

The *Love Armor Project* is the result of the ardent will and indefatigable conviction of a single artist in a generous and talented national community ready for action, hard work, and change.

When I first discussed the prodigious concept of the *Love Armor Project* with artist **Shirley Klinghoffer** and collaborating artist **Sarah Hewitt** in the spring of 2007, it struck me as an extraordinarily ambitious, unwieldy, and compelling undertaking. Shirley aspired to create a network of artists, knitters, and friends to knit a full-sized “cozy” for a Humvee M1026—a war vehicle currently employed in both Iraq and Afghanistan—as a demonstration of peace, forgiveness, and hope. The idea seemed sublime both in scale and concept and I assured her that if this project ever came to fruition, the Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA) would proudly host its debut.

As we further discussed the massive knit white object that would softly envelope one of the most iconic symbols of the modern American Army, my mind unintentionally strayed to the archetypal grandmother’s kitchen. A place where carefully handmade cozies swathe teapots and toasters, ready at a moment’s notice to comfort a skinned knee, a feverish child, a broken heart. This absurd image somehow magnified the project’s potential to compel audiences in surprising and unexpected ways. The idea of a Hummer cozy is as ridiculous as it is comforting and I knew that properly realized, the *Love Armor Project* could be both an artistic *tour de force* and an undeniably solemn social critique.

“Milan Kundera called it ‘the laughter of angels,’ when something lifts and unburdens your heart finally, after a long time of despair. The floating cozy, after the Humvee M1026 was driven out, achieved this lifted elegiac emotion via presented absence.”

-John Carver, *THE Magazine*

With references to feminist textile and anti-war art of the 1960’s and 1970’s by such iconic artists as Louise Bourgeois, Magdalena Abakanowicz, and Judy Chicago, the *Love Armor Project* deviates from its precedents in deliberate social inclusion and gentle forgiveness. The cozy stems from a medium and tradition of domesticity and comfort. Knitting is a meditative and reflective process—a coming together of people, lives, and stories. The participants of the *Love Armor Project*—male and female and ranging in age from 6 to 82—plaited skills, patterns, and experiences to weave new narratives, offer solace, and to become a part of a project larger than the sum of its individual participants.

When the *Love Armor Project* debuted in New Mexico in September 2008 it exceeded all expectations. The cozy and its subsequent documentary films, photographs, letters, and site-specific musical performance awed Santa Fe audiences. The US military stunned us all by not only agreeing to allow a Humvee to be measured and fitted for the cozy patterns, but to loan the CCA a Humvee M1026 for a week of the exhibition. The New Mexico National Guard drove the massive vehicle into the exhibition space while CCA patrons, artists, military personnel, and members of the press

watched. The attendant members of the military, male and female veterans of Iraq and previous wars, seemed proud and touched to have this object of art and symbol of hope draped over their massive war machine.

At the end of the week, the Humvee returned to the National Guard and the cozy hung suspended in the 6000 square foot exhibition space. Without an object to envelope, the cozy became a mute testament to loss and hope. As art critic Jon Carver stated in his review of the Santa Fe exhibition, “Milan Kundera called it ‘the laughter of angels,’ when something lifts and unburdens your heart finally, after a long time of despair. The floating cozy, after the Humvee M1026 was driven out, achieved this lifted elegiac emotion via presented absence.”

The *Love Armor Project* impacted Santa Fe in a singular and profound way. Its debut exhibition space, The CCA Muñoz Waxman Gallery, was built during World War II as a tank repair station. In 1941, over 800 New Mexico soldiers were sent to the Philippines as members of the 200th Coast Artillery Regiment. While there, the soldiers were overwhelmed by the Japanese and forced to endure the notorious Bataan Death March and

subsequent internment as prisoners of war. Only one-half of these young men returned home three and a half years later. The *Love Armor Project* is not only about war in Iraq and Afghanistan; it is about recognizing and honoring all war wounds past and present.

The *Love Armor Project* offers a simple and impressive proposition—a world of community, unity and compassion. The *Love Armor Project* received letters of support from men and women in active military duty, veterans for peace, mothers of lost soldiers, and adamant anti-war protestors. These disparate groups stood side by side when the Humvee arrived and again as it departed. In these brief moments of grief and remembrance everyone stood together in silent accord. The *Love Armor Project* is an intricate homage to men, women, and children of all eras and nationalities. As a symbol of our delicately intertwined lives and destinies, the *Love Armor Project* holds within its threads the promise of community, compassion, and change.

