

SHELLEY HAMPE
THESIS EXHIBITION STATEMENT

by
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Overview of Thesis Show III
2009

Plate XXVI

Overview of Thesis Show IV
2009

My work has evolved a great deal over the past two years. I began my studies at TCU as a painter, but soon after my arrival I began experimenting with installation and environmental art. In the beginning the installations were created in my studio space as a way of transforming my environment. My focus on installations became more singular because I no longer felt that I was able to communicate what I desired through two-dimensional objects. How can you get so much information into one object? This question kept lingering, which sparked my interest in the viewer and how he or she perceives and experiences art works. This body of work encourages awareness of the reflection on the point of view and experience of the viewer, and carries with it an ambiguous nature that is both frail and aggressive.

The materials and objects I use become part of the explanation. For my thesis show the list of materials are white fabric, used white bed sheets, white cheesecloth, white lace, white ribbon, white thread, white rope, pins, safety pins, close-pins, white primer paint, coat hangers, and the frame of a full size mattress; the singularity or combination of materials help explain the work. I choose to use materials that the viewer identifies with, and then I reconfigure their use to probe the audience to look at objects and their context in an altered way.

The color white, or the lack of color, can be complex. In Western society white is viewed as pure and innocent. In this thesis show white is exploited and transformed in the opposite manner. In the book *La Citta di Riga*, written by Per Kirkeby and translated by Peter Shield, Kirkeby takes an excerpt from *Moby Dick* to describe the complexity of the color white.

The white colour roams by the Poles. For me it is eternal disquiet and horror. It has been after me several times. It cannot be described. When

the white moves. Like a feather the polar bear approaches, dancing over stones and distances. It is suddenly conjured up out of the spotted landscape. I hardly dare remember it. But I have taken up many hours in working out by what unbelievable combinations of accidents (?) [sic] it did not get me. Accidents exist only for those who survive. This is not by chance. Melville writes about the white colour in *Moby Dick* (which naturally I read here), ‘But in spite of all those associations of this colour with something beautiful and good, there remains, however, an inexplicable mystery to white, which exceeds even the colour red, which terrifies because it is the colour of blood.’ The white stillness makes my blood beat faster. Is it the white colour or the white beast? Isn’t it all one – is it not just Anxiety here by the patches of snow, by the coagulating coast, the white stillness, the all-too-clear view?¹

A Calm Beginning, (see plate X-X) is a circular fabric environment created with muslin, thread, sewing pens, and safety pins. This piece uses the shape of a hexagonal pattern related to beehives and beekeeping to imply domesticity. In this room it is unclear whether the hexagon shapes are protruding or receding, or if they are growing or succumbing to death. The way light is diffused through the muslin gives the viewer a sense of comfort in a cocoon-like fashion. In nature the strongest shape to be found is the hexagon. With that awareness I created this room out of muslin fabric to suggest that even the strongest of things can be weak, temporal, and vulnerable.

If you could only understand (X-X) uses hand-fabricated lengths of textiles to construct bed sheets that are non-functional and hung by clothespins from white rope. There are four sections of clotheslines that span the length of the gallery, which are hung one in front of the other creating a barrier between the viewer and what might exist behind. The sheets also act as a filter for the natural light coming through the windows behind them. If the viewer chooses to venture through the sheets, which are hung eight inches apart from each other, the space between the rows of fabric is tight and can be

¹ Per Kirkeby translated by Peter Shield, “The White Colour,” *Grey Hope the Persistence of Melancholy*, ed. Sigrid Sandstrom and Atopia Projects.

uncomfortable to pass through. This “possible experience” differs from the installations quiet, clean exterior appearance.

This is what I remember (see plates X-X) is a somber installation composed of fabric, thread, a bed mattress frame, ribbon, straw, and chicken eggs. The over-head canopy-like textiles are a mixture of various types of found white fabrics hastily stitched together, forming unpredictable puckers in their union. White threads dangle from the fabric ceiling, incessantly tangling together as you brush through them entering the space. The full size mattress is turned on its side leaning against the corner area of the wall striped of its fabric and stuffing leaving only the metal frame and springs showing. The mattress springs are painted white with primer and the outer edges are methodically wrapped in white satin ribbon. The bare mattress springs are treated like a chicken coop with the springs stuffed with unusable hay turned to straw and store bought eggs. This installation suggests a dream-like memory detached from sensible existential reality.

