



investigated include concepts of masculinity, depictions of violence, the relationship of past to present, the human condition, roles of femininity, youth culture, humor, recycling materials, consumerism, concepts of labor, comfort, and, the possibilities of the imagination.

Kristy Daum, a life-long seamstress and the founder and president of the St. Louis Modern Quilt Guild, is committed to infusing an age-old technique such as quilting with a modern aesthetic identified by bold pattern and color, use of negative space, and "improvisational piecing." Her *Doctor Who* inspired quilt is a pixelated portrait of the Tenth Doctor as depicted by David Tennant.

Marcia Docter challenges our conceptions of superheroes and supervillains when she constructs stitched portraits of Magneto, Catwoman, Spiderman, and Elektra. In her embroideries, text and image are used in the style of comics and graphic novels—internal monologues filled with humor or anxiety are often combined with scenes of action.

A painter and printmaker, James Haggerty creates mosaics using colored staples, a stapler, and painted board. With a deft and patient hand (it can take up to six months to finish a piece), Haggerty has created portraits of *Star Wars* characters—favorite childhood icons such as Darth Vader and C-3PO.

Using pre-printed and often vintage materials such as bed sheets and curtains that she has collected, Ai Kijima creates the ultimate mash-ups of pop culture characters. Rather than offer a definitive judgment about media or consumerism, Kijima's layered compositions reflect the complexities and ambiguities of signs and images in modern societies.

Aled Lewis' *Coruscant Tapestry* is a thirty-foot-long embroidered textile that depicts the action of the *Star Wars* movie universe to date. After repeated viewings of the movies, Lewis translated scenes into pixel format on his laptop and employed family and friends to help him cross-stitch this piece. The *Coruscant Tapestry* channels another applauded handcraft, the eleventh-century 230-foot-long Bayeux Tapestry that depicts the Norman conquest of England.

Mark Newport knits superhero costumes and embroiders comic book covers. His use of yarn, thread, and handcraft techniques, that are more often popularly associated with women, brings his interests in masculine ideals, security, and comfort to the fore. The translation of superheroes into soft materials means they are recognizable yet different.

Combining his animator's sense of space and form with blueprints of the Millennium Falcon that he found online, Thomas E. Richner crafted a model of the ship in about two months. Preferring to leave the hand of the artist visible—via cuts on the cardboard and dried glue that he does not disguise—Richner offers a reflection of his talent as well as a labor of love.

Multi-media artist, designer, and performer Timothy Westbrook creates layered projects that address gender, sexuality, fantasy, and history. His steampunk-oriented line of ensembles is displayed with large-scale portrait paintings of models wearing the clothes by fellow artist, Gary Leonard.

Lena Vigna
Curator of Exhibitions

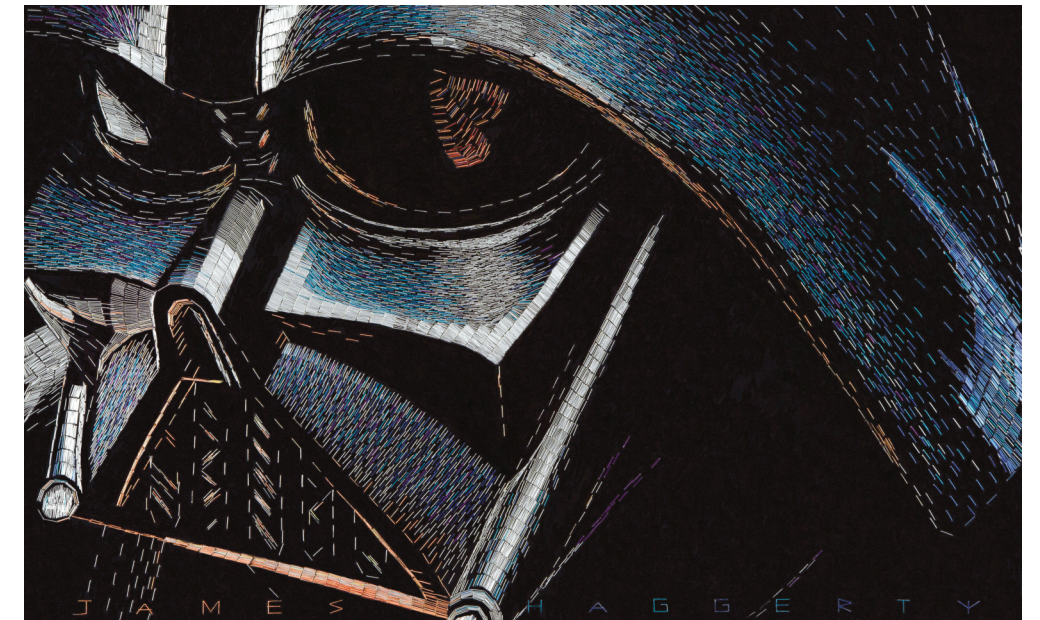
(above)
Thomas E. Richner
Millennium Falcon, 2014
Cardboard
58 x 44 x 13 inches
R2D2, 2014
16 x 18 x 32 inches
Courtesy of the Artist

