

CHRISTY MATSON

Christy Matson's "Millsounds" brings to mind the American fine artist Robert Morris and his "Box with the Sound of it's Own Making" (1961), where a walnut box contains the soundtrack of its construction (a three hour tape recording). The process is revealed as a time-based event with the result as evidence of this. American textile artist Christy Matson also connects the visual and the audio to illustrate the sound of textile construction where an audio recording is part of the viewer's experience. History is brought to life and firmly rooted alongside the latest digital technologies.

Christy Matson is Assistant Professor in the Fiber and Material Studies Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where her practice utilises both hand operated Jacquard and industrial Jacquard looms. In 2009 she was artist-in-residence at The Oriole Mill, Hendersonville, North Carolina. This area in South Eastern USA was traditionally at the heart of textile production in the US and The Oriole Mill was one of a few industrial textile mills to open during the early 21st Century. These mills would once have been productive and noisy environments, but at the time of this residency, the US economy hit a low and The Oriole Mill lay dormant for long periods of time. For such a place, normally a hive of activity, to fall silent is eerie and unsettling, something that Christy Matson wanted to capture. The piece comments on the once illustrious past of American textile production, the difficulties being faced at present and an uncertain future.

One hour long, the digital video "Millsounds" was created from remixing audio recordings Christy Matson made in 2009 inside the industrial Jacquard textile mill. She heavily manipulated them to produce the finished work in 2010. "Millsounds" demonstrates the approximate time it takes to hand weave or industrially weave the same length of cloth. For example, it can take one minute to industrially weave what could take one hour to weave by hand. To tie in neatly with this observation, Christy Matson took one minute of the audio recording and time-stretched it to one hour. The video shows the repetitive rhythm of the construction of an industrial Jacquard loom fabric. The sound slowly evolves, shifting in both dramatic and subtle ways during its performance, while an underlying hypnotic beat captures the audience's attention and engages them.

Prior to this residency, Christy Matson had explored the inter-relationships between textiles and sound. In 2006 she was artist-in-residence at the Experimental Sound Studio in Chicago, and at the Harvestworks Digital Media Arts in New York City. A keen interest in combining textiles and new digital technologies informs her practice and enables her to extend the usually static experience of textiles into a time-based and sensory one.

Her work comments on the production of textiles, on 'smart' and 'high-tech' textiles and asks the viewer to engage with this. Uniquely poetic and reflective, "Millsounds" is a homage to the past, a current 'voice' and anticipates a presence in the future.