

# CRAFTIVISM

RECLAIMING CRAFT & CREATING COMMUNITY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-  
GREEN BAY → LAWTON GALLERY

GUEST CURATED BY: Faythe Levine  
OCTOBER 9TH → OCTOBER 30TH, 2008

## CRAFTIFESTO

THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS!

### CRAFT IS POWERFUL

WE WANT TO SHOW THE DEPTH & BREADTH OF THE CRAFTING  
WORLD. ANYTHING YOU WANT YOU CAN PROBABLY GET FROM  
A PERSON IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY.

### CRAFT IS PERSONAL

TO KNOW THAT SOMETHING IS MADE BY HAND, BY SOMEONE WHO  
CARES THAT YOU LIKE IT, MAKES THAT OBJECT MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE

### CRAFT IS POLITICAL

WE'RE TRYING TO CHANGE THE WORLD. WE WANT EVERYONE  
TO RE-THINK CORPORATE CULTURE & CONSUMERISM.

### CRAFT IS POSSIBLE

EVERYBODY CAN CREATE SOMETHING !!

Handmade  
NATION

WWW.PAPRESS.COM

WWW.HANDMADENATIONMOVIE.COM

Written by Amy CARLTON & Cinnamon Cooper who started the DIY  
Trunk Show in 2003. TO READ THE CRAFTIFESTO IN ITS ENTIRETY  
visit WWW.DIYTRUNKSHOW.COM

## STEPHEN PERKINS

I'm really pleased that Faythe Levine took up the challenge to guest curate *Craftivism: Reclaiming Craft & Creating Community*. This exhibition comes at particularly exciting and pivotal time in the world of craft, and Faythe is one of the many people who are helping re-define the medium and expanding our ideas about what craft and crafting can be.

One indication of the energy of this new movement is the large number of manifestoes being issued by its participants. Here are just a few that I've come across: "*The Revolutionary Knitting Circle: Proclamation of Constructive Revolution*", "*Manifesto*" by Whipup, "*Handmade Manifesto*", "*Crafter Manifesto*" and "*Craftifesto*". It's interesting to me that the world of craft has adopted a strategy from the world of avant-garde art to promote its agenda, and it further suggests that the divide between the two worlds is becoming increasingly blurred. To issue a manifesto is a political act — it's an open declaration of a group's intent, what they're for



STEPHANIE SYJUCO, THE COUNTERFEIT CROCHET PROJECT [Critique of a Political Economy], organized by STEPHANIE SYJUCO

and against, and what they are proposing as the solution. I see this manifesto activity as a sign of the incredible vitality of this women-centered movement as it seeks to establish itself and initiate change. And perhaps the strength of some of the reactions to this new movement speak also to the very profound changes that craftivists are seeking to make in our communities, both local and global.

My thanks once again to Faythe and to the artists who have collaborated in making this exhibition a reality.

Stephen Perkins  
Curator, Lawton Gallery

## FAYTHE LEVINE

As a teenager in Seattle in the 1990's I found myself immersed in an underground punk rock scene. During that time the West coast was a hotbed for a nationwide underground D.I.Y. (*do it yourself*) culture of music and art. I discovered what it was like to be a part of a community, a network of like-minded people with a common interest. Punk rock taught me that everyone has it within themselves to start something. I learned for the first time that my voice was as important as the person's next to me.

I witnessed the effect of what doing something with one's own hands can have on a person. The effects are positive, by making your own decisions, I believe we will continue to manifest and take care of a healthy creative community. When I stumbled into the indie craft scene in 2002 I found a community that nurtured that very idea.

In 2005 I first came across Betsy Greer's website *Craftivism.com*. The word craftivism made sense to me before I even read her definition. I had realized the power of craft and the community that was embracing it. Craftivism worked its way into my vocabulary when I was talking about certain aspects of the community and its intentions. My life had become synonymous with the craft community. I had spent the last two years establishing my business *Flying Fish Design*, I opened *Paper Boat Boutique and Gallery* and organized *Art vs. Craft*, an indie craft fair in Milwaukee. It was obvious that there was something huge happening around the United States and I began working on my documentary film *Handmade Nation*.

My main intention in documenting the indie craft community was to show the vast amount of people involved, the events, the outpouring of work – all of this positive amazing stuff

happening. I wanted to capture the power of handmade, the power of community on film. Luckily my vision was shared and the support for the film and now book has been widespread. I think it shows how much people are interested in handmade, making a personal connection with the maker and their work.

Over the course of filming *Handmade Nation* I began to find more and more work that was intended to create dialog about social issues including labor, trade, manufacturing, consumption and branding. The artists featured in this show are a few of many who are working under this umbrella. Craft is approachable and these projects tend to create a dialog that would not happen otherwise.

As the trend of handmade and buying local continues to grow we are witnessing a revival of people desiring human interaction, the mark



JENNIFER MARSH, International FIBER Collective,  
WRAPPED GAS STATION, 2008

of the hand. This trend is visible in advertising and products, which allows a wider audience to relate the actual handmade work that is becoming more accessible through online shops and the growth of indie craft fairs.

I believe this is just the beginning of something much larger. I think that through the emergence of the DIY, art, craft and design community, we will continue to see growth and exciting developments.

