



PAPERSTEELPAPER

**SUSAN
STOCKWELL**



'Paper, Glue, Paper' - detail.
 'Paper, Glue, Paper' - recycled cardboard boxes. 350cm x 270cm x 270cm. Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China. 2006
 Left



Corus Steel Works, Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. 2006
 Right

'Rubber Installation' - detail. Hanging cascade. Recycled rubber inner-tubes. 457cm high. Mapping Art Gallery, Sheffield. 1991
 'Empire Dress' - various paper maps, glue. Life-size. Stitched-up Paper and Politics, Studio Caparrelli, London. www.studiocaparrelli.com
 Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
 Right



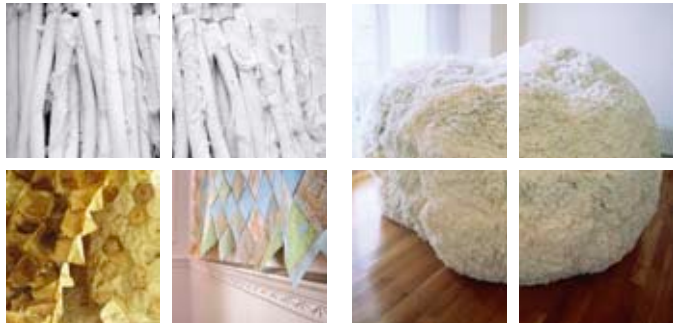
'Rubber Installation' - detail. Woven wall.
 'Embedded' - Tissue paper columns made by compressing tissue into moulds. Varying sizes from 305cm x 122cm x 122cm to 152cm x 30cm x 30cm. Battersea Art Centre, London. Photo by Eric Great-Rex. 1997
 'Embedded' - detail
 Right



'Bed Book' - found single bed frame and Mills & Boon novels. 198cm x 107cm x 30cm. 2005
 'Bed Book' - detail
 'Empire Dress' - detail. Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
 Above

'Pom-Pom' - tissue paper. 120cm x 120cm x 120cm. Jibby Beane Gallery, London. 1994
 Below

'Paper Logs' - from Kimberly-Clark, 152cm. London
 'Trayne' - detail. Coffee stained paper portion cups, coffee filters and cotton thread. Life-size. Jibby Beane Gallery, London. 2000
 'Imperial Quilt' - detail. Stitched-up Paper and Politics, Studio Caparrelli, London. Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
 Right





PAPERSTEELPAPER

**SUSAN
STOCKWELL**



'Paper, Glue, Paper' - detail.
'Paper, Glue, Paper' - recycled cardboard boxes. 350cm x 270cm x 270cm. Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China. 2006
Left



Corus Steel Works, Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. 2006
Right

'Rubber Installation' - detail. Hanging cascade. Recycled rubber inner-tubes. 457cm high. Mapping Art Gallery, Sheffield. 1991
'Empire Dress' - various paper maps, glue. Life-size. Stitched-up Paper and Politics, Studio Caparrelli, London. www.studiocaparrelli.com
Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
Right



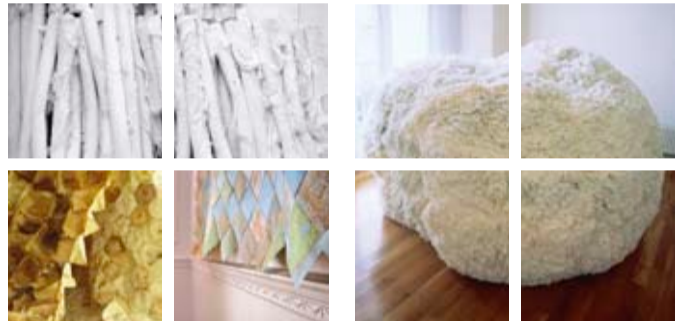
'Rubber Installation' - detail. Woven wall.
'Embedded' - Tissue paper columns made by compressing tissue into moulds. Varying sizes from 305cm x 122cm x 122cm to 152cm x 30cm x 30cm. Battersea Art Centre, London. Photo by Eric Great-Rex. 1997
'Embedded' - detail
Right



