

holding on

Jessica Dupuis Karen Hillier Sarah Malakoff

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Artist Bios

JESSICA DUPUIS (<http://www.jessicadupuis.com/>) received her MFA from UNC–Chapel Hill and her BFA with a concentration in ceramics and print media from Alfred University. Dupuis exhibits her work regionally and nationally. She has been a resident artist at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft and Women's Studio Workshop. She is a recipient of the International Sculpture Center's 2010 Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award and a 2012-2013 Ella Fountain Pratt Emerging Artists Grant from the Durham Arts Council. Born in Buffalo, NY and raised in Chapel Hill, NC. Currently, she lives and works in North Carolina.

SARAH MALAKOFF (<http://sarahmalakoff.com/>) holds an MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and a BFA from Smith College. Her work has been widely exhibited in both solo and group shows nationally and is included in several public and private collections. *Untitled Interiors*, a 16 page Artist's Project, was published in *Esopus Magazine* in 2007. She has been awarded Fellowships from the Massachusetts Cultural Council in 2001 and 2011 and a Traveling Fellowship from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 2011. She is Assistant Professor of Photography at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

KAREN HILLIER (<http://www.karenhillier.com/>) earned an MFA from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and a BFA from the University of Texas at Austin. She has exhibited her work in countless solo and group exhibitions across the US and abroad at venues including the Reed Whipple Cultural Arts Center, Maryland Federation of Art and the Alexandria Museum of Art. Her work has been profiled in publications including *Wired Magazine*, *Leonardo* and *ArtBulletins.com*. Hillier is Professor Emerita at Texas A&M University where she was integral to the establishment of the university's MFA program.

Above: Jessica Dupuis, *Twin Bunk Bed Series*, detail.
Cover: Sarah Malakoff, *Native American Chief*, detail.

Visitors Guide

1. What objects from your family hold the most personal significance? What characteristics of yourself are contained within those objects?
2. The transformation of everyday objects into art is a common thread in this exhibition. Can you think of other artists who have taken simple or "ready-made" objects and created works of art?
3. In what ways does the feminine perspective of these artists add to the meaning of the work? How might this show function differently if the artists were men?



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holding on

“Of all the priceless objects left behind, this is what we rescue. These artifacts. Memory cues. Useless souvenirs. Nothing you could auction. The scars left from happiness.”

-Chuck Palahniuk

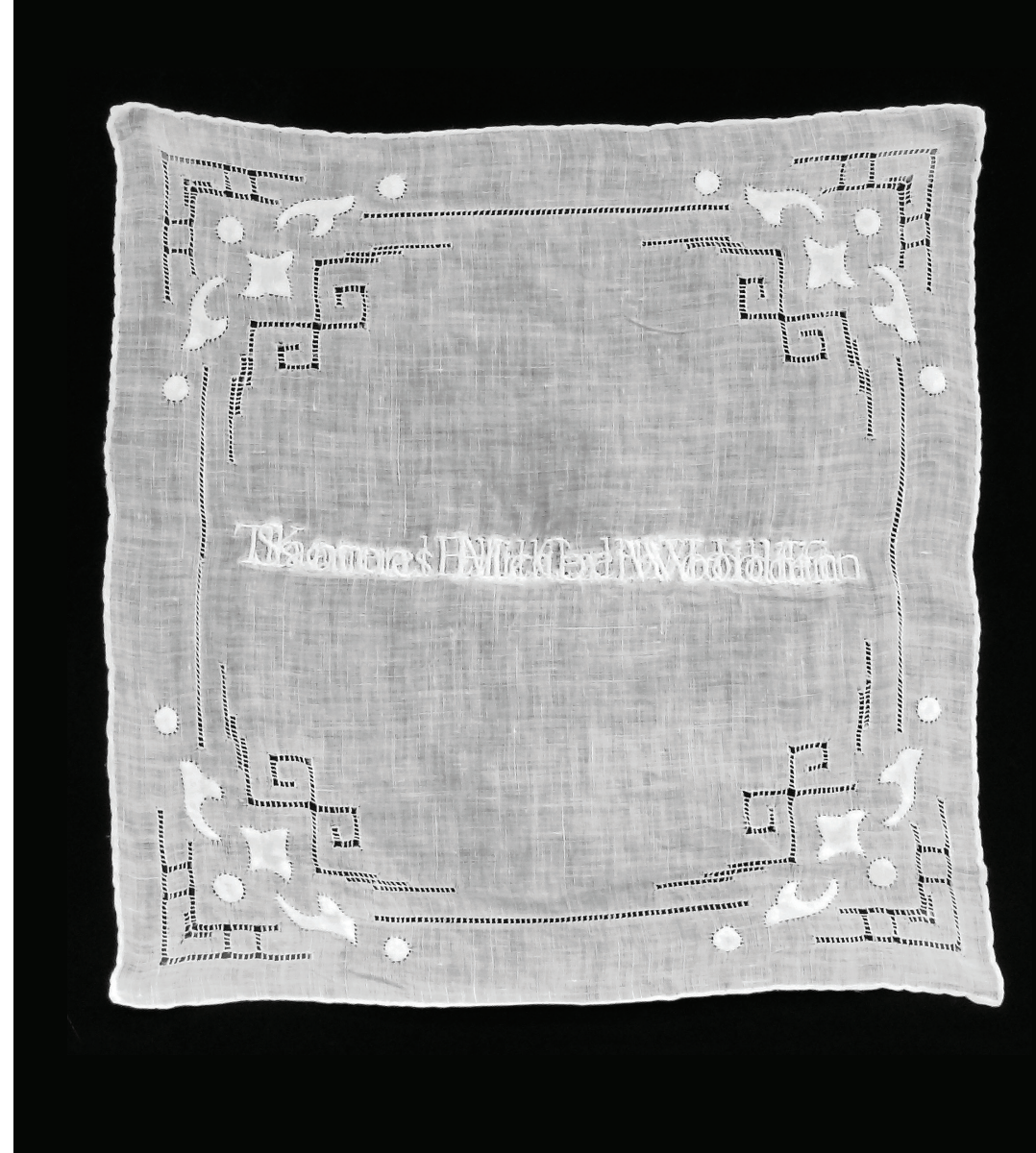
Through photography, embroidery and ceramics, the artists of *Holding On* explore the ways that personal objects function as portraits, family histories and memorials. Each artist turns to the domestic sphere for their inspiration, revealing how our homes contain integral parts of our identity and experience. Jessica Dupuis enshrines furniture from her childhood in millions of ceramic shards; Karen Hillier works with antique hankies, embroidering names from her family tree on top of one another; and Sarah Malakoff documents portraits within interior domestic spaces. Through meticulous processes, each of these female artists transforms the mundane into the extraordinary and reveals the intimate power of personal objects.