For me, craftivism is about the desire to produce change through the passion of creating and I hope that you take away something as empowering as I feel from the message behind the work.

*Faythe Levine*  
Guest Curator



I was disheartened to hear last week about the rogue few who turned what had been a peaceful march into something more violent at the Republican National Convention. Finding reports that read, "enthusiastic demonstrators screamed "war isn't the answer!", some inciting violence against police trying to control the march," didn't help. The hypocrisy inherent in these so-called acts of peace literally brought on tears of sadness. How can you fight the "system" when you are content with bravado and brawn being your only weapons? How can you hold a belief when you let your anger override your thoughts and actions? How can you expect to make a change by demonstrating that your brightest

idea is disobedience? Situations like the RNC where individuals cause violent actions and find justification for the destruction of property, have done little to raise awareness, and lots to tarnish the ideals of "activism."

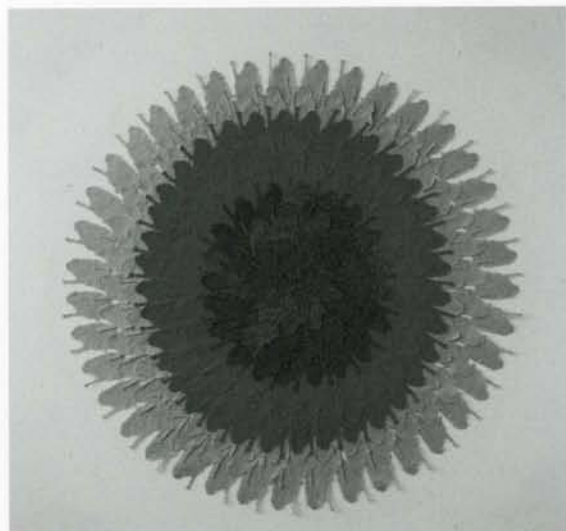
Until the turn of the last century, the word "craft" was also negatively viewed in the vernacular. Long seen as trivial and somewhat crude and unnecessary thanks to technological advancements, "craft" had long lingered as an activity of the past. But thanks to the timely convergence of the quest for unicity, frustration against consumerism and materialism, and the internet, "craft" has been rescued and empowered instead of forgotten. The very fact that it had been neglected had an important part in its rise, "craft" grew stronger thanks to its lack of boundaries or rules of engagement. "Craft" gave us a place to play and explore recklessly as we eagerly dove into its myriad possibilities and infinite activities. And thanks to this rekindling of interest and hunger for knowledge, we not only empowered "craft," we empowered ourselves, too.



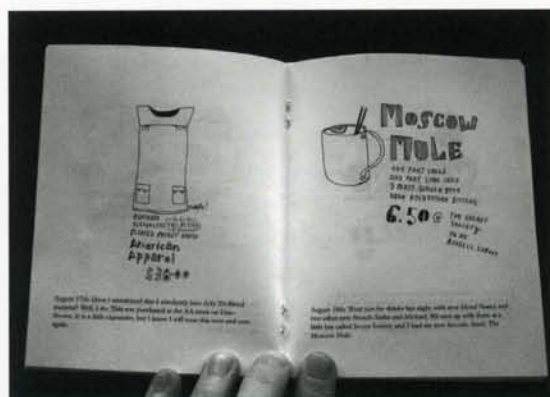
MELLISSA VOGLEY WOODS, Sun Bonnet Goes to WAR, 2007

When I started to write about craftivism (craft + activism = craftivism) in 2003, both of the words “craft” and “activism” were due for a makeover. Here in 2008, now that “craft” has had a meteoric trajectory, it’s time to bring “activism” up along with it. Every time we speak our mind and refuse to stay quiet or make a conscious decision to make our own clothes or paintings or purses, we are “activists.” Whether we make these decisions at the dinner table or at a podium, we are helping to shed light on “activism” as positive, not negative, action. Just like we owed it to “craft,” we now owe it to “activism” to bring back its forward-thinking power instead of settling with it being tarnished. Craftivism combines both “craft” and “activism” to describe creative acts done out of positive ideas and hopes for a greater good.

The works in this show are harnessing the dual strength of craftivism. They are showing that you can get your voice heard without yelling, that you can act boldly without destruction, that you can be imminently powerful with your creativity and not your fist. The works before you display how you can convey messages of unrest, anger and dissatisfaction while not



LISA Solomon, *synchronized tanks:*  
*RADIAL FORMATION* [yellow, orange, gray], 2008



KATE BINGAMAN-BURT, *WHAT DID YOU BUY TODAY?*  
*Zine, AUGUST 2008*

shouting or breaking or marching. By engaging your mind playfully and creatively, craftivism works because it allows you, the viewer, to make up your own mind in your own time letting what you’re seeing before you resonate. Even though recent events, politically, socially and culturally sadden me to no end, it is via my individual power and the aggregate power I create with my peers that I am emboldened, energized and excited. I hope that the works in this show make you think, question and discuss how we, as individuals, can work together harmoniously towards a kinder world, one stitch, brushstroke or canvas at a time.

*Betsy Greer*  
*Author of Knitting for Good*

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