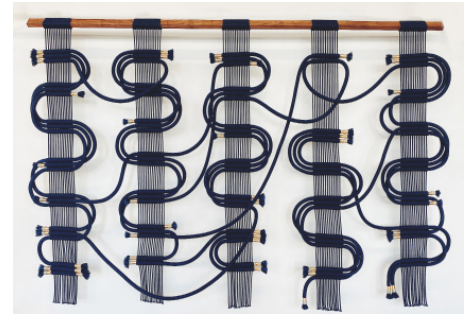


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© Windy Chien, Circuit Board (Detail), 2021. Suahella cordage, 514 gold Japanese thread, walnut, 48 x 72 in. All rights reserved.

Windy Chien

Journey of the Line: Selected Works

July 29 - September 14, 2021

Opening: July 31, 4-6pm; Artist Remarks & Knot Demonstration - 5pm

Sarah Shepard Gallery is pleased to present its first solo exhibition with contemporary fiber-based artist Windy Chien. The exhibition is entitled, *Journey of the Line*, a reference to using one continuous rope and following it to the conclusion of its journey. Featuring pieces from Chien's various series including *Circuit Board*, *Hitching Post*, *Diamond Ring*, and *Knot Installation*, she is also introducing a new collaboration with East Bay artist Melissa Bolger. Chien's practice melds art and design, craft and concept, function and aesthetic. While the output is often beautiful, this quality is intended to draw the viewer in and provoke awareness of the concepts behind the visual harmony: a deeper clarity of looking.

Chien makes sculpture and site-specific installations that elevate the vernacular forms of knots to inspire awe and understanding. An avid sailor, Chien was drawn to their functionality, cultural significance, and aesthetic value. Knots manifest tension and show forces working in harmony and in opposition. In 2016, Chien gave herself an assignment to learn a new knot —out of the almost 4,000 documented— every day for one year, creating the book, *The Year of Knots*. She came to recognize knotting as a universal language spoken across oceans, centuries, genders, and occupations. When Chien is in her studio today she often draws on her library of historic sailing books for inspiration.

Drawing from *The Year of Knots* as her ongoing palette, her bodies of work explore a singular, exquisite knot in search of its ultimate expressive potential. The finished works are minimalist, monochromatic rope sculptures that utilize pattern, repetition, and monumental scale to emphasize the poetry of the line. They are meant to be viewed from all angles and the dimensionality of the works further showcase their integrity. She uses composition and technique to explore the tension between contrasting ideas. In her iconic *Circuit Boards* series, the composition is inspired by computer circuit boards and the New York transit map designed by Massimo Vignelli - each of these sources speaking to energy flow and the power of linear design. Chien doesn't lose sight of the gendered associations of weaving as "women's work" - the skills of macramé, passementerie, weaving - and in the case of *Circuit Boards*, joins that with the masculine influences behind the composition. With a father who was a hobby woodworker and mother who taught her macramé at the height of its popularity in the 1970s, these influences sat quiet for many years, but following her career in the music and tech world, she took a macramé class that led Chien to become fascinated with knot techniques. Since macramé focuses on just several knots, Chien realized she wanted to push past to expand her knot vocabulary and propel her creativity forward. On working with rope, Chien has said she likes, "the notion of using the line to create volume and shapes in space, without weight." Each circuit board is finished off with a custom color and in certain cases leather detailing.

The first series Chien made during her career was *Knot Installation*, a contemporary re-envisioning of the classic sailors' knot boards. The piece featured in the show represents 40 different knots she chose specifically for the exhibition. Each collection is documented with a book illustrating each knot and its purpose - they represent knots used for purposes such as mountaineering, sailing, rock climbing, fishing and knitting.

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The *Diamond Ring* series is inspired by Diana Vreeland's maxim that "the eye has to travel." Hundreds of feet of a single, unbroken rope evolve into a path for the eye. The *Diamond Ring* features the hitch knot which in the "olden days," was applied to vehicle wheels as a type of mud or ice chain. *Hitching Post*, also featuring the hitch knot, is a more recent series - and like *Diamond Ring*, needs an object in order to hold the knot. This concept dovetails nicely with our understanding of hitching posts as gathering places to which people come for recreation and camaraderie.

The newest series Chien is showing is a collaboration with Bay Area artist Melissa Bolger. The mixed media works blend Bolger's photo realistic drawings of hands coupled with one of Chien's knots to represent the action and intention behind the functionality of knots.

Artist Windy Chien is best known for her 2016 work, *The Year of Knots*, in which she learned a new knot every day for a year. Her work ranges in size from a knot that can fit in the palm of a child's hand to room-sized installations that are sought after by private collectors. Following long careers at Apple and as owner of legendary music shop Aquarius Records, she launched her studio in 2015. Select clients include the National Geographic Society, Nobu Hotels, IBM, Google, and the Kering Group, and her work has been covered by Wired, The New York Times and Martha Stewart. Windy's book about her work was published by Abrams in 2019.

The gallery is currently open Tuesday - Saturday from 11-4pm or by appointment. Thank you for continuing to keep our community safe. For more information contact sarah@sarahshepardgallery.com or 917-375-2720.

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