'Bed Book' - found single bed frame and Mills & Boon novels. 198cm x 107cm x 30cm. 2005
'Bed Book' - detail
'Empire Dress' - detail. Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
Above

'Pom-Pom' - tissue paper. 120cm x 120cm x 120cm. Jibby Beane Gallery, London. 1994
Below

'Paper Logs' - from Kimberly-Clark, 152cm. London
'Trayne' - detail. Coffee stained paper portion cups, coffee filters and cotton thread. Life-size. Jibby Beane Gallery, London. 2000
'Imperial Quilt' - detail. Stitched-up Paper and Politics, Studio Caparrelli, London. Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
Right



Index of images



2

Our world is awash with Susan Stockwell's quotidian materials – tissue paper, used coffee filters, old rubber inner tubes, discarded romantic novels, cardboard boxes, empty tin cans and plastic bottles. She takes and remakes them; an act of transformation through which we see them, perhaps, for the first time. But there is no heavy-handed message here about pollution, wastefulness, or the dark side of Western consumerism. Instead Stockwell invites you to contemplate and reconsider what art might be, to

arenas; the weight of history upon the present, contemporary global industries and politics – international and personal. And what is particularly compelling is the deftness with which she combines the layers of resonance within her work, the rigour and ambition of its construction, with a distinctive delicacy of touch, a sense of evanescence.

Stockwell's engagement with the raw stuff of her art, her ability to condense its particular physical characteristics but also exploit its full imaginative potential, was

Grandeur of scale and conception, allied to the choice of disregarded, risky materials, continued to be the modus operandi for Stockwell's next major series of works, constructed from tissue paper. As with the rubber pieces, her paper installations were large scale, they had an imposing presence but at the same time – and this is evidence of the subtlety of her hand – lightness, and a translucent ethereality. For the Jibby Beane Gallery, London, in 1994, she created a massive soft-edged form in tissue paper – in appearance

MATERIAL PLEASURES

look hard at the world, at what you barely notice and do not value - to find profundity and beauty there.

Born in Manchester and trained initially in Sheffield - once the northern heartland of British industry - Stockwell became fascinated by the environment around her; abandoned smokestacks and derelict mill buildings, steel works and factories. She was an art student at a time when the purities of high modernism had been superseded, among some younger British sculptors, by an engagement with everyday materials and locations. This early sensitivity to her surroundings, and a desire to work with rather than to impose upon them, has grown and developed through Stockwell's career. But, parallel to her continued responsiveness to the specifics of individual place, her work has also increasingly embraced wider

evident at her first major exhibition, at the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield in 1991; an installation made from rubber inner tubes. She researched the rubber industry in Brazil – a place with personal significance for her (a family connection), and an industry with a violent political history, producing bloody tragedies such as the assassination of the Eco campaigner Chico Mendez. Something un-regarded – the rubber inner tube – became, then, full of meaning. And Stockwell managed to metamorphose this unwieldy, smelly, ugly material into a fluid black river, flowing gracefully from one wall of the gallery and puddling on the floor. Two other walls were covered in rippling folds, transforming the detritus of our car culture – evocative of traffic-choked roads – into something organic in appearance, something mysterious and melancholy.

like a pom pom or powder puff. Two years later, for her touring show, *Embedded*, the paper was layered into towers. Intended to be used once, and then thrown away – tissue paper summons up dual connotations of purity and abjection; it invokes, at the same time, the polite cleanliness of the socialised body and private bodily functions. In terms of the history of sculpture, the use of such fragile, insignificant, disposable material debunks the pompous certainties of some large-scale abstract sculpture – and, in the case of the huge pom pom, with a generous shot of frivolity for good measure.