(right)
Cheong-Ah Hwang
Captain America, 2010
Paper
16 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the Artist
Photo Courtesy of the Artist



A Whole Other World: Sub-Culture Craft

Artists Inspired by Doctor Who, Star Wars, Steampunk, and Superheroes



A Whole Other World: Sub-Culture Craft explores the intersection of art with cultural subjects that inspire devoted "fan" followings. This exhibition specifically addresses the science fiction and fantasy-based themes of *Doctor Who*, *Star Wars*, steampunk, and superheroes.

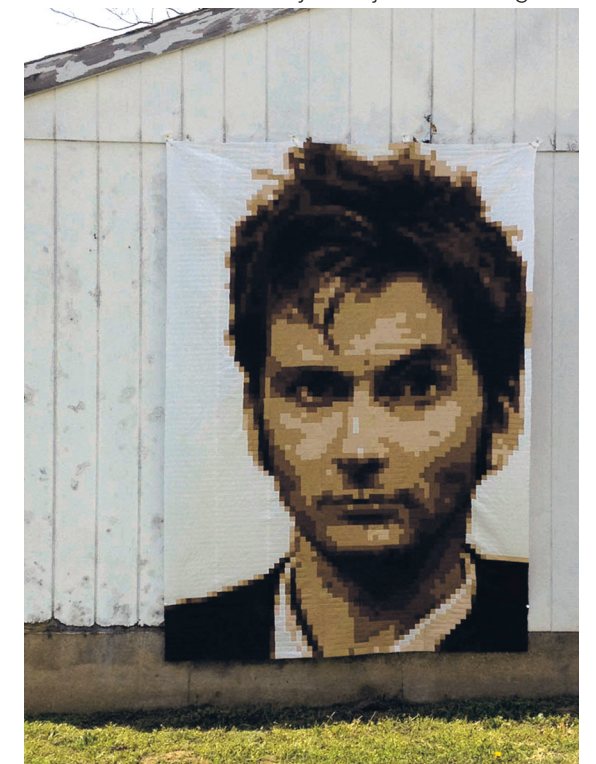
Each of these topics—all linked to history, imagination, fact, and fiction in their own particular ways—have ardent fans and practitioners. While they may stem from TV series, movies, books, graphic novels, and gatherings of the like-minded, they are not necessarily mainstream topics of conversation. Interestingly, they have also become subjects of artworks, DIY craft, and major projects, such as Chris Lee's efforts to produce a full-scale replica of the Millennium Falcon spaceship from *Star Wars*.

Focusing on pieces directly inspired by these themes, or by the winding of these kinds of topics in and out of popular culture, this exhibition features a variety of objects and images. Whether carved wood reliefs of characters from *Doctor Who*, a 30-foot-long cross-stitch tapestry of the *Star Wars* saga, steampunk jewelry, ensembles and jetpacks, or knit superhero costumes, the work delights and impresses.

