

Stitches in Time: A Curated Exhibition

JANUARY 25, 2022 BY [DAVID DEMELIM](#) — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



Stitches in Time



Behind the Lens 2022:

Stitches in Time Emily Belz, Curator

Continuing our annual *Behind the Lens* series, **The Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts** is presenting *Stitches in Time*, curated by Emily Belz, to explore domestic and family-driven narratives from five women photographers. The collected work asks us to reexamine the fabric of our society, the ties that bind and the connections or stitches that hold us together. The artists presented here all work with themes of binding to explore and highlight the connections that bind us together and reveal the strength of family, in a nation of immigrants.

The exhibition brings together a selection of work from *Becky Behar, Coco McCabe, Michelle Peterson, Gail Samuelson, and Erin Sweeney* to explore gender stereotypes, time management and domestic narratives through a 21st Century lens.

Opening Reception: February 17th

Gallery Exhibition: February 17th – March 11th

Gallery Hours: Thursdays & Fridays Noon – 6:00pm, Sat 1:00 – 6:00pm.

Gallery Visits: Available by appointment, email gallery@riphotocenter.org



From the Curator: Emily Belz

Life; past, present, or future animates each of these works. The artists presented here; Becky Behar, Coco McCabe, Michelle Peterson, Gail Samuelson, and Erin Sweeney ask us to look and think carefully about our ties, both literal and figurative, to family or home. Working across a range of media, from photography to book arts to embroidery, these 5 artists all work with themes of binding, joinery, and seams, the very things that hold us together, up until that point when they pull (us) apart. Stitches on cloth, tape on the skin, knitting needles harnessed by yarn; this imagery asks us to think about time, the time it took to hem a dress, bring a pregnancy to term, raise a family, fashion a home, and importantly, *who* committed the time to bring these creations to life. In works sometimes fanciful, sometimes surreal, and sometimes even humorous, these artists bring the work of craft to the forefront of a conversation about stories, how they are built, and importantly, how they are held together.

The bringing together of these artists is informed, additionally, by the unavoidable foil of Covid-19. For many, this global pandemic brought us closer to home than we had been in years, or perhaps had ever been. This emphasis on the domestic, and domestic spaces, accentuated homebound activities; cooking, genealogy, knitting, and sewing among them, activities that have often been placed, stereotypically, in the realm of women's work. The artists presented here reclaim domestic and/or family-driven narratives in ways that highlight this work, revealing the strength behind it with both vigor and grace.

About the Curator: Emily Belz

Emily Belz is an independent photographer and educator based in Lincoln, MA. Her photographs focus on domestic still lifes, telling stories through the traces, objects, and slants of light that have been left behind. Belz has exhibited her photographs widely in both solo and group exhibitions. She is represented by Gallery Kayafas in Boston.

Belz holds a BA in photography and art history from Hampshire College (1997); an MA in community-based art education from the Rhode Island School of Design (2009); and an MFA from the New Hampshire Institute of Art (2017). She teaches classes and workshops at the Griffin Museum of Photography (Winchester, MA) and the deCordova Museum (Lincoln, MA), and is on the faculty at Lasell University (Newton, MA). Belz works privately with artists as a mentor and specializes in reviewing and sequencing portfolios.

With 20+ years in the art world, Belz brings this experience to her role as a juror for photography competitions, and as a reviewer for regional portfolio reviews. She enjoys curating exhibitions in collaboration with emerging artists in the Boston area.



In the Gallery:

Installation photos coming soon..

Becky Behar: *Homespun*



Homespun © Becky Behar

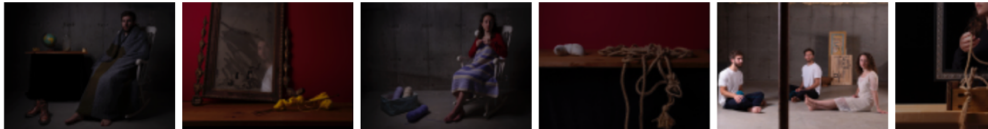
In "Homespun," photographer **Becky Behar** constructs a visual story of her children's lives through yarn, ropes, and their habit of knitting (a skill they inherited from their maternal grandmother) during times of anxiety and uncertainty. "Homespun" examines the fears, hopes, comforts, and discomforts of the family Behar has knit together with her children.

Becky Behar creates still lifes and portraits in domestic spaces. She composes the environment and carefully constructs narratives that portray the intimate. Her images discuss the family and oftentimes, her identity and role as a mother in transition. Behar is looking to stop time and elevate the everyday. She is heavily influenced by historical paintings, especially those of Johannes Vermeer, Caravaggio and John Singer Sargent. With the use of her camera, light and color, she creates painterly photographs.

