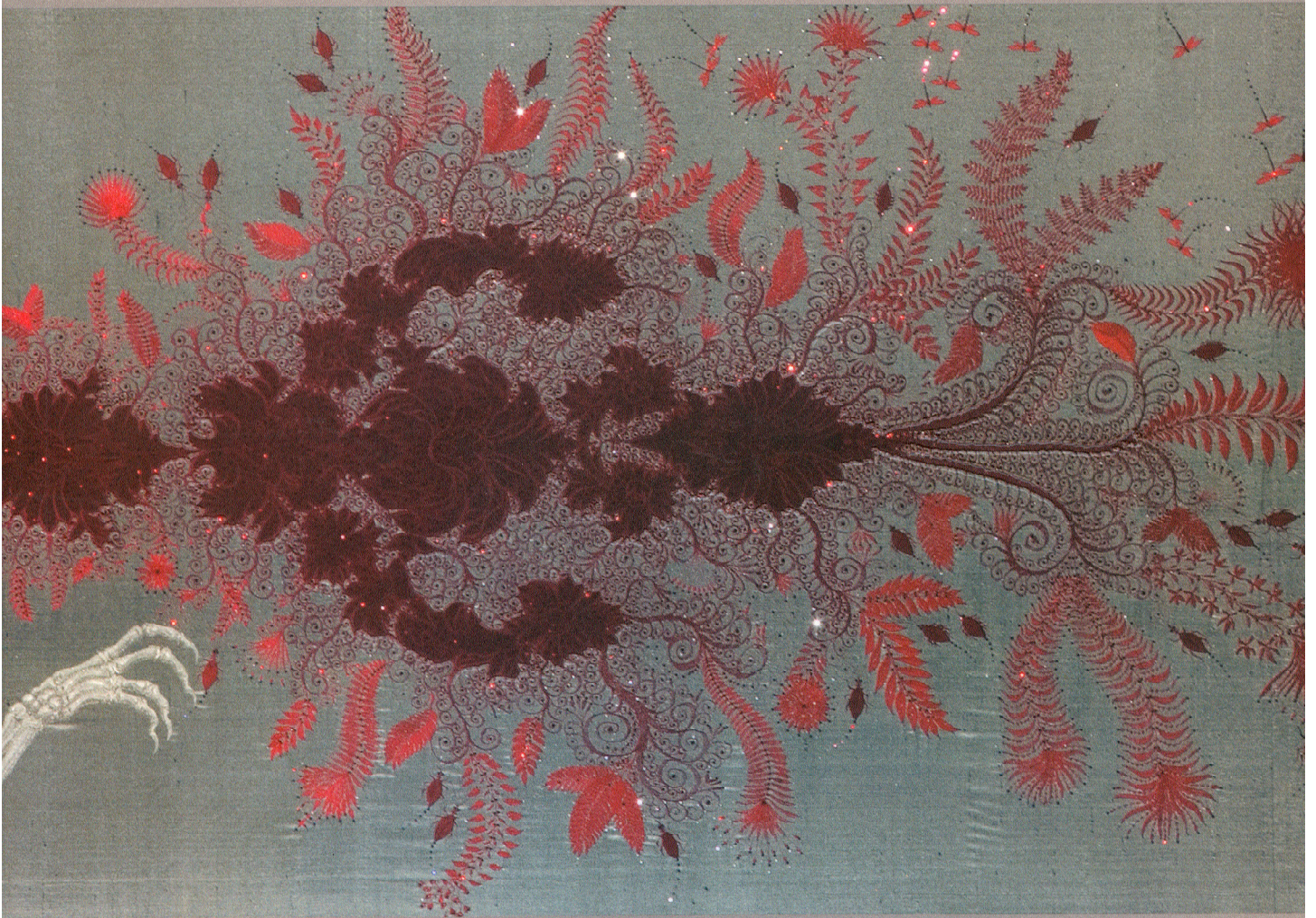


process+materials²

Pricked

extreme embroidery



Museum of Arts & Design

Kate Kretz explores psychological states of consciousness and intimacy. Her embroideries, which often depict parts of the human body—eyes, mouth, hair—are created using her own hair or that of close friends. Through these embroidered images, viewer becomes voyeur. Kretz's works are two distinct types. *Oubliette I* depicts a wide open mouth with full lips. What at first glance resembles an eccentric uvula seen inside the throat is the depiction of a tornado, which seems to rage across this oral landscape. The image conflates two seemingly ill-matched concepts—the tornado, which has the power to destroy life, and the mouth, through which air passes and food enters the body to sustain life. The throat and mouth are also the home of human sound, now drowned out by the destructive force that has taken up residence. Victorian hair wreaths, intricately fashioned from the hair of past and present family members, are evoked by the antique oval frame. The result is an undeniable juxtaposition of vulnerability and rage. Kretz has described this effect as a "psychological maelstrom, revealing what is normally kept hidden. I believe that one of the functions of art is to strip us bare, to remind us of the fragility that we share with every other human being across continents and centuries."

