

*Kathy Slade*

This is  
a chord.

This  
is  
another.







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JORDAN STROM

*Stitch Out the Jams*



*The world is filled to suffocating. Man has placed his tokens on every stone. Every word, every image, is leased and mortgaged. We know that a picture is but a space in which a variety of images, none of them original, blend and clash. A picture is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture. Similar to those eternal copyists Bouvard and Pécuchet, we indicate the profound gesture that is always interior, never original.<sup>1</sup>*

– Sherrie Levine, “Five Comments,” 1980 – 1985

Sequestered, held in suspension, purged of background, the artist’s orphaned details cast outlines, drawing the eye into the centre of the image. Foregoing gestures of her own hand, the artist chooses instead to illumine existing imagery. For the exhibition *Kathy Slade: This is a chord. This is another*, the artist’s carefully selected elisions draw from the ephemera of sound and music culture: set lists, sheet music, chord charts and film fragments, and cultural props. She takes her retrieved images down to their rudiments. Each picture exhibits a concise economy of lines, a glistening crispness of form. Yet, hers is a minimalism that is far from taciturn.

While acknowledging the cultural historical link between sewing and women’s craft and labour, the works on display eschew the imagery traditionally associated with the hand-sewn image (floral motifs, bird specimens, idyllic forest scenes, etc.). The silence of the lone sewer

gives way to the imaginary soundtrack and distinctive chuddering, whirl and whoosh of the sewing machine. In Slade's care this machine becomes a sonic instrument, the garment factory a supporting band. A new generation of computational machines liberate the use of the hand to render the stitch.

But Slade's interest is simultaneously a noise of another sort. The image of the silent embroiderer (the art historian Rozsika Parker has shown this figure to be prevalent in many a nineteenth and early twentieth century romantic novel) is shaken loose by the sound vibrations of Slade's rock n' roll suffused imagery.<sup>2</sup> Acknowledging the long pictorial impulse of embroidery and needlepoint — and in particular the pictorial embroidery for its own sake that dates back to the mid seventeenth century — Slade's carefully selected images simultaneously challenge the domestic trappings of embroidery practices that have been around since the Renaissance.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the decidedly un-domestic rock 'n' roll culture, Slade's parent material includes *outré* film culture, wayward art history, and the ephemera of fandom. She smuggles in vestigial fragments, non-sequiturs. The artist gathers together her miscellany and elevates them as lost moments. Simultaneously, she strips them of any rhapsodic impulse. Her fondness for popular and underground culture transits across the divide between sound and image.<sup>4</sup> The DIY culture of textile arts is echoed in instructional abstractions of 'Learn guitar'

manuals. This interest in the intersection of popular culture and music manifested itself in other ways through Slade's musical and discursive collaborations with musician and writer Brady Cranfield.<sup>5</sup>

When peering at Slade's pictures it's hard not to see moments in the densely threaded canvas that are reminiscent of instrument strings. Sewing, strumming — both configure loops in their own way. Slade's strands beg the question: what is the difference between wire and thread? Indeed, the deeply riven connection between string and sound is supported by recent theoretical physics: “With the discovery of superstring theory, musical metaphors take on a startling reality, for the theory suggests that the microscopic landscape is suffused with tiny strings whose vibrational patterns orchestrate the evolution of the cosmos. The winds of change, according to superstring theory, gust through an Aeolian universe.”<sup>6</sup>

In a sense, each body of work by Slade is an examination of permutation, not unlike the chord progressions she draws inspiration from. Yet they are also cord progressions in their iterative exploration of mechanical sewing. The opalescent doughnuts of the *Embroidered Monochrome Propositions (O Series)*, insinuate the inherent mutability of language and its alphabetical building blocks. This series refers to the character Sophie in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) who incessantly made little and big Os, in effect learning to write before

she could read. In doing so, Lisa Robertson states, Slade “allegorizes the originating metaphysical concept; the emptied philosophical neant as figured by the graphic symbol loses its claim to mannish expressive singularity and is remounted as a kind of loopy, satirical lace.”<sup>7</sup>

When viewed up close, Slade’s concatenation of threads have the appearance of a relief — from the Latin *relevo*, to raise. The build-up of threads are raised above the background plane. The line, harnessed minutely to the canvas, strung along, circling back to form minuscule contoured outcroppings. The strands of cotton appear luminous, like filaments. The tiny draw-strings, shock-chords cross-bitten against serene backdrops.

Slade’s work with sewn thread echoes the peregrinations of earlier artists of the post-industrial era who saw the potential of fibre to shift the terms of modernist image-making. Like Italian conceptual artist Alighiero Boetti, Slade has chosen to devote much of her practice to repurposing information into soft fabric forms. Slade’s images, however, operate at a more intimate scale. Her favoured mode is the monochrome—the outlines of the image are frequently in the same or similar colour to the background surface. In this sense of scale, tonal range, and appropriationist strategy, there is an affinity in a number of Slade’s embroidered and printed works to the sewn imagery of German artist Rosemarie Trockel. Yet, Slade trades in Trockel’s austere conceptualism frequently directed at corporate

iconography for a more deadpan — and often far more humorous — treatment of everyday pop culture, and especially the fan cultures surrounding popular music and film. As Cate Rimmer has noted: “though seemingly incompatible, the sweet sentimentality of *Ordinary World* is well-suited to the historical associations of embroidery. The needle of the machine embroidery acts as a substitute for the transcriber’s pen as well as the record needle, and the words and notes stand in for the embroidery sampler historically used to instruct young women through verse.”<sup>8</sup>

While others have read Slade’s *Orange Pom-pom* as a reference to the decorative yarn sewn add-ons found on various forms of hats and jackets, this soft sculpture also suggests strong affinities to another source: the sis-boom-bah of cheerleading culture. A-fuzz with cheer, Slade’s *Pom-poms* sits silent, yet evoke the vocal cheers of these sports team boosters. Cheerleading chants, and the frenzy of vocal noise they are meant to invoke, are as much a part of the work as its inviting tactility.<sup>9</sup>

Slade frequently taps into the frenzied imagery that make up the ephemera of fan obsessions. It is the connective tissue of ephemera that lies at the center of culture. The *Set List Samplers* follow the strategy of elevating apparent ancillary materials — jottings and scribbles — to a position of critical significance. Here a set of crib notes depict the precise order of songs played. The discardable written words, meant to plot

out a unique instant of performed music specifically intended for the eyes of the performer, is presented as documentation, rather than memorialization. Collected not only for their private off-the-cuff quality but also for their traces of the artist's hand, Slade eagerly transposes these annotated listings into mechanically reproduced images. Meanwhile, *I Want the World, I Want the Whole World* depicts an uproarious and squealish sequence from the film *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971) where Veruca Salt sings "I Want It Now." Her imprudently bold sounding-off emits a quiet roar from the austere and delicate surface of the stitched film stills. "She demands the world," Slade asserts, "She is willful and defiant. She is going to get what she wants or die trying."<sup>10</sup>

In her book *Fray: Art and Textile Politics*, Julia Bryan-Wilson has outlined a number of significant trajectories of textile art from the 2000s. She discusses, for example, the "acts of remaking" found in American artists Margarita Cabrera, Stephanie Syjuco, and Zöe Sheehan Saldaña's various practices. While these three artists provide "acts of remaking [that] ask us to think about how process, remuneration, and physical effort [function] in textile production,"<sup>11</sup> Slade's deliberately non-handmade acts of remaking instead focus on desire, sound culture, and present day gender politics grounded in literary and film history.



While hers is not the bristling and raw Fibre art of the 60s and 70s, it is far from a threadbare redux that initial looking might presume. The seemingly scattered miscellany, upon closer inspection, reveal themselves to hold not a few similarities. They are like coordinated forms of instrumentation; each image exhibits a clarion sharpness while at the same time come together with Rock Opera-like syncopation. If these images and objects share an affinity for sound and musicality, then, as Slade herself has said, they are also united by their shared interest in desire. The compendium of images and objects, as presented in this exhibition, certainly give off the wow and flutter of the demotic.<sup>12</sup> And as Sherrie Levine asserts, *a picture is but a space in which a variety of images, none of them original blend and clash*. Like the wellspring of material that Slade draws from, these are riffs, outtakes, and audio hallucinations, that blend and clash to form a raucously noisy whole.

1. Levine, S., "Five Comments" (1980-85) from *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*. Edited by Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. p. 379

2. For more on "Colette's silent stitching child" and other novelistic representations of the silent female embroiderer see Rozsika Parker's *Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: Women's Press, 1986. pp. 9-11

3. Parker, R., *Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: Women's Press, 1986. pp. 92-93

4. While other artists of her generation have directed their image-making attention on pop music and its art rock variants, and the importance of citation and fragmentary expansion, Slade's work primarily manifests itself through stitch-work. Though Slade's exploration of sound culture and the history of popular music (film etc.) is much broader than her textile-related work.

