

Samplers by John Massier Visual Curator for Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center, Buffalo, New York

"The work of Alicia Ross often disrupts and skews the fetishism of the historical male gaze upon, specifically, the feminine form. She has manipulated pornographic images, for example, through segmentation and color blind patterning. In her series of Samplers, Ross distorts the object gazed upon through a specific methodology and form of drawing. Utilizing downloaded images, Ross excises these figures from their original backgrounds and uses a computer program to translate the image pixels into a pattern of cross-stitching. Ross further edits the cross-stitched pattern, determining the fullness of the pattern, the delineation of lines, and her choice of thread color. Using the sewing machine as a drawing instrument, Ross is toying with particular versions of female iconography. At this point, young female artists have been drawing upon pornographic imagery for several years, as a means of reclaiming a sense of personal identity and a sense of control over how female imagery is used. While all of Ross' source imagery is downloaded, only a portion is culled from pornographic sites. Just as many figures are selected from fashion website and art historical sources, conflating each into the other, and reducing them all to the same discreet, beautiful objects of handicraft. They are sexualized, as well as neutralized through a process of abstraction. They contain intentional artistic choices, as well as automated imagery. They are foxy and domestic. Sexy and aloof."

June 2007