Letting you go (X-X) is composed from thrift store bed sheets reconfigured as pillows, ribbon, and clothespins. Pinched corners tied off with bows, attached by clothespins, suspend the individually made pillows stuffed with cotton spilling from their insides. This installation is animation “paused.” The pillows appear to be pouring from the ceiling and walls uncontrollably. The billowing supply of stilled pillows implies an event gone badly. Perhaps its existence lies within the space where a good dream goes terribly wrong. As you approach the exterior of the installation it feels soft, comfortable, cloud-like. These feelings contrast with the aggressive, suffocating feeling you encounter underneath the installed pillows.

In the process of failure, (see plates 5-6), is an installation composed of an army of wire coat hangers obsessively wrapped in white ribbon. White ribbons tied in pretty bows connect the individually wrapped hangers to each other, implying a disturbing juxtaposition of the soft, beautiful hangers and bows, with the aggressively hung hangers that invade the viewer's space. This simple domestic object, the coat hanger, is taken out of context from its purposeful use and strung together self-suspended from the wall in a canopy like fashion that forces the viewer to interact with it. The mangled family of coat hangers reflects a type of domestic spider web with a menacing twist. This is reiterated by the sharp contrasting shadows the hangers form on the walls and floor of the space.

When I began to design the layout of this thesis show I looked to Pipilotti Rist's survey exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston Texas in late 2006 shown through early 2007. The layout of the show was so fluid that, as a viewer, I experienced the work as a whole and not as separate pieces. This is the concept that I used to model the installation of my show.

Throughout this thesis show there are commonalities that unite each piece to form a cohesive body of work that can be seen as either a series of installations or as one whole installation. Domesticity and the appropriation of domestic-like materials have always been a factor in my work. Another element in this work is the addressing of space shared between the viewer and work, as well as the element of light and the filtering of light that can be seen in *A Calm Beginning*, *If you could only understand*, and *This is what I remember*. Finally, this body of work, as well as individual pieces within it, evoke contradiction and contrast as a result of the context in which the work is housed and arrangement of materials used.

The process of realizing this exhibition has been difficult but rewarding. During the past two years of graduate study, I have become an artist, and I am proud of the work that has come out of this learning process. As an artist I am and will continue to question myself and will never be content idling in the same place. There is so much truth to be discovered and I have no desire to rest.



