

Maggy Rozycki Hiltner &
Tammy Marinuzzi

COMMON GROUND, BY JILL FOOTE-HUTTON, (Artist's work pg. 82)



Two lines of prepubescent boys and girls face off in a sea of marigold orange fabric. At the hinterlands of the waiting line, on opposite sides of the confrontation, viewers read the apprehension, anticipation, and indifference on the faces of the figures engrossed in their own imaginations. We see them picturing what is to come. To pass the time our eyes are drawn upward to what the artist, Maggy Rozycki Hiltner, calls a “dazzle ship of decoration,” and our minds are briefly detoured from the mounting tension. With a bit of formal trickery, we are drawn to a field of slate-hued turquoise, anchoring the face off. Even measured bullet points of white thread count off rhythmically to the apex of the composition where one small male hand reaches out and two eyes are magnetically drawn to the point of possibility upon the future breast of a female who appears caught in a mental state somewhere between Peggy Lee’s “Is That All There Is,” and a desire to see the foretold fireworks of titillation.



Now, gentle reader, let us shift our attention to a small figure, to be precise, a figure with a stature of only 12 3/4 inches (32.3 cm). A small underbite protrudes pushed up by a thin red line of a lip that fades to a black line bisecting the face in a suggestion of dirt or drool. With eyes and arms uplifted and fingers transfixed by the very nature of sculpture which renders the form static. Artist Tammy Marinuzzi fills us with an overwhelming desire to see the tiny fellow wriggle to life and break free from his Daphne-like state, fulfilling his desire to be held. He pushes toward us with his posture. A rear foot moves forward as the fullness of his face pushes out of a sea of coarse green sand making a silent entreaty to take everything we are willing to give. And, of course, we will give it. We will deliver unto cuteness what is due cuteness, even to our own detriment and demise. Does it hurt? Only when I laugh.

Craft is the egalitarian frienemy of the would-be elitist A-R-T. In an ever-shrinking world the battle lines blur as each camp invades the

other. Like double agents in a period of cold war, Marinuzzi and Rozycki Hiltner refuse allegiance to any side but their work. They are contemporary samplings of a community, conscious of craft traditions—irreverent about arbitrary boundaries set by the guard of an antiquated canon. Humor is the apparatus of their treaty. They reach out to the disenfranchised segment residing within our individual humanities to create an illusive community. With each wink and nod the illusive becomes more tangible. Humor is their colander, separating and rewarding the viewer who ventures deeper to exhume the artists' intimate truths and observations. Below the surface we may recognize happenings too vulgar or difficult for straight public confession. Not only is a brief explosion of audible laughter approved, it is encouraged. If a gasp or blush or moment of self-conscious hubris follows, it only solidifies our acceptance to the club. We are in on the joke.



Rozycki Hiltner's palette is a studio filled with vintage embroidered selections of table runners, napkins, and samplers. She generates her own community spanning decades and bolstered by drawers and drawers of women's work. She imagines the minds of the ladies who busied their hands stitching cup towels for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. She revels in the imagined conversations shared between feminine, tangential minds. The notion of subversive humor buried within the secret language of overlooked homespun handicrafts is pitted against the idea that some may take their craft too seriously. Rozycki Hiltner's measure of humor, evidenced in her narratives, is an ability to recognize limitations and unashamedly, yet inclusively, poke those limitations. She leans over to her audience's ear as we take in the work and whispers, "What's this all about?" She asks knowing full well the common experience she exploits. Humor and questions deflect and diffuse until audience and artist are confident in each other. Only then can we discuss the delicious dangers of overindulgence and the larger implications suggested by a work like *Too Much Too Many* where our protagonist is pitted against the delicious antagonism of ripe strawberries. His reward, and ours if we look hard enough, is a tone on tone rash. The artist wants to engage us in a conversation about pleasure tinged with pain, but she buries the evidence in a tonal range, creating a visual sense of timing and allowing the audience to leave before the punch line falls.