

Threads of creativity run through 'Cotton' exhibit

By Chris Bergeron/DAILY NEWS STAFF

[The MetroWest Daily News](#)

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Video



[VIDEO: New art exhibit opens](#)

FRAMINGHAM — Catherine Weber transforms bits of cloth like the hankies her late father used to carry on hunting trips into "prayer flags" of love and remembrance.

Kate Gasser draws in intricate detail the "hippyish" green and yellow cotton dress she wore years ago before taking on the responsibilities of work and family.

Lisa Barthelson wove a "Tween Nest" from scraps of clothes and fashion accessories her daughter used to wear as a teenage dancer.

They're just some of the 25 artists showing varied work in "Cotton," an exhibition at Fountain Street Fine Art that explores wildly innovative uses of a commonplace fabric.

Cheryl Clinton and Marie Craig, who founded the gallery at 59 Fountain St. in January 2011, said they chose "Cotton" as the show's theme to celebrate their second anniversary because it's a traditional gift that let the artists express "different points of view" in creative ways.

"It provides a theme with a common thread if you'll excuse the pun," said Craig, a photographer from Natick. "When we advertised the show, we asked artists who wanted to submit work to think about cotton as a theme, a historical reference and a material in physical or conceptual form."

Artists from six states answered their call by submitting from materials as diverse as acrylics, oils, fibers, beeswax, fiberglass, photos, steel, wax and, of course, actual cotton.

As organized by artist and independent curator Joanne Mattera, "Cotton" offers wide-ranging and original work that's full of surprises.

Jurying the show, she viewed 135 digital images from more than 60 artists before selecting 33 works by 25 artists.

Perhaps because this was the gallery's first juried exhibit to accept work based on digital images, it includes submissions from artists in five states outside of Massachusetts - Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maine, Connecticut and New Hampshire. Twenty Bay State artists are in the show.

Acting on Clinton's and Craig's suggestion, Mattera organized "Cotton" based on five interrelated "threads:" textiles as image and objects, structures, narratives, vessels and landscapes.

The New York-based artist said "Cotton" features "a number of very good works ... that hew to the theme while offering welcome surprises."

Visitors will be happily surprised by the different ways artists interpreted the show's theme.

In his digital photo "Tallit," Rob Weisman of Ashland captures the craft and care that went into making a Jewish prayer shawl. Using acrylics, Newton artist Karen Rothman has painted three potholders that might have been found in any American kitchen.

Fusing painting and weaving, Stacey Piwinski, of Medford, created "Object of Labor #2," a mixed media piece that blurs the boundary between cotton as a material and idea. Instead of his usual panoramic landscapes, Roy Perkinson, of Wellesley, painted a length of rope like a still life from the natural world.

Several exhibitors in "Cotton" are showing art that reveals a transition from earlier styles or uses different kinds of material.

A Southborough resident, Weber said her evocative piece "On the Line" incorporates her lifelong passion for sewing with a recent interest in photography.

Resembling handkerchiefs drying on a clothesline, it comprises four squares of silk and gossamer upon which she has printed on both sides photos of nature scenes reminiscent of her late father's love of outdoors activities.

"These are memories," said Weber. "I feel like I'm connecting to my childhood."

Gasser used nine pencils with different degrees of shading to draw her intricate "My Old Dress" which includes floral and animal motifs in remarkable detail.

"I knew it would be a real challenge. Using all the different pencils let me express the emergence of the final image from the drawing as if it was brought up very slowly," she said.

A self-described "material junkie," Barthelson of Rutland said using scraps of clothes and accessories of daughter Marissa used a few years ago lets her "freeze time and make art from it."

"I'm telling the story of my family by letting the materials lead me there," she said.

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"Cotton"

WHEN: Through Jan. 27

WHERE: Fountain Street Fine Art, 59 Fountain St., Framingham

INFO: 508-879-4200, www.fountainstreetfineart.com

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