Plate I



Plate II



Plate III



Plate III



Plate V



Plate VI



Plate VII

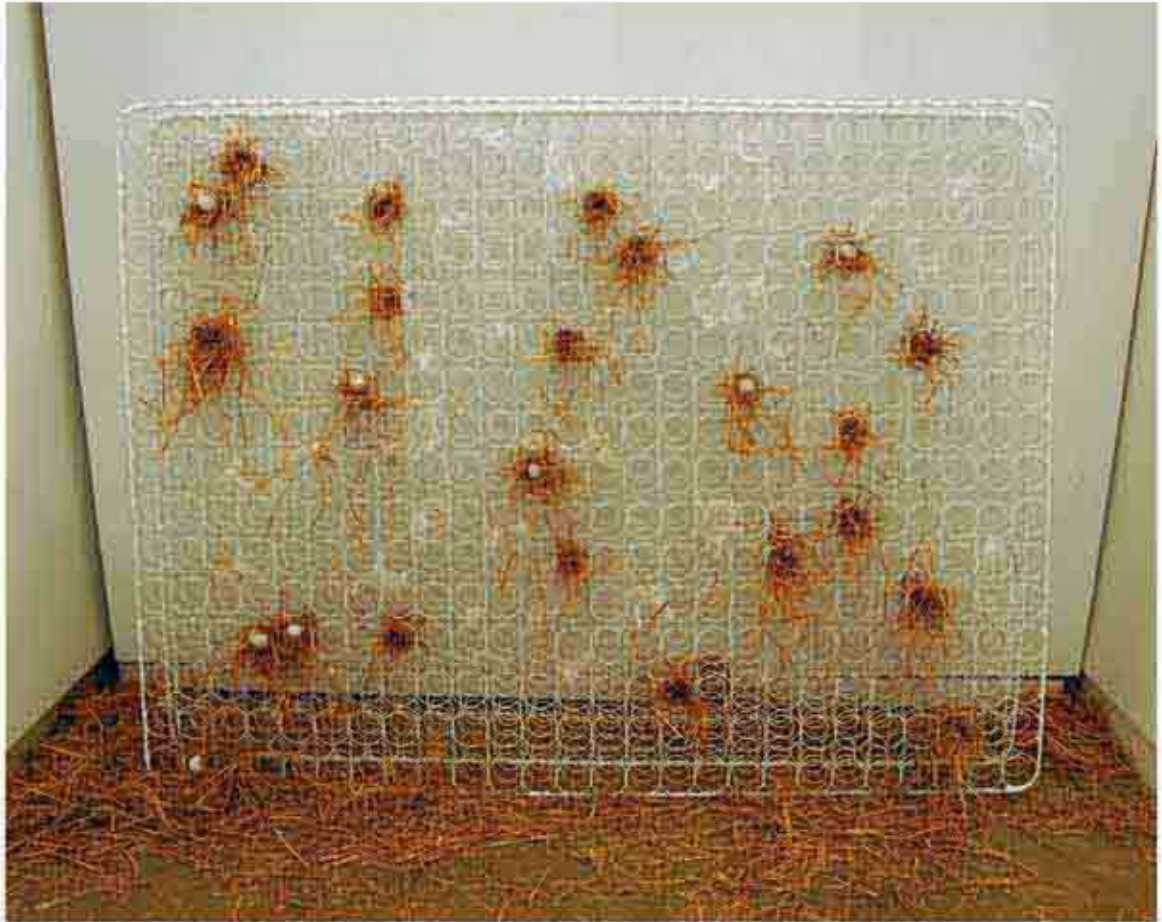


Plate VIII



Plate IX



Plate X



Plate XI



Plate XII



Plate XIII



Plate XIV



Plate XV



Plate XVI



Plate XVII

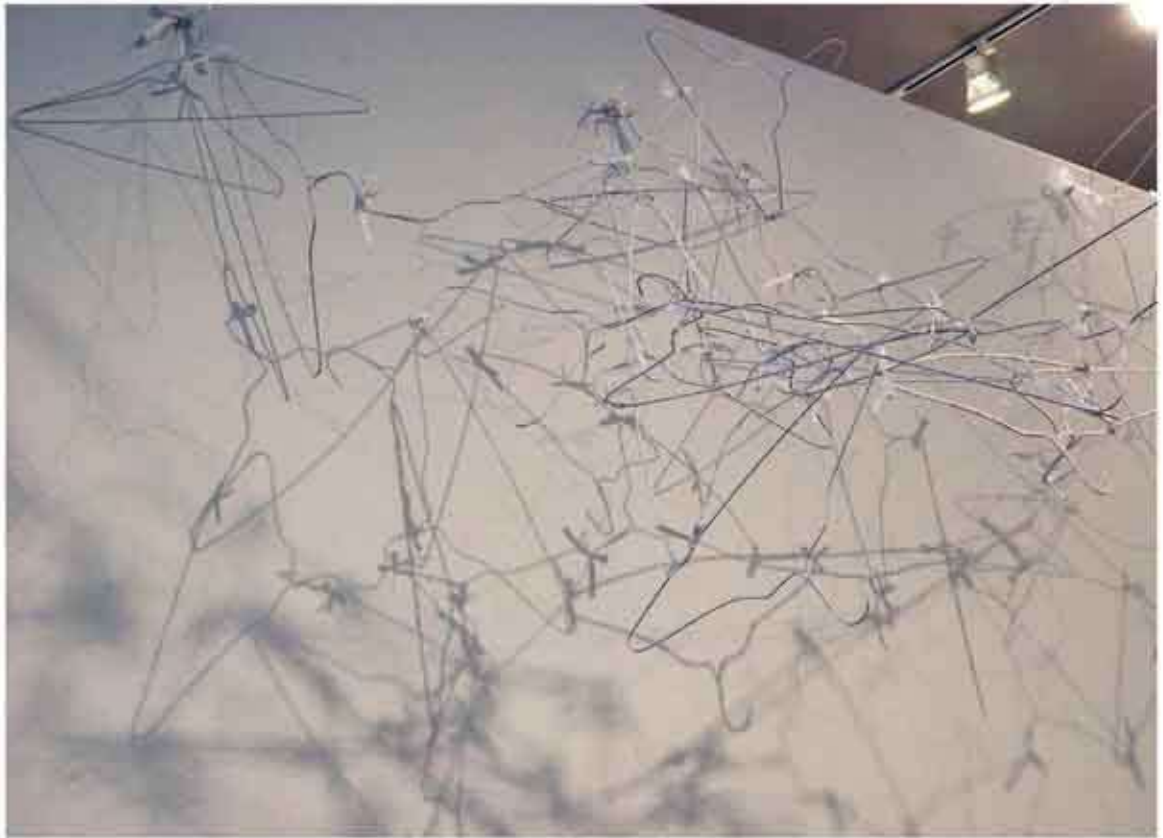


Plate XVIII

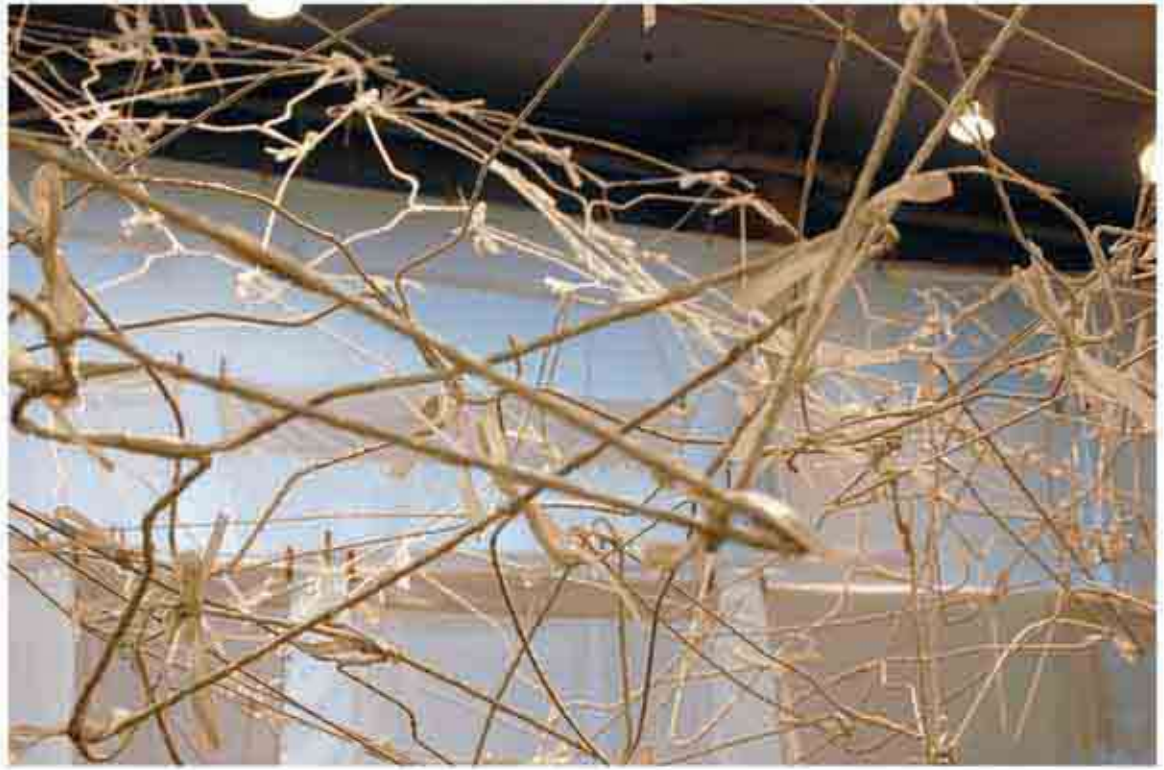


Plate XIX



Plate XX

