that investigate the textile worker's body: Alfred Lord Tennyson's 1842 poem «The Lady of Shalott» which has become an iconic representation of a textile artist at work, and William Holman Hunt's painting based on that poem. I am reaching back to Hunt's work because of the close relationship between Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics and the discourse of craft associated with John Ruskin and William Morris. As Morna O'Neill notes, the «crafting of a Pre-Raphaelite canvas conceptualized an approach to artistic process that would become central to the Arts and Crafts movement» (O'Neill [2015]). Moreover, Hunt's painting, which he began in 1886 and was exhibited in 1905, concerns itself with the embodied interaction of the craft worker with her tools and materials in ways that prefigure, and are extensively expanded upon by, Lia Cook's textiles.

1. LIA COOK'S ENACTIVE WEAVING

Lia Cook established her reputation with her *New Master Draperies* series from the early 1990s; her woven tapestries recreated the textiles portrayed in paintings by Old Masters such as Leonardo da Vinci and Artemesia Gentileschi. Her subsequent move toward digital weaving technologies became apparent in her *Childhood Traces* series from the early 2000s, in which she created very large tapestries based on her personal childhood photographs. Both of these series negotiate the way different art forms (painting, photography) and different aspects of art history and personal history are impressed into textiles. Janet Koplos notes that Cook's use of her own childhood images makes her «present in the work in two doubled ways, which might be described as past and present, and object and subject» (Koplos [2015]). This self-reflexive quality is also apparent in her *Point of Touch: Material Pleasures,* series from the late 1990s. These pieces, mostly of pressed linen treated with oils and dyes, portray hands, legs, and torsos touching and being touched by various textiles. «Presence/Absence: In the Folds» is a 192 inch by 41 inch panel in which several images of Cook herself appear positioned vertically with black bars between. The effect is at once of a tapestry and a roll of exposed film. In each image, Cook's hands touch her face, covering cheeks, mouth, or chin. At the bottom, the fabric tumbles onto the floor, and Cook's self-portrait is disrupted by folds of drapery. As both object and subject of the piece, Cook elides her face and hands; her identity as the maker of the tapestry is as important as her self-presentation to the world. On these panels Cook touches her own face with the same hands that touched and wove the fabric on which her face appears; the folds of the panel are echoed by the folds of her skin. Judith Leeman describes this metahaptic reflexiveness as a «tight cycle of self-reference. […] Doublings abound. Recursive circles loop and repeat» (Leeman [2007]: 336).

According to Cook, her work explores « the sensuality of the woven image and the emotional connections to memories of touch and cloth» (Cook [2019]). The grammar of her sentence here is evocatively ambiguous. Does touching the cloth create memories, or are we remembering the feel of cloth fabrics we associate with past emotion? Are these only Cook's memories, or the viewer's as well? Even more strikingly, does cloth itself bear memory? Is cloth sensual in the same way that our response to it is sensual? These questions scramble sensory agency among artist, viewer, and object.

As the title *Point of Touch: Material Pleasures* suggests, Cook is interested in the pleasures of the body's engagement with woven materials, and doesn't shy away from representing sexual as well as sensual stimulation. In «Presence/Absence: Gather» two hands meet, their thumbs gently squeezing some sort of bodily form through a loosely worn garment, perhaps a robe or towel. The natural place for hands to meet would be

the lower torso, and the sexual suggestiveness of the weaving is both apparent and relatively non-explicit. The 48 inch square piece hangs by its upper corners, the drape of the fabric paralleling the curve made by the joined hands, emphasizing the soft tactility of the fabric that lies between the hands and the hidden body. Self-touching is more explicit in *Point of Touch: Bathsheba*, in which a repeated pattern of stylized hands in black and white creates a screen behind which a leg and lower torso, only partly covered by a folded piece of fabric, touch each other and the cloth. Both works elide the maker's touch on the fabric she creates, the sensuous touch of fabric on the body, and the reflexive touch of hand on skin.

