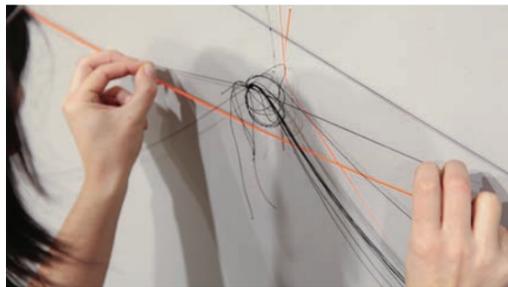


Katherine Mitchell DiRico uses drawing, sculpture, light, and sound elements to create multimedia installations that investigate how we negotiate connectivity and sense perception in today's networked world.

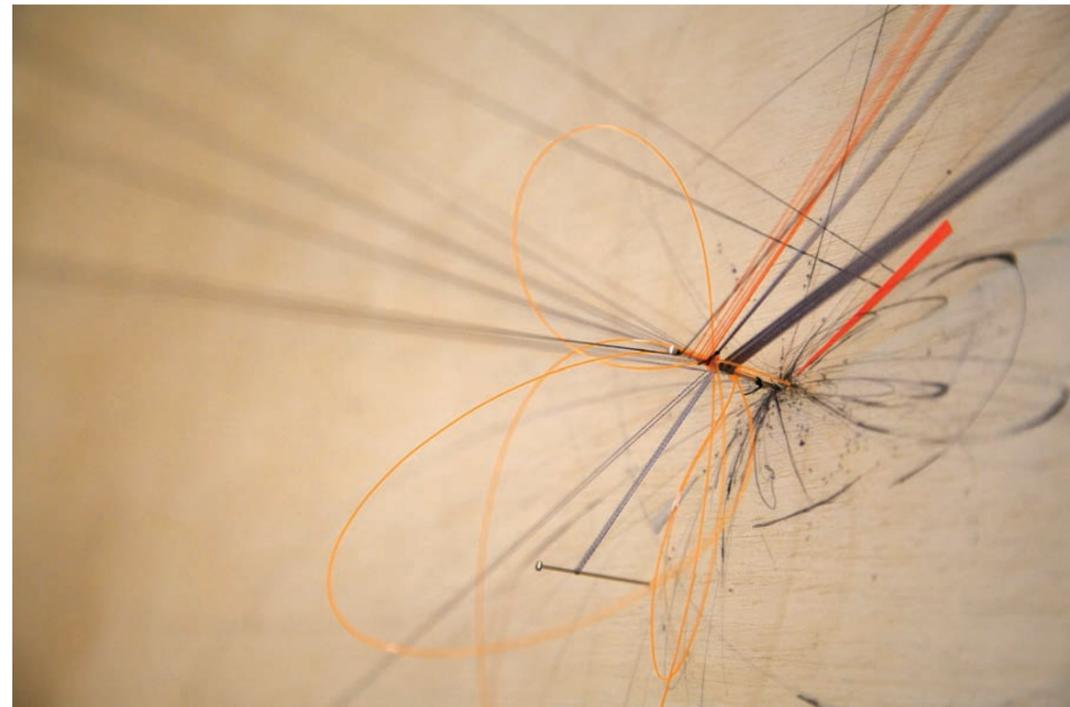


Solo exhibitions include the Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston, MA; Carol Schlosberg Alumni Gallery at Montserrat College of Art, Beverly, MA; Five Seven Delle Project Space, Boston, MA; and Porcelain Gallery, San Francisco, CA. Selected group exhibitions include the Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland; Stockwell Studio, London, England; Transmediale Festival, Berlin, Germany; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Grossman Gallery at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and the Massachusetts Campus Compact Conference on Civic Engagement, Boston, MA; SOMArts Cultural Center, 66 Balmy Gallery, and Crucible Steel Gallery, San Francisco, CA; and the September Gallery, Hudson, NY.

