

THROUGH LINE
MEGHAN PRICE

May 23 - June 29, 2024

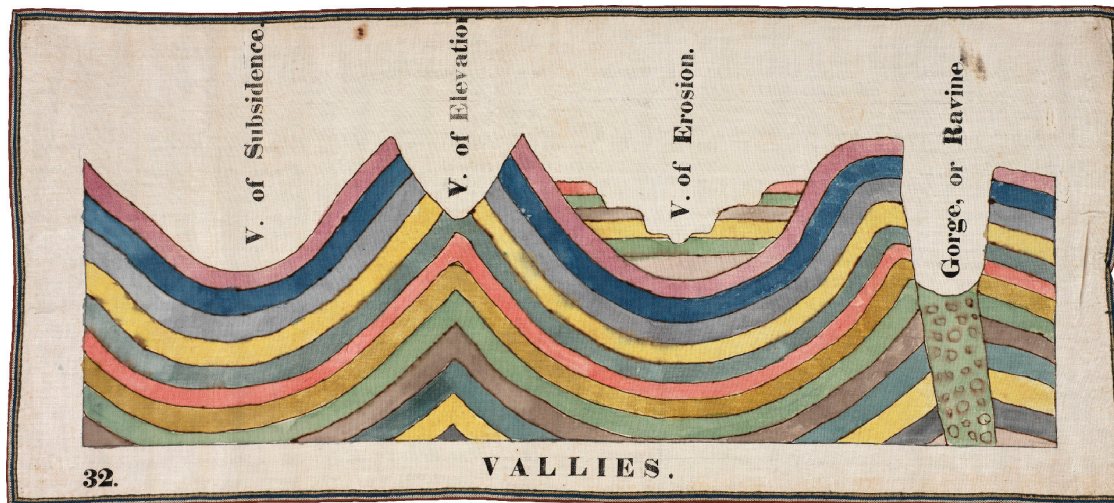
Text by Stanzie Tooth

Meghan Price rushes to be slow. Her process is a flurry of actions, research, and experimentation, which manifests in the slow meditation of a weaving, her hands and digital jacquard loom working thread by thread to arrive at a new understanding.

Price's preceding series highlighted geological forms and materially illustrated how time, pressure, and environment build our world gradually. Throughout her oeuvre Price has posed questions about our human relationship with the earth, disrupting our material assumptions to their core. A boulder is not a given, not a static thing, it is the outcome of millions of small events over millions of moments. It is each grain of sand. It is every minute. By exposing the underpinnings of our natural world, Price makes us stop and consider our place in these cycles. We are each a single thread in the tapestry of time.

At the height of the pandemic when searching for connections to the outside world, Meghan happened upon the work of Orra White Hitchcock, a 19th century scientific illustrator. White Hitchcock was the wife of scientist and professor Edward Hitchcock and for over four decades acted as his silent collaborator, illustrating his research in geology, botany, zoology and anatomy, regularly joining him in the field. As is often the story of pioneering women, Orra's autonomy as an artist and scientist was restricted by domestic obligations. She had eight children, tended the home, and cared for Edward through health struggles, all while acting as his scientific confidant and bringing life to his research through vivid paintings.

As noted in a posthumous exhibition catalogue of White Hitchcock's work: "It was an age of such curious scrutiny that every blade of grass, every scratch in a rock, every trace of life fossilised indelibly in stone offered answers to questions we did not even know to ask."⁽¹⁾ Though separated by two hundred years, this 'curious scrutiny' is the connective thread between White Hitchcock and Price. While the socio-cultural realities surrounding these women bare stark differences, their artistic lineage is clear. Both use fibre and



mixed media to create materially rich artwork celebrating geological forms. Above all, both artists' work seems concerned with the questions we uncover about ourselves through the close examination of our natural world.

As a means of paying homage to her artistic forebear, Price has undertaken a new project titled *Through Line*, directly inspired by the works of Orra White Hitchcock. Working with the archives at Amherst College, Price took macro photographs of White Hitchcock's geological charts rendered in ink and watercolour on fabric. Rather than looking at the compositions as a whole, Price focused her lens on moments of material articulation where pigment would bleed into fabrics, transgressing the boundaries of the renderings. It is through these small transgressions that Orra's hand could be most keenly felt. Back in the studio, Price translated these images into *trompe l'oeil* tapestries. Here, a brush stroke is no longer a momentary action, but is meticulously reconstructed through the accumulation of thousands of intersecting threads. By depicting the fluid qualities of watercolour through the laborious process of weaving, Price creates a liminal space where the action of the gesture is extended indefinitely.

There is an intimacy that can be felt in such close looking. Price's careful study of these renderings illustrate how materials record time. The minutiae of material events in White Hitchcock's work echo the flow of Earth's materials, which aggregate on an geologic timescale. In viewing her work we also enter Orra's timescale, that of her making and the events of brush on cloth as we trace the movements of her material. Price's interpretation then becomes an echo of an echo. The weaver's timescale is recorded in the warp and weft, the build up of threads acting like so much sedimentation. The resulting textiles reverberate through the various layers of time and making. These tapestries are not a given, not a static thing, they are the outcome of millions of small events over millions of moments. They are each thread. They are every minute. Through each connective thread, Price brings us in close. The detail in her work makes our eyes keen, draws us in, and makes us consider. In closing the two hundred year gap between she and Orra, Meghan shows us how the Earth sciences can be seen on a human timescale. We are each a single thread in the tapestry of time.

Meghan Price is a Canadian visual artist living in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. She has exhibited in spaces across Canada and internationally including the Canadian Cultural Centre (Paris), Fiberspace (Stockholm), The Centre for Craft Creativity and Design (Asheville), Centre Matéria (Quebec), YYZ (Toronto), Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff) and the McClaren Art Centre (Barrie). Price has held residencies at the Banff Centre, the Scottish Sculpture Workshop, the Icelandic Textile Centre, Artspace (Sydney), Union House Arts (Port Union) and The Museum of the Flat Earth (Fogo). Most recently, she was Artist-in-Residence at Concordia University (Montreal). Price's works are held in the collections of Cambridge Galleries (ON), Aimia, Canada Goose, RBC and TD Bank. Her projects have been supported by the Société de Développement des Entreprises Culturelles (QC) and the arts councils of Canada, Ontario, Toronto and Quebec.

United Contemporary
1444 Dupont Street, Unit 22, Toronto
info@unitedcontemporary.com
647-673-7530

11am - 6pm
Wednesday to Saturday
or by appointment

1. Hollander, Stacey C., *Charting the Divine Path: The Art of Orra White Hitchcock 1796-1863* (New York: American Museum of Folk Art in collaboration with Amherst College Archives & Special Projects, 2018), exhibition catalogue.

Images:

Orra Hitchcock drawing of valleys. Eng., ca. 1828-1840
Edward and Orra White Hitchcock Family Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College

Meghan Price, *Ravine* (detail), 2024, 41" x 51.5"
Handwoven cotton stitched to stretched canvas