



Amanda Grzelak, *Family Roots*, 2015, direct application of dye and block printed pigment on cotton, Styrofoam inserts, hand and machine sewn.

Amanda Grzelak is a studio arts student at Concordia University. She explores innovative ideas and new aesthetics in her art practice. Concerned with the formal qualities of her work, Grzelak tries to focus on the creative process to find her own voice.

Grzelak's installation *Family Roots* (2015) is a response to a photograph from Claire Beaugrand-Champagne's (b. 1948) *Thien et Hung* series (1980–95) depicting mothers and children from Vietnamese refugee families whose journey from Thailand to North America Beaugrand-Champagne documented over the course of several years. This image inspired Grzelak to contemplate her family roots, her Asian heritage and her experiences as an adopted child. She employed block printing to produce the pattern on her fabric, and then directly applied texture to the composition. Nine yards of fabric were wrapped around pool noodles to create the desired shape. The work's form resembles an anchor suspended in the air rather than firmly embedded in the ground, suggesting a connection to one's heritage that is not necessarily tied to a geographical setting, or perhaps a search for one's place in the world. The seemingly heavy and thick interlinking forms imply a rich heritage and family history, while the manual drawing of dark lines over the white fabric symbolizes a desire to uncover this history and to make it one's own. Yet the fact that the viewer is only able to see one side of the work alludes to the inevitable limits of one's knowledge of family history, which is often based on selective documentation and/or the oral narratives of relatives. Grzelak's installation reveals the complexities of examining one's cultural heritage and family roots in one's search for belonging.

Alexandra Boucklos