5. Under the banner *Cranfield and Slade*, Slade has worked collaboratively with Cranfield on a number of music projects including the artist's records, *12 Sun Songs*, (Vancouver/ Or Gallery, Vancouver, Zürich: Christoph Keller Editions/JRP|Ringier, 2009) and *10 Riot Songs*, (North Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 2011). Slade and Cranfield also collaborated on a number of discursive and performative events as part of the Music Appreciation Society, a "fictitious" society that [brought] visual art and popular music together "through panel discussions and listening events, performances, artworks, and publications." Events included *The Smiths Research Intensive* (2009) a panel discussion and mobile listening unit, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and *Wrong Wave 2: Art Rock is Dead/Long Live Art Rock* (2011), a four day festival organized for UNIT/PITT and held at the Waldorf and Emily Carr University.
6. Brian Greene quoted in Douglas Kahn's *Earth Sound, Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 178. Originally from Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, New York: Vintage, 2003. p. 135.
7. Robertson, L., "Yardgoods: Kathy Slade's Embroidered Monochrome Propositions." *Kathy Slade: Embroidered Monochrome Propositions and Other New Work*. Vancouver: Western Front, 2002. p. 32.
8. Rimmer, C., "Think Big." *The Banal*. Montreal: Liane and Danny Taran Gallery of the Saidye Bronfman Center for the Arts, 2007

9. Cate Rimmer has likened Slade's Pom-Pom to the form sometimes found "sitting atop a knitted hat." In her essay Rimmer suggests that it is useful to consider the Orange Pom-Pom in relation to minimalist sculpture: "...for while its title gives a clue to its origin, its shape is non-representational; its size and density, even its colour tie it to works by Donald Judd, Yves Klein and others. And yet its shaggy overabundance is warm and inviting, and its visceral qualities, including the visible evidence of its making, set it apart from more 'masculine' minimalist objects. It is hard to resist the desire to interact with Slade's *Orange Pom-pom*, to touch, to fluff. This is in stark contrast to the ideal of the detached observer privileged by minimalism." See Cate Rimmer, "Think Big." *The Banal*. Montreal: Liane and Danny Taran Gallery of the Saidye Bronfman Center for the Arts, 2007.

10. "A Conversation with Kathy Slade by Sydney Vermont, *D'Or: Explorations in Psychic Geography*, Vancouver: Or Gallery, 2004. Originally published in Cahier D'Activité, Issue No. 2 Winter 03/04. p. 88

11. Bryan-Wilson, J., *Fray: Art and Textile Politics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017, pp. 265-66

12. In music recording, "wow and flutter" refers to the frequency wobble caused by rotary component on audio equipment.



*Ordinary World*, 2002

Alighiero Boetti (after portrait by Paolo Mussat Sartor), 2005

*Set List Sampler: Destroyer (Dan Bejar)*, 2006

*Set List Sampler: Rodney Graham Band (Rodney Graham)*, 2006

# ORDINARY WORLD

Moderately slow, with a steady beat

Written by  
DURAN DURAN

The musical score is presented in a standard format with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a vocal line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score consists of four systems of music. The first system shows the piano introduction with a steady bass line and chords in the treble. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the piano accompaniment with a vocal line starting on a whole note. The fourth system shows the piano accompaniment with the vocal line continuing. The lyrics are: 'Came in from a cold - y' Thru - day / For - sakes of co - hi - d - dence, once / For - years in the road - side till ... of'.

Came in from a cold - y' Thru - day  
For - sakes of co - hi - d - dence, once  
For - years in the road - side till ... of

on the air - e - man, thought I heard you talk - ing soft - ly  
 prompt - ed you to say pride will tear us both - a part  
 out - for - his and great, tear to - day, far - well, longer - live

Well now, I turned on the light, the T. V.  
 pride's gone out the win - dow across the  
 floor be - side the man of the - ly

and the road - we - still I don't see - the ghost - of  
 roof - tops, sun - a - way, Let me in the rec - oard of my  
 me and ho - ly need, ours is just a lit - tle rowed

you... what is hap - ping to, it all? Co - zy some say...  
 heart... what is hap - ping to, me? Co - zy some say...

To Coda 0



Where is the love that I've long - lost?  
Where is my friend when I need you most?  
Gone a-way,  
Gone a-way.

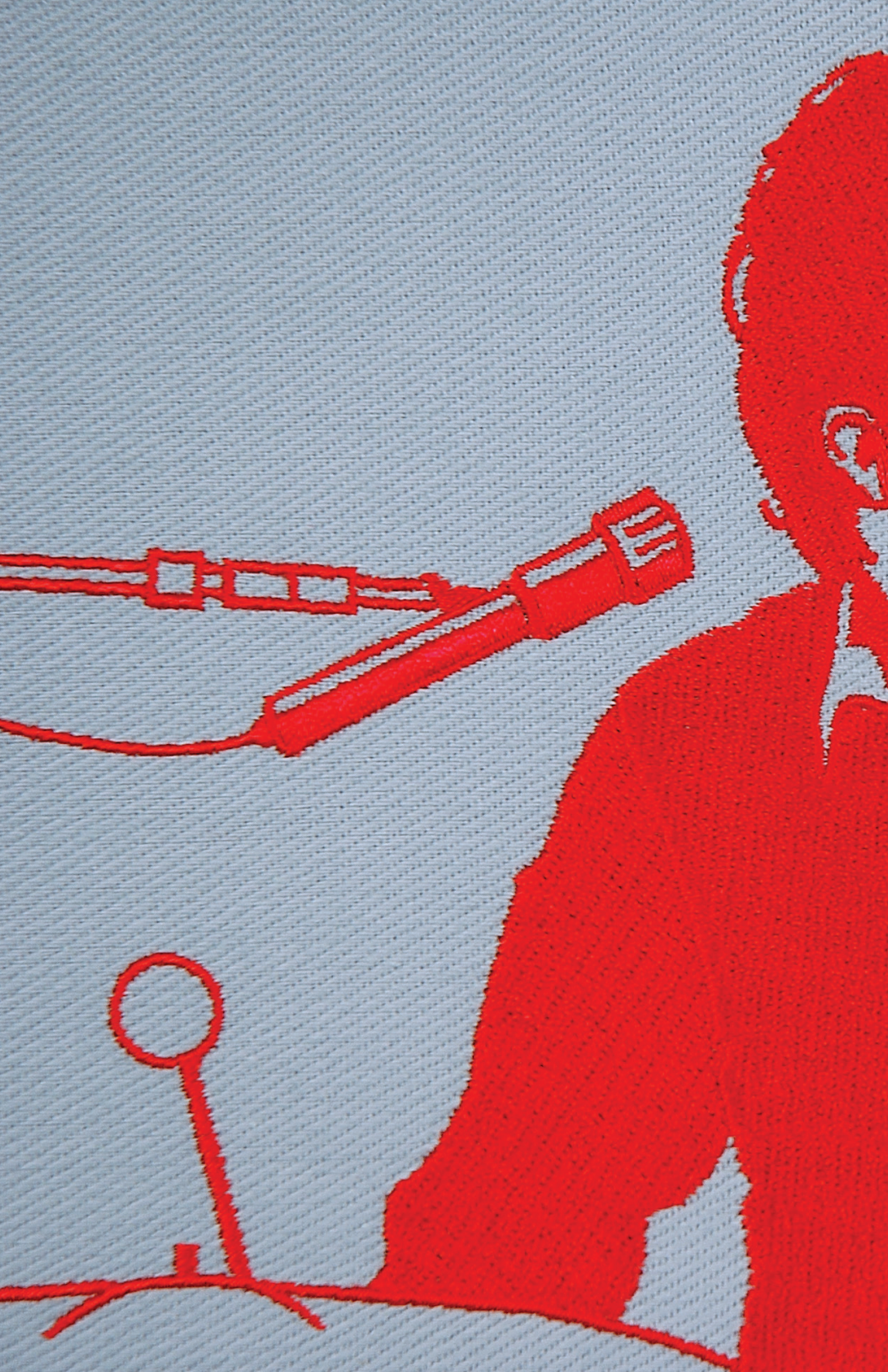
But I won't cry for you - lar-day... There's an or - di - nar - y world

some-how I ... have to find.

