



UNRAVELED

Confronting The Fabric of Fiber Art

A Group Show Curated by Indira Cesarine

April 17th - May 28th, 2021

THE UNTITLED SPACE

45 Lispenard Street, NYC

ARTIST STATEMENTS

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

Amber Doe, Carol Scavotto, Caroline Wayne, Christy O'Connor, Daniela Puliti, Delaney Conner, Dominique Vitali, Elise Drake, Elizabeth Miller, Hera Haesoo Kim, Indira Cesarine, Jamia Weir, Jeila Gueramian, Jody MacDonald, Julia Brandão, Kathy Sirico, Katie Cercone, Katie Commodore, Katrina Majkut, Katy Itter, Kelly Boehmer, Linda Friedman Schmidt, Lisa Federici, Marianne Fairbanks, Mary Tooley Parker, Melanie Fischer, Melissa Zexter, Mychaelyn Michalec, Mz Icar, Orly Cogan, Robin Kang, Rosemary Meza-DesPlas, Ruta Naujalyte, Sally Hewett, Sarah Blanchette, Sooo-z Mastropietro, Sophie Boggis-Rolfe, Stacy Isenbarger, Stephanie Eche, Victoria Selbach, and Winnie van der Rijn.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

unravel [uhn-rav-uhl] to separate or disentangle the threads of (a woven or knitted fabric, a rope, etc.). to free from complication or difficulty; make plain or clear; solve: to unravel a situation; to unravel a mystery.

“UNRAVELED: Confronting the Fabric of Fiber Art” investigates the narratives of contemporary fiber artists. The exhibition brings together a diverse group of artists who each address through their own personal vision, materials, and methods, works that are deeply rooted in the history of feminism, in the intersection of art and craft, addressing our living experiences and personal languages. We live in a world of extremes - on one hand, the pandemic has brought forth an intensity on digital and online programming peaking with the emergence of NFT art, and on the opposite end of the spectrum we are seeing a return to the comforts of the home and along with it a renaissance of organic and handmade artworks that embody that spirit. The laborious and repetitive methods required to create one work of fiber art can take hundreds of hours yet equally the creation process is often referred to as a mediative act of healing, allowing for an expressive personal and cultural interrogation.

Fibers have been an integral part of human civilization for thousands of years. Textile art is one of the oldest art forms, dating back to prehistoric times. Despite early works of textiles such as embroideries and tapestries having been made by both men and women, the tradition of textiles and needlework evolved into that of “women’s work” and was not only dismissed as not “important” but was literally banned from the high art world by the Royal Academy in the 18th century (circa 1769). With the rise of the women’s movement as well as technological advances, women reclaimed the medium, subverted its history as a lesser art form, and transformed it into a tool of expression, of protest, of personality. From early suffrage movement embroidered banners to the groundbreaking exhibitions and works of female pioneers such as Bauhaus weaver Anni Alber’s momentous solo show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1949, Lenore Tawney’s exhibition at the Staten Island Museum in 1961 to Judy Chicago’s groundbreaking 1979 work “The Dinner Party”, we have seen the medium evolve and inspire new generations of fiber artists.

“UNRAVELED: Confronting the Fabric of Fiber Art” explores this new wave of female-identifying artists who are using materials ranging from thread and yarn to human hair, fabrics, and discarded clothing, among a range of other components to unravel the “language of thread” with works that provoke and interrogate. Whether drawn from a deeply personal narrative, or rooted in political motivation, each artist weaves, spins, sews, and hooks the viewer with their detailed and intricate textures that communicate and empower. The exhibition presents two and three-dimensional pieces that explore with gravity and humor our contemporary culture, its beauty, flaws, and idiosyncrasies through murals, assemblages, fragile and gestural threads, meditative, and metaphorical fibers. “UNRAVELED: Confronting the Fabric of Fiber Art” pushes the boundaries, investigates ancient as well as new materials and techniques, and presents a contemporary universe of the language of women and their interwoven, progressive vocabulary.”

– **Curator Indira Cesarine**

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Amber Doe

I am a multimedia artist who uses sculpture and performance to bear witness to the experiences of black women even as American society aims to render us and our lives as invisible and meaningless. Despite the prevalent “urban black” narrative, my experience is tied to the natural world, and I use materials that reference my desert environment and my lived experience as a black woman with Indigenous roots: palm leaves, branches, flowers, hair extensions, and cotton rope all give form to my sculptures, installations, videos, and performances.

Carol Scavotto

My work has been largely motivated by the embarrassment I felt as a child growing up at a time when dyslexia was not well recognized or understood. Being dyslexic forced me to become adept at reading people and situations via body language and facial expressions.

Trying not to draw attention to my shortcomings in a classroom setting led me to become a master of disguise, often wearing a mask of understanding to conceal my embarrassment. Reading faces and situations so acutely taught me to search for the backstory to everyone's facade. An equally strong motivator in my work has been the years I spent doing gymnastics, figure skating, and ballet, activities that focus on the beauty and strength that the human body can consciously create.

In my work I am continually asking questions and exploring stories and situations. I have always played with dolls, and I still do. Through my sculptures, drawings, videos, and paintings of the doll-like representations of people I create, I have adopted a voice that allows me to address personal and social issues - racism, ageism, sexism and social injustices - with non-threatening imagery, assigning emotions and attributes to a frozen expression in a staged setting that often mimics a stop-action performance piece. Many “isms” are veiled under the cloak of civility, supporting my intrigue of unearthing the backstory behind the facade.

