

*Lucid Perturbations: The Sewn Drawings
and Books of China Marks*

24 April 2026 – 11 July 2026

OPENING RECEPTION

15 May 2026, 5–7 p.m.



CHINA MARKS I At the Winter Palace, 2018
Fabric, thread, fusible adhesive, wooden and ceramic beads, Jade glue
20 x 25 1/2 in (50.8 x 64.8 cm)
Photo by Jeffrey Scott French, courtesy of The Artist

(SANTA FE, NM) 147 yards of fabric artworks—a length nearly one and a half times the height of the Statue of Liberty—weaves a tapestry that records a quarter century of an unsung artist’s singular vision and consuming passion for drawing with the sewn line.

Zane Bennett Contemporary Art is thrilled to announce *Lucid Perturbations: The Sewn Drawings and Books of China Marks*, an exhibition comprising more than 200 works by China Marks (b. 1942, Kansas City, MO). Thousands of fabric scraps, commercially produced panels of cloth, vintage silk scarves, textile reproductions of masterpieces, and spools of thread fed through a sewing machine over the course of twenty-two years coalesce into a tremendous body of work created with intense labor and meditative flow. Zane Bennett Contemporary Art director Carina Evangelista notes that the surreal tableaux and books serve as the artist’s “intuitive responses either to travesties and phenomena in the larger world or to the tragicomedy or psychology of the most modest human scale.” The expansive exhibition, coordinated with Marks’s longtime friend, Pamela Matsuda-Dunn, opens in two parts, with an **installation on the ground floor on Friday, April 24, 2026, and a grand opening from 5–7 p.m. on Friday, May 15, 2026**, to coincide with the Santa Fe International Literary Festival. This exhibition marks the **first time Zane Bennett has exclusively dedicated its 5,000 square feet of gallery space to a monographic exhibition.**

Marks, a Fulbright-Hayes fellow and recipient of numerous grants, including a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, was long established as a sculptor based in Long Island City, NYC. Before she began sewing, she had an exhibition history that included solo shows at venues such as The Morris Museum (1987), The Newark Museum (1990), and The Robeson Gallery at Rutgers University (1989). December 6, 2000, is the exact date **Marks recalls being struck by an epiphany: “My drawings told me they had to be sewn, and not by hand. I would have to buy a sewing machine and learn to generate and control a sewn line... It might as well have been the voice of God.”** Pivoting at age fifty-nine from a lifelong practice of sculpture, drawing, painting, and printmaking, she exclusively dedicated herself to sitting with her nose “six inches from the needle” of her industrial sewing machine, producing sewn drawings, a term Marks used for her textile art, which includes large collaged tapestries, drastically altered jacquard painting reproductions, broadsides of embroidered text, small and medium-sized sewn drawings, and sewn books, many of which are being showcased for the first time in *Lucid Perturbations*.

In 2004, the trajectory of Marks’s career took another chance turn when renowned *New York Times* arts writer **Grace Glueck highlighted the originality of Marks’s approach** in an exhibition review of the artist’s sewn works. Glueck wrote, “Whatever Ms. Marks is up to she does it with bravura...” —a judgment that threw the spotlight on Marks’s career and new choice of medium. From 2001 to 2023, Marks produced over 600 machine-sewn books and drawings.

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For press or image inquiries, please contact Spencer Linford at spencer@zanebennettgallery.com.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lucid Perturbations showcases a third of this prodigious output, **offering the most comprehensive survey of Marks's sewn oeuvre to date.** The exhibition, with its myriad surreal and uncanny artworks, presents the multidimensionality of Marks's artistic psyche as the figurative key with which viewers may unlock their own subconscious.

Although Marks had a comfortable life as a practicing artist, received numerous grants, and has had exhibitions throughout her career, she is not widely known, and her work has yet to receive the kind of critical attention it deserves. In effect, **this major solo show for Marks is similar to the uncovering of the scale and breathtaking detail of the creative work that poured out of Henry Darger's private world.** Evangelista notes that viewers can snatch glimpses of Marks's singular ability "to stitch into cloth what she witnesses, observes, limns, and laments from the fabric of our world."