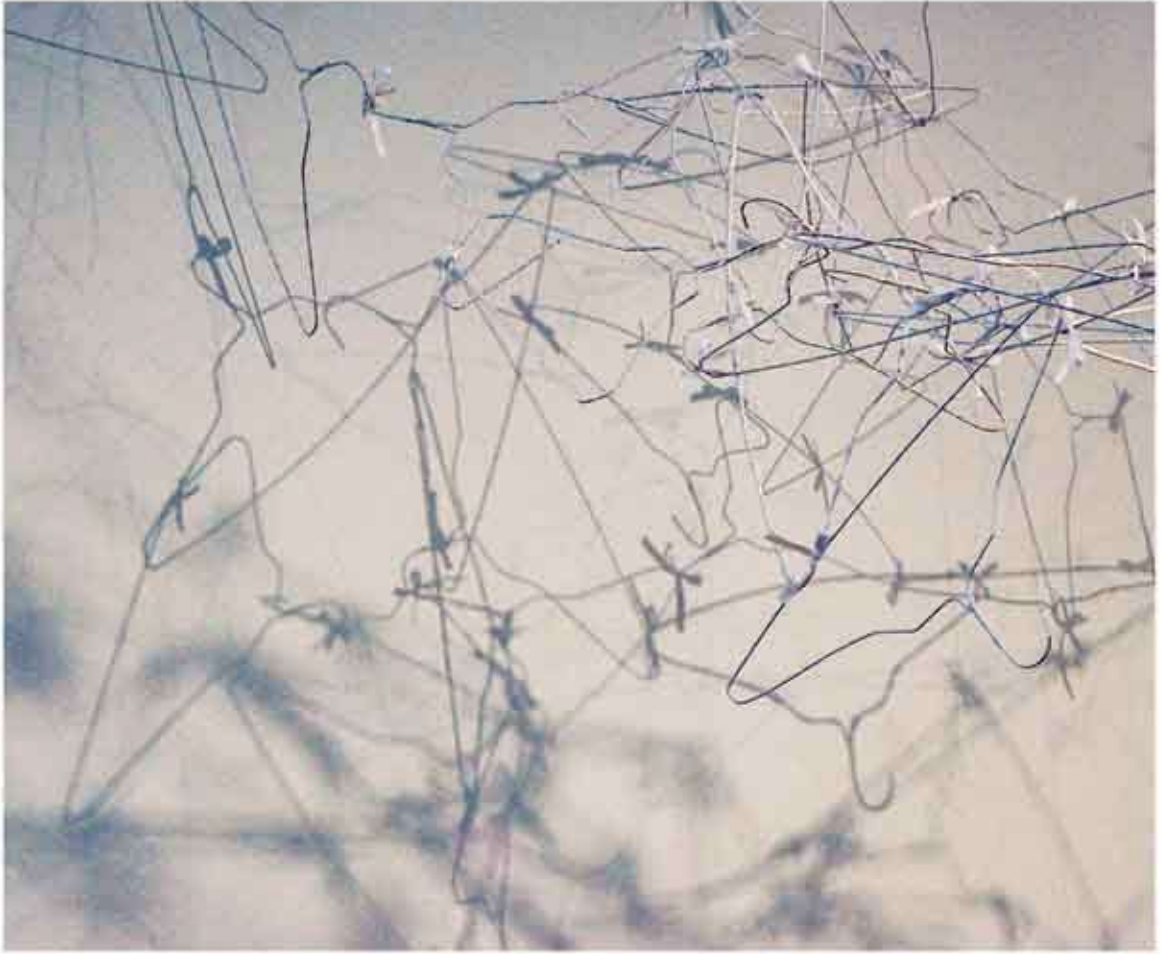


Plate XXI

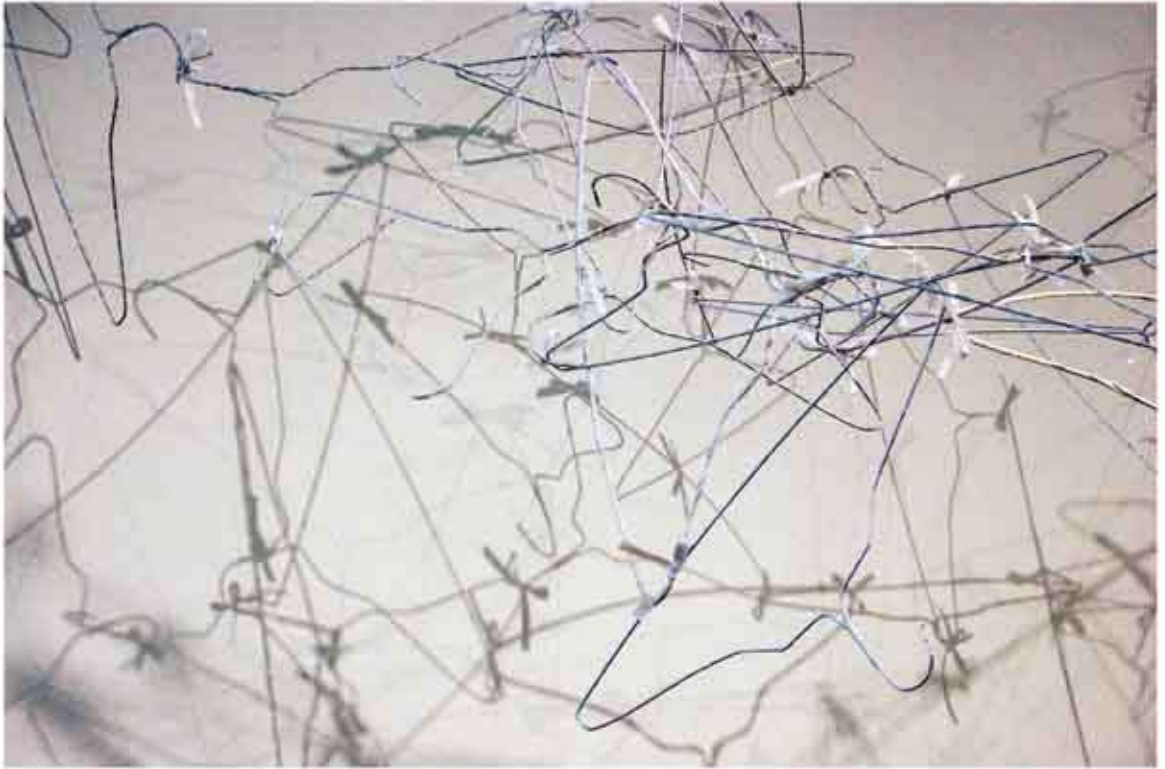


Plate XXII



Plate XXIII



Plate XXIV



Plate XXV



Plate XXVI

Vita

Shelley Hampe was born September 26, 1978 in Clifton Texas. She is the daughter of Donna and Lloyd Hampe, sister to Chris Hampe, Laura Oborski, Lisa Russ, and Travis Hampe. A graduate of Clifton High School, Clifton Texas, she received an Associate of Visual Communication from Collin County Community College in Plano Texas in 2001 and a Bachelor of Fine Art from Texas A & M University – Commerce in Commerce Texas in 2006.

Abstract

Shelley Hampe: Thesis Show is Ms. Hampe's thesis exhibition of five works of installation art. In early 2008 Ms. Hampe became interested in installation and environmental art, as well as the role of the viewer and their experience with art. She began to transform her studio into fragments of installation elements that have evolved into her thesis exhibition.

This exhibition can be viewed as five separate yet unmistakable cohesive installation works or one immersive installation. The art works carry with them a sense of frail aggression and a type of broken narrative.