

CRAFT-ED

works by

Sara Christensen Blair
Nicholas R. Schutsky
Chris Walla

Clarion University Art Gallery
September 5 – October 5, 2007

University of Miami Project Space
November 10 – December 1, 2007

Sara Christensen Blair lives in Aberdeen South Dakota where she teaches design at Northern State University. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, Christensen Blair studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2002. Christensen Blair received her Master of Fine Arts in mixed media in 2004 from University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. Recent exhibitions include *Knitted Tales*, *Embroidered Stories* at Bedford Gallery in Walnut Creek, California and *Contemporary Women Artists XIII*, juried by Judy Chicago, where she was awarded Best of Show.

Nicholas R. Schutsky, a New Jersey native, received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Richard Stockton College and went on to receive a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Delaware. Schutsky's work has been included in numerous exhibitions in the United States and abroad including *PerForm*, a solo exhibition at Sperone Westwater, New York, and *FREEZE!*, a group exhibition at Robilant & Voena in London. Additionally, his work can be found in the homes of prominent private collectors from New York to Monte Carlo. Schutsky currently lives and works in Northern New Jersey.

Chris Walla, a recent McKnight Fellowship recipient, was born in California and was raised in Washington State. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree with an emphasis in sculpture from Western Washington University in 1997. He later went on to receive a Master of Fine Arts from The University of Wisconsin Madison in 2003. Recent exhibitions include *44/46*, Temporary Public Art Exhibit in Chicago, and *In Words* at the University of Delaware Art Museum. Currently he lives in Moorhead, Minnesota, and teaches all levels of sculpture in the Department of Art and Design at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

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840 Wood Street
Clarion, PA 16214

University of Miami Project Space
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Art & Craft ... are terms whose use and meaning are often debated by critics, theorists, artists, and craftspeople. Formerly synonymous terms, they had a nearly parallel sense-development; not until the modern age—post industrial revolution—did their meanings diverge. With the idea of “aesthetic experience,” most famously expounded upon by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century, art separated from craft by giving taste and subjective experience precedence over the object itself.



Contemporary disillusionment with the ideals of modernism and questioning of the framework that governs the rules of taste brought about the rise of Postmodernism; postmodernism though, in turn, finds the distance between art and craft less clearly navigable. In 1996 art historian and critic Donald Kuspit wrote, “There has been a new emphasis on craft in the “fine” arts, to the extent that many so-called fine artists have begun producing craft objects, or objects in which the boundary or difference between fine art and craft is not easy to determine.”¹



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CRAFT-ED ... showcases the works of three such artists whose divergent perspectives employ similar approaches to art making. Their works are skillfully constructed using tools and techniques on or outside the periphery

above (from top to bottom)
 Sara Christensen Blair, *24 Months*
 Chris Walla, *Untitled (Bluechip Paintings)*
 Nicholas R. Schutsky, *Barnett Newman: Be I (second version), 1970*

cover (from top to bottom)
 Chris Walla, *Untitled (Bluechip Paintings) Paintchip P* detail
 Sara Christensen Blair, *24 Months* detail
 Nicholas R. Schutsky, *Barnett Newman: Be I (second version), 1970* detail

of traditional art making practice and clearly exhibit the blurring of the boundary between art and craft. The objects they create are testaments to the care and sensitivity they devote to both form and content.

In Christensen Blair's *24 Months*, her use of crocheted fiber, a symbol of domesticity, and birth control dispensers, a symbol of women's rights, confronts the complexity of female identity. Schutsky's simultaneously reverent and irreverent take on some of his favorite abstract expressionist paintings by re-creating them with LEGO® blocks, Lite-Brite, and rug-hooking suggests disenchantment with the myth of modernism. Walla's large-scale replications of Martha Stewart paint chips in *Untitled (Bluechip Paintings)* comment on the complex social hierarchy issues of taste by making paintings out of color combinations prescribed by a figure who has become the icon of taste. In all of these works the artists approach their *oeuvre* with sincerity, reverence, and humor.

CRAFT-ED takes a look at works in which the boundary between art and craft are not just difficult to determine, as Kuspit suggests, but indistinguishable and inconsequential as well.

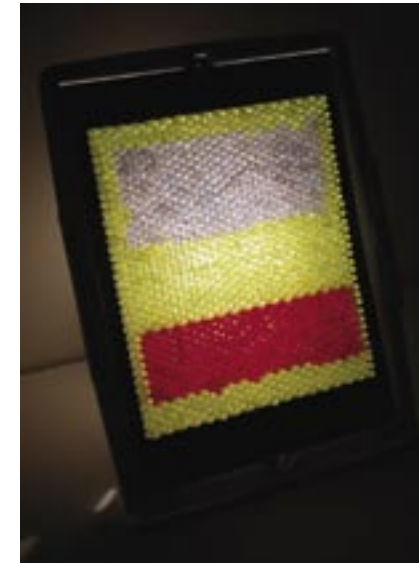
Mark Franchino, *Gallery Director*
 Clarion University of Pennsylvania

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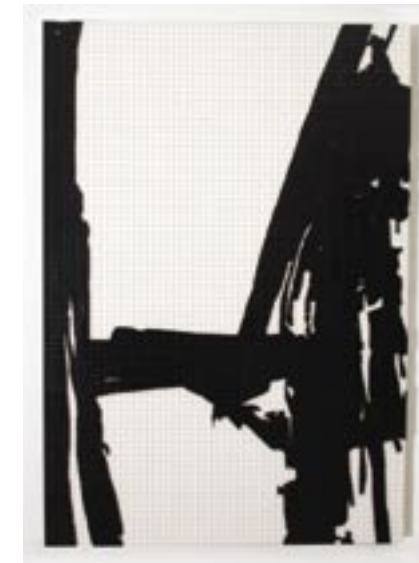
¹ Donald Kuspit, “Craft in Art, Art as Craft,”
 New Art Examiner, April 1996, p. 14.



above
 Chris Walla, *Hanky Project*
 left
 Chris Walla, *Hanky Project* beige



above left
 Nicholas R. Schutsky, *Mark Rothko: White, Red on Yellow, 1958*



above right
 Nicholas R. Schutsky, *Franz Kline: Slate Cross, 1961*

below right
 Sara Christensen Blair, *38 Hours* detail

below left
 Sara Christensen Blair, *Cyclic* detail