And as I try to make my way to the ur - di - nar - y world









Crystal Coenby  
Euro Oils  
Old Man  
Painter  
Modern Paint  
~~Arts~~  
Airplane  
Rebises  
Looters'  
Crossover

APPROVED ✓

# MEXICO (3)

- |               |                |      |
|---------------|----------------|------|
| 1. PHONO      | D MIN 4        | ① 28 |
| 2. WASHED UP  | D MIN 4        |      |
| 3. LOVE METER | D <u>MAJ</u> 4 |      |
| 4. SOLDIER ON | " " "          |      |

- 
- |                 |                |        |
|-----------------|----------------|--------|
| 5. SINK IN      | STAND 3        | ② 0017 |
| 6. WHAT'S FUNNY | <u>DROP</u> 3  |        |
| 7. SHE FAILED   | <u>STAND</u> 3 |        |
| 8. H + L        | STAND <u>5</u> |        |
| 9. SEEN STARS   | DROP 5         |        |

---

10. FEELIN ARIGHT	DADGAD (3)	③ 28
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11. MFTVD	G 5
-----------	-----

~~G B D F#AD~~  
G B D F#AD

LFD

SWW

—

S TA

STARS

D TR

N ALRIGHT

D

V O

○



ND 5

ND 5

OP 5



ADGAD

(3)



5 5



BRADY CRANFIELD

*Charting Kathy Slade's Soundless Chords*

This essay originally published  
by Tracey Lawrence Gallery in 2006.

Basic guitar tablature or tab is a simplified pictorial representation of guitar chords. It is utilitarian, a useful didactic device for musical self-learning. In tab form, the frets closest to the guitar's head and its strings are depicted as a grid, with finger placements for notes depicted as dots. New players in particular make use of tab to learn chords, from principal to alternate, and this is an early experience likely shared by most guitarists. An accessible, pragmatic and non-specialist form of musical notation and pedagogy, there are many tab-based chord books available as well as many online resources, including extensive archives of popular songs. Rendered in tab form by often anonymous enthusiasts, these ever-growing archives feature classics like *Stairway to Heaven* or *(Sittin' on) the Dock of the Bay* to the most recent (if sometimes obscure) indie-rock favourites, such as *Sublimation Hour* or *The Fox in the Snow*. With access to one of these archives or a tab chord book, a record collection, time and practice, most everybody is able to learn at least elementary guitar, probably more.

The promise of self-directed instruction and autonomous production offered by the simple accessibility of guitar tab was notably highlighted by an illustration in a 1977 issue of the early English punk fanzine, *Sniffin' Glue*, founded and edited by Alternative TV's Mark Perry. Roughly scrawled and cheaply copied, the illustration shows three simple chords (A, E, and G major) in tab form with the proclamation, "This is a chord. This is another. This is a third. Now form a band." This pedagogical/rhetorical illustration concisely articulates the then-nascent punk "do it yourself" ideology, which continues to hold influence. As depicted straightforwardly by Perry, thereby emphasizing the position being postulated, the notion of D.I.Y. is a foundational concept and a fundamental value — and indeed even a near-spiritual edict — for subsequent punk-oriented cultural production, music-based or otherwise. This is especially true for the North American trajectory of 1980s second-wave punk, post-punk and hardcore, as if re-enacting a kind of rugged cultural frontierism. Now widespread, D.I.Y. is a principle accepted as a cultural commonplace, informing craft collectives as much as contemporary shopping-mall-wear accoutred emo-punks, if thereby somewhat deracinated.

But if guitar tab in the context of punk subculture fosters a self-empowering and community-focused D.I.Y. ideology, Kathy Slade's extensive collection of embroidered tab chord "samplers," titled *Chart*, suggests some-

thing else in contrast. Her black and white minimalist display, a grid of over one hundred canvases spanning an entire wall, is D.I.Y. turned infatuated impulse. Subtle yet overwhelming, this work depicts a kind of obsessive-compulsive, late-capitalist excessiveness — a Veruca Salt-type subjectivization, a disposition present in many of Slade’s recent works. Full of less commonly used minor, augmented and diminished chords, this collection is the gluttonous tab book demanded by the insistent, anonymous but somehow simultaneously universal “I” of Slade’s poster work, *I WANT IT ALL I WANT IT NOW*, also in black and white. Perry’s idealistic “three chords” cannot satisfy this implacable demand, which seems to propagate by means of its own edgy inner energy. Caustic, unsympathetic, inhuman — or, perhaps more exactly, ahuman, as if surpassing humanity — this power is not containable or reconcilable. It is unable to be positioned within the context of any concise subjectivity, exceeding all borders and boundaries. Yet it is by virtue of the very blockages and limitations of its confined context that this irresolvable demand for “All” comes into its own, becoming powerful enough to command the impossible.

For all its insistence, this urge for “All” is fantastical, fed by its own propulsion, never touching earth despite its overtly worldly directive. Rather than wanting material realization, this drive is thus oriented towards the course of its own never-ending orbit. Drive here is

understood in terms of Jacques Lacan's reading of Sigmund Freud, in which drive is not an animal instinct but an attenuated psychological impulse abstracted from simple human biology. For Lacan, drive does not anticipate a specific final goal, but instead is sustained by virtue of its perpetual aim, which sends drive circling endlessly around its ostensible target: the eternal way of the aim is ironically its very goal. This closed repetition is itself a source of pleasure, one that perpetually delays resolution like an otherwise uncomplicated pop song that evades its home key at its finale, leaving listeners wanting, yearning. And like this hypothetical pop song, drive is thoroughly cultural and symbolic; it is also partial and multiplex. There are several drives, in other words, not a single drive: Lacan's topology includes oral, anal, scopic and invocatory drives, the latter two relating more closely to desire than the former. As such, drive does not equal desire, which in contrast has a ubiquitous constancy, albeit elusive, incandescent. Returning to Slade's work, although drive might fix on her humongous woolly *Orange Pom-pom*, for example, desire would fuel the unconscious attraction of the object as a sublime-infused *thing*, the source of which is not tangible in the conflux at the non-space of the pom-pom's heart.

Slade's *I WANT IT ALL* poster, *Pom-pom* and now embroidered *Chart* can all be seen as different targets for the same unending, almost tragic aim of drive,