Jessica Dupuis’ process involves dipping sheets of paper into watered down clay, called slip,



and then firing the paper in a kiln. The result is very fragile, thin sheets of ceramic that she breaks into shards and adheres to the surface of found objects. In this series, she has covered her entire childhood bedframe in the shards creating subtle organic patterns that mimic fur or scales. This animalistic effect gives life to an otherwise inanimate object and is heightened by her natural palette of brown and white. Through this transformative process, these objects are elevated to treasured members of the artists personal history. While her subject is highly personal, it contains a universal appeal. According to Dupuis, “individual perceptions and senses vary, just as our memories and attachment to objects differ from one person to another. For me, the physical form of sculpture functions as a journal; architectural spaces that are open for the viewer to explore.”

Karen Hillier’s piece, *Family Monogram* is part of a larger body of work titled *Unforgotten*. The work is made up of 20 handkerchiefs embroidered with the names of Hillier’s family ancestry traced over more than 400 years. The names are embroidered one over the other according to birth order with the youngest family member on top. Depending on the size of the family unit, individual names or letters can be deciphered, but in some cases are entirely illegible. The larger a family the more obscured the individual names become. Like, Dupuis, this work takes on a bodily quality. The translucency of the delicate fabric and the scar-like quality of the embroidery evokes skin, suggesting that the work is not a mere memorial to the past but an ever evolving document. For Hillier, “I venerate each implement as I transform it into a monument of the ordinary. Each technique I employ helps me assert the identity of my lost family and construct a family context for the living.” The work functions as an expression of family identity, past, present and future.



While Malokoff’s depictions of interior spaces contain some of the same gravitas present in Hillier and Dupuis’ work, there is an underlying humor in the ways that objects are arranged and displayed within her subjects. Her images have an aesthetic akin to a Wes Anderson film that reveals the absurdity of so many of our domestic experiences and choices. This particular series, focuses on portraits found within the home, creating interesting narratives in which the subjects of the portrait become actors in the physical space. According to the artist, “These diverse but venerated images of family, ancestors, historical figures, pets, and even celebrities seem to point to a longing for connection to community both past and present.” In *Native American Chief*, the western theme of the room along with the baseball glove, cowboy book series, and lion mask indicate a child’s space. Yet the neatness of the space and purposeful arrangement of objects suggests an adult presence. Similarly, the portrait of a wooded cabin places the imagined individual within a broader context beyond the room. What do these spaces reveal about the people who occupy them, and what do our perceptions of these spaces say about us?

ANNAH LEE
DIRECTOR OF ARTISTIC PROGRAMS

Above (l-r): Sarah Malakoff, *Pepi*; detail; Jessica Dupuis, *Twin Bunk Bed Series*; detail; Karen Hillier, *Samuel Hillier Woodfin b. 1988*