

# Susan Stockwell

[Article](#) [Bio](#) [Projects](#) [Images](#) [www](#)

crossroads:	border, colonialism, environment, globalisation
genre(subgenre):	Visual Arts (drawing, installation art, painting, sculpture)
region:	Asia, Eastern, Europe, Western
country/territory:	Taiwan, England (UK)
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information provided by:	Visiting Arts

## Article

top

Susan Stockwell is an artist who makes sculpture, installation, drawings and films. She is based in London and exhibits in museums and galleries all over the world. Her exhibitions include, 'Susan Stockwell Selected Works' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 'This and That' an exhibition forming part of an artist in reside at the Shenghua Art Centre in Nanjing, China and she will be showing with Patrick Heide Contemporary Art at the Miami Art Fair in December. She was artist in residence at Taipei Artists Village, Taiwan as part of a Visiting Arts programme of cultural exchange between Britain and Taiwan. She has taught extensively in the UK and America and is presently a part-time Professor of Fine Art in the school of Architecture and Visual Art at The University of East London.

Susan Stockwell (born in 1962, Manchester, UK; lives in London) creates delicately provocative works in sculpture, drawing, collage, installation and film that transform the overlooked materials of everyday life. She studied at Sheffield Hallam University and the Royal College of Art. Her solo exhibitions include 'This and That' at the Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, in 2006 and 'Susan Stockwell, Selected Works' at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), London, in 2001. Her recent group exhibitions include Patrick Heide Contemporary Art's presentation at the Miami Art Fair 2007 and 'Mapping the Imagination' at the V&A October 2007 – April 26th 2008. She has received awards and travel grants from the British Council and inIVA. Her work is held in museum collections around the world, including the V&A, Shenghua Art Centre and Binghamton Art Museum, New York. She is part-time Professor of Fine Art in the School of Architecture and Visual Art at the University of East London.

Stockwell explains that her practice is 'primarily concerned with transformation'. Her work comes into being intuitively and experimentally through a practice in which process, subject matter and materials are equal elements interwoven to create a multiplicity of meaning. She is influenced by artists such as Eva Hesse and Meret Oppenheim who interrupted the formal regimes of the Western fine art canon by introducing materials and practices traditionally belittled by their association with domestic, feminine realms. She shares with these artists an impulse to reveal matter spilling from its formal containers – whether its industrial packaging, cultural value or linguistic identity. In defiance of hierarchical and fixed taxonomies, Stockwell's practice seamlessly conjoins the apparently distinct categories of craft and 'fine art', evanescence and monumentality, waste matter and high production, sensual beauty and political critique. Similarly works such as the giant paper Pom Pom (2002) have a fragile, almost accidental, quality that belies their intensely considered, meticulous construction.

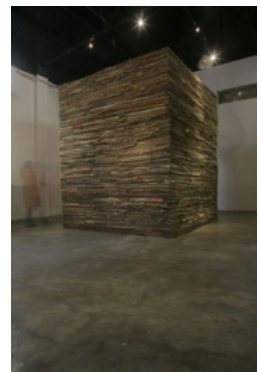
Stockwell employs the disposable industrial and domestic materials that pervade everyday life. She works most often with paper, but rarely in the standard form of the blank, virgin page that seems to wait expectantly for our mark. Rather, the paper she employs is heavily inscribed with its intended use - maps, dress-making patterns, toilet tissue, books, calligraphy paper - or a past use that designates it as waste - coffee filters, tea bags, torn packaging. She chooses these materials because, in her words, they 'act as ready-made signifiers' which she can sculpt and combine in ways that delicately reveal their obscured politics and hidden beauty.

