

ARTFORUM



Channing Hansen, *Index-Manifold*, 2017, wool, casein, silk noils, tussah silk fibers, gold, holographic polymers, pearl dust, photoluminescent recycled polyester fibers, banana cellulose, bamboo, bamboo carbon fiber, rose cellulose, SeaCell, legume cellulose, redwood, 50 x 78".

Here's a joke: A topologist is a mathematician who can't tell the difference between a coffee mug and a doughnut. To understand the gag you have to know what topology is: a branch of mathematics concerning spaces that are transformed through bending and stretching (but not severing or intersecting). Klein bottles and Möbius strips are examples of the kinds of subjects a topologist might invest her energies in. To a topologist, both a mug (a volume with a single hole, in its handle) and a doughnut (a volume with a single hole, in its middle) are tori—they only appear to be different, while they actually share fundamental similarities in the conditions of their surfaces. At its most mind-bending, topology can point to the interconnectedness of forms, breaking down some assumptions about space and our apprehension of it.

Channing Hansen is interested in such notions. He connects them not to sculpture, as one might expect, but to textiles—a medium he has been engaged with for more than a decade. In the past, he has referred to the knitted works he makes as "portals." And indeed, at Marc Selwyn Fine Art, these fabrications were distinctly revealing of the artist's process and the ideas currently driving him, namely quantum physics and non-Euclidean geometry. In the tangram-esque *Index-Manifold*, 2017, for instance, Hansen fit together sixteen triangular, stretched-knit panels to form a rectangle. Each triangle presents a motley of algorithmically determined knitting procedures, effectively providing a dictionary—or index, as per the title—for the rest of the exhibition. In some passages, Hansen's stitching is open and airy, and in others densely corded. One got the sense that he makes rules only to then intentionally break and remake them. Whereas lengths of knitting with diverse stitching are lovingly and carefully integrated in certain places, elsewhere they are lashed together with minimal fuss. There is infinite regress in this practice, although the numbering in the titling of the artist's works describes a topology without end: *1-Manifold*, *11-Manifold*, *?-Manifold*, all 2017, and so on.

The lists of Hansen's materials are nearly as dense as the compositions themselves, with the artist going to great lengths to supply the names of the breeds of sheep (Romeldale, Romney, Shetland), as well as the particular animals (Freya, Princess, Maggie) from which he sources his wool. If the litany stopped there, it would verge on twee, mirroring bourgeois cultural trends of, say, locally sourced food in upscale "farm to table" restaurants. Yet Hansen's lists also include such items as banana cellulose, SeaCell (a fiber made from seaweed), and holographic polymers. Old and new media are literally bound to one another, as Hansen blends, spins, twists, and tensions these divergent fabrics together. Unlike the artist who

Campbell, Andy. "Andy Campbell on Channing Hansen," *Artforum*, February 2018

sources materials from a wholesaler, or one who contracts with a craftsman, Hansen insists on learning every step of the process himself. This procedure thus becomes part of his practice, to be considered alongside the final products.

The intersection between weaving and science has a long history, one that dates back to Charles Babbage's nineteenth-century analytical engine (and to Ada Lovelace's early algorithms for it), which was based on his observations of jacquard looms, the first partially automated weaving machines. To go back much further, even Aristotle knew that *technē* (or craft) was also a form of knowledge, a way of understanding, and an opening into the unknown. Hansen is the latest in such a lineage, and his constructions are at once marvels of handwork and invitations to contemplate our world from another point of view—one in which there is no significant difference between a doughnut and a coffee cup.

—*Andy Campbell*