David M. Roth, writing about Cook's childhood photograph works, enunciates the counter-intuitively intimate quality of these large-format hangings. «The enlargement should, by all rights, make it less intimate; but the warp and weft of it produce the opposite effect, turning the grain (or perhaps digital noise) of the source image into a maze of interlocking markings» (Cook [2019]). The shift from «grain» to «interlocking» indicates the way a 3-dimensional textile surface complicates a 2-dimensional photograph, and suggests that, in doing so, it evokes tactile interactivity. Interlocking markings are more intimate because, like interlocking hands, something is touching something else. The weave evokes touch even as it elicits the desire to touch it, as Margaret Boden argues in her discussion of enactive aesthetics. Boden distinguishes craft works from art works based on their power to inspire bodily action. «Fine textiles, from silken gossamers to rough-woven hessians, prompt one to feel their texture against one's skin, and to drape them over our bodies or furniture. A well-crafted teddy-bear naturally cries out to be hugged. And a well-made cup or goblet naturally invites one not only to touch its surface but to pick it up and hold it in an attitude fit for drinking» (Boden [2000]: 294). Boden's claim that objects cry out to be touched echoes Merleau-Ponty's description of the body's movement among material objects: «To move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call» ([1945]: 161]. Such enactive responses, Boden argues, are distinct from the «indicative» responses we have to works of art, which inspire visual appreciation and intellectual engagement, offering «information about the real or imagined state of the world» (Boden [2000]: 291). Enactive responses impel us to stroke, lift, lie on and hug; they rouse a latent impulse to intimacy with the physical world. In the case of well-crafted teddy bears, or childhood photographs, such intimacy is affectionately nostalgic. In works like «Point of Touch --Bathsheba», in which the textile being touched itself portrays intimate touching, the enactive impulse becomes implicitly transgressive. In both cases, the work establishes a material bridge between the hand of the artist who creates the work and that of the gallery visitor who reaches out to stroke it, the cup owner who lifts and drinks from it, the teddy bear snuggler who wraps herself around it as she sleeps.

2. THE WEAVER'S CURSE

When looking for literary archetypes of weaving, Penelope and Procne come immediately to mind. But unlike these amateur weavers whose tapestries serve a communicative or political function, Alfred Lord Tennyson's Lady of Shalott, and even more explicitly the Pre-Raphaelite adaptations of his character, is a craftswoman, marked by her work ethic and artisanal innovation. Tennyson's 1832 poem «The Lady of Shalott» (which was revised in 1842) recasts Elaine of Astolat, the sweet, impressionable, and doomed young woman of Arthurian legend, as an industrious, mature, and independent craft laborer. An expert and devoted weaver, the Lady (she is never called Elaine), is steadily employed in the creation of a tapestry: « There she weaves by night and day/ A magic web with colours gay» (Tennyson [1842]: ll. 37-38) . The weaving represents the world outside her window, which she can only sees through a mirror; if she ever looks at the world directly she will be cursed. When Lancelot rides by she does look, with disastrous results:

She left the web, she left the loom
She made three paces thro' the room
She saw the water-flower bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott. ([1842]:ll. 109-117)

The rest of the poem follows the Lady as she leaves the tower, floats down the river to Camelot, and dies singing her own dirge.

The Lady's craftwork and her tragic fate are intimately related. She declares that the "curse has come upon me" at the moment when her tapestry erupts from its frame and her mirror cracks – that is, when the artifact she has produced and a central element of its production are destroyed. Yet, the precise events resulting from the curse, especially in relation to the Lady's tapestry, are unclear. Clearly something has gone awry with the Lady's tapestry, but Tennyson's phrasing is at once murky and absurd. «Out flew the web», presumably of the frame, but the verb «flew» seems comically dynamic, and raises the possibility that it flew out the window. Suddenly its dramatic flight is arrested, and it «floated wide» which could mean that it unravels and spreads its threads widely, or that it remains intact but travels widely, like a magic carpet. While the term «web» encourages us to picture unravelling, the tapestry can hardly spread itself «wide» in the Lady's enclosed apartment, so perhaps it flies out the window, and proceeds to drop yarn across the nearby fields of barley and rye. Tennyson's phrase effectively suggests the violent disruption of the Lady's weaving, but it doesn't help us answer crucial questions about what the curse entails, or the fate of the Lady's laboriously created handiwork. The Lady's departure from the tower, journey by boat to Camelot, and death, may be part of the curse, but they may also be willful acts on her part.