The artists whose works are represented in this exhibition emphasize the value of the handmade, combining their skills and imagination with compelling stories and characters

(above)
James Haggerty
Darth, 2014
Staples on painted board
24 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the Artist
Photo Courtesy of the Artist

(right)
Kristy Daum
The Tenth Quilt, 2013
Cotton and polyester thread
96 x 68 inches
Courtesy of the Artist
Photo Courtesy of the Artist





drawn from or inspired by modern science fiction, fantasy, history, and invented worlds. Fans of pop culture generally or in specific areas, these individuals create work that reflects the dynamism of contemporary creativity.

Artists and hobbyists whose works are featured include: Kate Atherley, Zac Benedict, Creek Van Houten (Compass Rose Jewelry), Kristy Daum, Marcia Docter, Magnus Effing, Julie Flaherty, James Haggerty, Cheong-ah Hwang, Ed Kidera IV, Ai Kijima, Carl Klinger, Jamie Kratz-Gullickson, Gary Leonard, Aled Lewis, Timothy Murphy, Frances Myers, Mark Newport, Patricia Hall, Thomas E. Richner, Sean Starwars, Silversärk, Katie Temple, Charles Tritt and Julianne Hunter, and Timothy Westbrook.

Defining what hobbyist means in contemporary craft is not easy and, indeed, some may object to its use at all. A hobbyist may be trained and some may be selling their work—such as many associated with the selling site for handmade and vintage goods, Etsy.com. For this particular exhibition, the hobbyists are those who are not making work with the intended result of showing it in an exhibition or becoming part of an institution's collection.

Arts and Culture

The intersection of art and popular culture is not new. While academic work in Western European and American traditions—especially painting—favored historical and religious topics, landscape, and portraiture, there has often been a turn toward less lofty, even mundane subjects. In the 1950s and 1960s when artists began to include items from “pop culture” into their work, it meant referencing mass-produced imagery or information. In varying forms, this has persisted with topics or phenomena that affect the broader cultural realm readily making their way into contemporary art.

The four phenomena represented in this exhibition were combined because they reflect some sympathetic cultural interests—some popular and some more subversive. Whether drawing on specific personal concerns, or on the recognition that broader cultural themes can be examined through the lens of science fiction or fantasy, contemporary makers who create work associated with fandom or geekcraft play to the appeal of these topics.

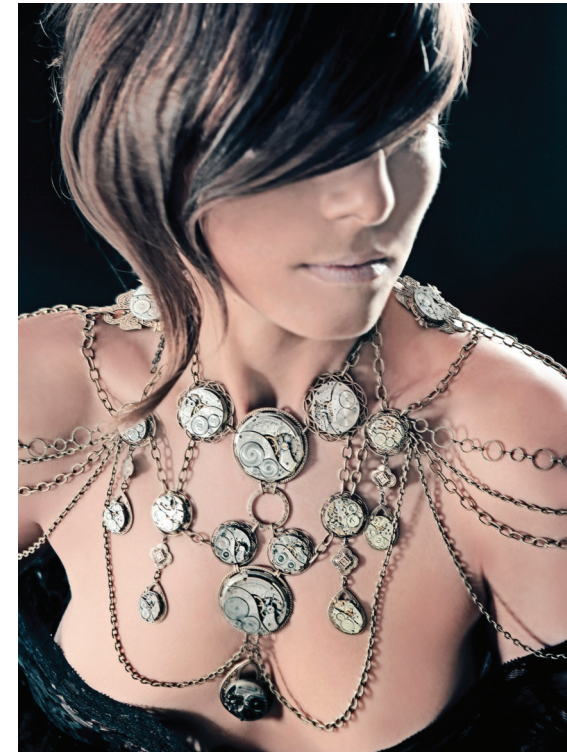
Geekcraft

The rise of geekcraft—generally associated with particular subjects and a DIY mentality—has paralleled an insistent thread of exploration in contemporary art where artists respond to larger cultural ideas through the filter of the personal and social.

