

Connecting Threads

In our fast-paced world of electronic devices and digital communications, we can take for granted the soft, tactile world of textiles that is central to our daily lives. Fabrics of all types are part of our activities and environments. Artists recognize this commonplace and necessary role that textiles play both inside and outside the home. Often associated with fashion or craft, textiles do not typically receive as much prominence in art museums as they deserve. Contemporary artists have long been creating astonishing works using fibre materials as a medium and exploring textiles as a subject.



Learning intentions for this unit:

- Understanding what are textiles and fibers.
- Looking at contemporary artists who create artworks from textiles that make a **statement** of our time.
- Learn about creative process and techniques used to create **textile** sculpture.
- Learn and practice a **variety** of methods of creating textile sculpture such **as crocheting**, weaving, sewing, etc.
- **Students will** create an organic **creature** that will be **added** to a collaborative installation.

What do you know about...

- Fabric arts...Fiber arts?
- What can you make with fabric...**yarn**...thread?
- What **methods** could be used to create art with the above **materials**?

WHAT IS TEXTILE?

A **textile** is a flexible material consisting of a network of natural or artificial fibers (yarn or thread). Yarn is produced by spinning raw fibres of wool, flax, cotton, hemp, or other materials to produce long strands. Textiles are formed by weaving, knitting, crocheting, knotting or tatting, felting, or braiding.

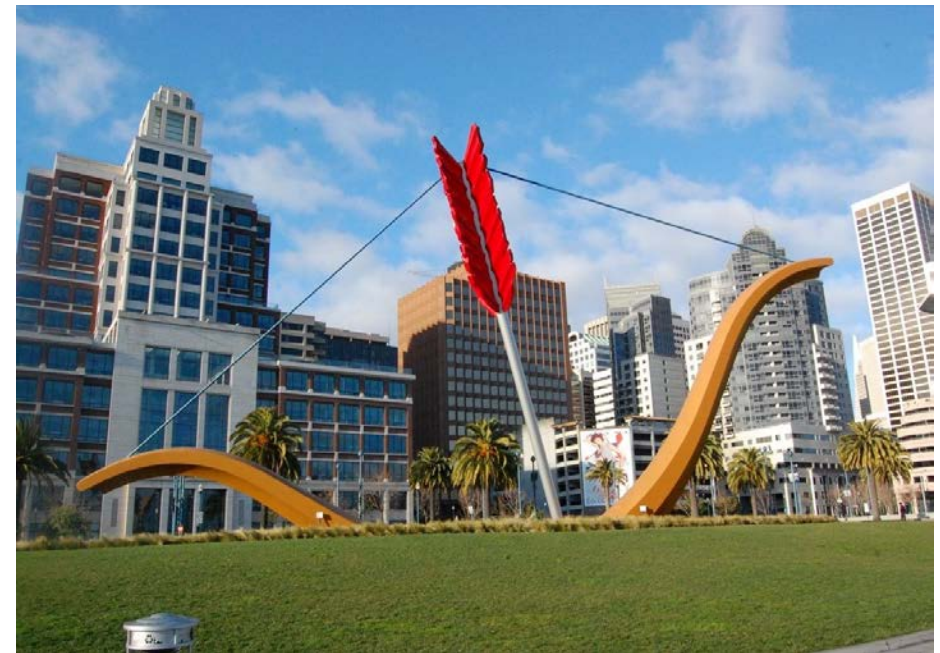
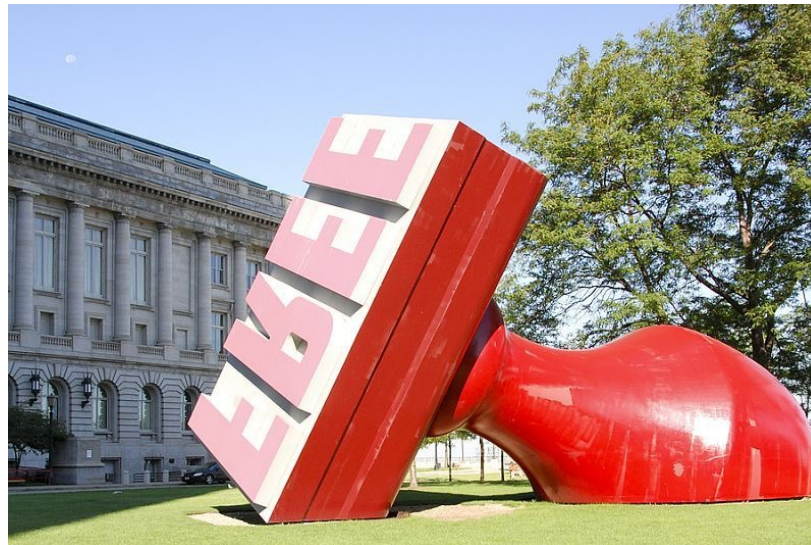