Growing up I was surrounded by my mother's collection of Japanese prints. The depth of storytelling and the lyrical narrative story lines of these images left an enduring impression and always brings me to a place of intrigue, beauty, and serenity. My strong attraction to Japanese prints led me to Shunga (Japanese erotic) art, an inspiration in this series. Shunga and much other erotic art portray the genitals in forms that are beautiful. My erotic artwork intentionally omits direct representation of the genitals and instead uses flowers and other images and gestures as a metaphor, thus leaving room for the viewer to personalize the narrative of each piece. For me, erotica embodies confidence and exploration of self in relation to another, and an embracing of joy, with an intentional flirtatious quality that conveys affection and humor with an ethereal quality.

Being highly aware of body language, my work has always incorporated suggested or overt undercurrents of sensuality and eroticism. Respecting and responding to body language and reading faces is a sensual and visceral interaction. Early in my career my work was louder and more demanding. Decades later, while social issues have altered very little, my viewpoint has evolved. I am no longer in debate mode. Maturity has given me a viewpoint that has “lowered the volume” of my artistic voice: I feel I can communicate more eloquently and firmly yet gently, calmly commanding the ownership of self-respect from oneself as well as others.

This erotic themed body of work grew as I recoiled from our collectively acrimonious social climate. I felt the need of a figurative, collective and supportive hug. The work is spoken from a sensual female voice, confident in her value and worth both to herself and the society at large, not one of objectification. The backstory to this series is one of female sensuality, a powerful force, one that challenges the patriarchal hierarchy. Females and female identifiers are too often shamed for their power, undermining their vitality and beauty; too often made to feel guilty for the aggressions railed at them. Sensuality can lead to sexuality; yet sensuality is a power in its own right. Fearing its power has allowed society to feel it has the right to deface and override its perceived threat with verbal and physical force. This work exposes the beauty masked behind the facade of modesty by claiming ownership of strength and beauty.

As a multidisciplinary artist it is necessary for the medium chosen for each series to support the narrative. The Erotic series began with pen and ink drawings intertwining two bodies in suggestive sexual positions. As I continued to create work in the series, the Mulberry paper no longer served how the pieces were evolving. The fluid sensuality of silk strengthens the visceral aspect of the narrative. My interaction with the silk involves the draping of the fabric over my body as I am handling it, molding it almost as I stitch myself into it. The medium of embroidery and stitchery reflect traditionally preconceived notions of submissiveness and domesticity of the female gender.

Caroline Wayne

In meticulously beaded sculptures I pull from my autobiography to illustrate stories of trauma, sexuality, intimacy, and growth. I use couture millinery and embellishment techniques to communicate through craftsmanship. Detailed beading and cyclical patterning emphasize the consistent labor in the repetitive motion of hand-sewing, that which mirrors the emotional and psychic labor expended in order to manage the suffering a body can accumulate over time. My sculptures translate the life experience of a survivor of complex trauma through the lens of glittering beadwork in order to recount deeply traumatic stories for the same cultural collective that due to repression, denial, censorship and deliberate silencing, has barely built a tolerance to seeing and hearing the reality that is the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse. I believe that through symbolism, softness, and aesthetics, I can bring this content to a public platform in a way that might offer an audience the space and time to digest the underlying narrative rather than immediately reject it upon recognition. Beauty and light can often serve as our entry point into deeper considerations when it feels too difficult to see through the dark.

Christy O'Connor

Carried Trauma I stems from a larger body of work titled Victim Shame, Body Blame, which was an analysis of American rape culture, toxic masculinity, and the ever-lasting effects our patriarchal society has had on both men and women, as we continue to blame and shame the victims of sexual violence as perpetrators are rendered free from culpability. This body of work scrutinizes the amalgamation of victim shaming tropes that men and women are taught throughout their lives, both passively and actively, through social norms, pop culture, our educational and legal systems, religious establishments, and familial influences and upbringing.

The sculptural form, Carried Trauma I, was constructed with dress making patterns, glue and thread, molded into the shape of a female torso. The thread is sewn into the work, scarring the form. The scarring is representative of the physical, mental, and emotional trauma that victims of sexual violence carry on and within their bodies as a result of that brutality.

Delaney Conner

Conner's *Femme* and *Visage* series primarily serve as explorations of geometric abstraction and as studies on color fragmentation in the deconstruction of portraiture, focusing mainly on the female form and facial profiles. These works aim to highlight the dichotomy between feeling beautiful and becoming sexualized that women often experience when they are perceived through the oeuvre of modern society. By abstracting identifiable features and removing individual characteristics to varying degrees, the artist explores the perception of the female form. Her mission is to create broadly familiar subjects that reflect femininity as part of the whole rather than the individual. Each piece is unique in its perspective of the subject, color, and geometric construction, but when viewed together they provide a diverse representation of female forms. To counteract the simplicity of the abstractions, Delaney provides depth through the intricacies of the textures and patterns created within each geometric cell. The intricacy of the fibrous details through which each piece is constructed are perceived only upon closer examination, providing a duality in the viewer's understanding of the tectonics of each piece analogous to our understanding of people. This show calls attention to our perceptions of ourselves as well as how we perceive others.

