

THE 100% AUSTRALIAN OWNED TEXTILE ART MAGAZINE

TEXTILE

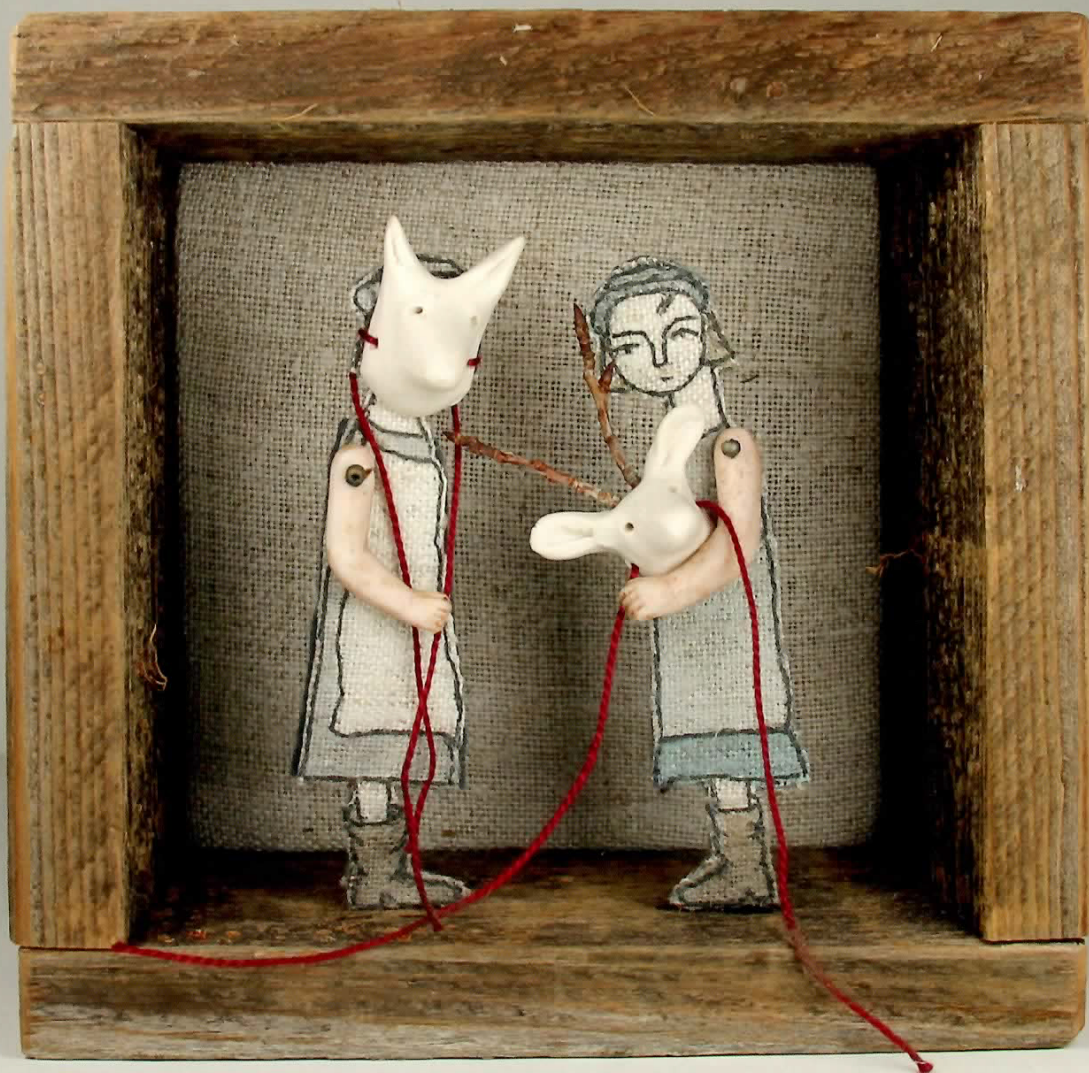
FIBRE FORUM

ARTIST PROFILES * EXHIBITIONS * BEST PRACTICE * REVIEWS

INSPIRING ARTISTS

FROM AROUND THE GLOBE!

