

# ***SHELTERS & FUTURE FOSSILS***

**AMY LANGE (MFA '17)**

**Fall 2016**

---

The CCA Library Exhibitions Program presents *Shelters* and *Future Fossils*, new work by MFA graduate student, Amy Lange. Lange explores notions of comfort, safety, identity and home through textiles. For this exhibition, four large-scale fabric sculptures are suspended from the Simpson Library wall alongside an artist intervention with the Science Library. *Shelters* operate as wearables and have been utilized in performances by Lange in previous iterations of the work. Currently, they evoke the bodily presence of a wearer, while also highlighting an absence. Layers of meaning are mirrored by layers of woven rags. The convergence of materiality and verticality evoke a feeling of coziness and vulnerability that creates connectivity between the phantom bodies encased in the *Shelters* and those of us inside the Simpson Library.

Lange's intervention with the Science Library combines small sculptures of fossilized textiles (*Future Fossils*) with physical materials and fossils from the CCA Libraries collection.

## ***Shelters & Future Fossils***

---

### ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Amy Lange is an artist based in San Francisco, California. She is a native of the west coast, having grown up half her life in the San Francisco Bay Area and the other half in rural Central Oregon. She received her BFA in Fibers from the University of Oregon in 2009, and then taught art at a small private high school in the bay area for four years. She regularly sews, weaves, crochets, knits, dyes, rips, glues, and encases textiles. She is currently working toward an MFA at California College of the Arts in San Francisco.

### ARTIST STATEMENT:

The primary themes that run through my work are comfort, safety, identity, and home. Through explorations in textiles, I make pieces that evoke coziness, memories of childhood, and protection against perceived future disasters.

Motivated by the resilient and preparatory determinism of communities anticipating dramatic shifts in lifestyles within our lifetime, I collect discarded cloth materials for use in future projects. My studio is a pantry as well as a workshop--it anticipates my needs. When it comes time to make things, I find it important to use only what is available to me in my immediate surroundings, as if I am practicing for a time when that will be my only option. I am a cross between MacGyver, a doomsday-prepper, and your great-grandmother. Currently I am making wearable "shelters" out of scrap fabric and yarn, small rock-like objects made from plaster and embedded fabrics, and a wall of woven pillows shaped like a machine-gun nest.

## ***Shelters & Future Fossils***

---

INTERVIEW With Amy Lange  
Conducted by Angela Berry

AB: What are *Future Fossils*?

AL: Future fossils are objects I made by pouring plaster, dye, and fabric scraps into silicone molds. I wanted to create layers that could be seen from the side, like a layer cake or a soil sample. I wanted them to be beautiful and inviting, but also foreboding, as if to project the viewer thousands of years in the future to a time when remnants of our society are buried and fossilized.

AB: How have these materials been fossilized?

AL: They're mimicking fossils, I suppose--they're creating rocks out of organic materials and liquid plaster, just at a WAY faster rate than in nature.

AB: Was there an experience that initiated this series of work?

AL: I was in the FOR-SITE class last spring with Susanne Cockrell (and you!) and I have to say that that experience really transformed my work. I had been making these objects already in my studio, but bringing them up to Nevada City and letting people interact with them in a series of performances really helped me understand what they were/are. The class really emphasized a connection with the land we were on, the troubled history of the gold rush and displaced indigenous peoples, and that struck a chord with me. It made me very aware of time, how short our lives are, but how long we've been interacting with the earth in different ways, leaving our marks behind, giving places meaning, but also wreaking havoc. It made me feel very much like nature is in charge and will always win, and that truth felt and still feels hopeful but also incredibly scary--if nature wins, we might not. So I guess the shelters are like my way of coping with this feeling--they are cozy but they also maybe communicate something, an allegiance of sorts, like when you put one on you're admitting to your own vulnerability, but there's a strength in that.

AB: What is a fossil or your interpretation of a fossil?

AL: A fossil, scientifically, is the record of an organic material--plant, animal, microbe--that is embedded in rock. I believe, if I remember 8th grade earth science correctly, the organic material is replaced completely by other materials, and this takes thousands of years. When I imagine a fossil, I think of magic. Rocks are totally crazy things to me--crystals, geodes, all that time and pressure that transforms one thing into another. They're also like Christmas presents--you can crack open a boring-looking rock and find something insane on the inside. I think that's the most captivating thing about fossils for me, the idea that there's information hidden inside something impenetrable. But with the right tools, you can slice it apart and reveal the secrets inside.

AB: What do you want the audience to know about the artifacts on view?

AL: I suppose I want the audience to make an aesthetic connection between the real rocks and my fake rocks, but also the real rocks and the Shelters. I want the audience to know the rocks are really old, and then think about how that relates to the objects I've made.

AL: I hope they're having a conversation about time and the earth--the real rocks are from the distant past, the shelters are from now, and the Future Fossils are from an imagined future. I think they are trying to predict the future based on the past, perhaps.

AB: What is time?

AL: Whew that's the best question. I like to watch science documentaries and sometimes I can wrap my brain around physics. But from what I understand, time is relative, and is perceived by humans in a certain way that is different from other creatures on this planet, and presumably other planets as well. Time can be warped and folded, theoretically--one of my favorite books is *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle, and she has this diagram of what she calls a tesseract, or a fold in space time, and it's two hands holding a string with an ant on one of the hands, and then the hands meet and the ant doesn't have to travel across the string anymore, but can just walk onto the other hand. I'm fascinated by this! I think memory can be a form of time-travel in a similar way--one moment you can be on the sidewalk and the next you're 5 years old on a slip-n-slide, and you haven't traveled anywhere. Objects can bring about these kinds of memories.

AB: How would you describe time?

AL: Well, I guess the way I experience time is different depending on what I'm doing. So when I'm sleeping it flies by, but when I'm on the bus in traffic it goes really slowly. Time is what everything has in common--nothing can escape it, it flows around everything. But it's so flexible, just the fact that it seems to be perceived differently so easily and quickly. We can't really see time, but we can perceive evidence of it. That evidence has many forms, of course.

AB: How can textiles make you consider time differently?

AL: Perfect follow-up question! Textiles are extremely time-intensive to create, they are literally records of time. I was researching the garment industry a lot last year and the ways everyday textile goods are made, and it led me to do an experiment where I made a sweater from start to finish: I bought wool that had come straight from the sheep, still dirty and oily and full of sticks, washed it, spun it, and knitted it. It took me an insane amount of time, so many hours that I couldn't believe I kept at it. And normally a machine does all these things in a sweater you'd buy at a store, and in a fraction of the time. There are a lot of things that used to be made by individuals that aren't anymore, but repetitive action that requires hours of your time usually adds up to a skill, and at least is a form of learning that resides in the body instead of the mind. So maybe time just always reminds us of our bodies, and making textiles can be a way to feel that.

AB: What are you reading right now?

AL: I kind of have to stop reading because I read so much over the summer--but I still have some books that are informing my work. I love *Making* by Tim Ingold--I recently bought it because I had it out from the library for like 4 months and thought maybe someone else might like to check it out. I love what he says about "embodied knowledge" because making textiles is totally a form of that. I'm reading *Spacesuit: Fashioning Apollo* by Nicholas de Monchaux for a class--I see a connection between the spacesuit and my Shelters for sure. I've been working my way through *A Paradise Built in Hell* by Rebecca Solnit for a while, which is an amazing book about how strangers care for one another in the aftermath of natural and manmade disasters. I kind of see my own work as a way to make paradise in hell. There are a lot more, but those are the ones I'm thinking about most right now.