

Michèle Colburn

Statement

The Tripwire Project, 2013-Present

The Tripwire Project is a labor of love. Conceived and begun in 2013 and continuously updated, it is a material and concrete representation of lives lost and wounded in America's longest wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. One stitch = one life of both American soldiers and noncombatant Afghans and Iraqis since the United States entered those countries.

My interest in materiality is underscored by the use of surplus military trip wire left over from the Vietnam War. The piece is knitted from this wire. These spools of wire still exist in the thousands today and serve as a reminder of their usage as tripping mechanisms for explosions on the battlefield. My work acts on two fronts, as a historical reminder of lives lost and the wounded years ago and of those in contemporary times.

It is important for me to memorialize lives and to question the actions of the decision makers and profiteers. My work is not only created in the privacy of a studio, but in public spaces, where decisions were made, and profits anticipated at the costs of others.

Statistics wash over us daily as information. My work here attempts to put the humanity back in those numbers, and to give the viewer a concrete visualization of what those numbers mean.