

The New York Times

'Thread Lines'

In the late 19th century, the building that housed the Drawing Center was home to the Positive Motion Loom Company. "Thread Lines," the center's current exhibition, invokes that history in, among other works, a lively installation and performance by Anne Wilson. Titled "To Cross (Walking New York)," it features black-clad dancers who wrap the gallery's four central columns in brightly colored crisscrossing threads, essentially turning them into a giant loom.

The rest of the show, organized by the Drawing Center's assistant curator, Joanna Kleinberg Romanow, is slightly more subdued but sets up some smart intergenerational conversations. Festive 1970s watercolors with stitched-on felt accents by Alan Shields hang next to Drew Shiflett's similarly textured 2012 drawing on handmade paper and cheesecloth. And gridded renderings of knitting patterns by Ellen Lesperance and Robert Otto Epstein build on the undersung work of Beryl Korot, whose signature installation "Text and Commentary" (1976-77) presciently connected techniques throughout history that have encoded information in lines — from patterns on the looms to video screens to digital data processing. (That piece is represented by related inkjet prints of more recent vintage.)

The attention this show pays to Ms. Korot and Mr. Shields (not to mention Louise Bourgeois, Elaine Reichek and Sheila Hicks) is crucial. A number of contemporary artists have embraced "drawing" with needle and thread and "painting" with stitched fabric, but the connection to early feminism too often goes unnoticed. Not here.



Sheila Hicks, "Transpercer 3 Fois" in "Thread Lines"
Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co.