



Artist Statement:

Maddie Shackelford

There used to be an uncomfortable tension between art and craft. That pressure has since dissipated and been replaced with a new tension – that between art and design. Arguably art and design have different objectives, however I am interested in how they can be the same. Design is becoming less and less about simply displaying information in a visually stimulating way, and more about user experience, empathy and psychology. Being interested in both Fiber Art and Graphic Design, I want to explore how that user experience can be heightened by art, and how design can inspire and grow from roots founded in art.

Because design is sometimes put in a category outside of art I explored this perceived dichotomy between art and design in a recent project. I created a brand and product packaging experience that was extremely elegant, tactile, and gave importance to the experience of opening or unwrapping a purchased product. The piece was about anxiety so I wanted to ease anxiety not just with the products within, but in the packaging experience as well. I did this by including soft and textured embroideries in the lids of the products. Does their inclusion in packaging mean that they are no longer art? I think not. I believe that their existence in the packaging makes the packaging more fine art like. Design and fiber must work in tandem to elevate each other.

When I am creating from fiber the focus of my design is both visual and tactile. Fiber is very visual and can be graphic, but it also begs to be touched. When I am working on a wall piece I primarily think about where it can be hung, how it can be hung, and how light will interact with it. Texture, color, and shadow are all important design elements that go into a piece intended display on a wall. My studies of design and design thinking have caused me to gravitate to objects that are clean, neat, have ample breathing space, employ angular shapes and lines, and also have a pleasing flow. I prefer soothing color that calms a weave structure that might be busier. It is in my nature to want to clean up messes, so my Fiber Art work is never messy, never a thread out of place.

On the opposite side, fiber has a long history in craft and function. When I make something intended for use in a home the design elements have to change. Form, color, texture, and shadow are still important, however it is more important to me to make sure the functional needs of the user are met. For example, can it be machine-washed? Will dye fade or bleed? Does it pill over time? Can it take some abuse? Is it soft, textured, and pleasant to touch? Even though functional pieces are still fiber art, it is important to me that the owners of the objects I make can use them without fear or hesitancy.

I want to give people something they will use and love and pass on to someone else. I want to make precious things that are precious because they are well crafted and beautiful, not because they mean something to me specifically. That's not to say that my work is not imbued with meaning, meaning just isn't the most important part to me. Pieces with heart, made with soul, conviction, and reason tend to be more beautiful than something mass-produced. I think this is because our creativity comes from God, and when we are exercising our creativity and combining it with emotional intelligence we can make beautiful things. For me Fiber Art is an act of worship. It is using the creativity and ability that God gave me. I am still unsure of whether I want the subject of my work to be faith. But if not, the process will always be a worshipful practice for me.

| <u>Title</u> | <u>Original Format</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Figure 1: Let Us Not Tear it But Cast Lots Instead | Mixed Media, 60 in x 24 in |
| Figure 2: This is a Headboard | Mixed Media, 48 in x 18 in |
| Figure 3: No Matter How Hard I Try, I Can't Remember | Dyed Silk, 48 in x 60 in |
| Figure 4: This is a Skirt | Dyed Rayon, 44 in x 17 in |
| Figure 5: Leftover | Mixed Media, 24 in x 20 in |
| Figure 6: This is a Wearable Blanket | Cotton & Wool, 36 in x 60 in |
| Figure 7: This is a Pillow to Put Where it Looks Best | Lyocell & Linen, 14 in x 24 in |
| Figure 8: Out of What You Know & Into Something Better | Lyocell & Wood, 96 in x 15 in |
| Figure 9: These are Pillows for a Couch | Silk & Cotton, 11 in x 30 in |
| Figure 10: Earth Has No Sorrow That Heaven Can't Heal | Cotton, 16 in x 82 in |



Figure 1: Let Us Not Tear it But Cast Lots Instead



Figure 2: This is a Headboard



Figure 3: No Matter How Hard I Try, I Can't Remember



Figure 4: This is a Skirt



Figure 5: Leftover



Figure 6: This is a Wearable Blanket



Figure 7: This is a Pillow to Put Where it Looks Best



Figure 8: Out of What You Know & Into Something Better



Figure 9: These are Pillows for a Couch



Figure 10: Earth Has No Sorrow That Heaven Can't Heal