Pattern of the World (2000), for instance, presents a map of the world

## images



Empress Dress



Paper, Glue, Paper



painted in tea over a paper dress-making pattern. The little luxuries of the traditional English domestic scene are reassembled in a vision of unexpected violence, not least because once scaled against the map, the dressmaking pins that hold the paper pattern together symbolise the vast tears in fabric of the planet made by the forces of global trade and imperial acquisition. At the same time, as a stain over the globe, the innocent-looking cup of "English" tea is re-associated with its role in the making of the British Empire. Indeed, while Stockwell's series of maps created from materials such as rubber tyres and tea bags are 'accumulations of the debris of everyday life' they also:

*"conjure up additional implications of accumulation, the strongest being the desire to appropriate everything from luxury goods to land to people. And in mapping out her chosen locations, Stockwell reminds us of the cost of this far-flung impulse."* (Anat Rosenburg, Art on Paper, July/August 2000)

Intriguingly, Stockwell's manner of revealing domestic objects to be complex symbols in the grand history of trade, nationhood and imperialism is one that also potentially reveals women to be powerful agents in that history rather than passive participants and victims. *Empire Dress* (2005), for example, is a costume sculpted from maps of the British Isles in a style typical of the upper classes at the end of the Victorian era. Its symbolism is evident on close inspection: a large mark at the breast where a brooch might sit is in fact a map of Manchester, the dark heart of the British Empire's cotton industry at that time. The sculpture brings a new twist to a venerable if little-examined art historical theme that connects maps, costume, power and femininity: as Alicia Foster points out, one of the forebears of *Empire Dress* is the seventeenth-century Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth I in which the Queen stands triumphant in gorgeous dress over a map of England.

Stockwell manages to address both the romance and the damage of history without polarity or polemic. Instead, her response is transformative. We see this at work in 'Paper, Steel, Paper' (Visual Art Centre, Scunthorpe, 2006) which explored the now largely defunct industrial landscape of the North of England and the contemporary accumulation of waste. As Foster remarks on that solo exhibition:

*"there is no heavy-handed message here about pollution, wastefulness, or the dark side of Western consumerism. Instead, Stockwell invites you to contemplate and consider what art might be, to look hard at the world, at what you barely notice and do not value – to find profundity and beauty there."* (Alicia Foster, 'Paper Steel Paper' Exhibition Catalogue, 2006)

In late 2007, Visiting Arts awarded Stockwell an artist's fellowship at Taipei Artist Village. She saw the residency as an opportunity to reflect on what she describes as issues of 'global politics and Chinese imperialism' embedded in the debate over whether Taiwan can and should remain independent from China. The Centre staff supported her research into Taiwan's history by arranging access to the Department of Transport's maps and conversations with cultural studies specialist Dr Liao Hsin-Tien. They also introduced her to a calligrapher and a tea expert and invited her to experience a Taiwanese tea ritual. In addition she toured Taipei, tracing its accelerated growth into a global city on a site where only forty years ago there were rice fields and buffalo. Taiwan, she writes, is 'a Buddhist country and Taipei is full of temples, shrines, monks and prayers nestled in amongst a concrete jungle.' This form of cultural and material incongruity, and the quandary of establishing a sense of place in a space whose identity is rapidly changing, drew Stockwell to develop a new body of map drawings collectively entitled *Line*. These works derive from her investigation into the transportation and mapping systems of Taiwan and other Asian cities, as well as her home city of London. They employ traditional craft techniques such as paper-cutting and sewing, and local materials such as rice paper, calligraphy paper and maps. As in many of her previous works, transformation is its profound theme.

*Line* exhibited as part of 'Citylogues' at the Taipei Artists' Village Gallery from 9 November to 30 December 2007. To see and find out more about Susan Stockwell's work, visit:

[www.susanstockwell.co.uk](http://www.susanstockwell.co.uk)

[www.artistvillage.org](http://www.artistvillage.org)

[www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/future\\_exhibs/mapping\\_imagination/index.html](http://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/future_exhibs/mapping_imagination/index.html)

Author: Cathy Haynes

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## Bio

top

### Education

MA The Royal College of Art, London, UK  
 BA (Hon's) Sheffield Hallam University, UK

### Solo exhibitions:

2006

'Paper, Steel, Paper' 20/21 Visual Art Centre, Scunthorpe, UK

2006  
'This and That' Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China  
2005  
'Stitched-up: Paper and Politics' Studio Caparrelli, London, UK  
'Text and Work' The Gallery at The Art Institute at Bournemouth, UK  
2002  
'Coffee House' Studio Caparrelli, London, UK  
'Susan Stockwell Installation' Lyon and Turnbolls Auction House, Festival  
Exhibition, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK  
2001  
'Susan Stockwell Selected Works', The Victoria and Albert Museum, London,  
UK  
'Material Accomplices' Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, Texas, USA  
2000  
'Accumulations' Thomas Korzelius Fine Art, New York, USA  
'Accumulations' The Economist Plaza Gallery, London, UK  
1997  
'Embedded' Battersea Arts Centre, London, Angel Row, Nottingham and  
Wrexham Arts Centre, Wrexham, Wales, UK

