

# V

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## Katie Schwab 'small wares'

Guestcurator: Clare Molloy

Opening: 25.09.2021, 17:00-19:00

26.09.-12.12.2021

Ribbons, looms and 18th century Dutch darning samplers are the starting points for *small wares*, Katie Schwab's exhibition at Vleeshal, guest curated by Clare Molloy. "Small wares" is the trade term for narrow textiles used for reinforcing seams and preventing fabrics from unravelling. These unassuming articles, which often remain invisible and yet lend a garment strength, are referenced in Katie Schwab's new body of work. *small wares* is an examination of processes of repair in both textiles and civic architecture.

The ability to repair textiles by hand was once commonplace. In the aftermath of industrialisation this has become an increasingly rare skill. Katie Schwab's research took her across the Netherlands to view darning samplers (stoplappen) in museum archives in Middelburg, Zutphen and Leeuwarden. Created by girls as young as 8 years old, these embroidered linen cloths document precise darning exercises and colourful repair stitches. A record of their learning, these samplers were shown to potential employers to demonstrate that these girls and women were adept in invisible mending.

The colours of the darning samplers inform the palette of *small wares & hard wares* (2021), woven at the TextielLab, the TextielMuseum's professional workshop in Tilburg. In collaboration with the passementerie expert Veva van der Wolf, Katie Schwab created three ribbons on a band-weaving loom from 1880. Embracing the spirit of sampling, the ribbon eschews uniformity and includes a myriad of stripes, holes and repairs in silk, cotton and linen. The vivid oranges and pinks of the ribbon's warp make reference to madder, a plant-dye that was historically grown across the region of Zeeland—a technique that Katie Schwab explored during her spring 2021 residency at Cove Park, Scotland.

Treating the bricked walls of Vleeshal as a giant darning cloth, the ribbons dance across the walls, hanging from custom hardware hooks created by the artist and SWARF. These hooks are steel renditions of the iron bolt holes already present in the space. Through their insertion into pre-existing holes in the masonry, *small wares & hard wares* traces patterns of architectural scars.

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*alcove cushions* (2021) is a series of works sewn together from broadcloth and offcuts of woolen fabric known as “fents”. The cushions act as an invitation to view *small wares* from the unusual vantage point of sitting in the wall niches. From the curves of the vaulted ceiling *strength study* (2021) descends, alluding to the cloth market (lakenhal) that once traded fabric just one floor above. The textile is constructed from bias binding, a small ware that usually hems the raw edges of other fabrics. Instead of relying on stretching and framing—the traditional methods of displaying textiles—the bias binding revels in supporting itself.

Katie Schwab’s long-standing interest in post-war architecture and design led her to a particular period of repair and restoration in Vleeshal’s history. The late-gothic building was severely damaged by a fire during WWII. To support the devastated structure, a wooden scaffolding propped up the façade and the rubble was encased with wood and concrete to support a new foundation. The building’s former trauma was transformed, becoming its own source of strength. Taking this hidden history as a metaphor and guiding methodology, *small wares* is a subtle examination of invisible strength and repair.

The exhibition is accompanied by the *small wares & hard wares* edition. It consists of a custom steel hook developed for the show with SWARF and a screen printed organic tea towel featuring the exhibition’s graphic identity, as created by designer Marianne Noordzij. The edition objects function together and apart, and are ready to be used in everyday life. The edition is indicative of Katie Schwab’s approach to distributing art for domestic spaces. It is available at Vleeshal and via [vleeshal.nl/en/shop](http://vleeshal.nl/en/shop), priced € 50, plus postage.

The first institutional publication on the artist’s practice, *Katie Schwab: Sample Book*, will be co-published by Vleeshal and Dent-de-Leone, edited by Clare Molloy and designed by transdisciplinary graphic design collective, Åbäke.

#katieschwab #smallwares #vleeshal

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## Katie Schwab

1985, London, UK

Katie Schwab works with installation, textiles, furniture and moving image to explore personal and social histories of craft, design and education. Her research focuses on domestic textiles and civic architecture from the inter- and postwar period and, in particular, the underrepresented work of women artists and émigré designers. Embedded in the communities and contexts in which she works, Katie's projects incorporate collaborative workshops, archival research and craft-based learning.

Recent exhibitions and projects include *small wares*, Vleeshal, Middelburg, Netherlands (2021); *Another Crossing, Artists Revisit the Mayflower Voyage*, Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA, USA & The Box, Plymouth, UK (2021-22); *A Working Building*, The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art, Plymouth (2019); *This Interesting and Wonderful Factory*, Clore Sky Studio Commission, Tate St Ives, St Ives (2018); *Atrium Commissions*, mima, Middlesbrough (2017); *Making the Bed, Laying the Table*, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Glasgow (2016) and *Together in a Room*, Collective, Edinburgh (2016). She is currently working on a new project for British Art Show 9, Hayward Gallery Touring (2021-22).

Katie was the recipient of the 2016 Nigel Greenwood Art Prize, the 2017 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Residency at Porthmeor Studios, St Ives, the 2018/19 New Contemporaries/ SPACE Studio Bursary, the 2017-19 Design Residency at Plymouth College of Art and the 2020 Henry Moore Artist Award. In 2019 she was shortlisted for the Max Mara Art Prize for Women in collaboration with The Whitechapel Gallery.

[www.katieschwab.com](http://www.katieschwab.com)



## Clare Molloy

1986, London, UK

Clare Molloy works as a curator. In 2018 Clare joined the team at the Gropius Bau in Berlin, working initially as a Curatorial Fellow and currently as Assistant Curator.

At the Gropius Bau she has co-curated the exhibitions *Wu Tsang: There is no nonviolent way to look at somebody* (2019), *Lee Mingwei: 禮 Li, Gifts and Rituals* (2020) and Zheng Bo. *Wanwu Council* 萬物社. She also works on the In House: Artist in Residence programme, which currently hosts SERAFINE1369 (2021-2022), and previously welcomed Zheng Bo (2020), Otobong Nkanga (2019) and Wu Tsang (2018).

Recent independent curatorial projects include the forthcoming exhibition, Katie Schwab: *small wares* at Vleeshal Centre for Contemporary Art, Middelburg, NL (2021) as well as *And Now The Screen Is Struck By Lightning* by Peter Cant and Krzysztof Honowski at TROPEZ Berlin, DE (2019) and *solid solutions / soft skills* by Stefanie Kägi and Selina Reiterer at Kunstraum Engländerbau, Vaduz, LI (2019). As the 2015 Kadist Curatorial Fellow, Clare worked closely with Otobong Nkanga on her exhibition *Crumbling Through Powdery Air* at Portikus, Frankfurt, DE, curated *Comot Your Eyes Make I Borrow You Mine* at KADIST, Paris, FR, and was research curator for Otobong Nkanga's Tate Live: *Performance Room, Diaoptasia*, at Tate Modern, London, UK. She subsequently co-edited the first monograph on Nkanga's work, *Luster and Lucre* (Sternberg Press, 2017). In 2019 she took part in the Mondriaan Fond's International Visitors Programme.

Katie Schwab: *small wares* is her first project in The Netherlands. In 2014 she worked with the now Director of Vleeshal, Roos Gortzak, as Curatorial Assistant of the festival FdJT: *What Happens in Offenbach Stays in Offenbach*, which, for obvious reasons, she cannot discuss. Clare holds an MA in Curatorial Studies from the Städelschule and Goethe University, Frankfurt.

@claremolloy\_