

26.09. 2021– 12.12. 2021



guest curator  
Clare Molloy  
public  
programme  
11.12.  
2021

#### INTRODUCTION

Ribbons, looms and 18th century Dutch darning samplers are the starting points for *small wares*, the solo exhibition by Katie Schwab (\*1985, London, UK). “Small wares” is the trade term for narrow textiles used for reinforcing seams and preventing fabrics from unravelling. These unassuming articles, which often remain invisible and yet lend a garment strength, are referenced in Schwab’s new body of work.

The ability to repair textiles by hand was once commonplace across the Netherlands. In the aftermath of industrialisation this has become an increasingly rare skill. Schwab’s research into hand-sewn repair techniques focused on darning samplers (*stoplappen*) in archives in Zutphen, Leeuwarden and the Zeeuws Museum, Middelburg. Created by young girls, these embroidered linen cloths document methods of invisible mending rendered in brightly coloured threads.

Alongside the importance of textile histories, another key reference is the Vleeshal site, a late-gothic building that was severely damaged by a fire during WWII. During its postwar reconstruction, the architectural rubble was encased in wood and concrete to create the Vleeshal’s new foundations. The building’s former trauma was transformed, becoming its source of strength. Taking this hidden history as a metaphor and a methodology, *small wares* is a subtle examination of invisible strength and processes of repair.

#### EXHIBITION EDITION

Katie Schwab’s practice operates at the intersections of art, craft and design. For Vleeshal she has created *small wares & hard wares* (2021), an exhibition edition of 30. Each signed edition consists of a custom hook, made in the UK with SWARF, and a screen printed organic tea towel designed by Marianne Noordzij from Werkplaats Typografie, Arnhem. The edition objects function together and apart, and are ready to be used in everyday life. The edition is available at Vleeshal and via the online shop.

#### PUBLICATION

The first institutional publication on the artist’s practice, *Katie Schwab: Sample Book*, is forthcoming, co-published by Vleeshal and Dent-de-Leone, edited by Clare Molloy and designed by transdisciplinary graphic design collective, Åbåke.

#### EDUCATION

There is a free educational activity for kids available at our desk. For more information on our educational workshops, please contact: [educatie@vleeshal.nl](mailto:educatie@vleeshal.nl)

#### PRESS

For press requests, please contact Leandra Bos: [leandra@vleeshal.nl](mailto:leandra@vleeshal.nl)

#### GUEST CURATOR

Clare Molloy

#### TEAM VLEESHAL

Director: Roos Gortzak  
Management assistant: Hanna Verhulst  
Assistant curator: Luuk Vulkers  
Head technician: Kees Wijker  
Marketing & communication: Leandra Bos  
Hosts: Theresa Schipper (head), Lotte Doods, Hannah Dupré, Ruth Hengeveld, Nick Koper, Auke van Laar, Ploen Mevis, Daphne de Reu, Suzan van de Ven, Maaike Wisse

#### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Marianne Noordzij, Werkplaats Typografie, Arnhem



- 1 *alcove cushions (2021)*  
Broadcloth, polyester thread, foam  
20 alcove sized cushions, c. 77 x 43 x 8 cm each

In shaping exhibitions, Katie Schwab pays close attention to the materials, histories and forms already present in the space, and carefully considers the way the works are encountered in relation to the body. Built originally as a meat market, the Vleeshal's thick walls and flagstones intentionally keep the space cool. The word "RVND", meaning beef, can still be found carved into the floor. The alcoves, with their heavy oak doors, were used by the traders as cupboards to keep knives or money safely shut away.

*alcove cushions* are an invitation for you to view *small wares* from the unusual vantage point of sitting inside the wall. You are welcome to sit on the woollen cushions. The choice of material acknowledges the wool trade that has connected the Netherlands and the UK since the 14th century. The UK exported wool to the Low Lands, where it was dyed and woven into tapestries.

