

JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

For immediate release

Margo Wolowiec: Evergreen, Searchlight, Rosebud

April 19 – May 27, 2017

Opening reception: April 19, 6–8pm

Jessica Silverman Gallery is pleased to present “Evergreen, Searchlight, Rosebud,” a solo show of new large-scale works by Margo Wolowiec.

Wolowiec explores the worlds enabled by digitization, social media, and the darker corners of cyberspace. She also enlivens an old, tactile form through weaving her works on a wooden floor loom. The irony is entirely intentional and profoundly conceptual. The term “Luddite,” which refers to a person opposed to machines and new technologies of all kinds, originates from the early 1800s when bands of English textile workers destroyed the first automated punch-card looms as a form of protest.

Wolowiec is a keen observer of paradoxes and maker of oxymorons. The rich tension between her carefully curated internet imagery and her sensual, handmade weavings is just the first thought-provoking dialectic of many. Other productive frictions include: beauty versus politics, information versus knowledge, word versus picture, and the colliding histories of painting, photography, textiles and sculpture.

Wolowiec’s process is a story in itself. The artist collects jpegs and tiffs through specific hashtags and geo-tags. She cherry-picks and arranges the images then transfers the freshly made composition through a dye-sublimation process onto polymer threads. Wolowiec weaves the yarn on a manual loom to create a tapestry to which she sometimes adds a gestural mark. The final textile maintains a grid-like pattern that refers to the square and rectangle formats of the source photographs.

The hashtag with the greatest impact on Wolowiec’s new work is #rosegarden. Roses have been cultivated for their visual beauty, perfume and perceived medicinal value for some 5000 years. Regularly evoked in poetry, they are laden with meaning, serving as symbols of love, remembrance, affluence and battling family clans (e.g. War of the Roses). Within American politics, the White House’s rose garden, which borders the Oval Office and the West Wing, has been used by different Administrations for diplomatic strolls and ceremonial signings. The phrase “rose garden strategy” refers to the ability of an incumbent to use his home base to bolster his apparent power. Intriguingly, in the era of “alternative facts,” President Trump prefers his own golf courses for such posturing.

While flowers and greenery appear in all the works in the exhibition, the wall-hung weavings are also laden with images from online news sources, both verified and fake. The words are mostly blurred beyond legibility so the viewer cannot determine whether the text is true or false. The ambiguity is only resolved occasionally when Wolowiec highlights words in blue or paints a copyeditor’s loopy “delete” mark over them. The titles of these pieces derive from snippets of readable words, such as “Pictures of her Children” and “Imagine How Many.”

The freestanding sculptures, which echo the shape and scale of room dividers, feature copper wire mesh like that used for “Faraday cages,” which protect spaces from the electromagnetic interference of cellular frequencies and radio waves. In context, the lustrous copper screens combined with the optimistic floral blooms seem to shield the viewer from the anxiety of political news.

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The title of the exhibition, "Evergreen, Searchlight, Rosebud," stems from the code names used by the Secret Service for the President and members of his family. "Evergreen," "Searchlight" and "Rosebud" are the respective ciphers for Hillary Clinton, Richard Nixon, and Sasha Obama. These particular words appeal because they signal a search for hope even if not all of the people to whom they refer do.

With this exhibition, Wolowiec deals with fundamental issues of our time – the place of natural beauty in a digital world, the changing symbols and aesthetics of power, and the challenge of distinguishing the warp and weft of truth, fiction and falsehood.

Please join us on Saturday, April 22 at 3:00pm for "Artist on Artist: Margo Wolowiec in conversation with Josh Faught"

Margo Wolowiec (b. 1985, Detroit, MI) has a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from the California College of the Arts. Her work is in the public collections of the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), Kadist Art Foundation (San Francisco), and the Detroit Center for Photography. It has been included in exhibitions at the Museum of Craft and Design (San Francisco), di Rosa (Napa), and the Center for Performance Research (Brooklyn). She was a panelist for the "Material Concerns and Current Practices" series at the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation in New York (February 2017). Wolowiec is represented by Jessica Silverman Gallery and Laura Bartlett Gallery (London). The artist lives and works in Detroit, MI.