

# Jen Stark puts five questions to Frances Trombly

Frances Trombly transforms our view of our everyday surroundings through crocheting, knitting, and sewing. She chooses to re-create common things like deflated balloons, a roll of toilet paper, rope, confetti, or crumpled receipts, and displays them in discreet places, like a back corner, or on the floor, so that the viewer almost overlooks the work. I enjoy it because of the labor-intensive process and the transformation from mundane object to exquisite work of art (which I aim for in my work as well), and I love the satisfying moment of realization: "It's not a discarded receipt someone dropped on the floor, it's an insanely hand-stitched piece of fabric."

I heard that a collector came into the gallery right before the opening of her solo show in Miami last year. The collector glanced around, seeing only a mop, trash bags, cardboard, and tarps in the gallery, and asked if there was supposed to be an art opening there that night. When a gallery attendant said, "Yes, this is it," the collector, feeling insulted, stormed out. Mission accomplished. —Jen Stark

Jen Stark, *Radial Reverie*, 2008. Acid-free colored paper, 20 x 20 in.



Frances Trombly, *Garden Hose*, 2007. Crocheted cotton and metal hook, 32 ft long.

## Most of the works are made using cloth, by crocheting, knitting, or sewing. Why do you choose these materials and processes?

Fabric is reasonably inexpensive, which has always been helpful. When I began making my work, I found it was something that I could work on anywhere, it was easy to ship and it was a medium I could control myself. There was no need to rely on anyone to assist in making it, no need to build a frame for it or hang it on the wall. The fabric would just naturally fall where it needed to. It's a beautiful thing. There is also an intimacy working with fabric that is unlike any other medium I have experienced.

## How and why do you decide which objects to create?

My work is mostly determined by the space it inhabits. It is also determined by a unifying theme rooted in the practice of weaving, cross-stitch, knitting, and crochet. This practice contrasts with the objects I choose as subject matter. The objects must be in contradiction to the traditional practice. My practice is handmade, and the objects that serve as inspiration are mass-produced.

## What do you want the viewer to take away with them after seeing your work?

I don't have expectations for the viewers' response. They can misunderstand or get it completely; either way, it's their experience.

## What is the most difficult piece you created?

If by difficult you mean physically, I'd say *All Purpose Tarp* [2008]. This piece is handwoven using a polypropylene fiber, which was not very forgiving on the loom.

## Why do you choose to present many of the pieces as though they are discarded or overlooked objects?

I am interested in hard work and effort being dispensed on an object that is of a quiet nature. To me, it is special to form a relationship with something hidden or overlooked. I find these things have a lot more to offer than we allow and there is a modesty in that that I find special. ♦

Jen Stark has a solo exhibition on view through June 23 at LMAK Projects, New York, and is in a group show opening June 13 at the Fireplace Project, East Hampton, New York. Frances Trombly's work is on view at David Castillo Gallery, Miami, through June 30, and she will have a solo show at Casas Reigner, Bogotá, in early 2010.