Dominique Vitali

Dominique Vitali is a multidisciplinary artist specializing in embroidery and printmaking. Her work focuses on her personal experiences living within the confines of a female body, exploring sexuality, religion, and body image. The shared narratives of childbirth, menstruation, dysmorphia, sexual violation, and societal scrutiny all come into play and find connections with the viewers in their shared commonality. Catholicism—its pageantry, its patriarchy, and the tightrope walk between madness and mysticism—has factored heavily into much of her imagery. The stories depicted are deeply personal and, filtered through the lens of a woman, inherently political.

Vitali's canvas of choice for her embroidered narratives is vintage lingerie, with its inherently sexual, incredibly personal, pre-existing histories. She finds it an interesting juxtaposition to tell her stories using a skill so entwined in feminine piety, all upon a canvas that is historically sexual in both its iconography (simultaneously enhancing and masking sexuality) as well as its proximity to the previous owner's flesh. Vitali's work in this medium plays with the aesthetic contrast between unexpected, bold imagery and delicate, utilitarian garments, oftentimes venturing unashamedly into deeply intimate subject matter.

With her works on paper, Vitali is currently immersed in an ongoing series of large-scale monoprints that explore the narratives of various women, both fictional and non-fictional, whose stories have captivated her in the shift that occurs when re-imagined through a more contemporary female lens. Her hope is to find her own truths through literally reconstructing disjointed pieces of prints and stitching them together, re-forming her own interpretations of the stories.

Vitali currently lives and works in the New York area, and has shown in galleries both in the U.S. and abroad. Recent highlights include a printmaking residency in Venice, Italy at Studio Fallani, and inclusion in the esteemed North American Printmaking Biennial.

Elise Drake

Drake's work is a laborious and tactile response to the discriminating binaries implicit in the society in which we live. The work centers around the social, emotional, and existential impact of

technology and the imbalance of power in modern-day life. Her focus is on social change, the representation of the real, and what it means to be part of a digital culture that intentionally uses vanity as an obscure panopticon.

Elizabeth Miller

Hair is a part of all of us. Our skin anchors it. We live within it. And because of it, hairstyles and designs have enjoyed a rich, multi-hemispheric tradition that has spanned the millennia.

Liz Miller's work explores the connection between our roots and contemporary America. Textile, ancestry and contemporary black culture are her inspirations. Her work takes the form of static installations, artifacts of rituals and/or full-scale performances, films, and social experiments.

Cataloging hair stories since her formative years, Miller celebrates the limitless potential of hair, most often as it relates to African American culture. The work questions hair and body politics, while addressing such issues as appropriation, classism, gender, ethnicity, anti-blackness, equity, identity, and the commodification of the black body.

Hera Haesoo Kim

My current work strives to grasp the inexplicable 'void' which exists between two seemingly opposite realms – the conscious and subconscious. I define this void as a state where the conscious and subconscious spheres overlap and interlock. Herein lies an ambiguous space where thoughts float in and out, neither the conscious nor the subconscious being the dominant force. In my practice, I aim to create a space to facilitate an audience interaction that allows better understanding of the void.

When I was 17 I experienced a temporary heart failure. I took electroencephalogram (EEG) tests and witnessed the movements of my brain waves reacting to my spectrum of senses and emotions. This sparked my initial fascination with the human consciousness, its regulatory capacity, and visualization of the unconscious. I began to explore the best way to visually represent the disparity between intangible, amorphous thoughts, and the physical human brain. This culminated in a project called *The Gray Monster Inside Me*, in which viewers are asked to place a structure on their heads, stepping inside the work physically and mentally. I define this space as a 'room of ambivalence,' where a continual fluctuation of contradictory attitudes and feelings occur, encouraging the audience to access the space between the conscious and subconscious.

My interest in capturing this void has continued with various visual archives that document my emotions and memories in a tangible way. I intend to capture the place where my intuitive moments live: a place of stored memory. This practice has taken several forms, including *Flat Map to Rabbit Hole*, a series of drawings in which I desire to capture and record certain 'moments' to re-feel the emotions and re-create the moment, as well as an ongoing archive of materials, *Never Settled*, that spark spontaneous reflection.

Recently, my interest in exploring the void materially has expanded to creating a space to facilitate an audience interaction that allows for better understanding of the void. In recent projects *Veggy Bar 9 2+7* and *Nutrient Power Plant Summer*, I aim to engage the broader public sphere through apartment projects and interventions in kitchen space, where I facilitate an experience of the void in private and personal spaces through performance. By infiltrating and altering these private spaces, I can create a hybrid space that allows me to actively facilitate an audience engagement with subconscious memory. In kitchen projects specifically, I initiate these

experiences by altering the visual form of a common dish or conducting experiments that draw attention to emotional responses to food.

Stored information and stored memory, especially when archived as visual material in my practice, show the faces of our real experiences. My ultimate goal is to invite viewers to a first-hand sensing of the 'contrariety-void', a mental no-place they have never experienced before. My work serves as a bridge for my audience to come to grips with the unexplained. I invite them to this place to interact with senses deemed incomprehensible, where intuitive and unpredictable emotions are welcome.