As defined by the blogosphere, Pinterest, and the internet generally, geekcraft encompasses a wide range of techniques and Do-It-Yourself projects—including themed cakes, terrariums, crocheted dolls, and costumes (for humans and animals). Artists and hobbyists in this exhibition may or may not identify themselves as “geekcrafters.” Either way, their use of certain cultural subject matter links them to these broader investigations.

(above)
Marcia Docter
Sum Sum Sunt Subaqua, Subaqua Maledizre Temptant/ Even Though They Were Underwater They Still Spoke Evil, 1996
 Dried linen, glass beads, and cotton and metal thread
 12 1/4 x 12 1/8 inches
 Racine Art Museum, Gift of Marcia and Alan Docter
 Photo: Jon Bolton

(right)
Timothy Westbrook
Femme Nouvelle Dress, 2012
 Cassette tape ribbon and wool
 Size 10
 Courtesy of the Artist
 Photo: The Pfister Hotel



galaxy “far, far away.” Many species of alien creatures (often humanoid) are depicted. Robotic droids and space travel are also commonplace.

Steampunk

Steampunk refers to a subgenre of science fiction and sometimes fantasy, and in recent years, to a fashion and lifestyle movement. It often incorporates technology and designs inspired by nineteenth-century industrial steam-powered machinery. Steampunk concepts have been applied to adornment, hybrid and fantastical machines, fiction, music, art, and furniture. The tone and feel has also filtered into movies such as *League of Extraordinary Gentleman* (2003) and *Sherlock Holmes* (2009). Steampunk works are often set in an alternative history of the nineteenth century's British Victorian era or American “Wild West.” It may also incorporate additional elements from the genres of fantasy, horror, historical fiction, alternate history, or other branches of speculative fiction.

Superheroes

In modern popular fiction, a superhero is a type of heroic character possessing extraordinary talents, supernatural phenomena, or superhuman powers and dedicated to protecting the public. Since the 1930s, superheroes have been depicted in movies, comics, books, cartoons, and consumer products. Long-running superheroes that would probably be recognizable to many include Superman, Batman, Iron Man, Wonder Woman, and Spider Man. Portrayals of superheroes change with different time periods, writers, illustrators, and designers. For example, costumes may be modified based on popular fashion or enemies can reflect current social and political topics. Superheroes are defined by their origin stories and motivations yet they are also shaped by their evil counterparts, or supervillains.

Works in the Exhibition

The works offered in this exhibition are produced by fans and those who ponder popular culture. They are reflections on ideas and not necessarily direct representations. Some of the broader ideas

Brief definitions for the four cultural phenomena represented are derived from the internet—diehard fans may use different words or terms.

Doctor Who

Doctor Who is a British science fiction television program produced by the BBC from 1963 to the present day. The show depicts the adventures of the Doctor, a Time Lord—a time-travelling humanoid alien. He explores the universe in his TARDIS, a sentient space ship. Its exterior appears as a blue British police box, which was a common sight in 1963 when the series first aired. Along with a succession of companions, the Doctor combats a variety of foes while working to save civilizations and help people in need. The show has been able to persist over five decades because of a clever way the Doctor is reinvented with each new actor that plays him—basically, the Doctor “dies” in one form and is reconceived in another.

Star Wars

Created by George Lucas, *Star Wars* is an American epic space opera franchise centered on a film series—the first film of which was released in 1977. The events depicted in *Star Wars* media—which includes books, television series, computer and video games, and comic books—take place in a fictional



(above)
Creek Van Houten
Steampunk Capelet, 2014
 Antique mechanical watches and brass
 10 x 12 inches
 Courtesy of the Artist
 Photo Courtesy of the Artist

(right)
Mark Newport
Big Batman, 2012
 Knit acrylic and buttons
 120 x 26 x 6 inches
 Courtesy of the Greg Kucera Gallery and Duane Reed Gallery
 Photo Courtesy of the Artist