





# Rae Haynes

# PATTERNS FOR FUTURE LIVING

1-23 September 2023

“The rhythms made us want to make those colours dance too.”

Sonia Delaunay-Terk, *Nous irons jusqu'au soleil* 1978

In the early 20th century, avant-garde artists responded to the seismic changes taking place in modern society by experimenting with abstraction in ways that would alter not only the look of art, but the concept of what art could or should be. Amongst those radical innovators were women who have since become fundamental to our understanding of modernism but who often struggled to be taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Sonia Delaunay-Terk's work in textiles and fashion compromised her credibility in the eyes of formalist purists in the twentieth century but her ability to move from easel painting to interior design, to costume design and illustration makes her the perfect template for contemporary art: simultaneously warmly domestic and bracingly radical; looking to both past and future; moving, shifting, dancing. This energy carried her work through the challenges of wars, revolutions, and personal and cultural upheaval.

Rae Haynes has danced in a zone between painting, drawing, textiles, sound and embodied participation for over twenty years. Their doctoral research was grounded in Levinas' ethics, and since that time Haynes has expanded on the practice of care as a strategy in contemporary art. As they have described their work, they seek to draw out in their viewer/participant an expression of “who and what we *care for* and the vital issues and values that we *care about*” (Haynes 2021, 127). Haynes has done this through an exuberant exploration of colour and materials. Delaunay-Terk's *Robe simultanée (Simultaneous Dress)* (1913), carefully constructed from a patchwork of different materials as a sensuous costume for dance, while also constituting a ground-breaking piece of geometric abstraction, is the perfect leaping off point for Haynes' acts of generous colour, designed to embrace you and entice you to take part.

Patterns and words are the stuff of Haynes' work: words forming patterns, and analytical and intuitive reconfiguring of the patterns of language. Intellectual abstraction is often thought of as the antithesis of feminist action—leading to what Anna Kornbluh has referred to as “autobiographical crenulations [or irregularities] of theory” (2021, 56)—and yet, visual abstraction has proven a rich seam for

feminist artists to mine. For Haynes, activism and beauty are not only reconcilable, they are perfect complements for one another. This doesn't stem from an autobiographical impulse but from a particular aesthetic program, grounded in an ethics of care, which they have expanded on in both their studio practice and their writing. The pursuit of knowledge through the work that takes place in the studio and the gallery is possibly still a crenulation of theory, but one that can be expanded to include others and have broader applications in the world.

For *Patterns for Future Living*, the irregular edges of this way of knowing take the form of textile banners, collages, ink and watercolour drawings, wall paintings, sound, and kinetic objects. We are required to respond to seismic changes taking place in our world now just as the early Modernists did over a century ago. We are grappling with the looming consequences of climate change, growing economic inequality and dislocation, and yet another round of culture wars, where segments of our society are systematically excluded or even demonised. We know that none of these problems will be easily or quickly resolved, and we will need all the energy we can muster to mitigate them. *Patterns for Future Living* is not artwork about or for Sonia Delaunay-Terk, but it evokes her spirit of adaptation and exuberance to provide solace and hope in the face of our 21st century challenges.

Courtney Pedersen

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