Indira Cesarine

Empowering feminist themes are often a point of departure for my multi-sensory series. My work questions the place of humanity in context with contemporary civilization and is often influenced by autobiographical content and women's history at large. I connect with thematic subject matter that engages a narrative of social discourse and art activism. As a multi-disciplinarian artist, I often work across several mediums including photography, video, sculpture, painting, and printmaking to convey a rich and diverse narrative. Through my exhibitions and artwork, I challenge the status quo, as well as tackle stereotypes and double standards. I draw from historical narratives in an effort to create empowering artwork that can have an impact on the viewer, be a catalyst for change or provide insight into history which may have been overlooked. As an artist, I find it is more effective to communicate my ideas through visual and sensory explorations that can uniquely address the world we live in today.

I have been sewing, stitching and creating with thread since I was a child, although it wasn't until the pandemic that I had time to experiment with needlework with my artwork. I have always been inspired by the history of "women's work" and incorporating its vocabulary into my artwork as an inspiring force, using it as a tool for empowerment and honoring its legacy. My threaded photography series "Fertility Goddess" features renowned dancer Katherine Crocket as muse, with each stitch a metaphor for the power of women, not only to give life, but also embracing divine femininity.

Jamia Weir

Being an artist-teacher allows me to fully utilize my experiences in visual art, acting, music, and movement, as an inspiration guide to my young students. I find that my experiences as a teacher are intertwined with my art practice. Living in Los Angeles, in recent years I've delved into improvisational acting on local stages and in workshops as my art took a more performative turn. I have discovered through improv, that I've become a student, teacher and practitioner of Creativity itself, learning and exercising firsthand concepts of the creative process such as the celebration of failure, or challenging yourself to "find the game" for example, in front of an audience.

This idea applies to visual artmaking as well. I'm currently studying "improv quilting" and learning the rules of traditional quilting, to then sort of "break" them, as one does in improv upon the stage. Utilizing the "Yes, and..." approach, I add on as I go; I listen to my art and it becomes an intuitive conversation back and forth between us. Working with my hands is my way of working through emotions at a tumultuous time in our history, communicating through the flow of my creative process...I process the now. The usage of fibrous and textured materials like fabric, yarn and thread, lend a comfort to the hand and mind and an ancestral connection that all feed into the need for self-care at this time as well. I let my artwork guide me, as I follow it along.

Jeila Gueramian

I like to inspire exploration. I create alternate worlds and invite people to lose themselves in them: awaken their senses, feel like a kid, be in the moment, laugh or be a little scared, stop and ask a question, get involved in a fantasy, believe in the magical.

The found materials I use whether from my past or someone else's past are a catalyst point. These items often have a sense of comfort and help us recognize things that may have been a part of our childhood or past. This helps the viewer transport back to a time and place and feel those feelings all over again.

Jody MacDonald

I am consumed with the construction and performance of identity.

Each textile figure begins with a photographic transfer of my face. The works are not self-portraits but rather a series of roles that I have cast myself in. These roles transgress boundaries to critique current social and political issues, connecting to the viewer through humor and pathos.

The piece featured in UNRAVELED is from my current series, Freaks, Geeks, and Strange Girls, inspired by carnival freak show archetypes.

The freak show's practice of blurring fact and fiction mirrors my fascination with real vs. fake. I am enchanted by objects and individuals that - whether through masquerade, posturing or camouflage - are not quite what they seem. This attitude of imitation carries through into creation: upholstery fringe becomes hair, sandpaper emulates poolside terrazzo, painters' tape stands in as ceramic tile, and three-dimensional objects are flattened into cardboard cutout representations.

Each sculptural diorama represents roughly 200 hours of labor and features an intricately crafted, 20" textile-based figure set inside an elaborate, mixed media environment. With few exceptions all elements are meticulously fabricated by me, merging both fine art and craft materials and techniques.

Featured prominently throughout the dioramas are appropriated and manipulated works of well-known artists such as Hockney, Degas, Koons, and Pollock. Sly references to contemporary culture target IKEA, kombucha bars, fake news, and current politics.

Pwittie Ghul Buhd is inspired - in part - by Cleopatra, the female trapeze artist antagonist in Tod Browning's 1932 cult classic film Freaks. Cleopatra's "normal" exterior belied a wicked, twisted interior.

When her plan to marry the circus Small Man, murder him for his inheritance, and then run away with her Strong Man beau is discovered, she is brutally physically altered by the sideshow's freak community so that her outside matches her inside. The title is in reference to a phrase I was asked to repeatedly speak when I had a speech impediment as a child.

At 1:4 human scale the intimate size and intricate detail of the figures coax viewers in for a closer look where sinister narratives lurk under a veil of dark humor.

Kathy Sirico

I am a Brooklyn-based artist working at the intersection of painting, textiles, sculpture, collage, and installation. My goal is to innovate the field of contemporary abstraction by reimagining aesthetic power as empathetic, feminist, and ecologically conscious.

I create large-scale wall-based sculptural installations and freestanding objects. My collage-based process combines painted acrylic surfaces with new, found, and recycled materials. My work is maximalist, featuring layers of textured surfaces, bright colors, and unexpected materials.

To create a new abstract aesthetic that is itself egalitarian and forward-thinking, I study visual power as it manifests physically, psychologically, and spiritually throughout culture. I research historical systems of visual power across time, considering how color, method, material, scale, and compositional strategy create power. My vision is to offer an alternative aesthetic to dominant western culture's use of visual power as a promotion of patriarchal systems of gender and ecological oppression. I reimagine painting as a system of skins and structures which I materially reorganize into a non-hierarchical, three-dimensional abstract language. My aesthetic is inclusive, uniting materials, strategies, and histories of visual power across fine arts, craft, and architecture.

