



Knitting women into the picture

Local artist makes a statement about the lack of women in male-dominated fields

RYA BUCKLEY • SEP 18, 2018 • 0 COMMENTS • ARTS, FEATURES, STEEL CITY SCENE



Photos By Kyle West

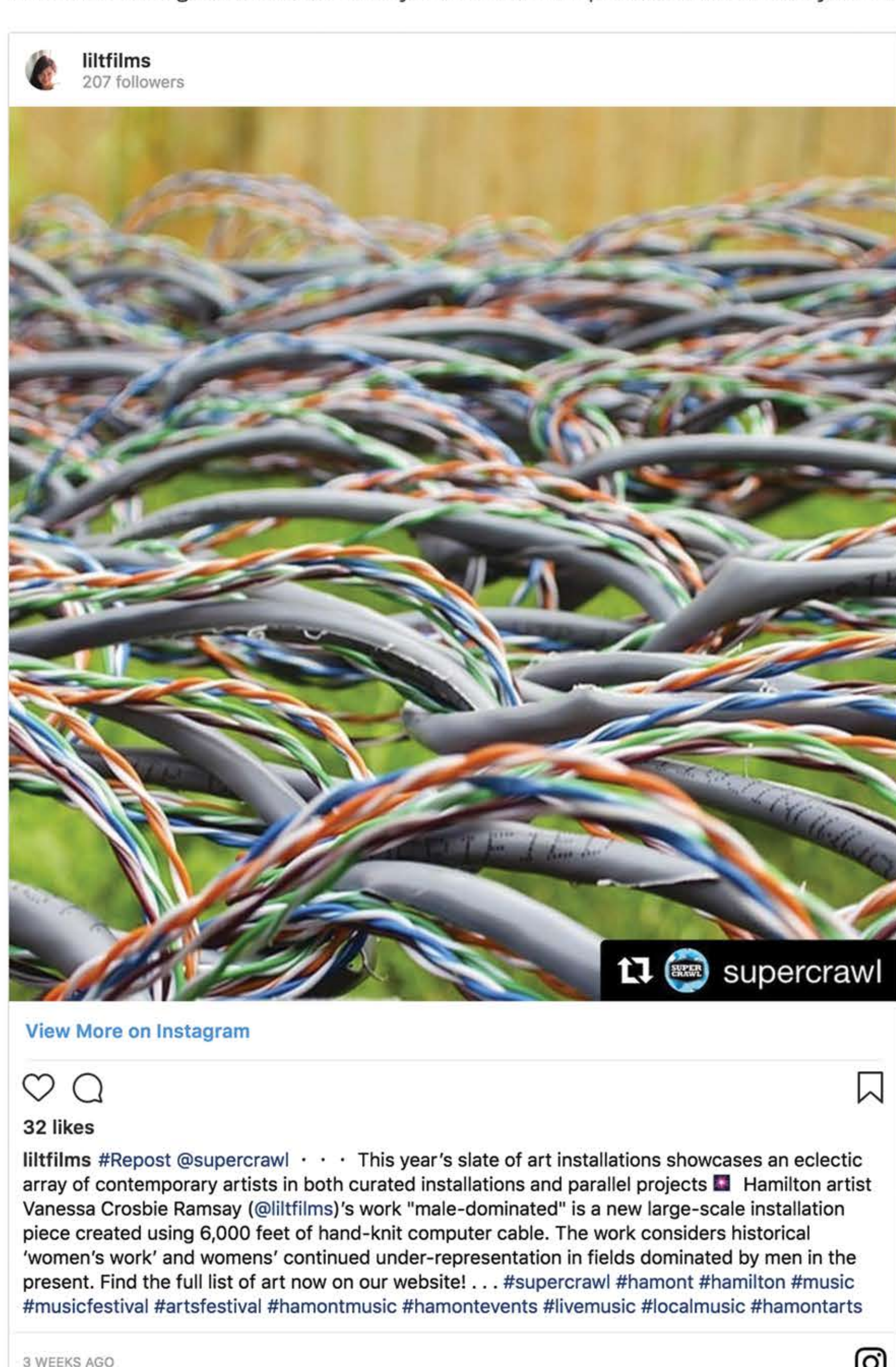
Since February of this year, local media artist, Vanessa Crosbie Ramsay, has devoted hours to hand-knitting and wrapping into a ball 9000 feet of Internet cable. This knitting and wrapping culminated when the 40 feet long by 12 feet wide structure was positioned outside last Thursday for Supercrawl, along with two giant, pink knitting needles.

The piece, entitled *male-dominated*, speaks to the underrepresentation of women in science, technology, engineering and math fields. The idea was sparked by friends of hers who had started a technology business and employed no women or people of colour. Aware that this problem is systemic, she wanted to create a piece that commented on it in an unexpected way.

“These types of companies hire less women and... when they have women that are hired, they’re [in] pretty misogynist spaces a lot of the time. [M]y work in general grows out of feminist issues and this... is just a small way to contribute to bringing attention to an issue like that,” she explained.

In creating the piece, Ramsay considered what is historically ‘women’s work’. The cables wrapped together into a semblance of a yarn ball calls to mind a past where the majority of women did work as homemakers.

However, contrasted with the technological tint of the cables, she brings onlookers back to the present, reminding them that in 2018, a lot of women are getting degrees and holding jobs outside of the home. While women might still knit, as Ramsay did to create the piece, it isn’t necessarily all that women do.