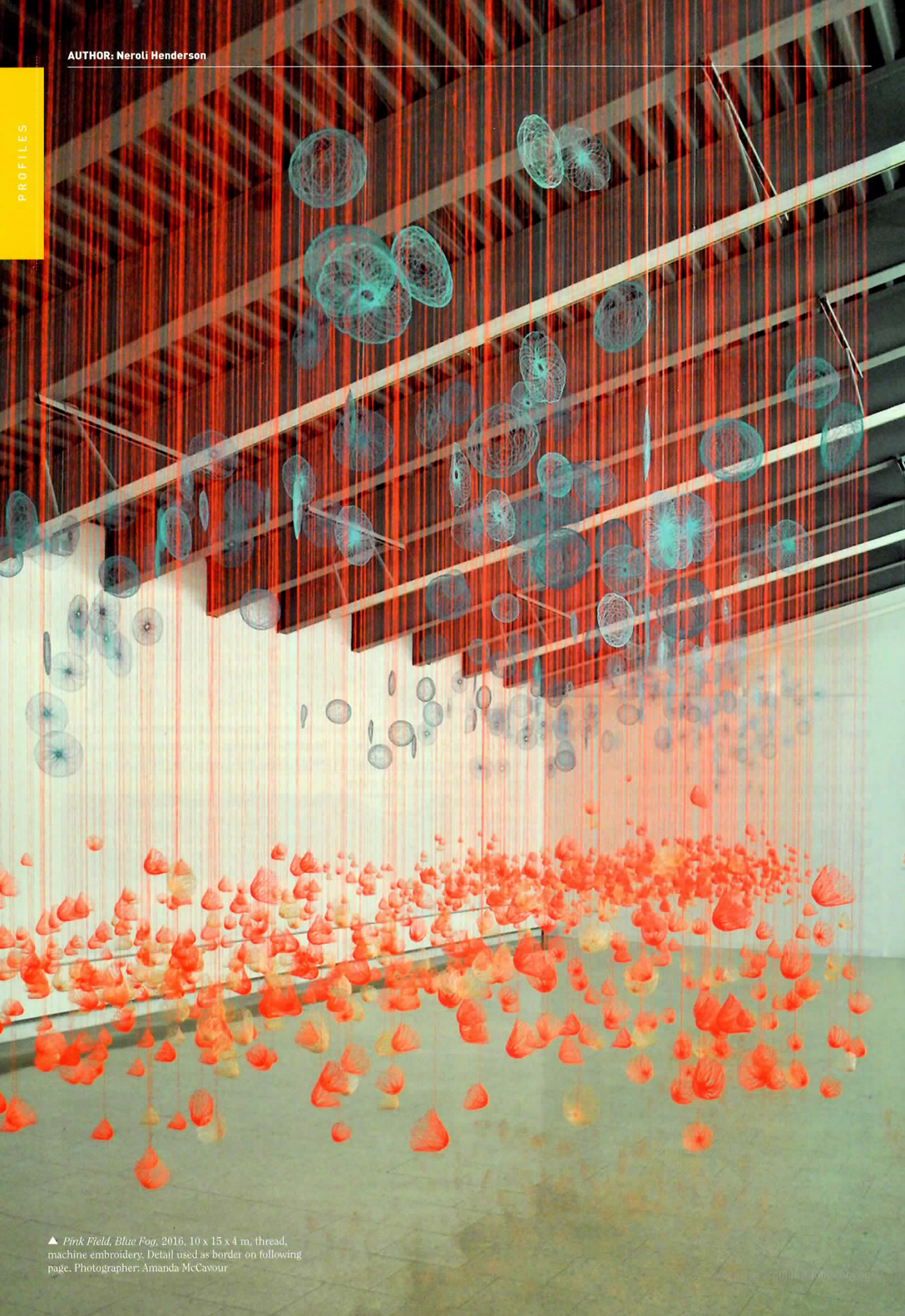
Cindy Steller



STORIES OF MIGRATION

TWENTYONE+





▲ *Pink Field, Blue Fog*, 2016, 10 x 15 x 4 m, thread, machine embroidery. Detail used as border on following page. Photographer: Amanda McCavour



Amanda McCavour

Toronto based 31-year-old artist Amanda McCavour creates ethereal, translucent installation assemblages that appear to float in space. This transparency and perceived fragility give her large scale painterly embroideries a dreamlike quality and surrealistic charm.



N: You studied fine art focusing on drawing at York University in Toronto, Canada and moved on to complete your MFA in Fibers and Material Studies at Tyler School of Art (Philadelphia, USA). At what point did you decide to move into stitch as a medium and away from conventional art techniques?

A: I started using stitch as a way to draw during my undergraduate degree. I was in a class where we were exploring an expanded definition of drawing, defined simply as "line". I started to think about how interesting thread was as a line and how stitch could be used to create images. I wanted to see if I could make a drawing that existed entirely of thread. I tried sewing into different surfaces and then removing the base — I sewed into paper and sheets of wax before finding

water soluble stabiliser which is a surface that washes away with water and perfectly suited to my needs.

N: You create large scale installations in a medium often reserved for small pieces. What led you to explore embroidery in this way?