Katie Cercone

My ongoing practice encompasses interdisciplinary installation art, assemblage, performance, and socially engaged community ritual. This work is based in my long-term, active engagement cross-pollinating the languages of embodied feminism, yoga, folk-mythologies, the shamanic impulse and holistic hip hop. Given the explosion of yoga in the West and growing "wellness" and "music" industries, as a pioneer of Hip Hop Yoga since 2011 I explore the detrimental ways in which the face of both yoga and popular music culture has become mired in Eurocentric beauty standards, puritanical Christian values and community-eroding mechanisms of consumer capitalism.

A major goal of my interdisciplinary art practice is the preservation, cultivation and ultimate resurgence of the worship of the Great Mother Goddess, the reinstating of women as spiritual leaders worldwide, and the restoring to sacred status women's genitalia and symbols of fertility. I'm invested in the shamanic medium as prehistoric queer and the role of the artist as medium between worlds.

My installations, wearables and happenings are an Art form bloated with the genital poetry of the Goddess. My textile works are hand-sewn, fabric based sculptural pieces made from recycled materials that have multiple uses as ritual talismans, wearables, ecstatic birth blankets, dreamcatchers and traveling altars. Each has its own total vision and tapestry of meaning. All these aspects function as would yantras - crystallizing my relatedness to all that is, the woven, devouring nature of reality. More immersive installations become experimental spaces for ritual, play and performance for creatives inclined to the sacred arts. Unorthodox Yogis blending spiritual practice with indigenous intuited herstories, hip hop artists fusing the rap cipher and Hindu kirtan ("mother tongues" based on the power of call and response, or "word to the Mother"). Organic energy exchanges and rich cultural dialogues are the basis of my installations and spaces, and my transformational work lies under a sacred canopy of co-created ritual and magic to align with higher consciousness. This is an Art that naturally straddles genres, a profound language forging a pathway between worlds.

Katrina Majkut

My artwork in the series In Control rejects the stereotypical domestic functionality of samplers. Historically, embroidery prepared women for marriage. Samplers represented domestic skill levels and specific cultural and religious values to potential husbands who sought a woman with the right skills to establish a household – make clothes, darn socks. Cross-stitch was used to advertise and represent specific identities related to womanhood, wifedom and motherhood, but bodily

functions, autonomy and diverse lifestyles were not represented in this textile practice even if they were essential to those roles. The "domestic craft" of In Control attempts to directly challenge this by stitching all products related to (but not limited to) women's health and needs, family planning, and the body with a fully comprehensive, bipartisan and medically honest approach.

Katy Iffer

I use embroidery to reflect on contemporary feminism and society's relationship with the internet. Patterns, repetition, and ritual frequently appear in my work, revealing a religious nature and expressing an obsession with an unattainable perfection. Playing with notions of perfection and expectation is something that I have always been interested in and seems increasingly relevant in the social discourse. Making art becomes an exploration of self-love in a world that is constantly showering us with alienating social norms. I aim to question these social norms and why we are so quick to accept them.

Kelly Boehmer

My soft sculptures display a tragic sense of humor. The response that we have to this imagery relates to the emotional complexity inherent in our relationships, fantasies, and anxieties. Saturated colors and furry textures are juxtaposed with upcycled taxidermy in my work. Delicate, sheer fabrics and faux fur "soften the blow," making anxieties easier to confront. The series of photographs allow the viewer to focus on the small details in my sculptural work.

Iconic works from art history, such as the Capitoline She-Wolf, the Laocoön Group, the Arnolfini Portrait, etc., often serve as a starting point for my work. An expressive mark-making is formed from my sewing aggressively by hand. The unrefined stitches of red thread flow throughout the work. After an exhibition, I reuse my materials by cutting up my old sculptures to make new work. This creates a layered history in the materials, similar to pentimenti (the subtle evidence of corrections in a painting, originating from "repentance").

Linda Friedman Schmidt

My conceptual textile artwork is centered on medium, process, and their associations and relationships. Discarded clothing is my paint. I give second chances to the worn, the damaged, the mistreated, the abandoned, the unwanted, and to myself. My emotional narrative portraits and figurative artworks examine the human condition through my own lived experience. I use discarded clothing to question the marginalization of my subjects while conveying their humanity. I believe that humans are fragile like cloth, all of us "cut from the same cloth," our lives entwined, entangled together sharing a common humanity.

Discarded clothing is the second skin, a medium of identity, emotion, and memory. Under the skin lies emotional pain. I grew up cloaked in sadness, emotionally damaged. There was a tremendous need to transform the pain, to create new skin from old. Discarded clothes are used to untangle identity. I explore the self as split, fractured, and transforming. I deconstruct the clothing with scissors, a tool both destructive and productive that empowers me to make the art and to cut myself loose from the past. The violence of cutting and deconstruction make way for the reconstruction and refashioning of a broken past.

I explore mending, the idea of repair as both a physical and symbolic act relating to individual as well as social trauma. Mending offers hope that a broken present can be transformed into something better. Central to my process is the arrangement and rearrangement of pieces to create a new whole. Fragments assembled and joined become emotional narratives that

interweave past with present, personal history with current social, cultural, political, and feminist issues.