Group Exhibitions:

2007  
'Citylogues' Taipei Artist's Village Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan,  
'Miami Art Fair' Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, Miami, USA  
'Mapping The Imagination' Victoria and Albert Museum, UK  
'Blind Memories' 198 Gallery, London, UK  
2006  
'Conversations' Ambrosino Gallery, Miami, USA  
2005  
'Pulp Fantasy' 20/21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe, UK  
'The Biggest Draw' Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, UK  
'Constructive Paper' The Harley Gallery and Foundation, Nottinghamshire  
'The British are Coming' Fiberscene, FIBERARTS, USA  
'London Art Fair' England and Co, London, UK  
2003  
'Sartorial' England and Co, London, UK  
'Connections' The James Hockey Gallery, Farnham, Surrey  
'The Map is Not The Territory' England and Co, UK  
'Sculpture a Spectator Sport' Bryanstone School, Dorset, UK  
2002  
'Bursary 2002' The Royal Society of British Sculptors, London, UK  
'Festival Exhibition' Bourne Fine Art, Edinburgh Scotland, UK  
'Multi Storey' Tart Gallery, London, UK  
2000  
'Subway Special a Democratic Platform' Aldwych Tube Station, London, UK  
'X'hibit 99' Battersea Arts Centre, London, UK  
'Here Artists Interventions at the Aldrich' Aldrich Museum of Contemporary  
Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA  
'Paper Spaces' The Neuberger Museum of Art, New York, USA

Forthcoming Exhibitions:

'Susan Stockwell', Canary Wharf, London  
'Sharon Loudon & Susan Stockwell' Patrick Heide Contemporary Art  
'On the Map' Sheffield Millennium Galleries, Sheffield  
'Body Space' Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle, UK  
2009  
'Susan Stockwell' The Art League, Houston, Texas, USA

Awards and Grants:

2007  
'Taiwan-England Artists Fellowship Programme, Visiting Arts  
'Mapping Project' The institute of International Visual Art (inIVA)  
2005-7  
'AHRC Small Grants for the Arts'  
'Research and Development Awards' (UCCA)  
2004  
'Annie McCall Heritage Project' European Funding Board  
'Lambeth Arts' Development Fund,  
'Research and Development Award', Surrey Institute of Art and Design  
'Research Sabbatical' SIAD  
'Bursary Award' The Royal Society of British Sculptors  
'Research and Development Award' SIAD  
2002  
'Champions for Change Millennium Award, Peabody Trust  
'Sainsbury's Arts Award', Sainsbury's Supermarket  
'Research and Development Award' SIAD  
1999  
'The British Council Travel Award'  
'Research and Development Award' The University of East London  
'Research and Development Award' Wimbledon School of Art