Contemporary **Textile** Sculptures





Claes Oldenburg (born January 28, 1929) is an American sculptor, best known for his public art installations typically featuring large replicas of everyday objects. He not only worked on public art, his gallery work of soft sculpture versions of everyday objects reigned him the king of **Pop Sculpture** since the early 1960's. His **everyday items** sculptures were presented on a **magnified** scale that reverses the **traditional relationship** between the viewer and object.





He shrinks the spectator into a **bite-sized** morsel that might be devoured along with a giant piece of cake, or crushed by an **enormous** ice pack. His **work shows** us just how small we are, and serves as a vehicle for his smart, witty, critical, and often **wickedly funny** insights on American culture.





Oldenburg's object, no matter how apparently **insignificant** in themselves, become **expressive** entities, almost like characters in a stage play.

Floor Burger (1962)



Floor Cake (1962), a giant squishy triangle 5' high and 9' long, reverses the familiar relationship between this object and the viewer (it looks like it might eat us). *Floor Cake*, for instance, was assembled in layers, as one might make a cake, its soft medium and opaque, slightly splotchy paint mimics frosting, and finally, even though this element is invisible, empty ice cream cartons and foam rubber were used for the interior filling, giving metaphorical guts to the piece.



Sheila Hicks (Born 1934), American artist, is a pioneer in **fiber arts**. She blurs the boundaries between **painting** and **sculpture** with her **vibrant** woven and textile works, which she creates in many shapes and sizes, **from wall** mountings that mimic the format of painting to **suspended** pieces that hang from the **ceiling** to floor like textured **columns**.



Sheila Hicks,
*Sculpture Bas
Relief* (2016)



Sheila Hicks,
Chimera (2013)

Escalade Beyond Chromatic Lands (2018). Textile had been relegated to a secondary role in our society, to a material that was considered either functional or decorative,” Sheila Hicks has explained. “I wanted to give it another status and show what an artist can do with these incredible materials.”

Campo Abierto (2019)



Roxanne Charles, Canadian Artist, is a local **mixed** media artist and a member of the Semiahmoo First Nation in Surrey. She comes from a weaving family. She is a contemporary **story teller** who works to touch, move, and **inspire** others through her work. The urgency of **environmental issues** around wild **salmon** lumber exploitation, urbanization, and the expansion of the tar sands and how they are all directly impacting our way of life and ultimately **creating** global crisis.