-Cyndi Conn

Consulting Curator and Visual Arts Director
Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe
www.launchprojects.com

A Crane Arts Selects Presentation**THE LOVE ARMOR PROJECT**

Ice Box Project Space

1400 North American Street

Philadelphia, PA 19122

February 5-26, 2009

Opening Reception Thursday, February 12, 6pm

The *Love Armor Project* is a collaborative project envisioned by **Shirley Klinghoffer**, facilitated by Klinghoffer and **Sarah Hewitt**, with the participation of over seventy artists around the United States. Original musical composition, *Salve*, by **Molly Sturges**. **Warrior Writers Project** participation for Philadelphia exhibition courtesy **Combat Paper/Green Door Studio**.

Curators:

Cyndi Conn, Santa Fe, NM (Originating curator)**Robert Wuilfe**, Philadelphia, PA

Special thanks for this Philadelphia exhibition of the *Love Armor Project* to: Nick Kripal of Crane Arts; Cole, Jamie and Brian of the Crane Arts staff; Drew Cameron of Combat Paper; Delia King of the Mural Arts Program. And, as always, Robert Wuilfe would like to thank Michelle Wilson, without whom this project would not have been possible.

The Love Armor Project premiered at the Center For Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM, September 2008.

**Participating Artists**

Kate Aks, San Francisco, CA
Meryl Bennan, San Francisco, CA
Jennifer Bennes, San Francisco, CA
Sue Breslauer, Santa Fe, NM
Judy Broughton, Santa Fe, NM
Madelin Coit, Santa Fe, NM
Helen Colton, Santa Fe, NM
Cynthia Cox, Santa Fe, NM
Millie Danielson, Ann Arbor, MI
Alicia DaSilva, Santa Fe, NM
Sallie Findlay, Deer Isle, ME
Sue Fine, Niantic, CT
Liza Finkel, Sanford, ME
Carla Freeman, Santa Fe, NM
Lisa Freeman, Santa Fe, NM
Katharine Garduno, Santa Fe, NM
Anne Granath, Pittsboro, NC
Kathy Greene, Beloit, WI
Diane Grolnick, Albuquerque, NM
Karen Goodspeed, New London, CT
Wendy Gordon, Portland, OR
Susan Herdman, Santa Fe, NM
Mimi Kingsbury, Santa Fe, NM

Bernice Kempner, Brooklyn, NY
Rena Kirsch, Washington, DC
Ruth Kirsch, New London, CT
Helen Klinghoffer (*deceased*)
Bay Harbor Island, Florida
Ruthie Koval, Santa Fe, NM
Ruth Kreisman, Pittsboro, NC
Christine Leith, Sargentville, ME
Pam Lewis, Niantic, CT
Kara Li, San Francisco, CA
Cynthia Little, Ann Arbor, MI
Sally MacKinnon, Scottsdale, AZ
Lydia Madrick, Santa Fe, NM
Marina McGuire-McCabe,
Coconut Grove, FL
Catherine Molland, Santa Fe, NM
Anna Lisa Morse, Boca Raton, FL
Jayne Nordstrom, Providence, RI
Kathryn Nowlin, Santa Fe, NM
Barbara Doroba-Ogg, Santa Fe, NM
Ruth Omlin, Santa Fe, NM
Jaye Orgera, Santa Fe, NM
Bernice Pearl, Santa Fe, NM

Revel Pearl, San Francisco, CA
Helene Pfeffer, Santa Fe, NM
Ann Hewitt Phipps, Arlington, TX
Judith Podmore, Santa Fe, NM
Paula Raposa, Somerset, MA
Jo-Ann Rauch, Miami, FL
Eliza Schmid, Santa Fe, NM
Janet Schwab, Santa Fe, NM
Tricia Smith, New Bedford, MA
Rita Spina, Pittsboro, NC
Amy Stanton, Santa Fe, NM
Fran Star, Tampa, FL
Reeve Stein, Santa Fe, NM
Luke Stein, Santa Fe, NM
Judy Sutton, Tampa, FL
Grace Matias Tavares,
Saint Michael, Azores, Portugal
Elizabeth Tomlinson, Santa Fe, NM
Alonzo Valencia, Santa Fe, NM
Dawn Viggiani, New York, NY
Dolores Vigil, Santa Fe, NM
Sue Wright, MD & ME

www.lovearmorproject.com

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