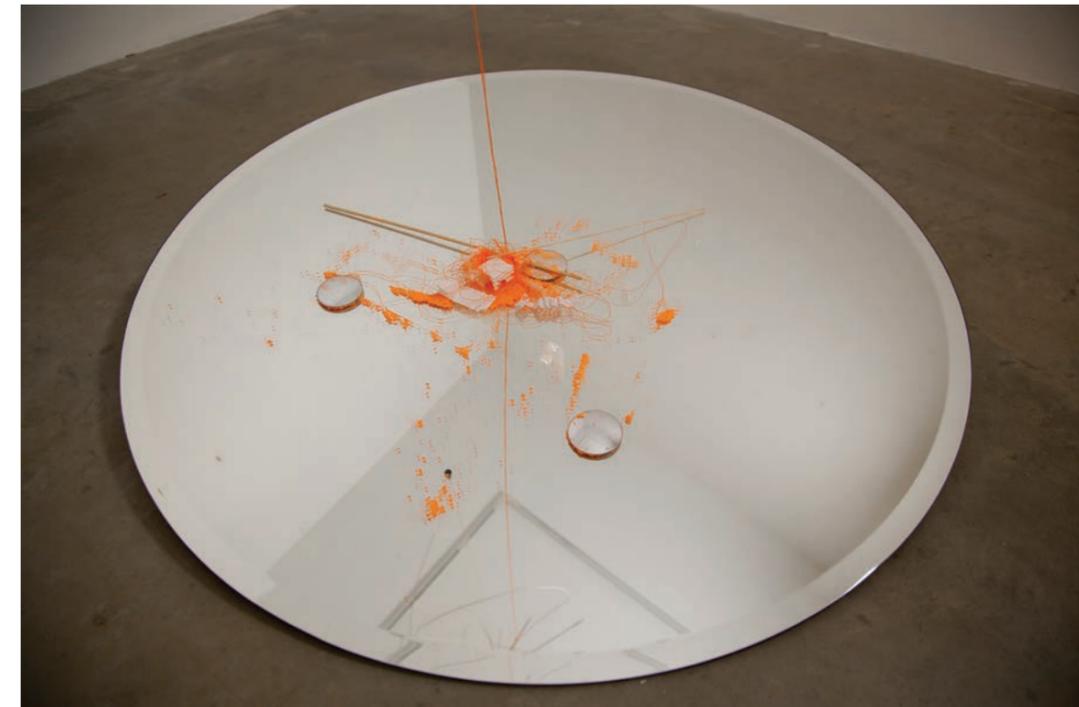
Mitchell DiRico was awarded the Montague Travel Grant and the President's Research Grant from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the 2018 Walter Feldman Fellowship from the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston, juried by curator Jen Mergel. She holds a BA from Smith College and the University of Dakar, Senegal, and an MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Tufts University.

This brochure was produced with the support of the Walter Feldman Fellowship, as administered by the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston.

www.katherinemitchelldirico.com



The Horizons of our Distraction | Detail, 2016 | Graphite, thread, pins, privacy screen, and adhesive on wood | 24.5" x 48"



Weighing Our Contingency Plan | Detail, 2019 | Wood, rattan, monofilament, thread, vibration, mirrors, pins, aluminum weights, chalk, and bioplastic | 10' x 3'

KATHERINE MITCHELL DIRICO



Nervous Systems: “Sense” Rearticulated by Katherine Mitchell DiRico

Jen Mergel

For her 2019 exhibition *Instruments of Synesthesia*, Katherine Mitchell DiRico’s wide-spanning attention to global, digital and sculptural interconnection centers on agitated, arrhythmic, even glitchy assemblages. Amid overlaid and intertwined lines of graphite, fibers, and recorded words are the flickers of light bounced from thin mirrors or thinner Mylar slivers or shiny pinheads. Elements seem bound in tight postures, as if resisting restraint, or seem to shiver as they shimmer, as if by unconscious reflex.

These are high-strung networks—nervous systems—that function to signal dysfunction. Nerves, the fibers that transmit sensation, are not literally represented here. But by physically tangling materials into observable flare-ups, Mitchell DiRico seeks to conjure how immaterial, virtual avalanches overload the senses, and, by extension, sense itself.

Mitchell DiRico states her works’ intended role: “Choreographing their own unique data stream, they reflect a networked world in which nothing is ever turned off, and a state of rest can never be achieved.”¹ Her words not only draw on her embodied experiences with dance, parenthood, and social media, but they also pinpoint ideas from Jonathan Crary’s polemic *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. Crary accounts for sleep drowned in endless stimuli, reflection eclipsed by glare, and, notably, sensory imagination—and the ability to dream—blanked by screens. To this last point, he cites *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, the final unfinished text left by Italo Calvino, who forewarned “of the danger we run in losing a basic human faculty: the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut.”²

In the face of this vast paradigm shift, Mitchell DiRico opts for intimate embodied gestures. They are paced, not as a seamless feed or in perfect simultaneity, but with deliberate a-precision, a break in sync, a hiccup that jars. And she chooses materials that might, beyond getting “eyeballs,” trigger other sense memories.

For example, her many lines in *Syncing Your Discernment* connect as elements that arc and splay against their convergence, with tiny arrows, flags, and pins signaling but never quite centering on single point. Light softly glints off the tightly wound polyester embroidery thread manufactured by Coats & Clark in color 404 (“Neon Orange”), and shines more crisply through the jumble of translucent monofilament, a Stren brand that “glows in daylight and under blacklight” for nonstop fishing, dawn through dusk. Both are attached to thin wood rods as if in aftermath of a struggle. Snared like bones are the zagging wefts of 3D-printed bioplastic, pulled apart. All are reflected in a small mirror marketed for “blindspot” safety while merging at speed. Slices of silver Mylar tape glint with the graphite sheen of radial marks and shadows that spray like sparks. The tug against a wrist of a snarled



stitch or snared fish hidden under fabric or water is present. So is the feel of changing speed to shift lanes, with one hand on the stick, a foot on the clutch, and an eye on different focal lengths within a split second. Such ingrained muscle memories have informed, moved, fed, or clothed us long before the era of swipe or tap to create. Yet here they sync, uncomfortably.