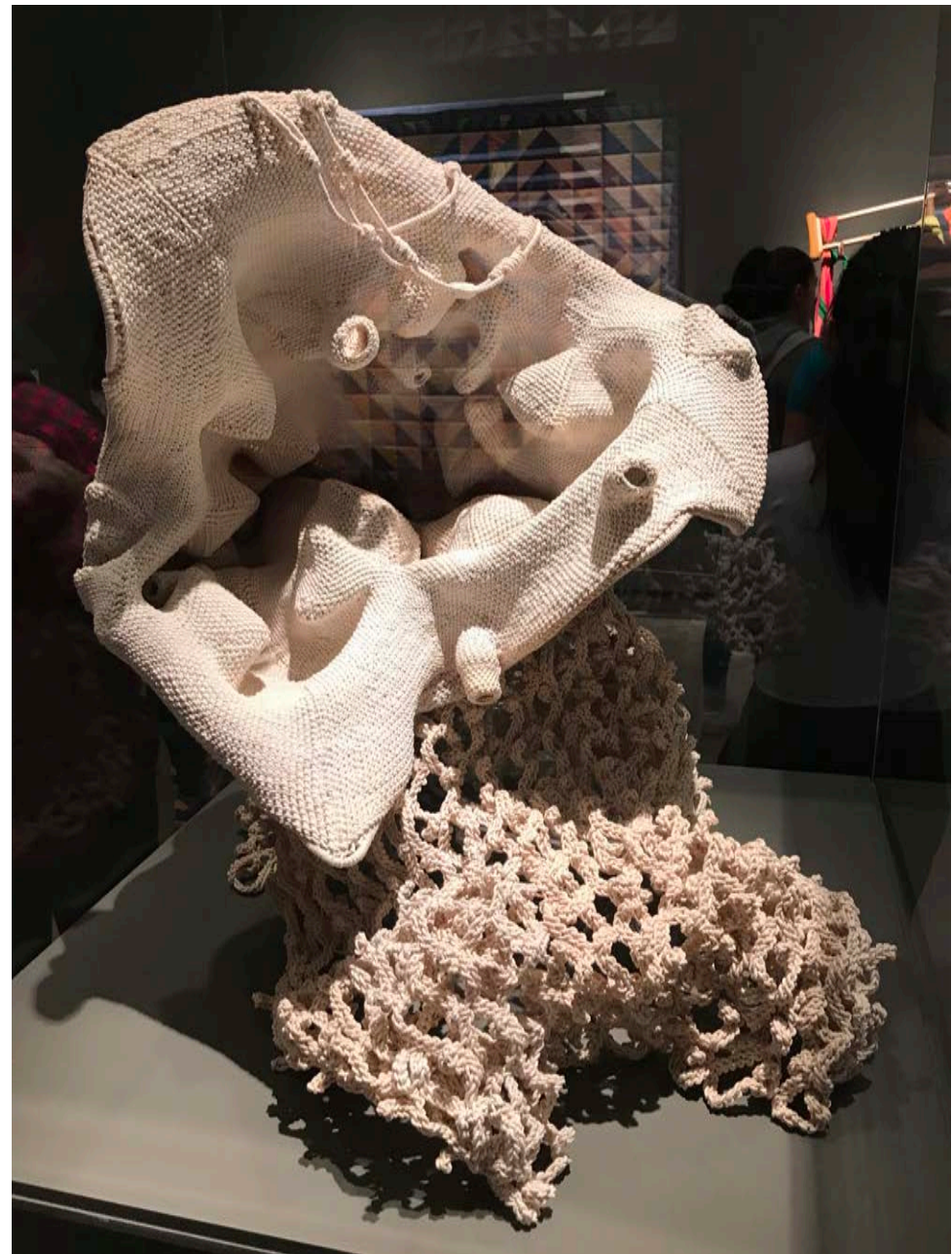




How does Roxanne use unconventional materials to create meaning in her art work?



