FULLER CRAFT MUSEUM’S NEWEST UPCOMING EXHIBITION:  
Maria Molteni: Soft Score

A site-specific exhibition that explores dynamic intersections of art and athletics.

Opening January 13, 2024

Maria Molteni: Soft Score is a site-specific exhibition that explores dynamic intersections of art and athletics. Created specifically for Fuller Craft Museum by queer Boston artist Maria Molteni (they/them), Soft Score employs “crafletic” expression for personal reflection and communal magic. Built upon 15+ years of socially engaged public artwork, it also emphasizes the importance of intersectionality and equity, within sports industry and community spaces alike.

Works in Soft Score offer multiple layers of interpretation rooted in both sensitive and cerebral aspects of art and sport—basketball in particular. On Molteni’s outdoor painted courts, movement between varied systems of symbology and instruction—from quilting motifs to offensive diagrams, nautical flag coding to free-throw choreography—employs a playful practice of translation. In the gallery: a ball-handling routine derived from a b-ball net knitting pattern is performed by the artist. A cloudscape of welded hoops evokes basketball’s dreamy campaign to “get air.” A
humbly humorous fan-and-pom-pom pairing positions the audience as performer in a classic activation—“the wave.”

Resourceful craft techniques and conceptual rigor point out the malleability of language and fluid relationships of spectator to participant. Molteni deftly creates their own hybrid systems to integrate abstraction, intuition, and embodiment. They aim to cultivate a sense of belonging in sports and art worlds so that all feel welcome, with or without a brush or ball.

“Fuller Craft Museum is thrilled to present the multimedia, site-specific installation Maria Molteni: Soft Score. Maria’s work combines art, athletics, and craft, with an aim towards greater inclusivity in these areas. In the spirit of “all are welcome,” their vibrant installation deeply resonates with the museum’s commitment to greater arts access for our communities, and we are eager for audiences to experience Soft Score.” - Beth C. McLaughlin, Artistic Director & Chief Curator, Fuller Craft Museum

Artist’s Biography

Maria Molteni (They/Them, b 1983, Nashville) is a queer Boston-based interdisciplinary artist, educator, designer and mystic, with a background in competitive sports and dance. They descend from Tennessee square dancers, stunt motorcyclists, and quilters—as well as cyclists, runners, and tennis players—of various European backgrounds. Their practice has grown from formal studies in painting, printmaking, and dance to incorporate research, ritual, and play-based collaboration. They often position their work as Phys Ed experiments for historic visionary movements, like the Shakers, Bauhaus, or Black Mountain College.

In 2010, Molteni founded the international queer/feminist collective New Craft Artists in Action (NCAA). The NCAA works creatively in public spaces to champion “participation over spectatorship” and the “liberation of recreation” over status quo commercial sports agendas. Their most well-known projects include “Net Works,” encouraging folks to create handmade basketball nets for their own empty hoops, and “Cosmic Courts,” by which they pioneered the national community-centered basketball court painting movement. As lead artist and creative director, Molteni has completed seven court projects in Massachusetts, hiring and training teams of queer, trans and femme artists to support in the rigorous, organic painting process. The artist views their courts as horizontal monuments, altars to the sky, and a vibrant commons that welcome a wider spectrum of makers and players.

NCAA’s “Hard in the Paint” received a national public art award from Americans for the Arts in 2017 and their teaching model and publication “Net Works: Learn to Craft Hand Made Basketball Nets for Empty Hoops in Your Neighborhood” has been utilized internationally by educators, organizers, and creators alike. Molteni and the NCAA collective have featured their work at the Congressional Maker’s Fair, Museum of Design (Atlanta), Harvard University’s Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, Basis Voors Actuel Kunst (Utrecht, Netherlands), New York and Boston Art Book Fairs, NGBK Gallery (Berlin), and the Weatherspoon Museum (UNC Greensboro), to name a few. They’ve been featured in publications such as W SLAM, Transgender Studies Quarterly, and American Craft Magazine, and have collaborated with other collectives such as Queer Sport Split (Croatia), The Office of Culture and Design (Philippines), Kosmologym (Denmark). NCAA inspired other basketball court initiatives such as Project Backboard (LA), My Home Court (Providence), and the recent court program launched by the City of Boston.

You can read more about those projects including a list of courts, locations/land identifications here: mariamolteni.com / ncaacollective.net
A behind-the-scenes look with Maria Molteni as they work on their exhibition in the Atrium Gallery. December 2023.

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