Although my technique resembles rug hooking, I have no interest in rug making. The connection with rugs is conceptual. Rags and rugs are metaphors for discarded and downtrodden humanity. Hooks fill in the holes in the canvas and in my soul. Hooks grab the attention of the viewer and help me reach people on an emotional level with my art. I take rugs off the floor, reinvent, and rescue rags, elevate and celebrate them on museum and gallery walls. What is shoved under the rug is depicted on the surface. Uncovered and revealed are concealed emotions, the unvarnished truth, the reality hidden beneath the surface, topics avoided, and the murky layers that make up our lives.

Lisa Federici

My body of work, that focuses mainly on parts of human anatomy, consists of a mixed media approach which highlights sewn together recycled sari silks. The sari silks I work with are sourced from women's collectives in India and offer the women who gather them and prepare them an opportunity for self-improvement and financial gain.

Having the knowledge that countless women before me have touched and worked with the saris gives the materials a place of honor in my work. These silks, along with sari ribbons and other materials typically relegated to "women's work" and "craft," allow me to establish strong feminist themes within my work. By sewing the materials both by hand and by machine into rudimentary and at times crude facsimiles of the human figure and anatomy, I play with the juxtaposition of traditional women's roles and modern technologies here and across the globe. My hope is for the viewer to have a visceral reaction to their own body which in turn will intrigue them and allow them the opportunity to investigate my work for its nuances and textures. Thereby engaging the viewer and allowing them to experience and interpret the materials and the human form in new and unique ways all while underscoring the female experience and role.

In each individual work I allow the silks to bend, fold, bleed, and fray as they want. By leaving the threads and fibers loose, hanging, and free to move, they become representative of the fluidity and linear quality of veins and capillaries in the human body. Additionally, the flexibility of the silks creates an interplay between human connectivity and human emotion. By using straight pins to represent the piercing of bodies and souls, and a needle and thread to bind all the elements together, I am able to further develop the theme of connectivity through a visual, literal, and figurative coming together of all the materials and elements within my work.

In this series of work, I am committed to exploring the connection and dichotomy between craft, sewing, and fine art. By highlighting women and their role in the home, society, and within their work, coupled with an emphasis on human anatomy, I am able to merge not only the female experience, but the human experience.

Marianne Fairbanks

Marianne Fairbanks makes work that explores the deep meaning in geometry and abstraction as they relate to textile and graphic design vocabularies. Fairbanks approaches weaving, painting, photography, and sculpture with a playfulness of process that destabilizes conventional value systems of hard and soft form-making while digging into more philosophical understandings of material vs immaterial.

The viewer is asked to consider object as photo, photo as pattern, pattern as dimensional; confronted simultaneously with macro and micro, foreground and background, disorienting the viewer as they search for a focus. While the work fights for perceptual attention, it also encourages a deep engagement with our material world in the construction of philosophical belief systems and physical realities.

Mary Tooley Parker

Mary Tooley Parker is a textile maker. Her artwork focuses on realistic interpretations of people and nature, whether from memories, local history, or visual images. Incorporated in her work are new and recycled wool, cotton, and silk fabric, fleece, handspun yarn, silk fiber, metallic fibers, and more. She uses natural and synthetic dyes to create colors as needed.

Textile art is received by the viewer in a different way than fine art, and there is science showing that a different part of the brain is stimulated when viewing a textile. It appeals to the senses, especially touch, and gives a feeling of warmth and familiarity before the brain even registers the visual image. Working in the simple medium of rug hooking affords Parker a strong connection not only to the fibers running through her fingertips, but also to the women who used this medium and other fiber mediums to express themselves during difficult times and with limited materials. Using this medium as a creative expression of her 21st century experience, she carries this tradition into the contemporary art world by taking the work off the floor to be viewed as art.

Melanie Fischer

We are drawn to the grand gesture, the loud assured voice, the bold move, the aggressive brush stroke. I celebrate the opposite: the small moments in our lives - the unremarkable. I honor the overlooked common miracles and unnoticed superpowers that keep our homes, our communities, and our societies going.

For the last couple of decades, I have primarily worked with fabric and thread – that which embraces our everyday. Viewers know how it feels, they can relate to the material just as they connect to the dismissed domesticity and the ordinary but important aspects of daily life.

My most current group of sewn artworks started in celebration of the uncelebrated heroes: the person who can find you a clean public bathroom, the person who steps up and does the dishes or cuts onions for you, but as Covid-19 took over, some of the things I was celebrating became even more pertinent; toilet paper, soap, hand sanitizer. These objects became signs of hope, of safety, of comfort.

Melissa Zexter

Melissa Zexter combines embroidery with photography. She sews by hand directly onto photographs she has taken, combining a traditional practical skill, embroidery, with a modern and mass reproducible process, photography. The artist's fundamental concern is to explore the photograph's material status as three-dimensional object as well as to examine issues of identity, memory, and technology. Her interest in the creation of hand-crafted, unique photographic objects is related to the proliferation of images in the modern age, one where images – and specifically photographic images – have lost their own object status altogether. Through their manipulations of the image's surface with embroidery or the partial removal of the emulsion, the photographs become unique, no-longer reproducible objects. Concerned with the interaction between hand and eye in relation to the photographic image, Zexter's complex works explore

memory and personal experience while manipulating the generic qualities of the photographic print.