«The Lady of Shalott» became something of a preoccupation of Pre-Raphaelite painters 60 years after its publication. William Holman Hunt spent 19 years on his version, which was finally completed by Arthur Hughes in 1905. John William Waterhouse painted three interpretations: *The Lady of Shalott, The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot*, and *I Am Half Sick of Shadows said the Lady of Shalott* in 1888, 1894 and 1911 respectively. The processes and materials of craft labor were of central interest to the Pre-Raphaelites, whose artistic practice emerged directly from John Ruskin's writings and were heavily influenced by William Morris. William Holman Hunt's *The Shadow of Death* (1873) and John Everett Millais' *Christ in the House of his Parents* (185) offer minute depictions of the workspace and techniques of ancient Israeli carpentry. Millais chose an actual carpenter as a model for Joseph so that his muscles would reflect his craft's impact on his body (Codell [1986]: 258). Hunt, who had travelled to Jerusalem for greater accuracy, offers a taxonomic display of historically correct tools, and both artists seem to have a particular affection for lovingly-rendered curly wood-shavings. In his description of his work on *The Shadow of Death*, Hunt includes an anecdote about a local craftsman coming into his studio. «He was mason, dusty and splashed with lime-wash» who wished to touch the painted surface of *The Shadow of Death* «to feel what is the difference between the linen and the flesh, the sky and the shavings; we have seen it with our eyes, and we want to feel it with our hands» (Holman Hunt [1905]: 306). The anecdote establishes a direct link between old-world craftsmanship and the tactile, embodied apprehension of the artwork. While the laborer is comically naïve about paintings (he insists Hunt turn the canvas around so he can see Jesus' back) he has a kind of wisdom of the hands that associates him with Jesus the carpenter in Hunt's painting and with Hunt himself.

Placing Hunt's *The Shadow of Death* beside his *The Lady of Shalott* makes it apparent the degree to which both works are as much about the tools, processes, and raw materials of craftsmanship as they are about their sacred or poetic source material. In particular, Hunt is interested in the entwining of the worker's body with the materials of his labor. Christ's feet are awash in wood shav-

ings; his thigh presses against a saw horse; he has stopped sawing a board to stand and stretch his sore muscles. The painting's theological symbolism emerges from the shadow of Christ's head and arms which, as he stretches, form a crucifix on the back wall. The carpenters' tools, which hang on the wall where the shadow of his hands falls, evoke the nails that will pierce those hands. In Millais' *Christ in the House of his Parents*, the boy Jesus stands in front of his parents' work table holding up his hand to show the splinter that has pierced his palm. Such a scrape is not surprising, given the number of nails, sharp tools, and rough scraps of wood scattered about, and no one seems too upset about it. Both works suggest the proximity of crucifixion and carpentry, and the vulnerability of the carpenter's body in both forms of woodworking. Carol Jacobi compares *The Shadow of Death* to a cartoonish self-portrait drawn by Hunt in a letter to Edward Lear, in which he portrays himself juggling knives. «The tools surrounding Christ in the painting itself, types of the instruments of his torture at the hands of man, echo the early self-portrait, the knives and tools which Hunt associates with his own vulnerability to "the power of the world"» (Jacobi [2002]: 609). For Hunt, the craftsman's body is always implicitly at risk from his own tools.

Hunt's painting of *The Lady of Shalott* also shows the craft worker's body entwined with and imperiled by her workspace. Her tapestry is stretched on a horizontal loom consisting of a circular metal hoop parallel to the floor and supported by decorative pillars. She works by walking inside the loom, her hands weaving the weft as she steps in and out of the warp's strands, her body moving in circles between its woven and unwoven sections. Linda Parry has discussed Hunt's extensive interest in textiles, and his early employment at a textile a textile manufacturing company (Parry [2008]: 59), which makes his elaborately ungainly portrayal of the Lady's weaving process all the more striking. Thomas L. Jeffers notes the impracticality of Hunt's rendering: «within an embroidery frame no more than a foot above the floor, and, with no place to sit, she must have been painfully on her way to scoliosis. Inside the frame, moreover, Hunt's Lady could never make the called-for three paces across the room» (Jeffers [2002]: 248).

Hunt has captured the moment when the curse falls and the tapestry begins to unwind. It is the Lady's hair that flies up and floats wide, not the web as in Tennyson's poem, forming a grand circle of heavy, lustrous, interwoven strands around her head that mirrors the circular tapestry. The yarn has begun to entangle her, wrapping in graceful arcs around her body, so that the fabrics of her skirt and bodice seem contiguous with the textiles near her feet. Her right arm is bowed gracefully, like a cellist's, and her right hand is caught by a thread so that her fingers fan upward. But her left arm is twisted uncomfortably backward, twisted by the thread into a painful and ungainly position. Her body thus offers the combined beauty and struggle of full engagement with her artwork. Tennyson was dissatisfied with the fact that Hunt's version placed so much emphasis on the interweaving of the Lady's body and tapestry. In *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (1905) Hunt describes Tennyson's irritation that the Lady's hair is «wildly tossed about as if by a tornado» and that the web winds «round and round her like the threads of a cocoon» (Holman Hunt [1905]: 124-125).

