

EMERGING VOICES

Kath Forgan

It starts with the sewing pattern, my place of experimental investigation. I find sewing patterns completely consuming, a 2D flat plan which will become the 3D garment. The pattern provides a topography of what it will become in the making. Sewing patterns are not immediately understandable to the novice, but the addition of written instructions and symbols support each step. I empathize with anyone who has difficulty with manuals, pamphlets, or diagrams. Specialized technical language is often dense and opaque, creating stutters and hesitations in what should be a flowing sentence. In my excitement and impatience, I naturally *throw the instructions out the window!* The British comedian **Eddie Izzard** described this act as *techno-joy*: demonstrating a feverish love of systems and machines, but without any real understanding how to operate them.

I make the sewing pattern using an intuitive ignorance, lacking knowledge of how to build a silhouette in the formal sense, but building protruding shapes with alphanumeric dotted marking paper and masking tape that are pressed and taped messily into forms. A fragile paper object is constructed from amalgamating domes, cones, hives, and holes, which need to break up again and flatten into a 2D pattern. I am not sure how these shapes will operate in fabric without boning to help them hold the form. Looking to diagrams and flows of information, I borrow how they reduce information of the 3D visually to the 2D, through line and contour. These are techniques akin to mapping, breaking down forms through stratification, line work

Top: **Kath Forgan Active Anxiety Wear** 2017, neoprene, ribbing, cotton thread, pattern drafting, sewing machining, hand stitching, 30" x 24" x 8".

Bottom: **Kath Forgan Unknown Flow Sleeve** 2017, neoprene, ribbing, cotton thread, pattern drafting, sewing machining, hand stitching, 30" x 24" x 8". Model: Taylor Kibby.





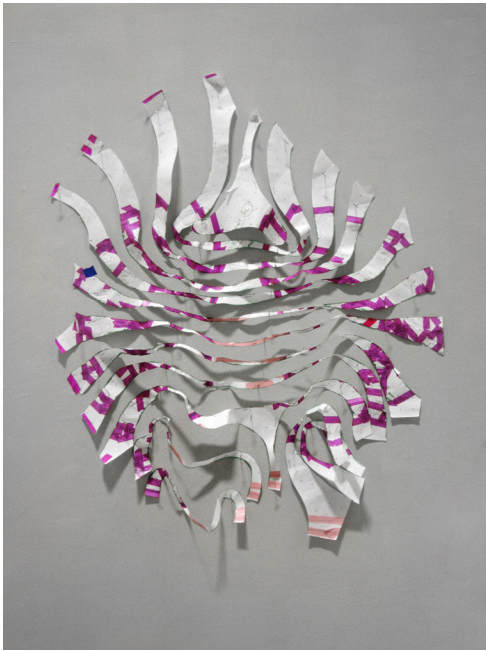
Kath Forgan *Active Anxiety Wear* 2017, neoprene, ribbing, cotton thread, pattern drafting, sewing machining, hand stitching, 30" x 24" x 8".
Model: Aaron Smith.

and flow. This process allows me to ignore the traditional seams of a garment, where the sleeves might attach, where the front meets the back. The sewing pattern has its own dense system—understandable only to me—where instead of numbers words mark connecting points of curved panels. Read aloud, this creates its own kind of poetic flow—*stretch-stretch, leap-leap, bound-bound*—reflecting physical action.

Words and lines work together as descriptors of space and form, bending the fabric to its will, forming new undulations and unexpected bodily dimension. Each sewing pattern is its own unique storm-like system, which gathers space towards the body. I find solace in remembering the human form is both temporal and changing, rather than static matter. The garment creates a heightened awareness of how our bodies move, beyond the poise and stance of the fashion model to a movement that emphasizes flowing



Kath Forgan *Unknown Flow Inside Out Sleeve* 2017, neoprene, ribbing, cotton thread, pattern drafting, sewing machining, hand stitching, 30" x 24" x 8".



motion. Garments are fluid objects, infusing animation into the making, a process that activates the body's dynamism. The volume of a garment can persuade us to test action, rather than shrink into ourselves as if sitting on a crowded bus. In motion we confront the limitations of our own static nature, and our own apprehensions at embracing the full range of physicality.

Kath's MFA Thesis exhibition opens May 12, 2018 at the Bison Building in Portland, OR.

—Kath Forgan is British and relocated to the Pacific Northwest to complete her MFA in Applied Craft + Design at Oregon College of Craft and Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon. kforgan.com

Top left: **Kath Forgan Unknown Flow Sleeve Sewing Pattern** 2017, alphanumeric dotted marking paper, masking tape, pattern drafting, paper sculpture, 32" x 30".

Top right: **Kath Forgan Unknown Flow Sweater** 2017, neoprene, ribbing, cotton thread, pattern drafting, sewing machining, hand stitching, 36" x 24" x 8". Model: Kath Forgan. Photo: Nathan Rice.

Bottom: **Kath Forgan Unknown Flow Sweater** 2017, neoprene, ribbing, cotton thread, pattern drafting, sewing machining, hand stitching, 36" x 24" x 8". Photo: Nathan Rice.

