

THREADED

A suite of three one-person exhibitions focusing on artists who work with thread and fabric as their medium

ANGELO FILOMENO

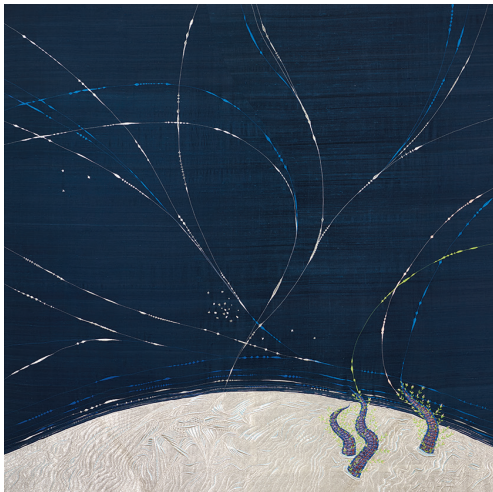
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

February 12–April 12, 2015

CENTER
FOR THE
ARTS
AT VIRGINIA TECH

EXTREME EMBROIDERY

In the literary classic *Fleurs du mal* (*Flowers of Evil*), the great French poet Charles Baudelaire's (1821-1867) seductive and eloquently expressed words contemplate of one of life's essential and perhaps most inexplicable contradictions—the acute dichotomy between life's exquisite beauty and its horrors: suffering, inevitable death, decay, and more. One hundred and seventy five years later, Angelo Filomeno, an Italian-born, New York-based artist delves into this universal theme in gorgeous paintings embroidered with luxurious threads on sumptuous, richly colored panels of shantung silk.



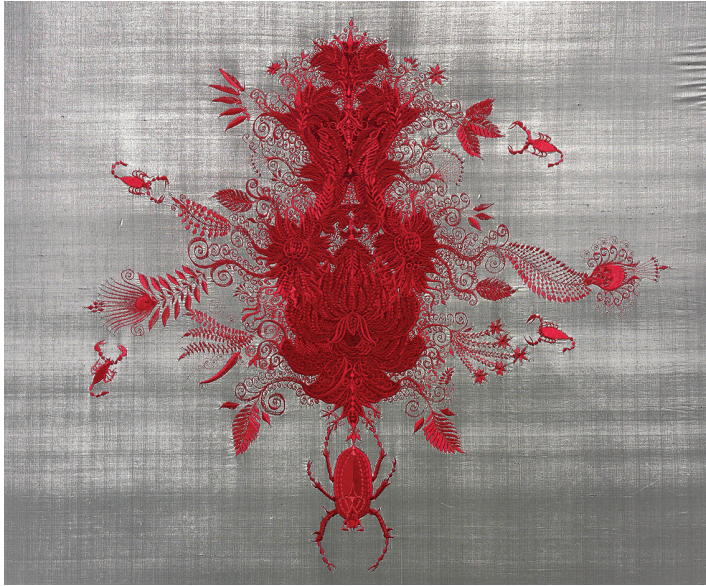
▲ *In the Upper Sky*, 2011
Embroidery on silk shantung over linen
68 x 68 inches

Interspersed with shimmering crystals, Filomeno's masterfully sewn and intricately rendered imagery portrays a fantastical world of baroque floral patterns intertwined with exquisitely portrayed scarabs, fragments of exotic plants, butterflies, peacock plumages, scarabs, scorpions, chicken feet, roaches, and skulls. His work draws on a vast range of art historical references to Medieval, Baroque, and Renaissance imagery. "I was thinking of Versailles in France," the artist states. "I was thinking of opulence and decadence."¹

Influenced in particular by the paintings and engravings of Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516), Filomeno's works are steeped in allegorical and underlying religious references. Birds and scarabs, both ancient symbols of transcendence and regeneration, take their place in Filomeno's lavish "paintings" alongside darker symbols of decay and decadence.