Waterhouse's second painting, *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot*, also shows the Lady wrapped up by the tapestry's yarn. A thick band of threads wraps tightly around her knees; she leans at an ungainly angle, apparently losing her balance, with the complex folds of her dress binding her further. Thomas L. Jeffers describes the Lady's vivid embodiment as a sign of her sexual agency: we see «a woman who could conceivably run a studio *and* have a man; who could find satisfaction in work *and* in love» (Jeffers [2002]: 248). I would suggest, by contrast, that the Lady's body is so directly engaged with the materials of the studio she is running, and the tapestry she is creating, that its sexual power seems of far less interest to the Pre-Raphaelite painters than its creative power in the studio space. As in *The Shadow*

of Death, the Lady's workshop in Hunt's painting presents an exhaustive, and visually exhausting, array of craft materials interspersed with personal items: balls of yarn, spindles, a vase of flowers, the Lady's discarded pattens (she weaves barefoot). An elaborate and monolithically large silver samovar sits within the ring of the loom, which would seem to block the Lady's ability to weave easily, but perhaps, like many artists, she needs her tea. Hunt's and Waterhouse's painting suggest that Pre-Raphaelites interpreted the Lady's «curse» as the fulfillment of the creator's bodily engagement with the tapestry, when woman and textile become indistinguishable. The creator's body in the midst of its artistic process is subsumed into the materials of creation. When the tapestry flies "out" and floats "wide" it is becoming enwrapped with the physical world it represents, and in doing so it takes the weaver's body, which is already entwined with her craft, along with it.

Such a reading of the curse would help explain a puzzling aspect of Tennyson's portrayal of The Lady. The poem emphasizes the consistency of the Lady's labor at her loom, and her lack of anxiety about the curse hanging over her.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott. ([1842]:ll. 37-45)

Erik Gray contrasts the Lady with fairytale heroines like Sleeping Beauty whose curses «are not brought on consciously or deliberately» ([2009]: 45). Where Sleeping Beauty accidently pricks her finger, the Lady «by contrast, is aware of the curse that hangs over her, and brings it upon herself with a series of decisive actions» ([2009]: 45). Yet the Lady's awareness is missing one crucial element: while she clearly has heard that she is cursed, and knows the mechanism of the curse's activation, Tennyson makes it clear that she «knows not what the curse may be». Something bad will certainly happen to her if she looks down to Camelot, but she cannot say what. Lines 43 and 44 both begin with «And», suggesting that, in the Lady's mind, the reasonable response to having an unspecified curse hanging over one's head is to continue working «steadily» and without great anxiety. She does not seem to be curious or angry about the curse, and has «little other care». The Lady thus differs from Pandora-like fairytale heroines of Bluebeard or Beauty and the Beast who can't resist pushing their luck to find out the secret being withheld from them. She also differs from those Gray mentions who are simply unaware of the sinister magical system in which they are ensnared. It is this combination of unflappable industry and mild-tempered contentment that seems to characterize most of the Lady's life in the tower.

The Lady's lack of interest suggests that she views the curse not as a magical punishment so much as an inevitable part of life. While the term curse may suggest a specific magical contract imposed by a god or a witch – open this box and evil will be released – it also evokes a cyclic travail that recurs every month, year, or lifetime. God's curse on humanity of menstrual pain and difficult agricultural labor is an example. The Lady seems to expect that she will someday be forced out of the tower, her body sent out into the world, and the steady recursive character of her weaving enacts that understanding. Merleau-Ponty also expresses the inevitability of this exchange between body and world through a metaphor of weaving: "Man taken as a concrete being is not a psyche joined to an organism, but the movement to and fro of existence which at one time allows itself to take corporeal form and at others moves towards personal acts» ([1945]: 101).

There is an eerie similarity between Hunt's painting and the image of Lia Cook in her studio that she has placed on her website. Cook stands at her jacquard loom, her hands on the tapestry. Fibers are everywhere. In the foreground is a table laden with brightly-colored spools of yarn; bundles of wires indicating the loom's digital technol-

ogy sprout from its top, while chords for hanging tapestries from the studio's ceiling vault up the walls. The entire top half of the photograph is occupied by *Neurothread Head* (2017), a cotton and rayon tapestry showing Cook's face overlaid by twining multicolored threads. Like the paintings of the Lady, the image emphasizes the interpenetration of textile and textile artist. Cook's recent work incorporates neurological mapping patterns into her textiles, so the threads are both wrapping her from without, and expressing the tangle of neurological fibers that control her hands and creative mind. The photograph intensifies the embodied portrayal of the artist in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, showing her body entwined with her artwork from within and without.