Born in Colombia and now living in the suburbs of Boston, Becky Behar's bilingual home is not exclusively a geographic location, but also a place built on emotional connections. Behar's art focuses on motherhood, domestic life and the link between generations. Her still lifes and portraits are suffused with light, reminiscent of Old Masters. The result is impactful photographs that elevate the everyday to evoke stories beyond the image.

Behar has exhibited at national and international galleries including solo exhibitions with the Griffin Museum of Photography in Winchester, MA and at Workspace Gallery in Lincoln, NE.

She has received multiple acknowledgements including a 2021 awardee with the 16th Annual Julia Margaret Cameron Award for Women Photographers, a 2020 Photolucida Critical Mass top 200 finalist, and 2020 finalist for the Griffin Museum of Photography John Chervinsky Emerging Photographer Scholarship.

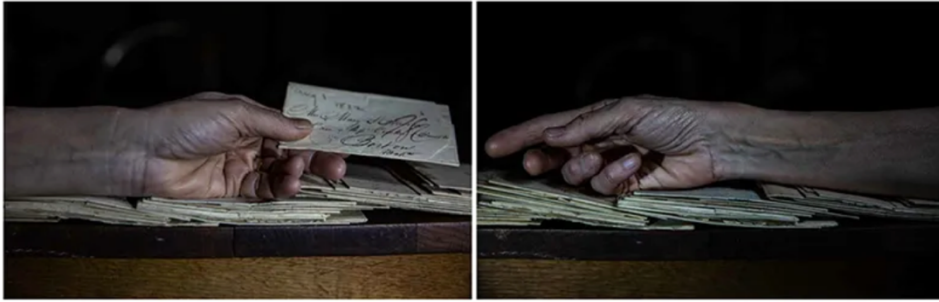


*"My **Homespun** portfolio began during the unprecedented months of quarantine in 2020 when my college aged children all came back home. After dinner, I would often find them sitting together and knitting. Seemingly woven into their DNA, when feeling anxious and lost, they resorted to knitting in order to create something that keeps them safe and warm.*

During my childhood, my mother was a dedicated knitter. The soothing, repetitive motion of wrapping yarn around needles gave her a sense of control over life in a new country. Shortly after we immigrated to the US, she knit woolen ponchos for her three children, even though we lived in Miami. My mother used any opportunity to teach me how to knit. It never took for me, and I decided that knitting was not hereditary.

For this series, I collaborate with my three children and use their act of knitting as a metaphor to construct a visual story of our lives. Just as tension enters the warps and weft of a fabric, I too use yarn and ropes to interlace a narrative. A textile carries its own set of characteristics: tenacity, strength and resistance. My images portray our fears, the comforts and discomforts that embody us, our hopes and the lives we knit."

Coco McCabe: *The Ancestors* (2020)



Delivery by Coco McCabe

Coco McCabe's "The Ancestors" asks us to look at family history through photographic diptychs that are at times whimsical, at times dark, and all informed by the Covid-19 global pandemic. Confined to her home during the spring of 2020, McCabe became an actor in her own historical dramas, joining past to present through the use of family relics and photographs. Using tape, yarn, and xeroxes of old images McCabe staged her ancestry, asking always the question, "how will these stories end?"

Coco McCabe is a photographer in Ipswich, MA. She was a print journalist for many years before joining Oxfam America as a global story-gatherer. While there, she photographed and wrote about impoverished communities in Africa, East Asia, and Central America. More recently, McCabe has focused on landscapes, street photography, and special projects, both documentary and personal.

Her work has appeared in online venues such as The Atlantic.com, Refinery29.com, The GroundTruth Project, Vision Project, and the Social Documentary Network (SDN). She has exhibited at the Panopticon Gallery in Boston, MA, the Griffin Museum of Photography in Winchester, MA, and locally in Ipswich, MA. In March 2020, McCabe was a featured speaker at SDN's Documentary Matters.



Michelle Peterson: *Domestic Bubble*



Domestic Bubble 2/7 by Michelle Peterson

Michelle Peterson is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work explores the often invisible labor of motherhood. During her second pregnancy Peterson made a weekly embroidery of her growing body beginning at 10 weeks and ending with a final embroidery after the baby's birth—30 pieces total—for the project "40 Weeks". In a separate but related project entitled "Domestic Bubble", Peterson made pinhole cameras from her grandmother's flour boxes, and used them to make long exposure photographs (up to 8 hours) of her daily domestic routines. Printed using the Vandyke Brown process, these images capture a ghostly swirl of motion, an indication of the daily labor involved in caring for children and the keeping of a home. Below each print is handwritten text describing domestic events of the day.

