

## **Leslie Schomp Statement**

I am creating a series of stitched drawings on fabric that form a visual diary. My drawings are not a record of exact events but more an examination of relationships, roles, and moments. My work testifies to the various and overlapping aspects of my life: domesticity and motherhood, teaching and research, fantasy and creativity. I express and advance my individual agency by chronicling these aspects; the drawings are meant to expose them as important but complicated, difficult to articulate, and open to interpretation. Through my drawings, I examine myself as a biological and psychological being. I find this an intriguing challenge because the edges of the self are fluid and difficult to define. Biologically, one's edges exchange moisture, air and heat with the environment. Psychologically, our boundaries of mind and heart become unclear as we yield to and resist those around us.

My materials and methods evolved out of the reality of my life as a working- woman but also bear witness to the complexity of the subject matter itself. I teach Drawing at various colleges and I recently became a new mother to a son and a stepmother to a daughter. As my career and domestic roles intensified, studio work by necessity inserted itself into my everyday life. I began to stitch constantly in response to my everyday routine, and the work helped me to clarify my roles and their interdependent relationship. I work with vintage handkerchiefs that are alternately objects of commemoration and objects that bear contact with the body. Handkerchiefs commemorate the ordinary as well as the extraordinary and represent a history of female domestic craft. I respond to each handkerchief as a format for the new picture plane as well as an object that has its own material history. The stitching allows lines or marks to be both physical and illusory. Often a found piece already bears stitches that become a part of my new image or idea. I make two-sided drawings as thread envelops both sides of the fabric. Self-portraits are often the subject matter of this work and I mostly sew "from a mirror". The sides of each drawing are different, which allows me to explore deeper narratives and alternate aspects of each image. Installation of each handkerchief varies with the viewing needs of each piece.

My work acts on a broader scale as memoir. As a child in a family of nine members, I was amazed to learn that one family story had nine very unique versions. Hence I find that truth finds meaning often in feeling. As I explore the self, I am drawn to the inarticulate and silent spaces, and I seek to express these visually. Just as memoir revisits events and creates a narrative framework, my drawings rely on continual (and even obsessive) working and reworking of materials and concepts. My work sustains me in ways I imagine other female artists to have sustained themselves in the past, whether or not they saw themselves this way. Instead of extending my practice to universal or theoretical language, I internalize and seek the personal in order to define my sense of self and the roles I play both culturally and personally. Likewise, I see my art as both intimately connected to the rest of my life and also, by definition, separate from it.

