

Janice Yan Yan Wu - Knitting Machine

This *Knitting Machine* is not the type of machine that will knit a garment, for it will not cast on or off, nor will it purl. The machine is a combination of knitter, dull furniture and dancing wine racks activated by sophisticated microprocessors.

The artist sits with ten tables gently curving around her - five on each side. She wears gloves with sensors and from each finger a wire extends to the floor. The space she occupies with the furniture appears comfortable and intimate. Atop each table an accordion style wine rack performs awkward gestures of stretching and contracting. The wine racks (commonplace household items popular in the 1970's) were procured by Wu from thrift stores, garage sales or flea markets. The ten identical tables have the look of mass production: particle board, machine lathed legs and banal brown paint. What we don't see are the microprocessors, which translate the gesture from finger movement to wine rack dance.

The gesticulating wine racks, expanding open and collapsing again, are an extension of Wu's hands, exaggerating the movements of her fingers while knitting. She has created a choreography that borders on the curious, the wonderful and the absurd. Wu often looks to textile processes as a source for her exploration of ideas and with *Knitting Machine* she invites us to consider the domestic practice and process of hand knitting - even the arrangement of the tables is reminiscent of a knitting circle. Derived from the word knot, knitting has been around for millennia. The process was mechanized in the 16th Century using a knitting frame, but hand knitting remained in industry until the mid 19th Century. Wu's knitting machine has no utility, instead it draws us back to the hand, to the human element of the process, ironically through the use of technology.

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