



TAM
interview
with Santa
Monica
based visual
artist
Deborah
Lynn Irmas

Collective Memory

What are your favorite recent trends in Southern California Contemporary Art?

My favorite trend is the rise of textile-based art practices as I think it is a response to the growth of computer generated art. The contradiction in the art world seems to mimic what is going on in our daily lives; this conflict between the tactile and the technological.

How does being a Southern California artist define you and your work?

I grew up in North Hollywood with movie stars, orange trees and sunshine. I guess you could say that's as Southern Californian as you can get. Since I can remember, art was always a way for me to be free and my upbringing in this liberating cloudless suburban land lent itself to my art practice. The romantic nature of my art...its' freedom of form and expression can be largely attributed to the environment that I knew best. Because of Southern California's cultural diversity, my parents and



especially my mom - an immigrant, found a place to raise their family and my work reflects this heritage.



Who is your favorite Southern California Artist of all time and why?

My Favorite Southern Californian artist is Tom Wudl who has also been my mentor for many years. His devotion to the spiritual combined with his admiration of art history has shaped my art practice in many ways. His dedication and genuineness to his art practice has helped me to learn these same principles. Other Southern Californian artists I appreciate are the artists that I studied with at UCLA Painting, Sculpture and Fine Art Program (P.S.G.A.)

in the 1970's. Alexis Smith taught me a way of thinking that I had not understood before. Chris Burden, Laddie Dill and Richard Diebenkorn had a huge presence in the art program and all of them informed my work.

What inspires you artistically? (Other artists, poetry literature, places, feelings etc.)?

I am inspired by other artists. From Contemporary, Modern and Post War artists, I find myself intrigued and excited by the stories they tell. There is not a day that goes by that I am not looking at another artists work. Understanding how others see and think is not only freeing but quite inspirational.

Have you always worked in your medium, if not briefly explain your artistic journey?

No I have not always worked in this medium. However, I have always worked with some form of sewing materials as these are the things I grew up with. From my mother, a seamstress and my father, a men's clothing store owner, I found myself surrounded by these materials from a young age. Starting out as a fashion illustrator, graphic designer and textile designer, my practice has invariably utilized these types of materials.



Please briefly explain your process?

I work with LOTS of materials...yarn, fabric, cord, twine, chains, etc. And I collect things all the time whether at vintage stores or hardware stores. I am constantly looking for interesting objects. I like having a large selection of materials in my studio because I work on so many pieces at the same time. I never know which material will end up working with which piece. I try to use all my scraps and lately I've been making soft sculpture balls with my leftover materials. For the last year and a half I have been working with yarn on canvas. My process is such that each series lends itself to the next series. There is an accent material in one series and then that becomes the focal point in the next series. I'm lucky in that way because I am never out of ideas. There is always another material that I feel enlivened to work with and eager to learn about its principles.

What do you think the role of the artist is in our modern world?

I think that art is really about one thing. It is a memory of that moment. For the artist and the viewer. I think that is the only role that the artist has an obligation to.

It is a collective memory of society.



Images:

1. Respectable Burden of Silence No. 2
2. Respectable Burden of Silence No. 4
3. Respectable Burden of Silence No. 1
4. (Detail) Respectable Burden of Silence No. 3
5. Portrait of Deborah Lynn Irmas

Photographs Courtesy of the Artist