

ARTFORUM



Alison Knowles, *Event Thread 1*, 2006, found materials, thread, 58 x 3".

NEW YORK

Alison Knowles

JAMES FUENTES

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Alison Knowles has alchemized found objects into art for nearly five decades, but she's always paid particular attention to beans and shoes. Why? In a recent (and excellent) essay published in *Art Journal*, the art historian Hannah B. Higgins drew this response from Knowles (Higgins's mother): "A pair of shoes is very important for everyone." The Fluxus doyenne was discussing one of her task-based and mutable event scores, *Shoes of Your Choice*, 1963, in which audience members are invited to approach a microphone to talk intimately about their footwear. In Knowles's latest solo exhibition, an astute ode to strolling, shoes seem to speak for themselves—and just as simply.

In the front gallery, six collages on raw cotton in tea-stained maple frames feature items—an eggbeater, shoe molds, deconstructed soles—amid raw flax and lentils. Hand-pressed stamps spell out some of the works' titles, as in *TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE* and *IF THE SHOE FITS PUT IT ON*, both 2011. In four adjacent selections from the 2006 series "Event Threads," a more comprehensive view of Knowles as longtime Downtown New York bricoleur emerges. These gorgeous talismans loop over a single nail apiece and elegantly snake down the wall like precious Minimalist driftwood mobiles, except with a rotten orange or a clothespin instead of washed-up wood, and a telephone cord or a baseball dangling at the end.

MoMA is currently presenting Knowles's series of screenprints based on her well-known late-1960s event score *The Identical Lunch* in an exhibition of contemporary art from the museum's collection, and earlier this year she enacted six afternoon performances of that piece in the museum café. Many tuna fish sandwiches later, this compact selection picks up where MoMA left off: It's the crucial after-meal walk.

— Lauren O'Neill-Butler