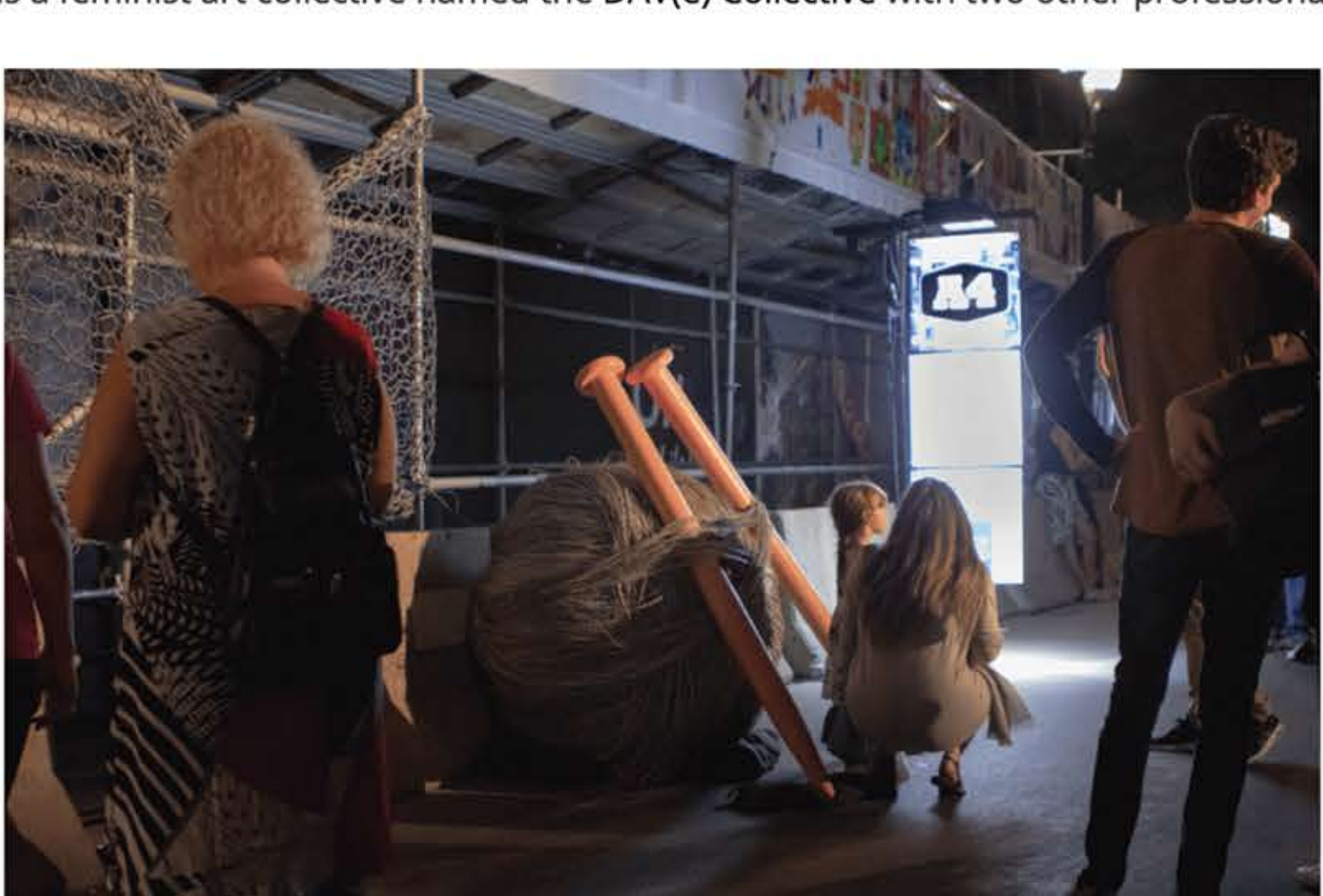


Ramsay herself is a good example of this. She attended York University, where she obtained a bachelor’s degree in fine arts with a minor in English. She juggles multiple roles as an arts educator, a media artist, a visual artist, a filmmaker and more.

She works in a space where women historically have been shut out from. Earlier this year, when Ramsay won a City of Hamilton Media Arts Award, she felt it was important to use her speech to talk about the disappointing representation of women in art.

“[W]e need to give more opportunities for women. I know the art gallery is working on it. Hopefully the trickledown is that all...organizations are working on it, having more women, having more diverse representation of all different types of people, rather than just white dudes. There’s some amazing women artists, even just in the city and we need to do more to celebrate that.”

Ramsay’s focus on intersectional feminism has defined the trajectory of her career. Following her graduation from York, she worked in television editing, but wasn’t happy with the portrayal of women in shows. Since 2010, she has been working in visual art, allowing her to express herself and her views. She currently has a feminist art collective named the DAV(e) Collective with two other professional artists.



“I would like to see more friendly, inclusive, welcoming environments for women so [that] when they get jobs...they [would] want to stay in them. And the same in art. We just need more representation in all of these fields and safer [and] more inclusive spaces for women in general,” she explained.

There’s a definite need for more welcoming spaces in the art world where thoughtful artists like Ramsay can exist in. Unfortunately, her experiences as a woman in the art world run parallel to the experiences of women working in several different fields, including STEM.

Some days Ramsay is optimistic and some days she is not. She is encouraged by the progress that is being made towards creating better environments for women, but sees how slow this progress can be. There’s no doubt that her expansive piece and all the work that she has done is helping carve out the space she strives for.