On The Mechanics of Breathing employs similar materials, but brings other ideas of pressure, and presence, to the fore. Spanning crossed rods suggest the skeleton of a kite, cut down from soaring, now tethered by its lines to sigh closer to the ground. Lobes shaped of rattan are knotted with fibers, some of which hang more loosely, tracing the motion of nearby air in their sway. Shadows double the lobes as if ovular wings, or lungs, awaiting someone else’s close movement for a twitch of life. A nearby body, not a digital signal, could bring a next breath.

Weighing Our Contingency Plan presents alternatives for tracking presence. Here, a floor mirror captures all surrounding the suspended structure as a tilted reflection, a parallel “real-time” image yet always slightly off. Strewn on the surface are Mitchell DiRico’s signature materials along with high visibility marking chalk branded by Irwin as “Strait-Line” for accuracy at building sites. Anything but straight, the chalk at this mini construction zone is continuously scattered out of place. Mitchell DiRico has equipped the blindspot mirrors with sensors so that with each text her cell phone receives, they vibrate out of place, momentarily losing focus. As stillness is repeatedly cut down, at least the phenomenon is outlined in chalk, a victim to the digital flow now a countless statistic. Narcissus wears new robes in the 21st century, and they shimmer with blinding glare.

Mitchell DiRico amplifies all of these works with a new audio piece, *Reading the Thread*. The layered recordings are her voice speaking the words from a computer screen with a window open to her Facebook page. Yet she is not reading in the traditional sense: focusing on the feed and ignoring all else. She recounts from left to right every word, including the computer’s menu bar, the browser’s search bar and tabs, the site’s list of tools, advertisements, pop-ups, and more. As untangle-able as her orange threads, her scores of language account for how conditioned minds must be to constantly filter ever-growing volumes of data through interfaces designed to tie bodies in place.

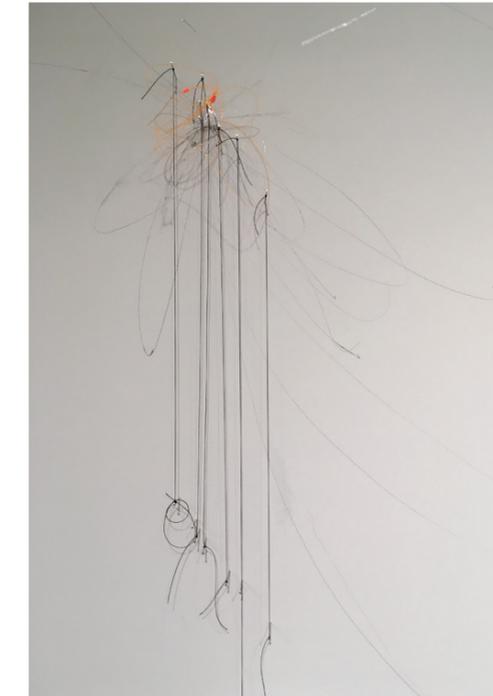
For those born analog that adopted the digital, Mitchell DiRico makes sensible—visible, traceable, palpable, understood—what is being lost of our capacity to focus (not react), to reflect (not glare), to feel (not feed). Her works embody contradictions that mirror a generational transition from the mechanical to the virtual. And she imbues them with a pulse for a simple reason: to check that others are still out there.

Jen Mergel is Vice President, Programs, for the Association of Art Museum Curators; from 2010-17 she served as Beal Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and in 2018 she presented the award-winning public art exhibition Fog x FLO: Fujiko Nakaya on the Emerald Necklace.

COVER
On the Mechanics of Breathing | Detail, 2018 | wood, rattan, monofilament, thread, mirror, pins, aluminum weight, and bioplastic | 5' x 1' x 2'



Syncing Your Discernment | Detail, 2018 | Wood, monofilament, thread, mirror, pins, Mylar, and bioplastic | 3' x 3' x 2'



Data Sets | Detail, 2017 | Graphite, thread, pins, magnets, privacy screen, marking chalk, and wood | 30' x 10'



On the Mechanics of Breathing | Detail, 2018 | wood, rattan, monofilament, thread, mirror, pins, aluminum weight, and bioplastic | 5' x 1' x 2'

¹Artist Statement for the exhibition *Instruments of Synesthesia*, Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston (April 4-28, 2019).

²Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 92, cited by Jonathan Crary in *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York: Verso, 2014), 107.