*alcove cushions* are made from broadcloth, a wide woollen fabric created by Hainsworth in Yorkshire, who handle the entire production from fleece to fabric. The sides of *alcove cushions* are cut from golden-ochre broadcloth. The cushion tops have been sewn from off-cuts known as "fents", commonly considered a waste product by the textile industry. Schwab sees their value and restores their status. She has pieced the fents together diagonally, creating abstract patterns in sage, blue, orange and red.

- 2 *small wares & hard wares (2021)*  
Cotton, silk, linen, powder coated steel  
Dimensions variable

Treating Vleeshal's brickwork as a giant darning cloth, the three ribbons of *small wares & hard wares* dance across the walls. Katie Schwab wove this *small wares & hard wares* with passementerie expert Veva van der Wolf at the TextielLab in Tilburg. Created on a band-weaving loom from 1880, the ribbons incorporate a myriad of stripes and holes in silk, cotton and linen. The weft of the ribbons is informed by the brightly coloured repair stitching on Dutch darning samplers. The vivid oranges and soft pinks of the warp make reference to the array of colours produced by the plant-dye madder, which was historically grown across the Zeeland region. Pink and navy threads trace repairs to places where the warp snapped during the production process.

The pattern that the ribbon takes across the wall follows a specific score: it only hangs from pre-existing holes in the masonry. Kees Wijker, Vleeshal's head technician, calls these marks the "scars of Vleeshal". Having installed exhibitions in the space since the 1990s, he has an embodied knowledge of where the holes have been filled-in, sanded down or left open. Intrigued by this layer of architectural repair, Schwab created bespoke blue hardware for these holes. Laser cut and powder coated steel hooks were developed with SWARF, their form nodding to the alcoves' wrought iron bolt-holes.

- 3 *strength study (2021)*  
Cotton bias binding, polyester thread, powder coated steel  
740 x 246 cm

Directly above Vleeshal there used to be a cloth market (*Iakenhal*). *strength study* descends from the vaulted ceiling, alluding to this former space of textile trading. *strength study* is constructed from bias binding, a small ware that is cut at a 45° angle for durability, and is often used for hemming. In *strength study* bias binding is freed of its concealed supporting role. Both the front and back of the work can be seen and its construction is on display. *strength study* was created using domestic tools: scissors, a ruler, an iron, threads and a sewing machine. It was pieced together in an improvised pattern, using an intuitive logic akin to the process of quilt making.

When researching the Vleeshal's history of repair, Schwab encountered a photograph of the war damaged façade being held up by wooden scaffolding. This image influenced the proportions of *strength study*, a vertical textile at architectural scale. Light passes through the geometric gauze-like patterns, drawing a parallel to the sun passing through Vleeshal's leaded windows. The subtle yellow and rose hues of the stained glass inspired the work's palette.

- 4 *patches (2021)*  
Wool offcuts, polyester thread  
30 x 10 cm, 40 x 34 cm

In autumn the Vleeshal's entrance is cloaked in a heavy curtain. Katie Schwab has patched the tears on the bottom of this hardworking textile using zigzag techniques that prevent a fabric from fraying. *patches* is a study of the zigzag machine-stitch and the saw toothed cuts made by pinking shears. *patches* acknowledges and strengthens that which has been torn, damaged or simply worn-out.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to:

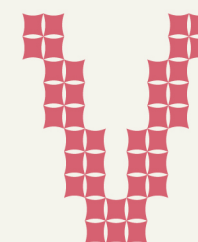
Leandra Bos, Roos Gortzak, Hanna Verhulst, Luuk Vulkers and Kees Wijker, Vleeshal.

The artist's family and friends; Gieneke Arnolli; Johanna van Benthem and Reinier Salverda; Anniek

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*small wares* is dedicated to the strength of Irene Schwab.



Vleeshal, Center for Contemporary Art

Markt 1, Middelburg, NL  
www.vleeshal.nl  
open: Wed–Fri 13–17:00  
Sat–Sun 11–17:00