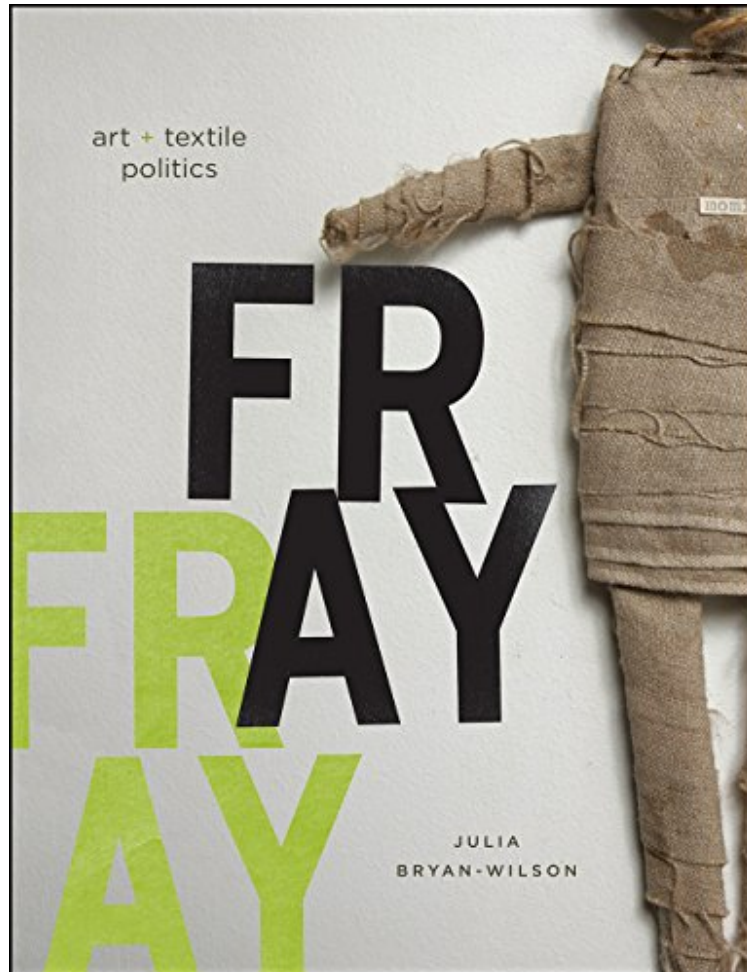


[E-BOOK] Fray: Art and Textile Politics

## Fray: Art and Textile Politics

*Julia Bryan-Wilson*

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#74074 in Books 2017-10-16Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 10.00 x 1.20 x 7.50l, #File Name: 0226077810296 pages | File size: 74.Mb

**Julia Bryan-Wilson : Fray: Art and Textile Politics** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fray: Art and Textile Politics:

In 1974, women in a feminist consciousness-raising group in Eugene, Oregon, formed a mock organization called the Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society. Emblazoning its logo onto t-shirts, the group wryly envisioned female collective textile making as a practice that could upend conventions, threaten state structures, and wreak political havoc. Elaborating on this example as a prehistory to the more recent phenomenon of craftivismthe politics and social practices associated with handmakingFray explores textiles and their role at the forefront of debates about process, materiality, gender, and race in times of economic upheaval. Closely examining how amateurs and fine artists in the United States and Chile turned to sewing, braiding, knotting, and quilting amid the rise of global manufacturing, Julia

Bryan-Wilson argues that textiles unravel the high/low divide and urges us to think flexibly about what the politics of textiles might be. Her case studies from the 1970s through the 1990s including the improvised costumes of the theater troupe the Cockettes, the braided rag rugs of US artist Harmony Hammond, the thread-based sculptures of Chilean artist Cecilia Vicua, the small hand-sewn tapestries depicting Pinochets torture, and the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt are often taken as evidence of the inherently progressive nature of handcrafted textiles. Fray, however, shows that such methods are recruited to often ambivalent ends, leaving textiles very much in the fray of debates about feminized labor, protest cultures, and queer identities; the malleability of cloth and fiber means that textiles can be activated, or stretched, in many ideological directions. The first contemporary art history book to discuss both fine art and amateur registers of handmaking at such an expansive scale, Fray unveils crucial insights into how textiles inhabit the broad space between artistic and political poles high and low, untrained and highly skilled, conformist and disobedient, craft and art.

"It is difficult to characterize this vast and ambitious book, but not its achievement, which is magnificent. In short, it will be received as a model of rigorous research, seamless organization, clarity of exposition, and utter persuasiveness. It will set standards of quality for topics beyond craft and textile studies. Indeed, within its pages are examples for art and cultural historians of all periods and media of how to articulate the ever-challenging project of revealing the ideological dimensions of art in terms of very specific historical and political contexts."