Another side of vulnerability and intimacy is revealed in Kretz's *Ebb* and *My Young Lover*, two standard pillowcases, one embroidered with a pair of eyes and the other with an ear covered by a hank of sensual, curly hair. Human eyelashes protrude from the surface of the pillow, which makes the images portrayed even more intimate. *My Young Lover* is fashioned from the hair of the artist's ex-boyfriend; the overall impression is of him asleep, with his head resting on the pillow. Is the artist the dreamer in both settings? Is the memory of an ex-lover inextricably stitched into the fabric of both the pillow and the artist's memory? These are not passive depictions of what has been or could have been, but, in the artist's own words "defiant acts" of revealed vulnerability.



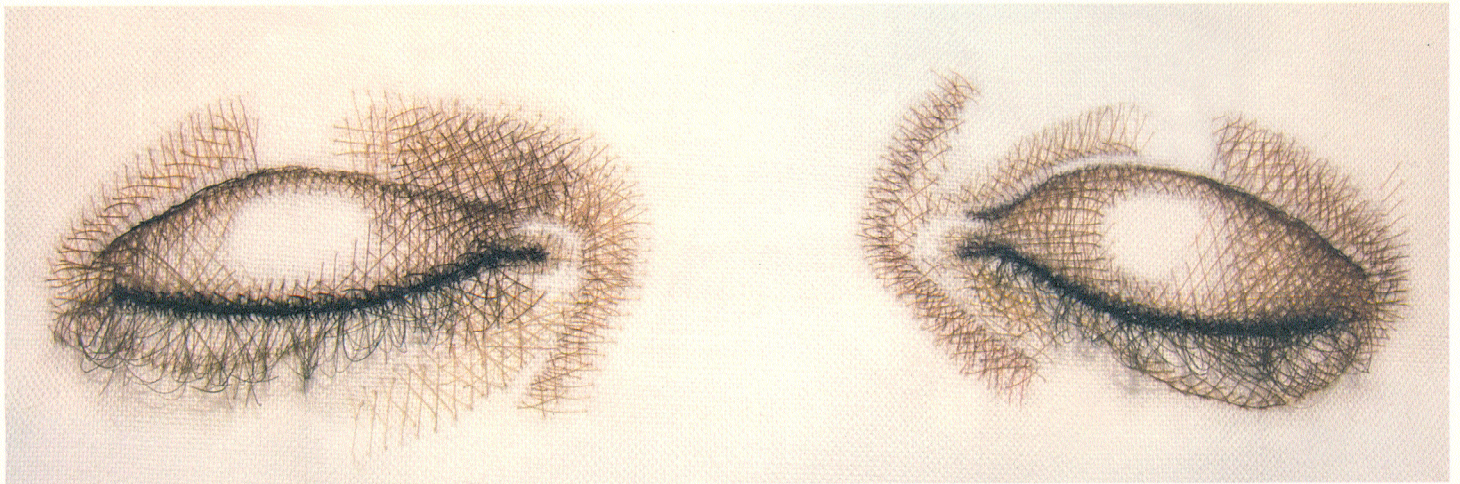
Oubliette I, 2006
Hand-embroidered human
hair on cotton, convex glass,
wood frame
9 x 7 x 13 1/4 in.
(22.9 x 17.8 x 4.4 cm)
Collection of the artist



Oubliette I (detail), 2006



Ebb, 2006
Human eyelashes, hand-embroidered human hair, cotton pillowcase, pillow 20 x 30 x 10 in. (50.8 x 76.2 x 25.4 cm)
Collection of the artist



Ebb (detail), 2006



My Young Lover, 2005
Hand-embroidered human hair on cotton pillowcase, pillow 20 x 30 x 10 in. (50.8 x 76.2 x 25.4 cm)
Collection of the artist