

Heitzman, Lorraine. "Channing Hansen's Fluid Dynamics," *Art and Cake*, 15 December 2017.

**art**and**cake**



Channing Hansen at Marc Selwyn Fine Art. Photo Credit: Lorraine Heitzman.

Had you lived during the First World War and by some miracle of time travel seen Channing Hansen's show, you could be forgiven for thinking that Franz Marc had picked up knitting needles. The work that fills both rooms at Marc Selwyn Fine Art has a similar expressive use of color and design that *Der Blaue Reiter* artists such as Marc, Kandinsky, and Jawlensky used to great effect in that turbulent era. Rich golds and deeply saturated purples, blues, and reds co-mingle in delirious, organic swirls of yarn on rectilinear frames. In *Fluid Dynamics*, Hansen's second show at Marc Selwyn, the artist has co-opted the craft of knitting that was once the province of women and has effectively re-purposed it without resorting to irony. Though a high level of craft is behind his wooly paintings, they are neither functional nor decorative. Instead Hansen finds a balance between his passion for scientific inquiry and the complexity of pictorial art in a tactile, unorthodox medium.



'10-Manifold' Channing Hansen. Photo Credit: Marc Selwyn Fine Art.

Six years ago, Hansen teamed with Alexandra Grant in a show at the Night Gallery entitled *The Womb Womb Room*. A nod to Faith Wilding's 1972 *Crocheted Environment*, known as The Womb Room, (a now-historic feminist installation), the 2011 installation incorporated Hansen's recent interest in fiber art. Three years later his work was introduced to a broader audience in *Made in LA, 2014* at the Hammer Museum. The work was knitted and fitted onto frames, much like his current show but it had a delicate quality, from a softer palette to a more open weave. It stood out from the dominant conceptual art and alternative media for its insistent materiality. From a video available on the museum's website, Hansen

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discusses his fascination with the laborious methods and mechanics of spinning and dyeing. Although the process is more anecdotal than visible in his work, it nevertheless informs his choices. Algorithms often dictate his stitches and his labels read like they are off a tasting menu from a restaurant serving only locally sourced, organic foods. Part of *5-Manifold* lists Alpaca, California Variegated Mutant (Hattie), Shetland (Freya) fibers and banana cellulose among its materials. In the end however, the viewer will appreciate and remember the work for its bold coloration and inventive construction long after they learned how it was made, or even why. The traditional format suggests that these are paintings foremost, so it is natural that we understand them in that context.

Entering the Marc Selwyn gallery, you are faced with an installation that impresses with its gusty color palette. The works are brilliantly hued and Hansen achieves subtlety by parsing out his colors with open stitches versus densely knitted passages. Wikipedia defines fluid dynamics as "...a subdiscipline of fluid mechanics that describes the flow of fluids (liquids and gasses)." The work does evoke images of planetary atmospheres, their colors heightened as if by enhanced photography. The hand spun and dyed wool is knitted to merge colors in interlocking, organic shapes that suggest molten rivers or air currents but yarn is anything but fluid, or what we usually consider as fluid. Close inspection reveals other more interesting aspects of these constructions; the stitches are wonderfully varied and imaginative. Color relationships are more detailed and nuanced, like the endless variations observed on beetles, rainbow trout, shells or rocks. These smaller moments in Hansen's work are a real source of wonder. Enjoy these works for their brilliantly hued yarns, but take the time to closely inspect them because you might otherwise miss the inspired details. If God is in the details, as Mies van der Rohe famously exhorted, then a careful look at Hansen's work may be just the divine experience you are seeking.