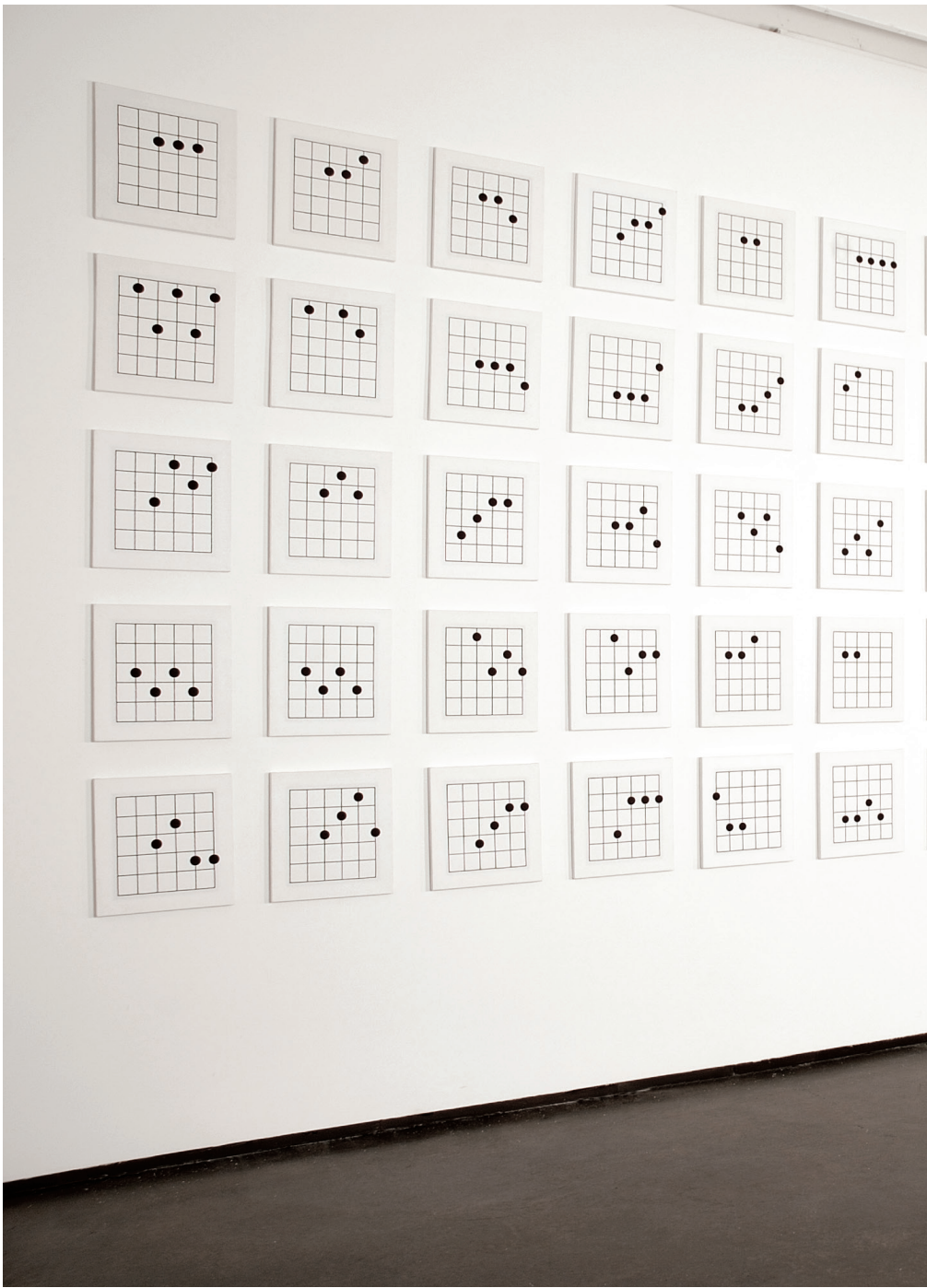


an inevitable overshooting that turns back on these specific, culturally demarcated objects in terms of critique: the lived world is simply not enough, never “All.” From this point of view, Alighiero Boetti, one of Slade’s influences, similarly aims at the impossible with his embroidered works *Order and Disorder* and *Mappa*, both of which emphasize less the futility as the impossibility of fully representing their respective objects. As Boetti shows, despite the best, most inclusive effort, some remainder always escapes such cataloguing, a mysterious extra *something* — perhaps the elusive real of desire itself? An absence like this is doubly present in Slade’s tab collection, which not only is not really music, strictly speaking, but also is not yet comprehensive. Further, more obscure and even improper chords remain unnamed. Spookily, music seems audible nonetheless, as if always-already in our heads, in this way corresponding to the Lacanian symbolic, the social dimension of language preceding and enabling the formation of subjectivity. Furthermore, like the embroidery samplers that traditionally serve as training for larger works, Slade’s tab chords are also representations of alphabetic letters, but translated in a different way. With this correspondence, Western music’s partially shared history with rhetoric is apparent: both once promoted balance, organization and reason, a conservative ethic since challenged. Indeed, the problematic nature of language is an ongoing concern for Slade. For instance, her *Embroidered Monochrome Propositions (O series)* works decon-

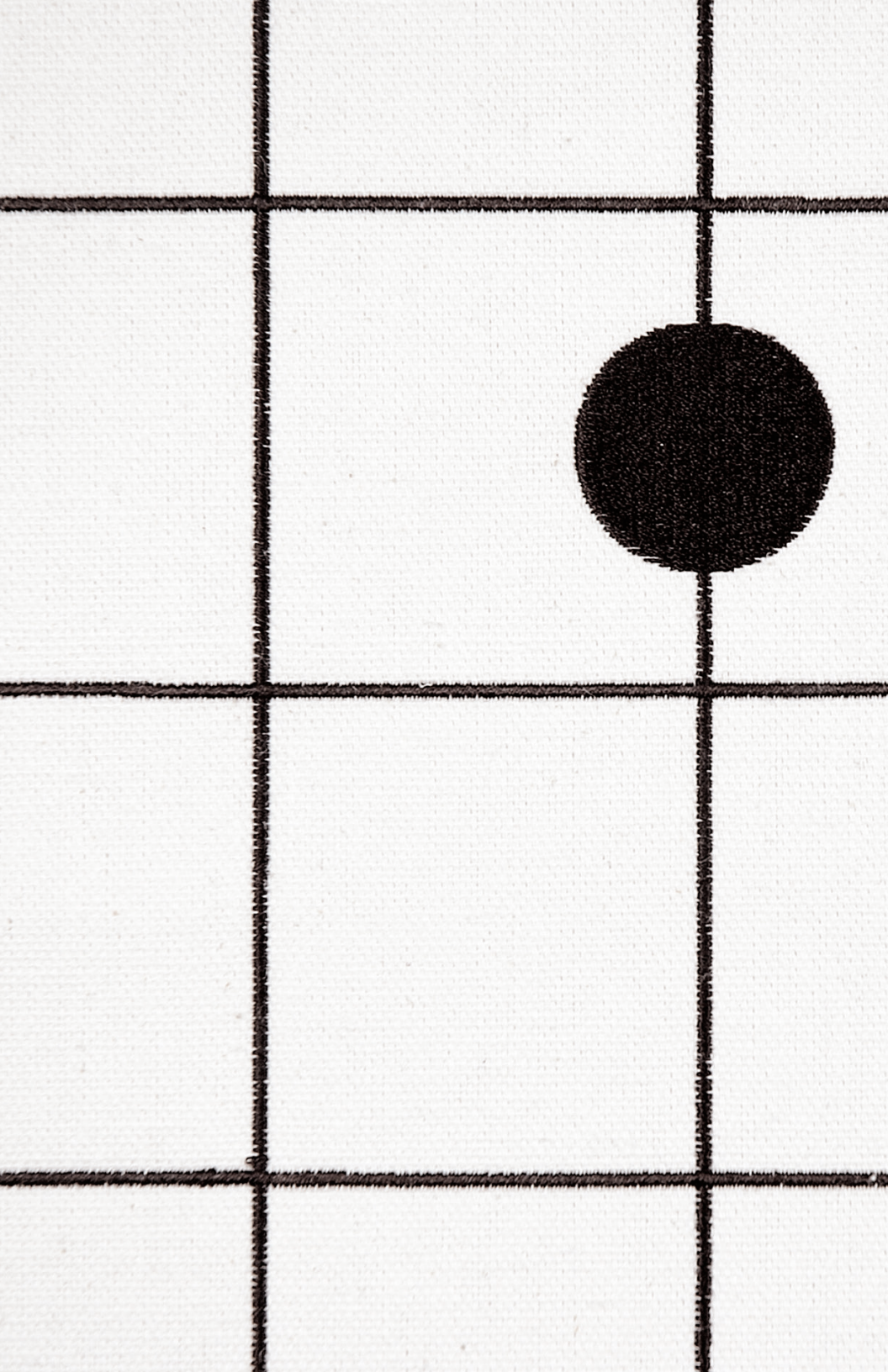
structively in this respect, with the empty spaces of the Os encircling the void that language cannot reconcile.