Stockwell's awareness of her identity as a woman artist, and her love of particular women's work helps to feed and form her practice. It is apparent in her critical intervention in the history of sculpture: although

3



'Paper, Glue, Paper' - detail.
'Paper, Glue, Paper' - recycled cardboard boxes. 350cm x 270cm x 270cm. Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China. 2006
Left

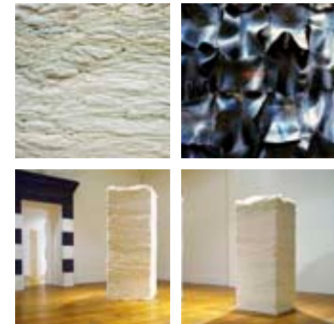
Corus Steel Works, Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. 2006
Right



'Rubber Installation' - detail. Hanging cascade. Recycled rubber inner-tubes. 457cm high. Mapping Art Gallery, Sheffield. 1991
'Empire Dress' - various paper maps, glue. Life-size. Stitched-up Paper and Politics, Studio Caparrelli, London. www.studiocaparrelli.com
Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
Right

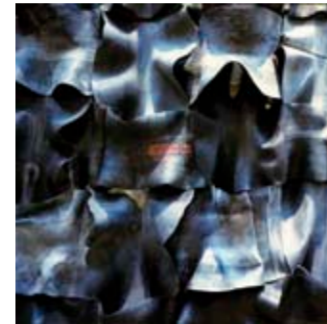
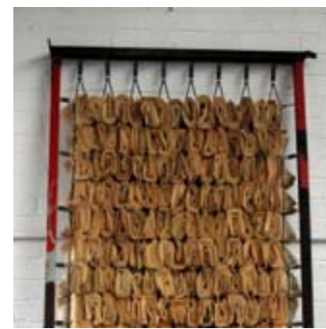


'Rubber Installation' - detail. Woven wall. 'Embedded' - Tissue paper columns made by compressing tissue into moulds. Varying sizes from 305cm x 122cm x 122cm to 152cm x 30cm x 30cm. Battersea Art Centre, London. Photo by Eric Great-Rex. 1997
'Embedded' - detail
Right

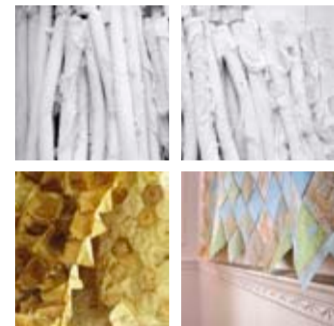


'Bed Book' - found single bed frame and Mills & Boon novels. 198cm x 107cm x 30cm. 2005
'Bed Book' - detail
'Empire Dress' - detail. Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
Above

'Pom-Pom' - tissue paper. 120cm x 120cm x 120cm. Jibby Beane Gallery, London. 1994
Below



'Paper Logs' - from Kimberly-Clark, 152cm. London
'Trayne' - detail. Coffee stained paper portion cups, coffee filters and cotton thread. Life-size. Jibby Beane Gallery, London. 2000
'Imperial Quilt' - detail. Stitched-up Paper and Politics, Studio Caparrelli, London. Photo © Jeff Leyshon 2005
Right



Our world is awash with Susan Stockwell's quotidian materials – tissue paper, used coffee filters, old rubber inner tubes, discarded romantic novels, cardboard boxes, empty tin cans and plastic bottles. She takes and remakes them; an act of transformation through which we see them, perhaps, for the first time. But there is no heavy-handed message here about pollution, wastefulness, or the dark side of Western consumerism. Instead Stockwell invites you to contemplate and reconsider what art might be, to look hard at the world, at what you barely notice and do not value - to find profundity and beauty there.

Born in Manchester and trained initially in Sheffield - once the northern heartland of British industry - Stockwell became fascinated by the environment around her; abandoned smokestacks and derelict mill buildings, steel works and factories. She was an art student at a time when the purities of high modernism had been superseded, among some younger British sculptors, by an engagement with everyday materials and locations. This early sensitivity to her surroundings, and a desire to work with rather than to impose upon them, has grown and developed through Stockwell's career. But, parallel to her continued responsiveness to the specifics of individual place, her work has also increasingly embraced wider arenas; the weight of history upon the present, contemporary global industries and politics - international and personal. And what is particularly compelling is the deftness with which she combines the layers of resonance