3. THE DIGITAL WEB

How is Cook's innovative use of digital technology consistent with her attention to the reflexive physicality of craft work? I would like to suggest that Cook's rematerializing of photographs, and her physical engagement with the digitally programmed jacquard loom, update a Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic principle concerning the materiality of representation. In Pre-Raphaelite art, the Christian symbolic mode of typology is incorporated into artistic meaning; Hunt's representation of Christ's shadow in *The Shadow of Death* is one example. Christ's position in the carpentry shop, adjacent to and in physical contact with his tools and materials, allows for a symbolic elision over temporal and spiritual realms between his physical/aesthetic labor and his physical/spiritual self-sacrifice. The crucifixion reaches out and touches the carpentry tools through his stretched arms. Both hand touching tool and hand touching cross have a sacramental structure. Hunt's interest in typological art was sparked by Ruskin who, in *Modern Painters*, also chooses a carpenter's tool to illustrate its operation. Discussing Tintoretto's *Annunciation*, Ruskin points to «a narrow line of light, the edge of a carpenter's square, which connects these unused tools with an object at the top of the brickwork, a white stone, four square, the corner-stone of the old edifice, the base of its supporting column. This, I think, sufficiently explains the typical character of the whole» (Ruskin [1891]: 175).

Howard Risatti's analysis of the distinction between tools and craft objects is worth addressing in relation to Holman Hunt's portrayal of antique carpenter's tools. Risatti argues that tools can be identified by their management of kinetic energy from the worker's body, while craft objects are «self-reliant» or «self-contained» serving to support the body rather than transfer energy from it (Risatti [2007]: 57). «So, unlike tools which are always concerned with using and directing energy in motion in order to make things, craft objects are typically concerned with preservation and stasis» (Risatti [2007]: 57). Even «old tools that are no longer necessary» for creating things, and are not, in fact, channeling the body's energy, can be identified as having once done so, and are therefore not craft objects (Risatti [2007]: 25). I would suggest, however, that Holman's Hunt sacramental portrayal of the tools makes the hand touching them as symbolic as it is kinetic, and thus a static container of meaning to the same degree as it is a kinetic object. The tools on the wall are part of a typological system in which Christ's body is preserved through material symbols. This is intensified by the viewer's awareness that they are antique tools. Larry Shiner distinguishes between a craft «carving made for a specific ritual use» and those «isolated in the art museum case» which have entered «a new system of meanings» to become «only art» (Shiner [2001]:272-273). Hunt's aesthetic works in opposition to Shiner's distinction, as the tools are at once vividly rendered reminders of the craft process and ritual objects represented on the highly «crafted» Pre-Raphaelite canvas (O'Neill [2015]: 18).

Holman's Hunt's portrayal of carpentry tools in *The Shadow of Death* thus foregrounds his interest in rendering the materials of the craft process as craft objects themselves. In Hunt's *The Lady of Shalott,* the loom is unquestionably a craft object, as is the samovar, as are the rug on the floor and the decorations on the walls. The tools and stu-

dio environment of the craft worker is composed entirely of craft objects; everything meets William Morris' standard of being both beautiful and useful. Morna O'Neill argues that the motion between thing and object in Pre-Raphaelite painting parallels that between type and material form.

> *[T]he painted object is always a thing, since its status as representation means that it is unintelligible as an object. […] Morris praises the "things" in Pre-Raphaelite painting ("here are such and such things") in a way that suggests he would be familiar with this paradox: the viewer recognizes the specific qualities of a quotidian object—its shape, colour, surface—only through its representation in painting.* (O'Neill [2015]: 14)

The carpenter's or weaver's tools, which allow for the functional engagement of their hands with wood or yarn, move from functional object to craft object and back through the viewer's apprehension of them in the painting.

A similar process is at work in Lia Cook's use of digital tools and artifacts. This impulse can be seen in Cook's early *New Master* works, in which the painted cloth in the Old Masters paintings is returned to its object status as woven cloth. In her wor\k with photographs, Cook renders dots or pixels into the material presence of textile's weave. As Janet Koplos notes, the « threads make systems of plusses and minuses or dots and dashes» (Koplos [2015]) so that the binary digital units of information become tactile. By reinstating the material presence of photographs, and reminding us of the artist's body's presence in the artwork, Cook updates this Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic for the digital age. Judith Leeman describes the experience of viewing Cook's photographic weavings as one of re-embodying the digitally dissolved image. «The material has body; the image is re-embodied» (Leeman [2007]: 334).