Front cover:

Amulet (Red Akrep), 2011 (detail)
Embroidery on silk shantung with crystals stretched over linen
78 x 39 x 2 inches



▲ *Amulet (Silver Akrep)*, 2011 (detail)

► *Amulet (Silver Akrep)*, 2011

Embroidery on silk shantung with
crystals stretched over linen

Overall: 78 x 39 x 2 inches

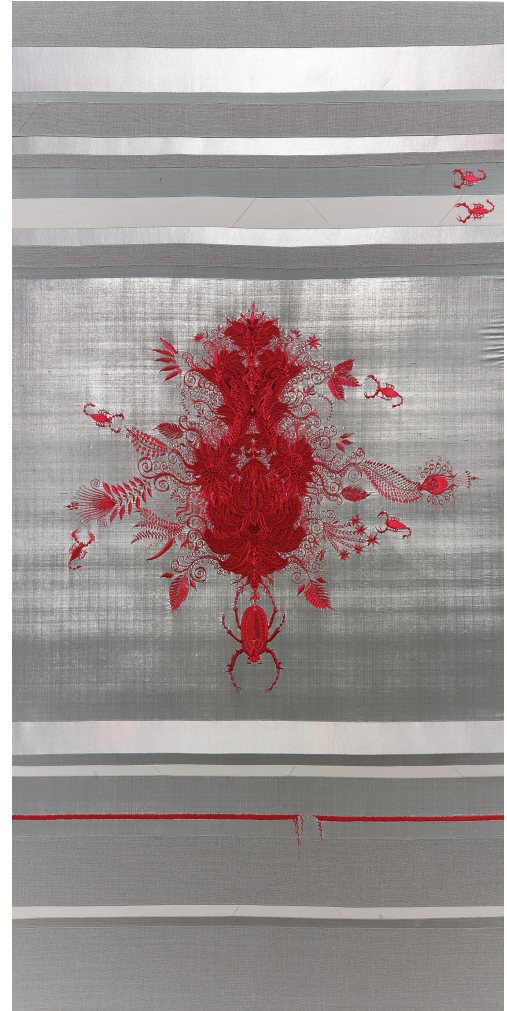
Prevalent throughout most of the works are scorpions—unnerving and portentous—though beautifully depicted with luxuriously embroidered threads against shimmering silks. Dating back

420 million years, this creature with its

venomous stinger has, since ancient times, symbolized the embodiment of evil. The devil, in Christian iconography, often wields a fiery scorpion's tail, a sign of ultimate depravity, treachery, and imminent death. The scorpion, however, has also symbolized protective forces, countering evil, and representing the process of renewal and regeneration. In ancient Egypt, the goddess Serket, often depicted as a scorpion, was one of several goddesses who protected the pharaoh. For Filomeno, scorpions, infused into his opulent tableaux, serve almost as talismans, representing the ever contradictory and opposing forces of good and evil, seduction and repulsion, beauty and the grotesque. And if Filomeno's imagery doesn't speak enough for itself, titles of his past exhibitions do—*Intoxication* (2013), *Mortality's Alchemist* (2009), and *Betrayed Witches* (2008)—all bodies of work that speak to "epic struggles between life and death, sexuality and decay, evil and redemption."² At once beautiful and enchanting, Filomeno's works of art are deeply unsettling. In the "paintings" on view, as in all of his art, Filomeno's portrayal of life's harsh realities is unflinching. There's pain in these works, even in the act of creating them. "I think of the sewing process," says the artist, "as wounding the fabric. . . ."³

With virtuosic skill, an exceptional command of materials, and a rampant imagination, Filomeno capitalizes on beauty. For him it is inevitable. But for Filomeno, beauty is also subversive. Like Charles Baudelaire's exquisite torrent of poems in the *Fleurs du Mal*, Filomeno's "extreme embroideries" lure us, seduce us, but entangle us into life's unanswered paradoxes.

