



THE DAILY PIC (#1734): I can't deny that, with a few exceptions—Kerry James Marshall being a big one—I'm of the school that says painting is dead, has been for decades, and may very well be for some years to come. Recently, however, one lapsed-painter friend advanced an idea that might almost—almost—be an antidote to painting's overwhelming status as the reactionary plaything of a gilded elite. (It isn't that that's all painting is; it's that painting is so much that that anything else it is barely counts.)

My friend's almost-convincing idea is that a hand-made painting, however good or bad, will go some way to introducing the presence of another human - with that big brain and those amazing opposable thumbs—into any space where it hangs. A painting's function, according to this reading, isn't so much aesthetic or conceptual or semantic but, for want of a better word, social. It automatically creates a community, of sorts, between makers and lookers.

All of which is just preamble, I'm afraid, to my take on today's Daily Pic, which shows two of the stretched textiles that have been hand-knit (and often hand-sheared, hand-carded, hand-spun and hand-dyed) by Channing Hansen for his current show at CRG Gallery in New York. Yes, I notice that these pieces are not paintings. But their extreme handed-ness makes them do all the work that my friend described, and then some. Because not only is the human hand of the artist on view in Hansen's knits, but they are built around his most essential humanity. The patterns in Hansen's textiles are derived—loosely, I think, with a large dose of esthetic license—from the most individual aspects of his DNA, his own single-nucleotide polymorphisms. (Yes, I've cribbed that word from the press release.) It's no wonder he's titled his show "Self Portraits."

Something else that some eagle-eyed readers may notice: If Channing's stretched textiles stand for painting's apogee, then the usual hierarchy between craft and fine art gets reversed. Painting, that is, stops being quite such a gilded thing—which might just save its life in the end. (Courtesy CRG Gallery, New York)