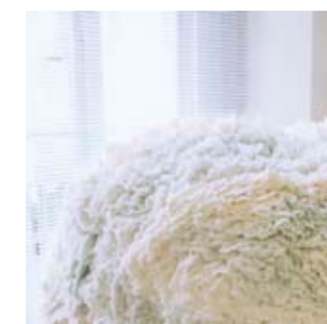
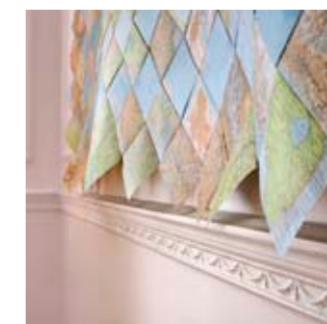
within her work, the rigour and ambition of its construction, with a distinctive delicacy of touch, a sense of evanescence.

Stockwell's engagement with the raw stuff of her art, her ability to condense its particular physical characteristics but also exploit its full imaginative potential, was evident at her first major exhibition, at the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield in 1991; an installation made from rubber inner tubes. She researched the rubber industry in Brazil - a place with personal significance for her (a family connection), and an industry with a violent political history, producing bloody tragedies such as the assassination of the Eco campaigner Chico Mendez. Something un-regarded - the rubber inner tube - became, then, full of meaning. And Stockwell managed to metamorphose this unwieldy, smelly, ugly material into a fluid black river, flowing gracefully from one wall of the gallery and puddling on the floor. Two other walls were covered in rippling folds, transforming the detritus of our car culture - evocative of traffic-choked roads - into something organic in appearance, something mysterious and melancholy. Grandeur of scale and conception, allied to the choice of disregarded, risky materials, continued to be the modus operandi for Stockwell's next major series of works, constructed from tissue paper. As with the rubber pieces, her paper installations were large scale, they had an imposing presence but at the same time - and this is evidence of the subtlety of her hand - lightness, and a translucent ethereality. For the Jibby Beane Gallery,

London, in 1994, she created a massive soft-edged form in tissue paper - in appearance like a pom pom or powder puff. Two years later, for her touring show, *Embedded*, the paper was layered into towers. Intended to be used once, and then thrown away - tissue paper summons up dual connotations of purity and abjection; it invokes, at the same time, the polite cleanliness of the socialised body and private bodily functions. In terms of the history of sculpture, the use of such fragile, insignificant, disposable material debunks the pompous certainties of some large-scale abstract sculpture - and, in the case of the huge pom pom, with a generous shot of frivolity for good measure.

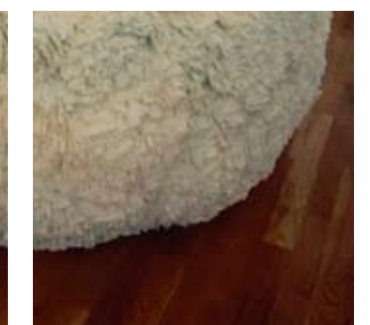
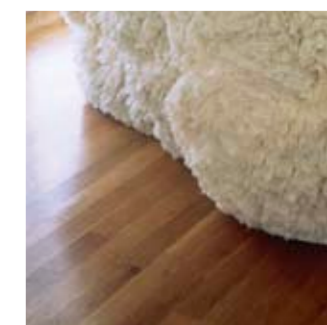
Stockwell's awareness of her identity as a woman artist, and her love of particular women's work helps to feed and form her practice. It is apparent in her critical intervention in the history of sculpture: although Stockwell's art may often be monumental, it cleverly subverts the accompanying macho braggadocio, and has been described as a feminist critique of the work of Richard Serra. She has spoken of her admiration for artists from the past, such as Meret Oppenheim and Eva Hesse, and also contemporaries she locates herself in relation to, including Phyllida Barlow and Ann Hamilton. She has also, in recent years, begun to make use of practices associated with women - home-dressmaking and its paraphernalia of patterns, needle and thread, and quilting.

