Stitched: Merging Photography and Textile Practices

Jayce Salloum Audio Tour
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Jayce Salloum

"I saw a sticky yellow thread,
A thread of the history that clings to me.
A hand mulls over my life, ties my days together
Time and again, a hand that was heir
To the race of dolls and the progeny of rags."

recalls Adonis, one of Syria's greatest poets, in the poem "A Vision". A succession of images of movement, displacement, and alienation, become monuments to a future hurtling towards the writer.

Vancouver-based artist Jayce Salloum's four works in this exhibition present photography in sculptural form. Fabricated by studio assistants by tearing the papers on which Salloum digitally printed his photographs and then strung onto a fishing line, viewers can only access these images through their peripheral edges. The main narratives are missing, only the white corners framing a strip of cobalt sky or the suggestion of a beige beachfront.

Human nature does not grasp very well what is granular. We don't see atoms, we see contiguous shapes. We don't see fibres, we see the fabric. We don't see pixels, we see the entire image. When these wholes are then once again torn and repurposed, we gravitate to the new whole, here in Salloum's installations as a single continuous set of shapes.

As the photographs are torn, they are multiplied in pieces ranging from a quarter to seven inches, and then strung together by size. The bulges and recessions reflect natural forms like the helix of DNA or the amplitude of waves. At eye level, these serrated layers feel like detritus from an industrial scrapyard, metallic, shiny even. Hung from the ceiling, they are reminiscent of stalactites, monuments to "the reworking, repurposing and condensing of the material" which Salloum notes as carrying "inherent references to a previous life and the one that it is heading towards."

Like the future as presented to Adonis, it is hard to visualize the totality of the narrative, of this sequence of events we understand to be history. It was noted in a previous exhibition Salloum had at the McCord Stewart Museum Montreal titled *location/dis-location(s): beyond the pale* that "Salloum challenges the spectator's capacity to grasp the many facets of

continuous realities." If, as Salloum noted his positioning of "himself as an anthropologist of the present", what becomes of us, the spectator in front of his torn narrative pieces? What is our relation to these fragments of time and content? It seems that we are outside of it all, as if we are omnipotent, at the very Archimedean point that constitutes objectivity.