Mychaelyn Michalec

My work depicts the mundane matters of domestic life. It uses imagery from home life, documented by secretly photographing the scenes around me using an iPhone. Social media has idealized family life, but I try to illustrate moments of both simultaneous disconnect and connections in the everyday. I then translate these scenes into textiles using both mechanical and hand tools; the yarn is injected through the base fabric with a continuous running stitch, leaving loops on the surface that form and follow the drawing of the design. After the tufting is complete, the rugs are then stretched on a frame like a traditional painting. This type of display renders them not utilitarian, but not the same objectness of a painting, and observes a fluidity of boundaries between craft and art.

Loop pile rugs have been called "America's one indigenous folk art", because both its technique and means of artistic expression were conceived and developed in North America. This rug tradition in rural communities was dynamic and utilized varying techniques and tools. I situate my work within craft because of its feminist tradition of paying tribute to generations of women's domestic and invisible labor. The process of rug tufting and the subject of domesticity combine issues of feminine-aesthetics, craft, and cultural value.

Mz Icar

We create narratives in the form of mixed-media street art and fine art that explore histories and imagine the best-case scenario future from the perspective of women and people of color. We are connoisseurs of arrangement. We arrange and rearrange light, color, materials, things, history, and paradigms. We work in photography, illustration, and mixed media, often weaving together mediums to explore 'what if?' and imagine alternative outcomes as well as concepts for the future particularly around marginalized people.

Orly Cogan

The tableaux I create are inspired by relationships. I work with vintage fabrics and embroideries as a base made by women of previous and more modest eras. I act as a collaborator, modernizing their traditional work and altering its original purpose by updating the content to incorporate the unladylike reality and wit of contemporary women, their struggles, and stereotypes. These issues are different from those of the earlier generation of women who originally embroidered textiles to "feminize" their homes. I mix subversion with flirtation, humor with power, and intimacy with frivolity. My subject matter is frank and provocative, dealing with issues of fertility, sexuality, self-image, isolation, vulnerability, indulgence, and beauty in the mundane, which are designed to challenge social stereotypes embedded within childhood fairytales. My quest is to tell fantastical stories of cultural expression with today's brand of American confessionalism where many of my heroines linger between a public and private realm mixed with yesteryear's kitschy conservatism. My work explores the many flavors of feminism.

Robin Kang

In my practice I explore the connections between contemporary technology, the history of textile fabrication/manufacturing, and its association with ancient spiritual practices. Incorporating graphics drawn from both circuit boards and patterns reminiscent of ancient weaving traditions, my work points to the influence that weaving technologies have had on the development of

humanity's mechanical development and eventually modern computing. Inspired by the influence of Jacquard's punch card system (developed for his loom) on the creation of early computers, to the hand-woven copper wires found on early memory storage hardware, I visualize how our current technological landscape is closely linked to the history of weaving. In parallel to my artistic practice, I have researched the connections between ancient textiles and sacred traditions, leading to apprenticeships with Mayan, Quechua, and Amazonian textile artisans and wisdom keepers. Inspired by the ways knowledge can be recorded within patterns, both in weaving itself and embedded through the ritual process of creating textiles, in my recent work I utilize shapes found on contemporary audio equipment circuits that have striking similarities to ancient textile motifs to create my own mythic motherboard tapestry designs, that envision a fusion of new technologies with a deep understanding of sacred practices and their harmonious existence with nature. This understanding can guide us as we navigate the environmental challenges of our ever-changing digital world.

Rosemary Meza-DesPlas

Rosemary Meza-DesPlas explores the concept of anger as a tool for change by juxtaposing found imagery from social media, art history and mass media. She is interested in how social movements, Women's Marches and #MeToo harnessed anger in order to forefront an array of gender-based burdens. Meza-DesPlas' most recent drawings incorporate her gray hair. She has been sewing with her own hair since 2000. Her hair is hand-sewn into a variety of grounds with small embroidery needles. Meza-DesPlas' decision to collect, sort and utilize hair as a vehicle for artmaking is informed by socio-cultural symbolism, feminism and body issues, and religious symbolism.

Sally Hewett

My practice centers around ideas of beauty and ugliness and the conventions which determine our definition of each. I am interested in how we see things and how we interpret what we see: does my particular way of representing bodies, using fabrics, stitching and embroidery, affect how the content of the work is seen? To some extent I see my work as an investigation of the divide between craft and art.

I love bodies. And it is not the conventionally beautiful bodies that take my eye, it is bodies which show their history, that have been altered by their experiences, that are decorated with bruises, scars, spots, stretch marks, freckles, pigmentation, veins. Bodies that have the marks of life on them. But also bodies which have been deliberately altered and decorated - by man rather than by life - scarification, tattoos, plastic surgery, fillers, etc. Are some characteristics of bodies inherently beautiful, or ugly, or disgusting? Or because we see everything through the veil of culture, fashion and convention is it almost impossible for us to see bodies objectively?

I am currently making a series of medical/surgical pieces, showing bodies that have been altered by disease or surgery. My granny (an upholsterer and seamstress of great skill) had her breast removed as a result of cancer and was hugely grateful to the surgeon for saving her life. But she was almost equally appreciative of what a beautiful stitching job he had done. She was very proud of her scar.