Michelle Peterson is a visual artist, with a BFA from New Hampshire Institute of Art in 2011, and an MFA from the Institute of Art and Design at New England College in 2020. She works in multiple mediums, including painting, photography, and fiber art. She is a mother of two and resides in southern New Hampshire.



"My work currently examines my role as both an artist and mother. Learning to intertwine the two roles rather than separate them, I chose to focus on the domestic space and the repetitive invisible labor taking place within that space. In a series of Vandyke prints titled Domestic Bubble I began embedding the history of the women in my family into the work. By creating Pinhole Cameras out of my grandmother's flour boxes and encapsulating the handmade processes entirely within my home, I began uncovering the extent of my invisible labor. I chose to turn the camera on my own kitchen using an eight-hour exposure time, which resulted in phantom traces of the activity taking place within that space. This gesture is meant to index my invisible labor by highlighting the static nature of the kitchen in contrast with the insubstantial wisps of movement that signal human presence within the work. In further contrast with the images depictions (or lack thereof) of the human body, I documented the experiences in my own hand to insist on making myself visible while acknowledging the reality of invisibility. By making myself present through this reference in the work, I am able to depict my experience of what it means to be visible as a mother and an artist today."

- Michelle Peterson

Gail Samuelson: *Grainlines*



Gail Samuelson presents family history—past, present, and future—through images of clothing in her photographic series "Grainlines." Samuelson descends from a family of dress makers in New York's garment district, and her photographs pay homage to both the makers and wearers of the dresses, gloves, skirts, and nightgowns pictured in her photographs. Recently, this body of work has evolved into a new chapter, showcasing knit work by Samuelson's daughter, and, as she writes in her artist statement, "pulling the thread forward in to the next generation of dress makers."



"My family made dresses in New York City's garment district, and as a young woman, I loved examining sample dresses, trousseau nightgowns, and veiled hats worn by my mother and aunt. In Grainlines, I celebrate the women in my life, the makers, and wearers of these clothes. Turning each garment inside out and carefully prying seams apart, I photograph even stitches and the pattern pieces of construction. Reinforced hems, loosening threads, and stained fabric are remnants of embedded family history. Outlasting their wearers, these garments are now tangible links to the passions, hopes, and dreams of the women who raised me. As my family grows, I include clothing made by my daughter, thus pulling the thread forward into the next generation."

- Gail Samuelson

[Gail Samuelson: Resume](#)

Erin Sweeney: *I Put Down Roots No Matter How Temporary*



Printmaker and book artist **Erin Sweeney** explores domestic narratives and the very idea of home in her handmade books. In her artist books, Sweeney calls particular attention to materials—the materials used to build a home, make a dress, and hold together a community. Each of her books asks, whose stories are these? And asks us to think about how we (as viewers) may be fastened and tied to our own historical narratives.

Erin Sweeney lives and works in southern New Hampshire. She received her MFA in Book Arts and Printmaking from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where she was awarded the Elizabeth C. Roberts Prize for Graduate Book Arts. She also has a BFA in Sculpture from the Maine College of Art in Portland, Maine.

Sweeney exhibits nationally, most recently at the Putnam Gallery at the Dublin School in Dublin, New Hampshire, Unrequited Leisure in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Canton Public Library in Canton, Ohio. In 2019, Sweeney was awarded a Ruth and James Ewing Award for Excellence in the Arts, and in 2020 was a juror for the Awards.

Stitches in Time, Emily Belz, Curator

Exhibiting Artists:

Becky Behar, Coco McCabe, Michelle Petersen, Gail Samuelson, and Erin Sweeney

Schedule

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Gallery Hours: Thursdays – Saturdays Noon – 6:00pm.

Gallery Visits: Available Appointment, email gallery@riphotocenter.org

Reception: February 17th

The RI Center for Photographic Arts, RICPA 118 N. Main St. Providence, RI 02903

Located in the heart of Providence, RICPA was founded to inspire creative development and provide opportunities to engage with the community through exhibitions, education, publication, and mutual support.

RICPA exists to create a diverse and supportive community for individuals interested in learning or working in the Photographic Arts. We strive to provide an environment conducive to the free exchange of ideas in an open and cooperative space. Members should share a passion for creating, appreciating, or learning about all forms of photo-based media. We work to provide a platform for artistic expression, that fosters dialogue and drives innovation in the photographic arts.

The Gallery at the Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts is a member of Gallery Night Providence <https://www.gallerynight.org/>

Want to become a RICPA Member? Membership brings many benefits and discounts, for more information and to find the membership level that fits you, visit our website at <https://www.riphotocenter.org/membership-info/> You may become a member at entry, member benefits begin immediately and run 365 days from your start date.

Questions: Contact gallery@riphotocenter.org To learn about other RICPA exhibits and programs, visit <https://www.riphotocenter.org/>.