This re-embodying process is enacted through the digital programming of the jacquard loom. Jacquard looms were the technological ancestor of computers, through their card-punch programming system, and they can be associated with the historical moment when, in Campbell's terms, the craft worker's body ceased to control the machine. Cook's hybrid use of hand and digital weaving both interrogates and celebrates the craft worker's bodily engagement with technology. Lacey Jane Roberts addresses the productive dualism of Cook's aesthetic in her discussion of Queer Theory and craft work.

> *Although the jacquard pulses with digital savvy, Cook must integrate the warp and the weft by hand. Weaving requires the constant, repetitive physical motion of the maker, and while the Jacquard is a high-tech, air-compressed beast, it is no exception. The conflation of cutting-edge technology with the tedious handwork that is required of Cook is simultaneously typical and atypical of craft.* (Roberts [2011]: 188)

While Cook's body cannot be said to be fully in control of the jacquard loom, the machine's motions shadow her body's «tedious handwork». Cook's labor in her workshop in combination with the loom's programmed activity enacts a blending of identities between artist and machine which is interactive without being alienating. Cook's work allows the interaction of her hand and the machine in a way that evokes the inescapable engagement of our modern bodies with digital technology, even as the artworks she produces from the process reclaim the sensuous material presence of enacted apprehension.

In her description of her current work weaving textiles based on neural mapping, Lia Cook emphasizes multidirectional exchange between artist, subject, craft, and scientist across neurological pathways.

> *Working in collaboration with neuroscientists, I am investigating the nature of the emotional response to woven faces by mapping these responses in the brain. I draw on the laboratory experience both with process and tools to stimulate new work in reaction to these investigations. I am interested in both the scientific study as well as my artistic response to these unexpected sources, exploring the territory between in several different ways. (Cook [2019])*

Cook uses the word «response» to describe the emotions of scientific test participants, the neuro-

logical activity in their brains, and her own artistic undertaking inspired by monitoring that activity. Her art is a «reaction» that is «stimulate[d]» by watching the subjects react neurologically to stimulation. The process begins with subjects looking at weavings of faces, and ends with weavings of the neurological patterns occurring behind the subjects' faces. As Leeman says of Cook's work with photographs, «Doublings abound. Recursive circles loop and repeat» (Leeman [2007]: 336). Cook's re-embodying aesthetic is intensified here, as she is re-embodying processes that are already bodily, though we tend not to imagine them this way. «In my work I have used DSI (Diffusion Spectrum Imaging of the brain) […] to look at the structural neuronal connections between parts of the brain, and integrate these "fiber tracks" with the actual fiber connections that make up the woven translation of an image» (Cook [2019]). The metaphorical «fiber tracks» of neurons become «actual fiber» in the tapestry, which reminds us that neuronal connections were already actual, material phenomena occurring in the brain. It should be no surprise, then, that *Neurothread Head*, which re-embodies the artistic self-portrait from the inside out, hangs above her loom.

CONCLUSION: THE TERRITORY BETWEEN

Cook identifies the location of her work spatially, in «the territory between» scientific study and artistic response. Such a spatialized aesthetic is consistent with the way embodiment is deployed in her work, and in critical responses to it. Janet Koplos makes the rather extravagant claim that Cook's large-format weavings «read most clearly from a considerable distance—across the room or even across the street!» (Koplos [2015]). Such a topographical placement of the viewer returns us to our initial discussion of the distinction between art and craft being based on the consumer's bodily relationship to the object. As we have seen, Cook's work, like Tennyson's poem and the Pre-Raphaelite renderings of it, reminds us of the perils and pleasures of the craft worker's bodily engagement with her creations. If, as Boden suggests, a successful craftwork is enactive, reaching out to the viewer and inspiring the viewer to reach out to it, then craft involves a triangular entwining of bodies and artworks. Gail Kenning argues that digital culture allows a similar exchange between a community of craft workers: «as information about craft activities is shared and exchanged online by participants, processes, practices, information and memes flow through digital networks and social media sites, creating the potential for greater collaborative and participatory creative practice» (Kenning [2015]: 455). In Tennyson's words, the web of a craftwork flies out and floats wide, existing around, upon, and within the bodies that accompany it.

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