

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

ELAINE L. JACOB GALLERY *and* COMMUNITY ARTS GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Elaine L. Jacob Gallery

480 W. Hancock
Detroit, MI 48202
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Exhibition: *Drawing in Space: An Installation by Sheila Pepe*
Weaving with Light and Shadow: Paintings by Janet Hamrick
Dates: January 11 – March 7, 2007
Opening: Friday, January 11, 5-8PM
Hours: Tuesdays – Thursdays 10AM-6PM and Fridays 10AM-7PM
Contact: Lisa Baylis Gonzalez, Stephany Sowards or Ammiel Thomas at (313) 577-0770
Lecture: Thursday, January 10, 7PM. Please call for lecture location.

Elaine L. Jacob Gallery to present *Drawing in Space: An Installation by Sheila Pepe* **and** *Weaving with Light and Shadow: Paintings by Janet Hamrick*

Drawing in Space: An Installation by Sheila Pepe

For several years now, New York artist Sheila Pepe has been transforming spaces with her knotted, crocheted, tied, and draped domestic and industrial materials in ways that initiate profound interrogations of sculptural space while engaging the viewer in the process of her art. This exhibition presents a site-specific installation created by Pepe in Wayne State University's Elaine L. Jacob Gallery.

There is no passive way to encounter these installations, as they inescapably incorporate viewers into their morass by forcing them to step around, stoop under, look up at, look through, and exercise their faculties of mind and imagination to comprehend this challenging art. Contrary to what might be thought, it is the systematic precision of Pepe's handcraft that makes for a seemingly random jungle of forms, the shadows of which contribute to an atmosphere of perceptual play. Pepe's work is an invasion of the exhibition space that evokes the effect of a three-dimensional Jackson Pollock.

Pepe grew up in an Italian immigrant family in New Jersey, the granddaughter of an owner of show repair shops, and was taught to crochet by her mother. In the practice of crocheting, she reclaims a traditionally feminine method and liberates it from operative stereotypes, both conservative and liberal, to create her radical, powerful and monumental art.

The artist's installations are charged with the humor that is inherent in their inclusion of simple, everyday materials (rope, yarn, rubber bands and shoelaces) wielded in such a complex, even obsessive manner. Yet her monumental scale and the ambition of her compositions give remarkable cause to reconsider the stereotyped importance of materials and methods of production in the creation of art. Pepe's bold and engaging work crosses boundaries between fine art and craft, sculptural and graphic approaches, and formalism and the familiar. It is at once both highly personal and universal.

Sheila Pepe received her B.F.A. from the Massachusetts College of Art (Boston) and M.F.A. from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She attended Haystack Mountain School of Crafts (Maine) and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (Maine), and was a fellow at the Bunting Institute at Harvard. She has received awards and grants including The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award, an International Artists' Residency from Art/Omni (Ghent, New York), a Museum National Annual Award, a Geraldine R. Dodge Fellowship and an Ann and Graham Gund Fellowship, among others.

Ms. Pepe has had solo exhibitions at the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, The Weatherspoon Art Museum (Greensboro, NC), The Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College (Cambridge, MA), and The Clifford Gallery at Colgate University (Hamilton, NY), among others. Her work has been included in group shows at the Center of Contemporary Art (Seattle), Artists Space (New York City), the Institute of Contemporary Art, (Philadelphia), the Faulconer Gallery at Grinnell College (Iowa), the Institute of Contemporary Art, (Boston), Tredje Saret, (Stockholm), and Galeria Guido Carbone (Turin, Italy), among others.

The artist's work is currently in the permanent collection of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), List Visual Art Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge), Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University (Waltham, MA), and Goldman Sachs (New York City), among others. Ms. Pepe currently teaches at Pratt Institute and the Rhode Island School of Design, and has taught previously at Bard College, the New School, and Williams College. She is represented by Susan Inglett Gallery (New York) and Bernard Toale Gallery (Boston). The artist currently lives and works in New York City.

The artist will be in attendance at the opening reception to conduct a gallery talk for the general public. She is available for interviews with the media by phone and in-person from January 7 – 11.

Weaving with Light and Shadow: Paintings by Janet Hamrick

This exhibition presents twelve meditative, technically virtuoso, and jarringly beautiful, paintings by Detroit artist Janet Hamrick. From a distance, Hamrick's abstract paintings can look as if they were made of printed fabric, as the artist weaves intricate abstract patterns in monochrome fields that are reminiscent of woven jacquards. On closer examination it becomes clear that the artist's medium is oil paint on wood panel, and that Hamrick's contrapuntal compositions subvert all patterning conventions, reading more like cryptic notation than decoration.

Hamrick frequently makes use of a multitude of horizontal, hard-edge, parallel bands of color against a rich stained or washed ground. These repetitious, densely packed bands resemble venetian blinds --which you must stand near to see out of, and which do not provide a clear view. Deftly painted calligraphic marks that are woven throughout this grid of stripes create a rich interplay of light and shadow. In the end, the viewer is drawn more deeply into the painting as he/she is obliged to visually focus through the subtle glimmering of pattern, light and shadow.

Hamrick says, "I paint color fields of refined shades of light and dark, accented by rhythmic patterns. The paintings involve several layers of contemplation. The immediate visual impression focuses on the repetitive composition. The colors impressionistically transform the art into either a natural or musical composition. With contemplation, the refined shades of paint applied in layers create a rhythmic cadence and encourage the viewer to meditate about the beauty of nature. The order found in ribs or sand casting shadows under shallow water or the sunlight filtering through venetian blinds are found intertwined with the floral and ornamental patterns. This forms a harmony of nature which inspires and becomes the paintings and works on paper."

As we learn from the artist, her seemingly entirely abstract linear patterns and swaths of color often suggest natural phenomena, and their temporary states, such as the sun shining through the leaves in the trees, rippling water, and horizons. Despite their often modest size, Hamrick's paintings summon forth a sense of vastness, like that of the sea and sky.

There is both resilience and fragility to Hamrick's works; a strength in the grid-like structure created by the rigid bands of color, and a sublime elegance in the curving ethereal marks woven throughout. The duality between the organic essence of her subject matter and the hyper-refined method of her technique is merged by a sophisticated use of color, to an almost hypnotic effect.

Janet Hamrick attended the College for Creative Studies in Detroit and the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Florida. Her work has been included in shows at George Billis Gallery (Los Angeles and New York), Lemberg Gallery (Ferndale, MI), College for Creative Studies, Ann Arbor Art Center, LaMar University (Beaumont, Texas), Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, Detroit Artists Market, Paint Creek Center for the Arts (Rochester, MI), The Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID), and the Detroit Institute of Arts, among others. Hamrick lives and works with artist husband, Stephen Magsig in Ferndale, Michigan. They also have a studio loft in New York City.

Both exhibitions will open on Friday, January 11, with an opening reception from 5-8pm, which is free and open to the public. The Elaine L. Jacob Gallery is located at 480 W. Hancock (between Cass and Second) in Detroit, on the campus of Wayne State University. Images of the work of Sheila Pepe and Janet Hamrick are available upon request.

For further information, please contact Lisa Baylis Gonzalez (lbgonzalez@wayne.edu) or Stephany Sowards (ap2984@wayne.edu) or Ammiel Thomas at (313)577-0770