

Much of the art on view is in the large-scale, virtuosic craft vein. Henk Wolvers's flat sculptures created with porcelain slip, a form of liquid clay, borrow the tracery if not the actual patterns of lace. Piper Shepard's "Lace Meander" is a series of hanging muslin scrolls into which the artist cut lace patterns with an X-Acto knife. Bennett Battaile's delicate sculpture of thin glass rods and Barbara Zucker's rubber sculptures both invoke lace-tracery in heavier materials.

Some of the artists address "issues of politics, gender and ethics," as a wall text puts it, in a general way. Janet Echelman's giant, hand-knotted nylon net hanging from the ceiling in the museum's entryway recreates the look of a nuclear mushroom cloud. Freddie Robins's sinister-looking gray-knit bodysuit, with the words "Craft Kills" emblazoned across the chest, alludes to the airline ban on knitting needles in the post-9/11 era.

The works most in keeping with the show's politically charged title are more interactive and collective, or more related to performance. For example, Cat Mazza's collectively crocheted "Nike Blanket Petition," a campaign against sweatshop practices represented here in a series of photographs, will be sent to Nike's corporate headquarters.

A video of Dave Cole's "Knitting Machine" project shows two John Deere excavators wielding telephone poles tapered to look like knitting needles — and missiles — to knit a giant American flag in the courtyard of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass.

Sabrina Gschwandtner, an artist and founder of KnitKnit magazine, has set up a "Wartime Knitting Circle" surrounded by panels made of industrially knitted photos of Vietnam War protesters knitting, British women knitting woolen covers for World War II hand grenades, soldiers knitting during World War I.

She invites people to join her in knitting "blankets for recovery" for people in Afghanistan and troops convalescing in military hospitals, among other projects. (On the exhibition's opening day, Ms. Gschwandtner was chatting and knitting with Phyllis Rodriguez, whose son died in the north tower of the World Trade Center on 9/11 and who has since befriended Aïcha el-Wafi, mother of [Zacarias Moussaoui](#), a French citizen of Moroccan descent serving a life sentence after his

conspiracy conviction in the 9/11 attacks.

Needlework indeed has a radical past. William Morris, a mainstay of the Royal School of Needlework and the Arts and Crafts movement in England, protested late-19th-century industrial production. Feminist art in the 1970s drew heavily on so-called women's work, and Rosemarie Trockel's "knitting pictures" of the 1980s cleverly drew on political themes.

So many more artists might have been included whose work explores the social aspects of knitting and lace or who more radically recast these forms: Simon Perotin, of the punk-doily creations; the artisans in the Church of Craft; Ms. Zittel; Ms. Auerbach; Mr. Drain; and so on.

Given the show's title, some visitors will arrive wanting to know how needlework, which runs counter to our technology- and information-saturated age, has become such a cultural juggernaut, and how it might serve to break down the barriers between artist and amateur, art and craft. A few works here may well satisfy that desire. Most will not.

"Radical Lace & Subversive Knitting" runs through June 17 at the Museum of Arts & Design, 40 West 53rd Street, Manhattan. Hours: Daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (until 8 p.m. on Thursdays); closed on holidays. Admission: \$9; \$7 for students and 65+; and pay-what-you-wish on Thursdays after 6 p.m. Information: (212) 956-3535; madmuseum.org.

A series of public programs related to the exhibition is planned, including lectures, panel discussions, performance pieces and workshops in knitting, lace-making, crocheting, fabric-making, fabric-printing and digital design. Some events are free with museum admission; others require an additional fee that includes admission.

Beginning tomorrow and running every Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. through June 3 will be "Well Crafted Weekends: Inter-Generational Workshops," for those 6 and older; \$7 per person or per family (up to four people). A detailed schedule is on the Web site.