Abstract Research Project – Malaika Sutter

Crafting the Needle: Text/ile-Image Constellations in Contemporary North American Fiction and Art

A needlework piece from the *Tiny Pricks Project* (2018–) juxtaposes neatly stitched delicate, romantic flowers with Donald Trump's misogynistic words 'grab 'em by the pussy.' Such combinations of text and image in the form of needlework (i.e. embroideries, quilts, and fabric collages) appear in a considerable number of contemporary North American art pieces and prose texts. Research on needlework has gained momentum in recent years (Jefferies et al. 2016; Hemmings 2012; Goggin/Tobin 2009) but it has never been discussed in a study that focuses on its intermedial appearance in contemporary North American prose and art. Generally, intermediality is concerned with "any transgression of boundaries between media" (Wolf 2005: 252). This interplay of media can open "a space of semiotic and material in-between-ness" that allows readers to perceive the world differently, thereby challenging epistemologies (Neumann 2015: 513). As both a source of oppression and a means of resistance, needlework can expose and question dominant ways of seeing the world. Text and textiles are closely connected in terms of etymology, history, and materiality. Therefore, I propose a parallel reading of needlework in contemporary North American literature, such as Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996), and textile art pieces, such as Faith Ringgold's story quilts (1989–). This study explores: (1) the perception and rhetorical potential of needlework in prose texts and visual art; (2) their intermedial appearance and functions; (3) the relationship of text and image in the primary sources; (4) the implications for art history and literary studies; and (5) a reading practice for the analysis of what I will call 'text/ile-image constellations.'