June 2 - July 4, 2006, SHAPED NOTES, Katherine Soucie Circle Craft Gallery

Katherine Soucie is an adventurer in the volatile territory of textiles, navigating her terrain with confidence and zest from a sound background of textiles, fashion and the technology of printing. As for the shaped notes of this show, they are the inspiration of her surface designs which spring from the unique shapes of musical notes — especially the those of Tom Waits, Jeff Buckley and Johnny Cash.

Katherine's textiles range from waste textiles, hemp/cotton, silks and other natural fibres and — something very new — cotton or polyester blended with crab or shrimp shells (crabyon and seacell knits). Her surfaces design integrates embroidery, stitching, and natural dyeing with digital printing processes which deconstruct the images by exposing them to computer obstruction and manipulation. They are then developed on Photoshop and Illustrator, and printed directly on the fabric, the small format on Canon 1860, the large on an Encad 3000 — the latter done while at the Kansas City Art Institute in June 2005.

This is heady stuff and a good moment to introduce my guest commentator, Yvonne Wakabyashi. Her textile art is renowned internationally, and it would take too much space to list her awards. Like Katherine Soucie she also is an adventurer whose textiles combine traditional and modern techniques and marry the creative sensibilities of East and West. Her special expertise is shibori, a process of dyeing which begins with the cloth wrapped round a pole, compressed and tied with string. But for Yvonne shibori becomes a tool to create exquisite textile sculptures. So she appreciates Katherine Soucie and writes:

Katherine enrolled in the Textile Arts Program at Capilano College as an advanced student with a background in fashion. I was impressed with her energy and focus and was delighted that on graduation in 2003 she received the North Vancouver Arts Council Award for outstanding achievement in the Visual Arts Program, and the Circle Craft Co-operative's scholarship for creative and academic achievement. Now, while her work is showing at the Circle Craft Gallery, Katherine has been presented with the BC Achievement Award.

None of this is surprising. Katherine's work is absolutely in tune with new elements in textiles and fashion - the deconstruction of materials, slashing it and layering different colours, textures and weight of cloth. The new deconstruction processes suits Katherine’s early impatience with the limited range of materials on the market, plus her ability to be centred in the changing world we live in. Deconstruction has long been a practice in the film industry to make clothes look old, and the young have deconstructed their clothes, patching them, leaving raw edges on roughly chopped jeans. It was a statement, and now is part of contemporary craft.

Katherine recently made her debut in the world of textiles and fashion with her clothing company "Sans Soucie" - a neat bi-lingual pun on her name, though her work is in no way achieved ‘without care.’ On the contrary she took great care to prepare a unique line out of recycled nylon hosiery fabric.

Katherine Soucie should have the last word: "Through natural curiosity for working with non-traditional materials I will continue to develop, design and produce textiles and unique, functional/practical garments which express our individuality. I feel that the mass production of garments and textiles today creates a need to rediscover, or reinvent already existing materials, so that we maintain awareness and an appreciation of what is individual in ourselves."

Thelma Ruck Keene, Gallery Curator