

Helen Amanatiadis

The Fates

6-21 April 2018

Helen Amanatiadis contemplates human evolution and consciousness attained through the complex process of shaping the natural world into technological inventions, specifically the technology of string. The consciousness of spinning string speaks to us still from its primitive techno-genesis, guiding us and making us human. String and humans become unified in an animate continuous stream of twisting fingers and spinning fibres. The string spins magically from our fingers and takes on a life of its own. The story of string is not simply in string speaking to us, as something other or separate, but rather as our second nature, so that the story of human history is elaborated by the story of string. The story of both humans and string comes from the unity – where string is synonymous with being human.

String tells its story whilst also guiding our own, as in the mythology of Homer's "The Odyssey", where tales of human fate are spun and woven. In this exhibition Helen Amanatiadis explores these concepts through Homer's three mythological beings in human form, the Fates. The three Fates spun, wove and measured the thread of human life. These spinsters, often portrayed as witches in modern western storytelling, have been marginalised as irrational and meaningless in a modern, rational and industrial world, which has devalued the feminine through the derogatory use of the term spinster. Yet a spinster is simply someone who spins string. Likewise, the school of modernity, the Bauhaus, marginalised its female artists by relegating them into the weaving workshop. The alchemy and magic of string and cloth, and its intertwined, tangled and knotty relationship to human evolution and fate, has been repressed and subsumed by modern rationalism and industrialisation. Yet, whilst string is an ancient and ritualistic technology, the human-string story includes the history of industrialisation, modernity and rationalism in which string played a significant role in the genesis of industrialisation – from the invention of the Jacquard loom to the Victorian cotton mills, textile factories, high rise construction and elevators, to digital computing invented as a progression of Jacquard pattern coding, and even chemical bonds for synthetic fibres and plastics.

Through weaving synthetic pink industrial utility string together with hand spun flouro dyed natural wool, the works in this exhibition seek to explore the tensions and contradictions of the material technology of string. The use of industrial materials and colours explicitly refer to industrialisation and modern rationalism, which sought to declare everything ancient and spiritual as irrational and valueless. Even though textile was at the heart of the industrial revolution, the activity of making string and textile become devalued through industrialisation, as a result of which we become divorced from the process of making the world. Yet the industrial string must not be marginalised either because it too retains and can reveal the hidden and repressed memory of human evolution through which humans and the technology of string have co-evolved. Perhaps through reactivating the ancient mythology of The Fates and the rituals of spinning fibres and weaving string, tales and fates, the capacity for making the world and making meaning in the world, can be remembered, reinvigorated and reimagined.

List of Works

1. Helen Amanatiadis, Drawn from Above, 2018, hand turned European Beech, flouro dyed wool, gold fil, 150cm x 4.4cm, NFS (or by request). [Wood turning by Bill Papalexioiu.]
2. Helen Amanatiadis, Spinsters 1, 2 & 3 (multiple of 3 each), 2018, laser cut and etched Beech plywood, Tasmanian oak, brass, hand spun flouro dyed wool, 30cm x 13cm, \$100 each.
3. Helen Amanatiadis, The Golden Scroll, 2018, hand spun flouro wool, metallic thread, flouro universal string, various industrial string and cord, laser cut and etched Beech plywood, Tasmanian Oak, brass, 120cm x 800cm x 70cm, NFS (or by request).
4. Helen Amanatiadis, Measured & Cut, 2018, flouro hand spun wool, flouro universal string, metallic thread, scissors, Beech bobbins, Tasmanian Oak, brass, 120cm x 120cm and 120cm x 9cm, NFS (or by request). [Measured & Cut is an interactive temporal work requiring audience participation which will continue throughout the exhibition.]

Informal Spinning Workshops at 1pm every Saturday

Artist Talks will be held on Saturday 21 April 3-5pm

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