

My art brings empathy towards the environment. It evokes feelings towards the natural world that we more typically reserve for other humans: empathy, compassion, and care. I use grown and discarded fiber to make art that draws attention to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The dialog between maker and materials is intimate; there is an exchange as both our spirits get infused into the work.

It seems necessary to balance my “doing” out in the world with “undoing” in the studio. When engaged with making, the incessant banter of my brain is gone or no longer dominates. My busy hand quiets my brain; it brings my mind to a calmer state. Working in my studio is where I find reflection, nearness, and care. I find it a threshold to freedom and timelessness and get satisfaction in working until things are fully resolved.

At the beginning of making textiles, I could not afford to buy paper, so I made it. Hand constructing is a passion and it has become part of the uniqueness of my wisdom and imagination. Like weaving, handmade paper is an ancient matrix of interconnected fibers. The plants and colors come from the earth whose ingredients are sun, soil, and rain. Canna, mulberry, cotton, tiger lily, *kozo*, iris, flax, abaca, and recycled blue jeans are some fibers that get transformed. I incorporate natural materials like *konyaku* (yam paste), seeds, beeswax, flower petals, and whole plants to convey my ideas.

My devotion to textiles involves a systematic process of building a vocabulary through materials investigation. This science and art include cooking, beating, hand coloring, sheet forming, pressing, and drying to transform fiber into strong beautiful paper. I often use batik-like resist with surface treatments like natural dyes: walnut, persimmon, indigo, and earthy pigments: red iron oxide, carbon black, and ochre. I am intensely driven towards these processes, but it is ideas, emotion and meaning that transform the materials into artwork.

My work is informed by the statistics regarding endangered plant species, polluted water, and current challenges for trees. What more will we lose if we don't change our behavior? I engage people in changing the trajectory of environmental destruction through art which includes reflection, nearness, care and love. There are often representative elements of

nature in my abstract work as evidenced by the image “Collective Paths” (#10). Its shapes and colors show a cloudy earth, a moon around a plant, and the outline of a child who is made up of reflections of water.

Using the same materials and processes as my two dimensional work I create interactive installations. Decades ago I was exposed to the actual work of the seminal fiber artists Shelia Hicks and Magdalena Abakanowicz and that was when I started creating installations viewers entered. “Prayer for Air and Mantra for Water” (#11, #12) is an abstracted waterfall, sections of sky, and viewers offerings about air and water. Installations attract a different audience, but they convey the same message as my two dimensional work. My motivation is to counteract environmental depletion, to preserve and to step lightly on the planet.

Additional representative elements in my work are re-contextualized botany drawings from my great uncle’s books. In his life he documented native species by self-publishing his research and by sending hundreds of plant samples to arboretums nationwide. “Silent Strength” (#5) is an homage to my ancestor but also to the plants whose spirits unfold in the transformation from fiber to handmade paper.

As an emerging artist I had opportunities through work/study and scholarships. I am grateful for my education, and I continue to give back through my devotion to teaching, writing/publishing, and hosting interns. Except for 2 years in Maryland and Italy I have spent my entire adult life in Minnesota. For several decades I contributed to the arts ecosystem by co-running a studio in the Minneapolis warehouse district. This public space hosted over 120 interns of all ages and all walks of life giving them expertise, training, access to facilities, and connections to community. Interns received hands-on learning experiences that were neither university affiliated nor academic in nature. For some it created a foundation for their creative practices. I have found an equilibrium by being involved both with local and national community work like serving on boards/ co-organizing conferences and creating in the studio for renewal.