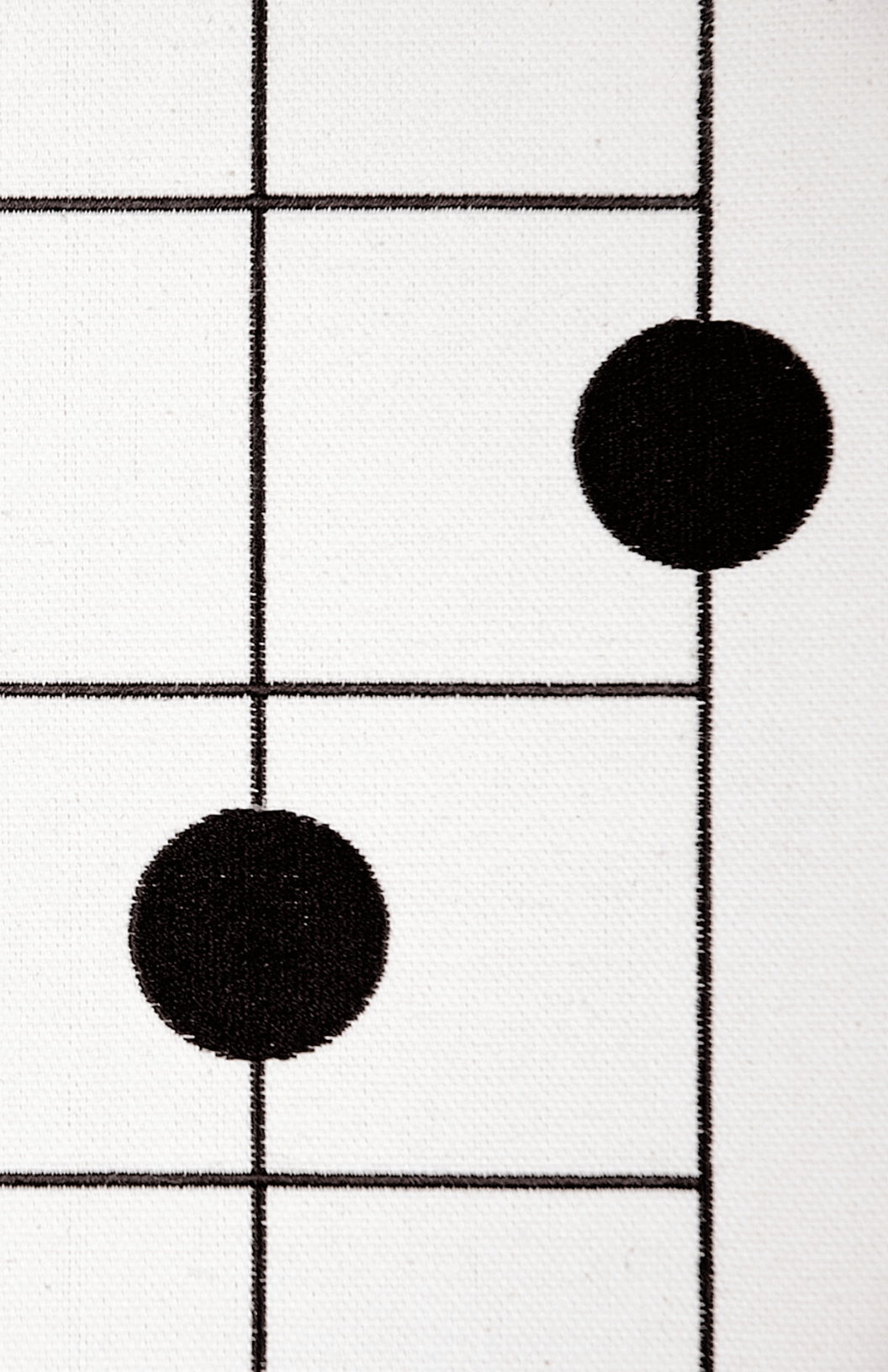
With its fascination with doomed-to-always-fail contrivances as language and music (that is, failing in the sense of being inherently incomplete, non-totalizable), Slade's idiosyncratic minimalism in *Chart* is much more early Dan Graham, especially his 1966 grid and dot-based print work *Side Effects/Common Drugs*, than the formalistic endeavours of Frank Stella or Donald Judd or the spatial phenomenology of Robert Morris (form-wise, the particularistic minimalisms of Agnes Martin and François Morellet also seem evident here instead). In this sense, Slade's objects are less "specific" than abundantly referential: they expand complexly into intersubjective, cultural and historical space, metaphorically speaking, not just the literal dimensions of the gallery. Accepting this people-scale conciliation, Slade's work embraces the *theatricality* of Minimalism, its inevitable social dimension, which is the very condition of its *embroidery*, of being more than basic material — in other words, of being something also unknowable, excessive. On the one hand, therefore, Slade consequently absorbs while reinterpreting Michael Fried's Greenbergian rebuke of Minimalism: postponing its own closure, *Chart* is art, not everyday, ignoble stuff. And on the other hand, Slade's work is critical here, too: it is also determinedly prosaic, non-exclusive. After all, what is guitar tab if not commonplace, and meritoriously so? Or thus the punks would have us believe.

Yet Slade is no partisan punk rocker. She trumps the DIY rulebook by using machine production to create her “handcrafted” embroidered tab chords, producing friction between masculine and feminine social norms and art-historical clichés (think Judd’s “manly” fabrications versus Eva Hesse’s “womanly” constructions, for example). There is no real solution for this well-worn confliction either, of course, only more deliberation — yet another irresolvability opened by Slade. With so many questions hanging unanswerable, it is no wonder that a common subtext of much of Slade’s work is a pronounced melancholia (see her poignant, winsome video work, *Please Please Please*, for example). Hence, her tab *Chart*. It is an old chestnut to proclaim that music is an abstract, universal language, somehow speaking unmediatedly to our emotions (read as pre-intellectual, pre-linguistic). If this hoary conception of music has any credence, then guitar tab would surely be music’s Esperanto. Like all utopian schemes, which most often hold forth the fantasy promise of something *else*, something *better*, Slade’s manifest sadness is well justified: beholding her alphabetical wall of chords, music both *is* and *is not* present. Still, one thing music *can* do is help make this inevitable uncertainty seem not so strange and terrible, more an oddly comforting, even beautiful woe. Sometimes all the rational thinking in the world cannot express the inarticulable abundance invoked by something so innocuous as *Don’t be Shy*, the Cat Stevens tune, one of a series of stand alone embroidered tab works by Slade. And yet, here as elsewhere, tab only acknowledges what forever rolls on by.









*Chart, 2006*

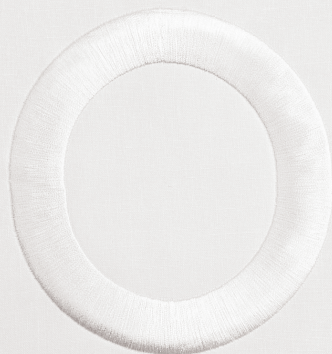
*Orange Pom-pom, 2002*

*Embroidered Monochrome Propositions:  
O Series, 2002*

















*I WANT IT ALL I WANT IT NOW*, 2003  
Black and white poster, ink on paper

*Françoise Hardy: All Over the World*, 2008



**I WANT  
IT ALL  
I WANT  
IT NOW**

# LE MONDE



# ENTIER

Paroles et Musique de  
**FRANCOISE HARDY**



# DANS LE MONDE ENTIER

Paroles et Musique de  
**FRANÇOISE HARDY**

Slow Rock

Piano

DO SB FA

FA SOLm SB SOLm

Dans le monde entier Cet le nuit est pareille  
Que m'im - porte a - lors De savoir plus ou moins

DO SB DO FA

A l'un d'autres nuit Quand disparaît le so - leil  
Si d'autres cette nuit S'aim'nt ou bien ont du chagrin

FA SOLm SB SOLm

Où tant de bonheur C'est tant de détresse  
Si d'autr's se dé-chirant Ou se re-joignent enfin

DO7                      Sol<sup>b</sup>                      DO7                      LA7                      FA  
 Tant de choses meurent — Pendant — que d'au — tres noi — als  
 Rien n'a d'importance, — s'avan — que tu — es loin — in

Sol<sup>b</sup>                      Sol<sup>b</sup>                      DO                      LA7                      FA                      24 Rit... Fa                      FA

sent — Tant de choses meurent — Pendant — que d'au — tres nous sent — Mais ce soir tu  
 — in — Et que cette nuit — De toi — je ne — sais rien —

Sol<sup>b</sup>                      DO7                      FA                      Sol<sup>b</sup>

n'es — pas là — Ce soir tu ne vien — dras pas — Et tu es si

Sol<sup>b</sup>                      LA7                      RE                      DO7

loin — de moi — J'ai peur — que tu m'ou — bles de jô — a

# Slow Rock

20

DO

FA

Dans

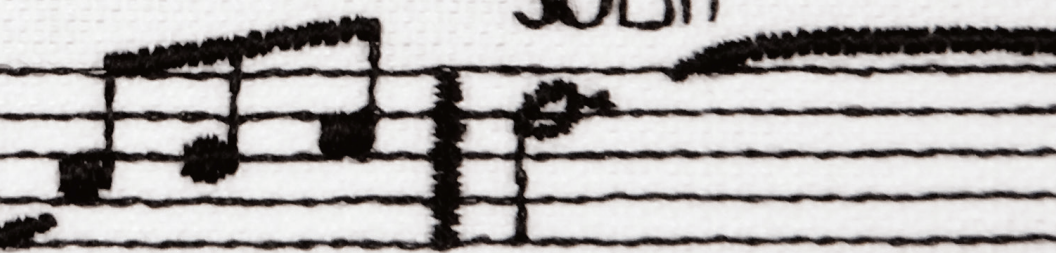
le



sib

FA

SOLm



monde entier





LINA MORAWETZ

*Notes on Serious Flirting*



*My dream of madness: being no longer capable of the effort to make contact. Absolved of it, by madness.*

— Susan Sontag, *Early Diaries*, 1963

Kathy Slade's *Blue Monday* is named after New Order's first serious flirt with the structure of dance music. The band's highly influential synth-pop track was something like the last breath of Joy Division and the first one of New Order. The stammering, vocoder-distorted cult track was engineered from the ghosts of many other artists, the rise of Thatcherism, and Manchester's decay, and it appeared in 1983 on the album *Power, Corruption & Lies*. "Blue Monday" was named after a popular paranoid theory about what is claimed to be the most depressing day of the year: a Monday about four weeks after Christmas characterised by the negative affects of economic loss, gain of weight, and so on — a winter blues generated by a repetition of the paranoid axiom that "things are bad and getting worse."