A: While participating in an Artist-In-Residence Program, I was challenged by two Curators —Patrick Macaulay and Melanie Egan — to think more about scale in my work. At this point in time, I was making pieces depicting my own hands at a 1:1 scale. Patrick and Melanie asked the question- "what if the work got bigger?" This spurred me on to many projects that engage with spatial perception in a different way.

N: How your pieces are suspended gives them a spooky, otherworldly quality. Is this an intentional

emotive response you wanted to give your viewers?

A: The otherworldly quality created by my thread installations allows these works to create spaces that feel in-between the real and the imagined or remembered. Many of my pieces depict spaces such as apartments I have lived in and natural landscapes, but the way that the works are rendered, through embroidery, takes them out of reality creating an alternative experience.

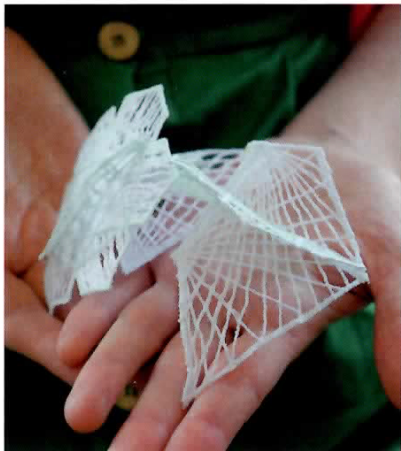
Threads assumed fragility lends itself to installations that make people envision they would be easily unravelled and are on the cusp of falling apart. This combination of perceived delicacy is in direct opposition to the actual structural strength of unravelled fibres and I like to explore this in my work.



▲ *Floating Garden Detail 2*, 2011-2015, 4 x 4.5 x 3 m, thread and machine embroidery. South Puget Sound Community College Gallery, Olympia, WA, USA. Photographer: Amanda McCavour. Produced with support of The Surface Design Association, The Ontario Arts Council and Maison des métiers d'art de Québec.

▶ *Living Room 2*, 2014-2015, 4.5 x 3 x 3 m, thread and machine embroidery. Photographer: Amanda McCavour.

▼ *Ice Crystals*, 2011, 3 x 3 x 3 m, thread and machine embroidery. Photographer: Agata Piskunowicz. Produced with the support of the Ontario Arts Council.

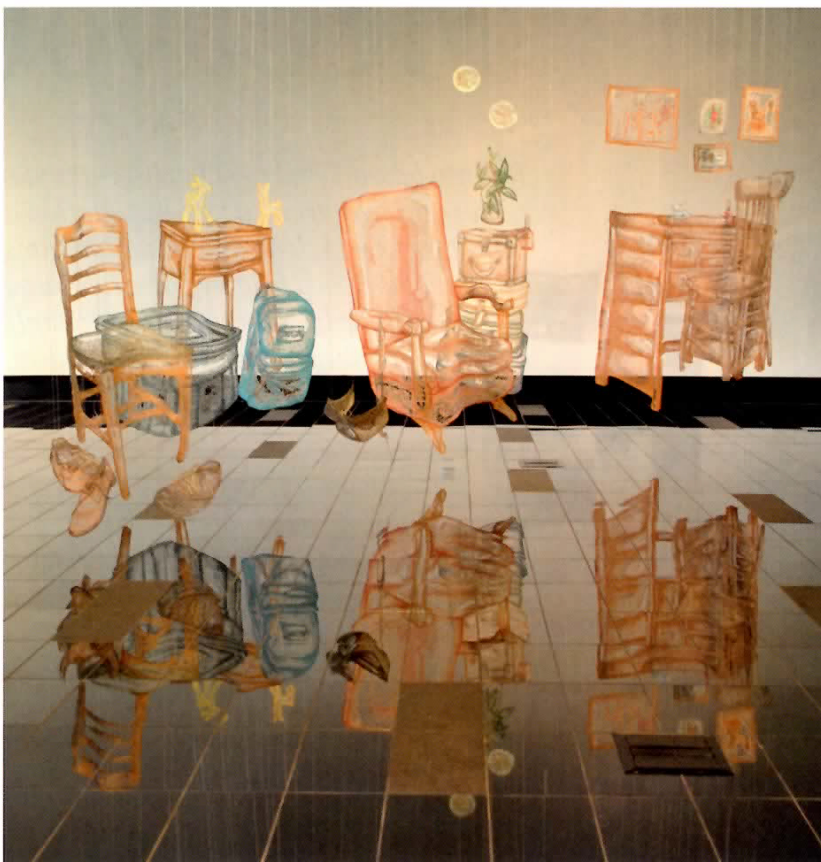


N: Have you found that your career has been any way limited by not working in a conventional art medium or do you think it's given you an edge?