Sooo-z Mastopietro

As a mixed media artist, I gather inspiration through color, texture, composition, humor and irony, which are essential elements to my work giving way to limitless endeavors infused with spirited experimentation and calculated execution. My unique style is an open curiosity which lends itself well to themes from the irreverent to profoundly conceptual. My objective is to achieve infinite

boundaries from a finite form. These intricately manipulated tubes of fabric represent the parts of the sum which inevitably become the sum of bigger parts.

Sophie Boggis-Rolfe

I have always loved exploring new materials that can be used in unpredictable ways. Subjects that I most enjoy are figurativism and portraiture, as there is always an undeniable truth to the human experience. My main method of working is using pins or nails with thread or string to depict something in a realistic manner. This method is called 'Constellations', and my aim is to represent a form by connecting the nails with string. With each line connection the thread/string builds up a tone or shadow. The layering and tactile representation that forms allow me to explore the more multi-dimensional depths of the image. I am drawn to this method as one can appreciate my work from different positions, up close and afar, merging the abstract with realism. Seeing my 'Constellations' in a real-life setting lets viewers understand the material relationship between the elements used in the construction. The 'Constellations' have patterned sharp tones, elevating the features that normally have certain textures. The work looks into a person's soul and sees how it manifests itself. Just as astrology can be seen as relating to someone's personality, some of the 'Constellations' can be read as a metaphor, the connected points constructing the portrait's features. This is similar to the electronic interactions of atoms with their protons and electrons, or neurons that weave themselves in our brains to hold the memory of someone we know. The 'Constellations' are about the small but important connections that inform one's existence.

Stacy Isenbarger

A desire to both hold on to and let go of our past influences drives my mixed-media practice. Contradictions of form and media quietly speak to tensions we have with negotiating our sense of place.

As works seem to pull themselves together or break apart, they act as stand-ins for complex personas confronting their environments-- physical, spiritual or cultural. Visually these material-driven paradoxes can confuse viewers due to their orderly nature, but the tightness of craft makes the tensions within them quickly felt, yet mysteries for us to ponder further. In this way materials contrast and connections act as clues. From upholstered forms, needle work, and velvet to concrete, tree branches, and rocks, I seek ways to express complex negotiations with our edges—our reaches, our landings, our thresholds,... our sense of home.

Stephanie Eche

I create work that questions cultural identity, consumerism, and time-based labor in relation to my experience as a third-generation Chicana. I am interested in texture, layers, craft legacy, and everyday objects. I manipulate natural, found, and repurposed fibers by breaking them down and building them back up, incorporating ancient and contemporary methods such as weaving, knotting, layering, and dyeing or painting.

This process examines the erasure of indigenous cultures as a result of colonization and capitalism, including the assimilation of my Chicana family, both in central Mexico and more recently in Los Angeles, California, and Phoenix, Arizona. Drawing inspiration from Huichol art and mythology, Zapotec weaving, my own memories, family research, and literature, I create imagery that helps me reclaim and understand my mestizo heritage.

Victoria Selbach

Women are my focus; our diverse generational legacies and our individual experiences. Unravelling the complexities of cultural lineage helps illuminate the present and our complicity in where we find ourselves today. My work celebrates women while it challenges me to consider our path and what I will pass on to my daughters and granddaughters.

2020 impelled an installation of smaller constructions, 'We Women'. The series looks at our true nature and the impact Western culture and 'place' have on how we are seen and who we become. Figures are cut from hardwoods in various tones which speak to the construct of race. The figures are set against collected objects unearthed from the past. Each piece is created to be a jewel on its own. When strung together, like paper doll cutouts, they start to tell an important story. The panels begin with the original ecstasy of connecting to our pure natural joy before weaving through some of the manifestations that expectation have on our expression. The series ends with the power of living with a connection to our fiercest nature.

Winnie van der Rijn

I am an artist of opportunity, open to possibilities. I collect materials, experiment with techniques, pursue my curiosities and look for connections, intersections and overlaps. It's a spinning Venn diagram that suddenly locks into place when all of the input mixes with an idea, resulting in the emergence of creative expression. My work exists in the realm of possibility and potential.

My compositions unfold; design and construction happen simultaneously. The structure grows out of a conversation with the materials. I embrace the discarded, the flawed and the marginalized. I create fictional histories, alternative narratives, future truths & imagined worlds in the form of false relics, ritual artifacts and altered portraits.

Themes of memory, identity, gender, beauty and power reflect my everyday experiences, interactions and concerns. Every choice I make about how I spend my time and energy tells the world who I am and what I value. Every time the world speeds up, I react by slowing down—working more and more with my hands in an attempt to balance the universe.

My current body of work is an examination and deconstruction of patriarchal power in menswear. I often wonder about power. I view menswear as symbolic of power - that maybe somehow the power is inherent in the clothing/costume/uniform. I wonder if the wearer brings the power or if the power is imbued in the clothing. I wonder if power is given or if it must be taken. Is it finite? Power is about influence, access, control, security, confidence, strength, self-awareness. It's authenticity without doubt or fear. Power is individual and institutional. Power is problematic because it is, in general, unevenly distributed. I wonder if it needs to be. If power dynamics/relationships are constructed can't they be deconstructed? I wonder what would happen if everyone was able to access their power. I think the power is hiding in the seams and edges of the shirts because they hold all the labor and energy of the making. I am interested in finding vestiges of power in menswear, extracting it and reimagining/reforming/redistributing it. I am dismantling the patriarchy one shirt at a time.