*Blue Monday* is a site-specific work developed for a storefront project on East London's Vyner Street. At 4COSE, meaning "four things" in Italian, the artists Cullinan Richards and Andrea Sassi sell, or, as they put it on their website, "bring to us," high quality food from Italy. Every month four different products are — again in their words — "exhibited" within a "purpose built structure."<sup>1</sup> Everything in this structure seems subordinated to the idea of extravagance and to a celebration of precision in arrangement: appetizingly wrapped up specialities like tuna, chocolates and single estate Italian olive oils are displayed in glass vitrines like precious artefacts to be protected from the appetite of the world. What on the first impression looks like the celebration of the distance from which one not only can, but apparently has to, behold anchovies laid out side by side, prompts in consequence a reflection on hierarchies of value brought about by the spatial decontextualisation of an art space and by displaying food like a collection of artefacts. As if at the same time the artists who run it want to shake up the imperious demand of this approach, they dryly add: "Ultimately all it is is food."

For her installation work *Blue Monday*, Kathy Slade printed four different motifs on gauzy silk scarfs and in addition developed a blue-coloured concept for the existing three-cornered rose-pink logo of

4COSE. The motifs — two typefaces, one film still, and a patterned repetition of the logo — are taken from specific archives of pop-culture, concrete poetry and publishing, as well as addressing politico-emotional positions: there is Brexit and a haunting disbelief (“IN IT,” coming from campaigning to remain, is printed in sequence on one of the scarves); Slade’s attempt to retype a typewritten triangular concrete love poem (*The Graph of an Affair*, a concrete poem by Michael Joseph Phillips from 1972); there is the sun exploding in a dramatic orange and black apocalypse (a video still from a 2005 Hardfloor remix of *Blue Monday*); and eventually the tinted blue of 4COSE logo, used as an ornamental element on the fourth scarf.

The fact that the softest scarves of silk printed with grave motifs are being draped within an art-space turned food-store is a performative co-reading, in the most peculiar manner, of one reality with another: art, pleasure and economics.

On first view, given the carefully constructed narrative of the chosen images on the scarves, the work seems to be bringing to us specific sociopolitical and cultural histories. But at a closer look it does so in ways which are less historical or academic but rather popular, trans-historical and associative. The selected images both encompass the appropriation of existing artistic projects as well as address a capitalist reality that Frederic Jameson

called a “purely *fungible* one, in which space and psyches alike can be processed and remade at will.” This entails “subordinating oneself to a reality that is infinitely plastic, capable of reconfiguring itself at any moment.”<sup>2</sup>

One has to bear in mind that the scarves are not looked at like canvases. The logic of their display is in a way subordinated to 4COSE’s conceptual framework, just like the products are. The scarves might seem to be something of the like of a biscotto or Salino salami, but eventually, none of them will be artefacts on display. They are edibles and artworks brought to us in a food-store which is not one. As such, they are neither subjected to nor promoting classification but rather reflect — by adding an extra level of uncanniness — the power relationship at stake in above-mentioned fungible reality. They are tissues aware of inconsistencies.

But unlike food which, stylized to whatever extent, ultimately still serves the basic function of survival/nutrition, the scarves seem to self-identify as accessory with decorative function. And when we talk about decoration, in the arts, we tend to say merely, not mainly. The soft scarves seem to display patterns just as they perform pattern in the space. They do not give any information on the motifs or details I have just unveiled. Instead, through their texture they entail — or moderate — the inextricability of pleasure and pain: of Blue Monday being the saddest day of the year or the pain, desire and madness of Brexit; or how difficult it is to re-

type a concrete poem on a typewriter, particularly when it is about love; or that Bernard Sumner in *Blue Monday* “sounded like he sings in his sleep, and the lack of logic, the blame game and pointless incantations of the text seemed to come from a dream-like landscape, reminiscent of de Chirico.”<sup>3</sup> We don’t know all this.

Wandering around between San Bitter and San Pellegrino, one does not get an analysis of fungible presents or of popular art histories. *Blue Monday* refuses to practice any form of didactic unveiling or demystifying explanation. Scarves not only seem to be, but *are* meant to cause pleasure on a sensual and visual level. The scarves — slightly crumpled up on piles of pasta or hanging slightly transparent from shelves like too-delicate canvasses after a downfall — displayed with motifs printed on a foundation of silk, not one of linen, seem to be too soft to be providing an “opinion,” making an “argument.”

It’s a memory disorder, a walking dream overlapping one reality with another. This potential misreading of a style, a crumpling up, as it were, of what is supposed to be pleasing and what is supposed to be political, is of course clearly intended.

As a site-specific work *Blue Monday* thus clearly reflects on the conditions that frame it. We think we can say that balsamic vinegars aged 10, 15 and 20 years, sardines, and parmesan, are ultimately only food. It is true.

But the question of “things” which are “brought to us” and how they are displayed demands more sensitivity, simply because it’s more complicated. It is exactly this “let’s talk about it as though it existed” and “not really believing it” which is pointing toward the distinction at stake: between an inner attitude — survival, even artistic survival — and an outward behaviour compliant with, or more accurately addressing, the aggressive gentrification of London’s East End.

It is not so difficult to imagine that the concept of 4COSE might have emerged from rocketing studio rents which needed to be covered. The gesture of 4COSE inviting Kathy Slade, who installed campy scarves of finest silk with brainy and sad motifs in between biscotti, can be read as a rigorously soft, serious flirtation with the fact that contemporary neoliberal culture has replaced both the concept of the public and the figure of the intellectual.

\* \* \*

Paranoid exposure (exposure driven by paranoia) is rarely an effective way of dealing with “bad things.” However, to practice “other than paranoid forms of knowing does not,” as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick put it, “in itself, entail a denial of the reality...”<sup>4</sup> Driven by a desire and an impulse which is other than paranoid but additive and accretive, the assembling of melancholic,



even eerie images of the history of contemporary pop, poetry and politics at stake here is not only a fight for the effort to make contact. *Blue Monday* seems to be a fight for the effort to *continuously* make contact grounded in a longstanding friendship between the artist and the artists who run 4COSE.

A visitor can get a scarf, take it home, wear it. Not only *Blue Monday*, also other recent works, such as Slade's installation of jacquard-woven blankets in the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, collectively entitled *For the Readers*, count on the beholder as actor within the work. It becomes clear that in her work the assembled plenitude of knowledge and materials (or also appropriation, as it were) is meant to be not only self-reflective but also conferred onto other objects and offered to other selves.

This is an attitude that can be referred to as staging (inter-medial as opposed to theatrical). Clearly, this is a mode of resisting objectivity (the work offers resistance to an uninvolved reading of itself) by embodying or embroidering ever new fields of intermedia hybridity. The effect of this interrelation is only in part the promise of the genre installation art. Its openness seems rather a mode of production, of producing models for the possibilities of works.

The spaces Slade creates and intervenes with are defined by the life-world, pop culture. Choosing seemingly non-theoretical terrains *involves*, even *is*

the conceptual tool offering resistance to objectivism and a presiding anti-intellectualism. It points towards the inextricability — the complicity, as it were — of a staged, almost stereotyped style and critical reflectivity.

One reading of this could be that of a metaphoric challenge (for the viewer) regarding structures or systems at their point of collapse or short circuit rather than pointing directly at the insoluble miseries.

A sun that explodes and warms your throat.

A love that fails gradually, but decoratively.

Linguistics that curl up under duress.

This mode of production can trigger, as Magritte once called it, a moment of “panic,” and these moments of panic are, as he said, privileged moments because they “transcend the mediocrity.” The beholder of *Blue Monday* is thus a flaneur or a flaneuse who strolls through a metaphysical interior of sorts (*Metaphysical Interior* is also the title of a prominent Giorgio de Chirico painting from 1926, interlocking inside and outside spaces) touches on the politics of display, a buyer of sardines that might at the same time be a collector of art.

This concept of the spectator becoming a part of the process of the artwork herself when wandering

about the store deciding between an “IN IT” scarf or Pasta Setaro picks up on a certain curious effect known from Slade’s previous works, such as the *Orange Pom-pom*. The silky softness of the scarves and their “ornamental” attitude, just like the “goofy” quality of *Orange Pom-pom*, conceal a serious intent. With lapses and excesses of meaning in between, *Blue Monday* might want us not only to think hard about how we get snagged by the associative yet dissociative style of the work. It might also want to make us think about the smooth processing from one reality to another as a core quality of capitalist realism.