#### Bibliography:

The Guardian 'Susan Stockwell' Guide Preview, Robert Clark, 11th Nov  
Catalogue, 'Paper, Steel, Paper' Susan Stockwell with accompanying essay  
'Material Pleasures' By Dr Alicia Foster, 20/21 Visual Art Centre, Scunthorpe  
Scunthorpe Telegraph, 'Recycled Exhibition', Article, 8th Nov  
BBC Radio Humberside, Live Interview, 4th November,  
Crafts Magazine 'altered states, Susan Stockwell and the politics of paper', By  
Carole Tulloch  
Elle Decoration 'Creative Spaces', Images, March  
Map Magazine, 'London Artists Create in Nanjing' Nanjing, China  
Catalogue, 'This and That,' Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China  
2005  
ARTFORUM Critics Picks, London, 'Susan Stockwell, Studio Caparrelli', June,  
Surface Design Journal, 'Susan Stockwell Revisiting the colonial Project' by  
Jessica Hemmings  
Text and Work, Brochure with accompanying essay by Rosie Miles Curator of  
Prints and Drawings at The V & A, Bournemouth Arts Institute  
2003  
FIBREARTS, 'Post Colonial Discourse in Garment Form,' Jessica Hemmings,  
V&A Magazine, Article - Frontlines, 'Pattern of The World', May-Aug  
2002  
The Map is Not The Territory part iii, Catalogue, England and Co, London  
2001  
B,B,C, Radio London, Interview, The Lisa Anson Show, 6th Nov  
Leonardo Music Journal, 'Not Necessarily English Music', Front cover  
The Scotsman, 'Hang it in the Louvre' Susan Mansfield, 13th Aug  
B,B,C, Scotland T,V, 'Regional T,V, News', 9th Aug  
B,B,C, Radio Scotland, 'Arts News', 9th Aug  
San Antonio Express News, 'Gallery Stroll', Finesilver Gallery, Dan Goddard  
2000  
Radio 4, 'Midweek' with Libby Purvis, 19th Jan,  
Art on Paper, 'Museum and Gallery Review', Anat Rosenberg, July/Aug  
London.co.uk. Magazine, Gavin Street, February,  
Time Out Magazine, 'Art Preview' Martin Herbert, Jan 6th

#### Residencies:

2007 'Visiting Arts' Taiwan-England Artists Fellowship Programme, Sept-  
December;  
'Mapping Project' inIVA, Three year project including conference and  
exhibition;  
'Artist in Residence' Charles Edward Brooke School, Creative Partnership  
2005/6 'Artist in Residence' Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China  
2004 'Visiting Artist' Annie McCall Heritage Project/Stockwell Park School,  
London,  
'Visiting Artist' Stockwell Park School, Stockwell London, UK; 'Visiting Artist'  
Kingsdale School, Dulwich, London, UK  
2002 'Taking a Line for a Walk' A Drawing of Stockwell, 'Mapping Stockwell,'  
Stockwell Festival, Lambeth, London, UK; 'Visiting Artist' Stockwell Park  
School, Stockwell, London, UK  
2001 'Artist in Residence' Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, Texas, USA  
1997 'Visiting Artist', Ohio State University, Ohio, USA

#### Collections:

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK  
Binghamton Art Museum, Binghamton, New York, USA  
Karol Vail Collection, New York City, U,S,A,  
Thomas Korzelius Gallery, New York City, USA  
Christopher and Georgia Erk Collection, Finesilver Gallery, Texas, USA  
Studio Caparrelli, London, UK  
Shenghua Art Centre, Nanjing, China  
Seeds of Peace Charity, USA

#### Teaching:

The University of East London, 0.2 Senior Lecturer, Fine Art, AVA  
University College for the Creative Arts at Farnham, 0,5 Senior Lecturer  
The University of East London, 0.2 Associate Lecturer and Visiting Lecturer  
Wimbledon School of Art, Associate and Visiting Lecturer  
1997/8, The Ohio State University, Professor in Sculpture

#### Visiting Lecturer:

2007 Camberwell College of Art and Design  
2006 Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, USA  
Chelsea School of Art and Design, London  
2005 The Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
2004 The Art Institute at Bournemouth, The University of East London  
2000-3 Bryanstone School, Dorset, The Royal College of Art, London, Ringling  
School of Art and Design, Sarasota, Florida, USA

## Projects

[top](#)

This artist took part in the following project(s) organized/funded by the culturebase.net partner institutions.

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## Www

[top](#)

### Susan Stockwell, official website

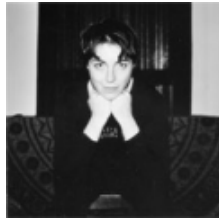
[www.susanstockwell.co.uk](http://www.susanstockwell.co.uk)

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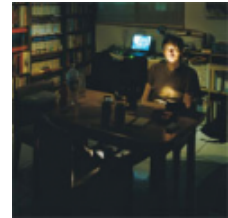
Roddy Bell

genre: Visual Arts  
country: England (UK),  
Norway, Myanmar



Barbara Sansoni

genre: Architecture,  
Design and Crafts, Visual  
Arts, Written and spoken  
word  
country: England (UK),  
United States of America,  
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