The catalogue, *Lucid Perturbations: The Sewn Drawings and Books of China Marks*, designed by Anne Finkelstein, features an essay by Carina Evangelista, a biography by Pamela Matsuda-Dunn, and photography by Jeffrey Scott French for the illustrated plates of all of Marks's books and broadsides.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

China Marks (b. 1942, Kansas City, MO) lived and worked in Long Island City, NYC, before moving to Massachusetts. She currently resides in the New York metropolitan area. She dedicated the last twenty-two years of her artistic career to sewn drawings, a term she used for her textile art, which includes large collaged tapestries of drastically altered jacquard reproductions of paintings, broadsides of embroidered text, small and medium-sized drawings, and a small library of sewn books.

Raised in Kansas City, Marks earned a BFA in sculpture from the Kansas City Art Institute, a Fulbright-Hayes fellowship took her to Kathmandu, Nepal, where she spent sixteen months constructing a major installation out of local materials. Upon return to the United States, she was awarded a graduate fellowship by the Danforth Foundation and received an MFA in sculpture from Washington University in St. Louis.

Marks is the recipient of two George Sugarman Foundation grants, a Mid-Atlantic Arts fellowship, three fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, three New York Foundation for the Arts fellowships, and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant. Interest in her sewn works took off after a 2004 review by Grace Glueck in the *New York Times*.

She has had solo exhibitions at The Center for Book Arts in New York City, the Foosner Art Museum at the Florida Institute of Technology, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, the Owen James Gallery, and University of Massachusetts Amherst, as well group exhibitions at numerous venues including the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury, MA; Concord Center for the Visual Arts in Concord, MA; Knust Kunz Gallery in Munich, Germany; and The Painting Center, NY.

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ARTIST STATEMENT

I draw with an industrial zigzag sewing machine and thread, starting with patterns and imagery I find on commercially available printed fabric, to realize complex narratives. Process is the transformative agent, synthesizing and subverting the forms and stories contained in the original sources. I have also written dialogue and commentary for my drawings and books, first cutting out words and letters from printed fabric, then using a computerized embroidery machine and CAD software to produce embroidered text. My drawings tell me what to say.

I bought fabrics and trim in stores in New York City and wherever else I happened to be. People who know my work offer fabric, buttons, needlework, and trim, occasionally from dead relatives. I almost always welcome it. Sometimes I incorporate leftovers from my years as a sculptor and maker of works on paper, including fabric silk-screened with images of my old line drawings and paint-smear work pants from the early 90s. Having used all kinds of power tools as a sculptor, I much prefer drawing with an industrial sewing machine to hand-sewing. My eyes in magnifying glasses, my face six inches from the moving needle, I have an intuitive bond with the machine. At the start, I have no idea what a drawing will look like. But ideas just get in the way. The key is to give myself over to the process.

That said, I am after as complex a truth as possible. My drawings reflect the world in all its glory, horror, and absurdity—its workers and slugs; sleepwalkers and prophets. Who is in charge and who suffers because of that? Why does the past keep biting us in the ass? What does it mean to be in love? I do my best to make sense of things, and it takes everything I've got.



CHINA MARKS | A Book of Horses (Pages 2–3), 2008
Fabric, thread, lace, silk-screen ink, latex paint, industrial felt, fusible adhesive, 19.25 x 15 x 2.25 in (closed), 19.25 x 30 in (opened)
Photo by Jeffrey Scott French, courtesy of The Artist



CHINA MARKS | Florabundum, 2006. Fabric, thread, fusible adhesive, 23 1/2 x 18 in (59.7 x 45.7 cm).
Photo by Jeffrey Scott French, courtesy of The Artist

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