Margo Ann Crutchfield
Curator at Large





▲ *Your Dream, My Dream*, 2011
Embroidery on linen
Triptych: 8 x 6 inches each

Works in the Exhibition

All works collection of the artist
Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, New York

Amulet (Purple Akrep), 2013

Embroidery on silk shantung with crystals stretched over linen
78 x 39 x 2 inches (198.1 x 99.1 x 5.1 cm)

Amulet (Red Akrep), 2011

Embroidery on silk shantung with crystals stretched over linen
78 x 39 x 2 inches (198.1 x 99.1 x 5.1 cm)

Amulet (Silver Akrep), 2011

Embroidery on silk shantung with crystals stretched over linen
78 x 39 x 2 inches (198.1 x 99.1 x 5.1 cm)

Your Dream, My Dream, 2011

Embroidery on linen
Triptych, each: 8 x 6 inches (20.3 x 15.2 cm)

In the Upper Sky, 2001

Embroidery on silk shantung over linen
68 x 68 inches (172.7 x 172.7 cm)

Exhibition History

Angelo Filomeno's work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe, and Japan, including two major international biennials: the Venice Biennale in 2007, and ARS 06 at the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki. In addition to this current one-person exhibition for the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, solo exhibitions of his work have been presented by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Toronto, Canada; Savannah College of Art and Design Savannah, Georgia (2009); and the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, Tennessee (2008).

Group exhibitions of Filomeno's work have been presented at institutions worldwide, including P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; Site Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of the University of Houston; the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan; and KadE Kunsthal, Amersfoort, the Netherlands.

Filomeno's work is in various international museum collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan.



◀ *Amulet (Purple Akrep)*, 2013 (detail)
 Embroidery on silk shantung with crystals
 stretched over linen
 78 x 39 x 2 inches

About the Artist

Born 1963, in southern Italy

M.F.A., Academy of Fine Arts, Lecce, Italy, 1984

Angelo Filomeno was raised in the southern Italian village of Ostuni. He comes from a family of artisans; his father was a blacksmith and horseshoe maker, and his mother was a seamstress who taught him to sew at an early age. Filomeno began working at the age of seven when he was apprenticed as a tailor. Much of his work stems from and is built on memories and experiences of his youth and roots in Italy. In particular, the death of his parents when he was very young has permeated his work with an acute sense of life and death.

Following his studies in painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lecce, Italy, Filomeno worked in fashion houses in Milan and then in New York, where he moved in 1992. He also worked for Carelli Costumes in New York producing theatre costumes. Filomeno began creating his embroidered “paintings” in 2001.

Filomeno has been sewing for 45 years.

For more information about the artist see www.galerielelong.com.

End Notes

¹ Filomeno quoted in *Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion*. Terrie Sultan, David Pagel, Colin Gardner, Nick Flynn, Claudia Schmuckli (Blaffer Gallery, the Art Museum of the Museum of Houston) 2008. P.83.

² Mark Scala, *Eros and Thanatos: Angelo Filomeno*. Exhibition brochure. Frist Center for the Visual Arts, 2008.

³ Angelo Filomeno in conversation with the Curator, November 15, 2014.

THREADED

A suite of three concurrent exhibitions

The Angelo Filomeno exhibition is part of a suite of three one-person exhibitions presented by the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech focusing on artists who work with threaded material as their medium.

Stay connected

The following events are free.

Artist Talk: Angelo Filomeno

Wednesday, March 25, 2015, 6:30 PM
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

My Take Talks

Tuesday, February 17, 2015, 6:50 PM
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery
Jane Stein, assistant professor and director,
Costume Design and Technology MFA program,
School of Performing Arts, Virginia Tech

This series invites people from all walks of life to share their “take” on the art in the center’s galleries. Join in an exchange of ideas—sparked by the galleries’ art—in a relaxed, social atmosphere.

Check www.artscenter.vt.edu for more details.

Concurrent Exhibitions

Threaded: Shinique Smith
February 12–April 12, 2015
Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Threaded: Polly Apfelbaum
February 12–April 12, 2015
Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery

Also on View

Lalla Essaydi
Presented in conjunction with the Islamic Worlds Festival
February 12–April 12, 2015
Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor

Odili Donald Odita: *Bridge*
Grand Lobby

Coming

ICAT: Open at the Source
April 23–May 17, 2015
Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery

SOVA: Senior Studio Show
April 23–May 17, 2015
Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Friday, 10 AM–6 PM
Saturday and Sunday, 10 AM–4 PM

Angelo Filomeno

Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery
Moss Arts Center
February 12–April 12, 2015
Presented by the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech
Curated by Margo Ann Crutchfield



For more information about this and future exhibitions, visit www.artscenter.vt.edu.



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