There is a strong precedent for these media and methods, both



randomly, across the surface of the 'quilt'. But 'pieces' of the Middle East - Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria - are tellingly placed next to Washington DC at the centre. This closeness of these countries to each other, in Stockwell's work, is not engendered by actual geographical proximity - the logic of the map - rather theirs is the 'irrational' proximity of hatred, summoned up by the jumbled pieces of the quilt. War stimulated the birth of map making - the earliest maps charted terrain for military action - and Stockwell both points back to this history, and movingly represents the terrifying lack of reason in our contemporary world.

Being in the world, travelling to make art in response to what she finds in other cities, in other countries, is fundamental to



summoned up and elegantly critiqued the pleasures of the body enjoyed by the audiences of the 'V & A' past and present. And the museum acquired Stockwell's *Pattern of the World* in 2002, a drawing made from paper dress patterns onto which she painted a map of the world in coffee and tea.



The relationship between maps, dress and femininity has had particular configurations in art history. In her Ditchley portrait of c.1592, Queen Elizabeth 1 was shown resplendent in spreading, jewelled skirts standing upon a map of England - land and the spectacle of a powerful women united in an iconic image. 350 years later, at a time when the European nations were about to be wrecked by war, their boundaries broken and redrawn, Picasso

during modernism - think of Sonia Delaunay's dress design in Paris of the nineteen tens and twenties - and more recently by artists during the second wave of feminism. But rather than working with fabric, Stockwell extended her practice with paper into this new area. At the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2001 she exhibited *Trayne*, a sculpture whose form evokes a daring, fin de siècle strapless gown of the type John Singer Sargent's *Madame X* might have worn, made entirely of stained coffee portion cups and filters. For the body of the 'dress' portion cups were opened out and sewn together, like a quilted or patterned fabric. However the trailing train is more three dimensional, made up of cone-shaped filters that have not been flattened out. *Trayne* therefore moves further into the sculptural as you consider it, unsettling its reading as a gown, or as a working model for one. And, coming closer, there is a realisation that the delicate coffee shade of the 'fabric' is actually the residue of real coffee - an imported luxury for the British. Within a museum dedicated to decorative arts from around the globe - notably costume - a collection founded for the enjoyment of the nation at the high point of Empire, *Trayne*

created his collage *Women at their Toilette*, in which a French wallpaper, decorated with maps, becomes the gown of a female figure. We think of the planet, and its countries as feminine, and therefore associating a woman's clothes with mapping, dressing it with maps implies, perhaps, the provisional nature of the patterning of nations we have inscribed upon the world.

The design of Stockwell's *Empire Dress* of 2005, entirely made from maps, dates, again from the glory days of the British Empire - narrow and floor length, with a slender waist and bustle. Upon the surfaces of the meticulously cut 'gown' can be traced the cities, town and roads that make up the United Kingdom, on its breast, a darker area, which might appear to be a brooch is in fact the city of Manchester - centre of the British textile industry, and Stockwell's birthplace. The artist's meditation upon her own origins, and upon national identity and femininity is pleasurable to look at, with its sexy curves, its cascade of ruffles, its skilful craftsmanship. But it also raises significant questions about the legacy of Britain's imperial history, and the ways in which femininity has been conceived and displayed.

Using another 'female' form of making - quilting - Stockwell created *Imperial Quilt*, first shown at her solo exhibition *Stitched-up: Paper and Politics* - at Studio Caparelli, London, in 2005, made of cut up and reassembled maps which - unlikely as it might sound - powerfully invokes present conflicts between nations. Countries are divided up and scattered, apparently



Design by
Jeff Leyshon
www.jeffleyshon.com
Printed by
Park Lane Press
using waterless inks
www.parklanepress.co.uk
Unless otherwise stated all
photos are by the artist.

Thanks to:
The University College for the
Creative Arts at Farnham.
The Arts and Humanities
Research Council.
20/21 Visual Arts Centre.
Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire.
Gainsborough Recycling
Enterprises.
Jeff Leyshon, for catalogue
design, advice and support.
Alicia Foster for essay.

© Jeff Leyshon
2006
All rights reserved. No part of this
publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or
transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or
otherwise, without permission
of the copyright holder.

www.susanstockwell.com