I will try to illustrate what I mean with an example from the field of writing. With the above described juxtaposed aesthetics one discerns a mode for the possibility for elevating one’s obsessions to both “intellectual ‘wanting’ like sexual wanting,”<sup>5</sup> as Susan Sontag put it, *and* style as a pleasure. Slade’s *Blue Monday* seems to wholly burn not only toward assembling knowledge and encouraging discourse, but also, at the same time, celebrates sensuality. Cindy Sherman once said that she wanted to create something people can “relate to without having read a book about it first;” poet John Keats yelled, as 16 year old Susan Sontag put it in her diary: “O for the life of sensations rather than thoughts!” The in-between of intellectual and sensual obses-

sions reverberates in another diary entry by young Sontag: “Sex with Music! So intellectual!!”<sup>6</sup>

The essayist Brian Dillon elaborates on the way Susan Sontag’s “outwards” writing and her inner writing attitude were struggling with exactly these two directions:<sup>7</sup> an irritation yet attraction towards the slipperiness of style as pleasure, metaphor and excess of curiosity (the *Pom-pom*), and sonorous prose, even kitsch, as opposed to the brainy ideal of the disembodied idea, the architecture of discourse, the classified sense and the argument (although, as Dillon remarks, she trashes the conventional distinction between style and content in her essay *On Style*).

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This interrelation seems crucial in installation art, particularly when producing models for the possibilities of works. Curious wantings and fascination can emerge from the enjoyable dichotomy between the disembodied concept and the do-it-yourself quality of Slade’s processing: a certain staged amateurism, a DIY style (the exhibited scarves are being fixed with products on the shelves as if this was just improvised for the moment, and not “for real”) and yet there exists a palpable intellectual reflection of the entire context. In this specific work, *Blue Monday*, Slade might want us to consider how the body (food, pleasure), and contemporary

culture (and the political conditions of it) connect and come apart. Their histories are subjected to techniques of compression and collage, the materials of culture and pleasure migrate transhistorically. Slade knows the art of quotation: an image or gesture seems more real if it is cited than if encountered in the raw.

The fascination in the work is a form of Lacanian *jouissance*, “an enjoyment that entails the inextricability of pleasure and pain.”<sup>8</sup> By being intertextual, *Blue Monday* rejects the defensive narrative stiffness of a paranoid, linear temporality — and continues the effort of processing and remaking fungible friendships also with ghosts, the dead, and events causing displeasure; prioritizing the popular over the populist, the intellectual over the academic, Slade’s preoccupations might thus appeal to those who have nothing whatsoever to do with art, perhaps for those fascinated with *New Order*’s early records and their search for a musical world outside of rock music, taking the (electronic) challenges of their new surroundings seriously.<sup>9</sup>

A remark on a remark, as it were, based on capitalism’s perpetual instability. A remark being turned on by a remark, just as New Order was “turned on by the latest technology that was becoming available,” eventually creating a circuit that could make “the sequencer and drum machine speak to each other.” And what is a serious flirtation other than a stammering point of a collapse, the last and first breath at one go?

1. <http://www.4cose.co.uk>
2. Fisher, M. *Capitalist Realism*. London: Repeater Books, 2008, p. 54
3. <https://www.zeit.de/2015/38/new-order-music-complete-album/komplettansicht>, my translation [accessed 09.07.2018]
4. See: Kosofsky Sedgwick, E.: "Paranoid Reading," *Reparative Reading*, In: Kosofsky Sedgwick, E., *Touching, Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. London: Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 127
5. Rief, D., ed., *Reborn. Susan Sontag, Early Diaries 1947-1964*. London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 318
6. *Ibid.*, p.34
7. Dillon, B., *Essayism*. London: Fitzcarraldo Editions 2017, pp.100
8. Fisher, M., *The Weird And The Eerie*. London: Repeater Books, p. 117
9. Fisher, M., <https://www.zeit.de/2015/38/new-order-music-complete-album/komplettansicht>, my translation [accessed 09.07.2018]

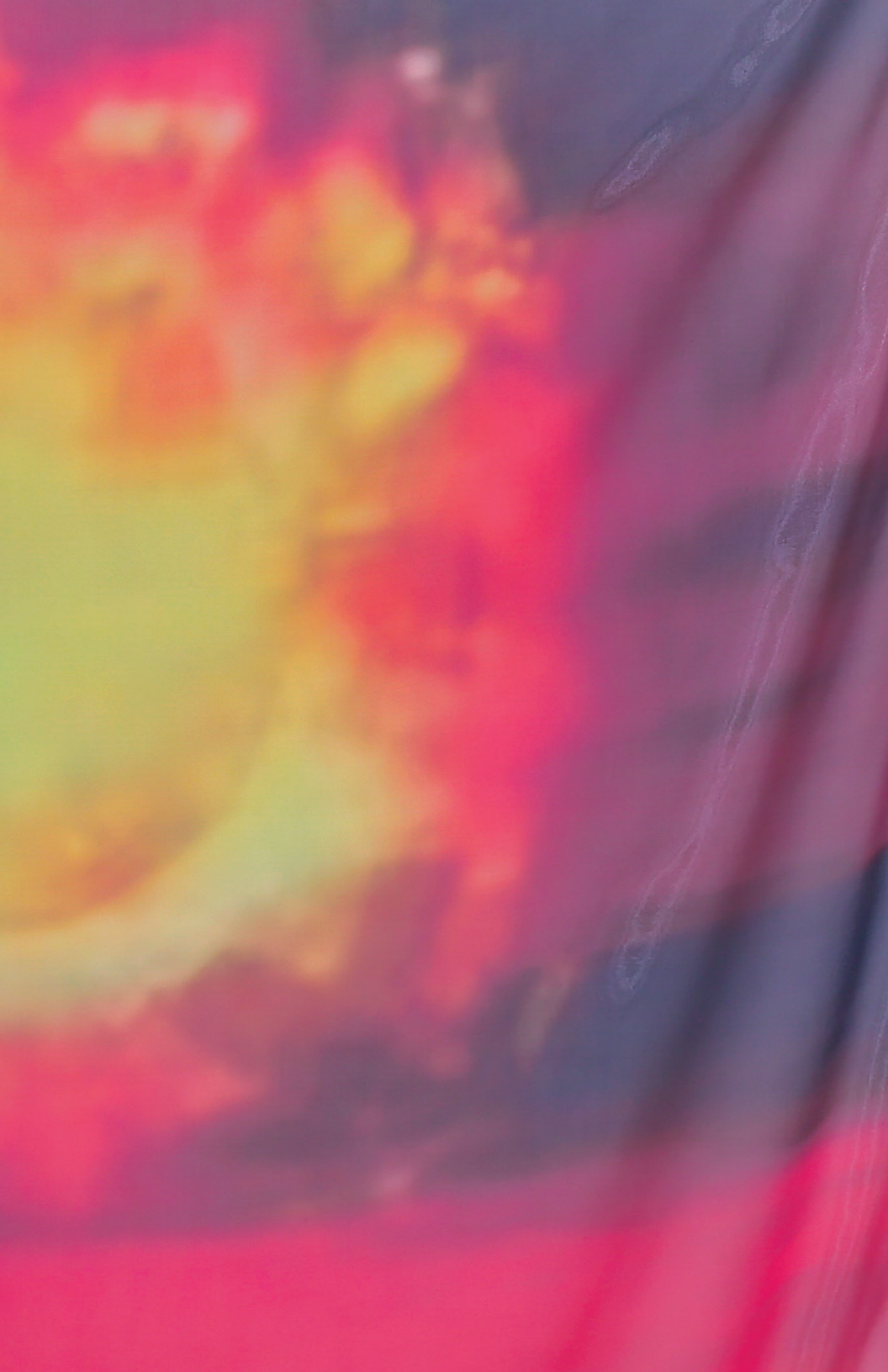
















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Energia (Kcal) 0  
Carboidrati (g) 0  
Alcol (g) 0

Lanfranca  
Aceto di VINO  
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Installation view, *Beginning with the Seventies: GLUT* at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery; Alexandra Bischoff, *Rereading Room: The Vancouver Women's Bookstore (1973-1996)*, 2016-18; Judith Copithorne, various works on paper, 1971-1972, SFU Art Collection; Kathy Slade, *For the Readers*, 2018, cotton.