A: I think that so many contemporary artists are working in experimental media that I have not found working with textiles to be a limitation. I think that it is easy when working with materials that are as seductive as textiles to get really caught up in the process and begin to lose distance from the work. But I have not found the medium to be limiting in terms of gallery and viewer receptions.



▲ *Pink Field, Blue Fog* Opening Reception, March 2016, Olin Art Gallery, Washington & Jefferson College, Washington, PA, USA




N: What's been the highlight of your career so far?

A: All the travelling I have done in the past 6 months for solo exhibitions! I've been to Roanoke, Olympia, St. Louis and Washington (all in the USA) and Cornerbook (Canada) in the past 4 months alone! Going to Virginia Beach to install my first solo show at The Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (VA, USA) was a major highlight for me. I stayed in a beautiful hotel right by the ocean so I could watch the sunsets and I even got to see some dolphins!

N: Please tell us about your favourite piece.

A: My favourite work to date is my most recent piece titled *Pink Field, Blue Fog*. This piece transforms the interior of the gallery into a surreal landscape. Thousands of neon pink sculptural forms and bright blue circles hang from individual threads, allowing you to be immersed within a colourful, playful environment. This work was installed at *Washington and Jefferson College* at the *Olin Art Gallery in Washington (USA)* and the students took the opportunity



► *Living Room Detail*, 2010-2011,
3 x 3 x 3 m, thread and machine
embroidery. Photographer: Agata
Piskunowicz. Produced with the
support of the Ontario Arts Council

to walk around the work and lie down underneath it.

N: How do you design such large scale installations from your studio?

A: I share a small studio space with embroidery artist Kate Jackson. There is not much room to set up my pieces before they make their way to galleries and museums. When I am designing a piece, I usually do a lot of sketching and then move to samples and tests. From there I work out a small setup of what I want the work to look like. Sometimes this involves multiplying the pieces by thousands, or picking out what pieces of furniture I would like to depict in a space.

For the most part, the first time I set up a work, it's at the exhibition. This keeps the installation process very active for me. I am constantly making decisions while the piece gets hung. In this way, the installation of the work is an integral and active part of making the piece.

N: Do you have a particular part of your art career that you consider a turning point in any way?

A: I would say participating in a three-year Artist-In-Residence Program at Harbourfront Centre (Toronto, ON, Canada). Graduating from a Fine Art program, I didn't know where my work stood in the context of Craft and Design. Being accepted into the residency gave me the confidence, time, space and support system of other artists and curators. This helped me in these first three critical years to start my career as an artist.

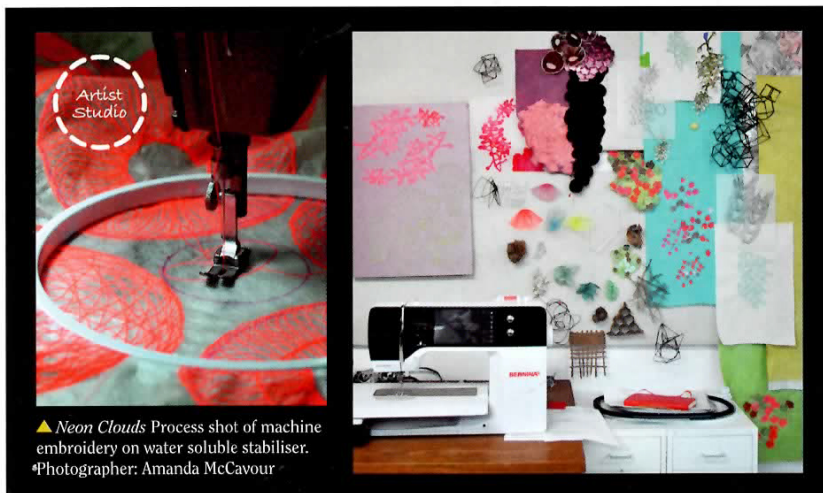
N: What exhibitions / pieces are you working on this year?

A: I am creating embroidered pieces that stack, layer, bend and fold — borrowing from structures found in nature such as minerals and plant life. I'm exploring digital embroidery and how this technology can work in conjunction with my freemotion embroidery technique. I have several solo shows lined up between now and 2018 in both the USA and Canada.

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▲ *Neon Clouds* Process shot of machine embroidery on water soluble stabiliser.
*Photographer: Amanda McCavour



▲ *Floating Garden*, 2011-2015, 4 x 4.5 x 3 m, thread and machine embroidery. South Puget Sound Community College Gallery, Olympia, WA, USA. Photographer: Amanda McCavour. Produced with support of The Surface Design Association, The Ontario Arts Council and Maison des métiers d'art de Québec.

▼ *Neon Clouds Detail*, 2011-2015, 10.5 x 9 x 4 m, thread and machine embroidery. Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, VA, USA. Photographer: Amanda McCavour.

