



Marion Strunk: What is a picture)

TextileArtist.org

Besides fine arts and art history Swiss artist Marion Strunk also studied psycho-analysis and is currently working as a professor at the University of the Arts in Zürich.

Although Marion's chosen medium is thread on photography, she sees herself neither as a photographer nor an embroiderer. Her art is a combination of photography and embroidery, in which the technique of stitching is not her main focus.

In this interview Marion explains the idea she seeks to convey through her art.

TextileArtist.org: What initially attracted you to textiles as a medium?

Marion Strunk: I chose textiles as my medium because the softness of threads makes it possible to stitch into photos.

Also as a medium the thread is conveying the message, 'be calm'! In other words, I choose to work with threads because of the tradition, the history of threads used in housework, done by women. The thread is telling something about making little gifts, or about knitting a pullover for a loved one, or it can be seen as a symbol for connecting.



Marion Strunk: embroidered photos, 2009

And, more specifically, how was your imagination captured by embroidery?

My idea was to use the photography as a medium of the past, with the thread as a medium for current moments. You can touch the thread on the photography. So you have a real moment of sensation when you are close to the picture, but soon – viewing it from a little distance – you will also see an image in the thread, (it could be a snowball, rain, a figure).



Marion Strunk: embroidered photo, 2008

What is a picture?

The main question in my work is: What is a picture? I like to put this subject up to discussion. Bringing photography and thread together makes it possible to show what a picture actually is: fiction. A thread is always concrete, so the photography will be concrete in origin, but within it there is fiction as well as in the thread.



Marion Strunk: embroidered photo, 2008

What was your route to becoming an artist?

I studied Art in Berlin at the now called University of Arts in the 80s, but my work started with a political affair, doing artwork for advertisements. At the end of the 90s I started to work in photography. From then on for me began the question of what an image is and thus the thread came into my work.

Threads as connections

Tell us a bit about your chosen techniques.

My embroidery isn't done very professionally – I only stitch into the photographs like a beginner: the embroidery itself is not my aim. At present I am interested in threads; threads as connections. I embroider threads into photographs. The photographs can be just snapshots I take of everyday subjects. Or they can be photographs that I acquire in some other way. So this means that I am neither a photographer nor an embroiderer.



Marion Strunk: embroidered photo, 2015

I embroider into the photograph, using the stitching to lay thread onto the surface. In the photograph the thread acquires a form, rising from it like a bas-relief and aesthetically integrated into the photo. The colour choice of the thread will add to this integration. It is important to me that the thread should be distinguishable in the photo when viewed from a distance – so sometimes I try to emphasize the difference between the surface of the photo and the stitching even more by embroidering circles.

The fiction can unfold like a self-explanatory illusion. But when you touch it, you feel the woolly thread and you understand its tactile quality. The thread is statically present in the picture, it is a figure or object in the photographic image and is itself an image as well as a photograph. The image cannot however claim that 'this is how it was'.



Marion Strunk: embroidered photo, 2009

What currently inspires you?

I'm currently inspired by the work of **John Baldessari**.

How has your work developed since you began and how do you see it evolving in the future?

The thread first came into my work by altering photos. Then the thread itself became important as a medium. I will continue with the embroidered photography but with different subjects, perhaps 'the kitchen'.

Can you recommend 3 or 4 books for textile artists?

Yes, two in German:

- **Craftista! Handarbeit als Aktivismus by Critical Crafting Circle**
 - **Marion Strunk, Die Stadt besticken mit Faden und Nadel in der Hand: Kunstforum International, Der urbane Blick, 2012**

And one in English:

- **The Needle's Eye, Contemporary Embroidery, Katalog: KODE, Artmuseum Bergen, Norway, 2014**

Do you give talks or run workshops or classes?

Yes, I do in Zürich in my studio.

How do you go about choosing where to show your work?

My gallery is **Barbarian Art Gallery** in Zürich, Switzerland.

The best place to see my work is on my website **www.marionstrunk.ch**

You can also explore Marion's book, **Foto und Faden, Edition Till Schaap, 2018**