*For the Readers: Emma Bovary, or After Gustave Flaubert: She Bought a Map of Paris*, 2018, Cotton, 152.4cm x 189cm

*For the Readers: After Angolo Bronzino, Portrait of a Young Man with a Book*, 2018, Cotton, 152.4cm x 189cm

Photos: Rachel Topham Photography

She bought a map of Paris, and with the tip of her finger on it she walked about the capital. She went up the boulevards, stopping at every turning, between the lines of the streets, in front of the white squares that represented the houses. At last she would close the lids of her weary eyes, and see in the darkness the gas jets flaring in the wind and the steps of carriages towered with much noise before the peristyles of theatres. She took in *La Corbeille*, a ladies' journal, and the *Sylphe des Salons*. She devoured, without missing a word, all the accounts of first nights, races, and soirées, took an interest in the début of a singer, in the opening of a new shop. She knew the latest fashions, the addresses of the best tailors, the days of the Bois and the opera. In Eugène Sue she studied descriptions of furniture; she read Balzac and George Sand, seeking in them imaginary satisfaction for her own desires. Even at table she had a book by her, and turned over the pages while Charles ate and talked to her. Paris, more vague than the ocean, glimmered before Emma's eyes in a rose-coloured atmosphere, but the many lives that stirred amid this tumult were divided into parts, classed as distinct pictures. Emma perceived only two or three that hid from her all the rest, and in themselves represented all humanity. The world of ambassadors moved over polished floors in drawing rooms lined with mirrors, round oval tables covered with velvet and gold-fringed cloths. There were gowns with trains, deep mysteries, anguish hidden beneath smiles. Then came the society of duchesses; all were pale; all rose at four o'clock in the afternoon; the women, poor angels, wore English point on their petticoats; and the men, unappreciated geniuses under a frivolous outward seeming, rode horses to death at pleasure parties, spent the summer season at Baden, and toward their fortieth year married heiresses.



*The Surrey Art Gallery sincerely thanks Kathy Slade for generously sharing her extraordinary artwork with our audiences. We are grateful to the other lenders to the exhibition: Sydney Hermant, Erin O'Brien, Jesse Birch, and Brady Cranfield. We are very appreciative of the careful attention and perceptive reflections of the guest writers Lina Morewitz and Brady Cranfield for their respective catalogue texts.*

*— Jordan Strom*

## *Acknowledgments*

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— *Kathy Slade*

**KATHY SLADE** is a Vancouver-based artist, curator and editor. She is currently completing her MA at European Graduate School, Saas-Fee, Switzerland (2018) and holds a BA from Simon Fraser University, Burnaby/Vancouver (1990). Recent solo exhibitions include *I WANT IT ALL I WANT IT NOW*, Walter C. Koerner Library, Vancouver, BC (2018), *Blue Monday*, 4COSE, London, UK (2017), *Charrette Roulette: Language: Kathy Slade, Kay Higgins and Publication Studio Vancouver*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, AB (2015). Her collaboration with Lisa Robertson, *It was a strange apartment; full of books...*, was presented at Galerie Au 8 rue saint bon, Paris, France in 2013 and Malaspina Printmakers, Vancouver in 2012. Slade's work has been included in group exhibitions such as *Beginning with the Seventies: GLUT*, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery (2018), *Yesterday Was Once Tomorrow (or, A Brick is a Tool)*, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, AB (2017) and *Document XXL*, Artexste, Montreal, QC (2017). In 2018, Slade curated *Sarah Dobai: Principles and Deceptions* at the Or Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

**JORDAN STROM** is Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Surrey Art Gallery. In addition to the over 45 exhibitions that he has organized in Surrey since 2009, Jordan has also curated exhibitions for the Vancouver Art Gallery, Kamloops Art Gallery, Presentation House Gallery, Republic Gallery among others. Recent exhibitions include *Land Songs, Water Songs: Chants de terre, chants d'eau* (2018), *Flow: From the Movement of People to the Circulation of Information* (2018), *Ground Signals* (2017) co-curated with Roxanne Charles, and *Nep Sidhu: Shadows in the Major Seventh* (2016). From 2004 to 2008, Jordan was co-editor of *Fillip* magazine, an international journal of art writing.

**BRADY CRANFIELD** is a sound and visual artist, musician, and writer. As well as his own practice, he has ongoing, long term collaborations with the artists Kathy Slade and Jamie Hilder. His collaboration with Slade includes The Music Appreciation Society project, which is a make-believe secret society dedicated to the appreciation of music, particularly popular music. Cranfield also established and operated Selectors' Records, a record shop and performance and project space in Vancouver from 2015 to 2018. He has a MA in Communications and a MFA from SFU, and his current musical projects include the bands Womankind, Hot Towers, and Alfred Jarry. His public artwork, Weekend Chime, a once-weekly chime to signal the supposed end of the workweek, is currently under development with the City of Vancouver.

**LINA MORAWETZ** is a writer and translator from Austria. She has been commissioned to develop essays, readings, and curatorial work for the institutional and gallery context as well as in support of individual artists. Her poetry, short-stories and non-fiction have appeared in art and literature platforms such as Camera Austria International, Edit Magazine, Das Narr Magazine, Makhzin Beirut, Kunsthalle Bremen, and Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig. She has recently translated poetry from Liz Howard and Solmaz Sharif into German.

**LIST OF WORKS**

*Alighiero Boetti*  
*(after Portrait by Paolo*  
*Mussat Sartor), 2005*  
 Embroidery on cotton  
 63.5 x 71cm, 4 panels  
 Courtesy of the artist  
 and Brady Cranfield

*Blue Monday, 2017*  
 Silkscreen on silk  
 georgette, 4 scarves,  
 63.5 x 71cm / Courtesy  
 of the artist / Photo  
 credit: Tori Schepel

*Chart, 2006 / Embroidery*  
 on canvas 105 canvases,  
 38 x 5.5cm each / Over-  
 all dimensions variable  
 Courtesy of the artist

*Embroidered Monochrome*  
*Propositions: O series,*  
 2002 / Embroidery on  
 linen, multiple panels:  
 each 51 x 45.75cm  
 Courtesy of Erin O'Brian  
 Photo credit: Recorder

*Embroidered Monochrome*  
*Propositions: O series,*  
 2002 / Embroidery on  
 linen, multiple panels:  
 each 51 x 45.75cm  
 Courtesy of the artist

*Embroidered Monochrome*  
*Propositions: O series,*  
 2002 / Embroidery on  
 linen, multiple panels:  
 each 51 x 45.75cm  
 Courtesy of Jesse Birch



*Françoise Hardy:*

*All Over the World, 2008*  
Embroidery on cotton,  
2 canvases each, 56  
x 49.53cm / Courtesy  
of the artist / Photo  
credit: SITE Photography

*I Want the World I Want  
the Whole World, 2003*  
Embroidery on cotton,  
61 x 51cm, 3 panels  
Courtesy of the artist

*Orange Pom-pom, 2002*  
acrylic yarn, 147cm  
in diameter / Courtesy  
of the artist / Photo  
credit: Recorder

*Ordinary World 2002*  
Embroidery on cotton  
6 panels each, 54 x  
52cm / Courtesy of the  
artist / Photo credit:  
SITE Photography

*Set List Sampler:*

*Bonaparte (Sydney  
Vermont), 2006*  
Embroidery on canvas,  
61 x 51cm / Courtesy  
of Sydney Hermant  
Photo credit:  
Jesse Birch

*Set List Sampler:*

*Destroyer (Dan Bejar),  
2006 / Embroidery on  
canvas, 61 x 51cm  
Courtesy of Sydney  
Hermant / Photo credit:  
Jesse Birch*

*Set List Sampler: Pink  
Mountaintops (Lindsay  
Sung), 2006 / Embroidery  
on canvas, 61 x 51cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
Photo credit:  
Jesse Birch*

*Set List Sampler:*

*Rodney Graham Band  
(Rodney Graham), 2006*  
Embroidery on canvas,  
61 x 51cm / Courtesy  
of the artist / Photo  
credit: Jesse Birch

Kathy Slade: This is a chord.  
This is another.

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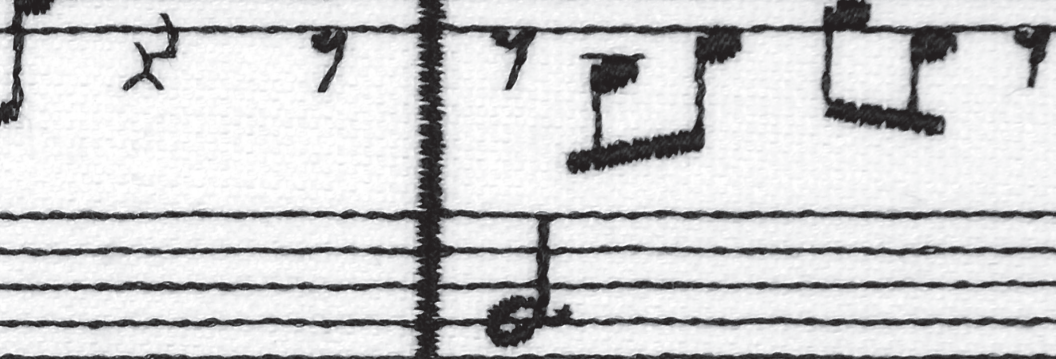
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