Inese Birstins- *Mindscape* (1978)
Jute and Mixed Fabrics

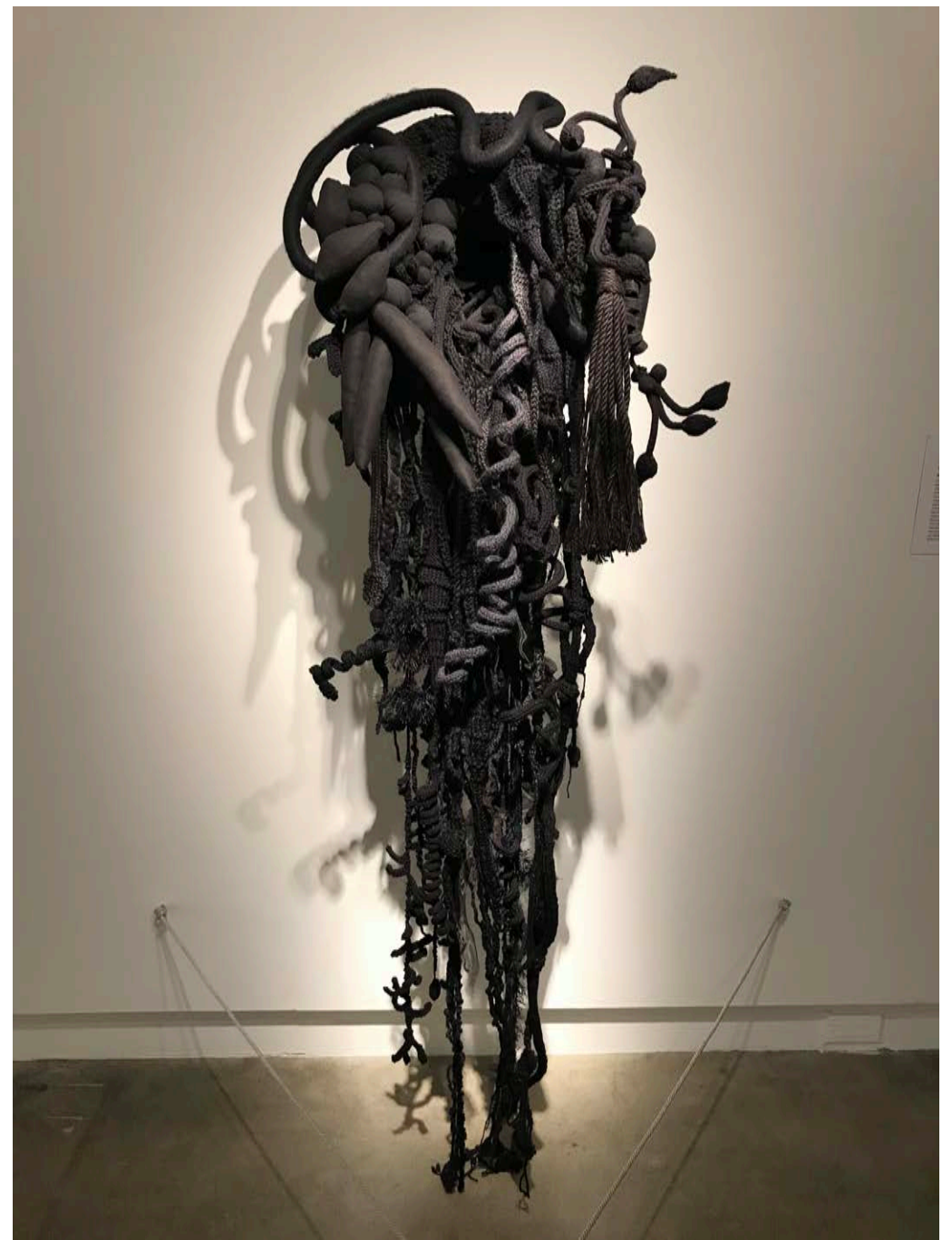


Diane Roy- *Neptune's Ear* (1984)
Crochet, cotton



Cora Li-Leger,
Lineage (2018)
Yarn

Elizabeth Carefoot, Canadian (Surrey)
Artist, artwork alternates between
painting in acrylic, to constructing
boxes, mixed media and textiles.





Elizabeth Carefoot
Mixed Fabrics

Inquiry Assignment:

- Inspired by the work of Elizabeth Carefoot, My Totem (2012), students will create their own textile organic **creature**.
- Students can use knitting, sewing, crocheting, weaving or any other form of textile making that they are interested in exploring.
- Students decide on an appropriate **challenge** for their skill level using 1 or more methods within their project. If **need of more** challenge try to **combine** several methods into the project.
- Students are not only working together to create a class installation, but will also have to work together in teaching each other textile techniques.
- Research how to **crochet, knit, weave, sew, etc.** (become the expert)

- This is an inquiry project and students are expected to find the resources necessary to be able to create their project. Students will also be documenting the process of their creation.

How to choose what to do?

- Begin with what seems to be **most comfortable** for you to create a form that could be made into a body for a creature.
- You are **responsible** for figuring out how to learn a **new skill** to create your textile **creature**.
- Push your thinking...how can you research how to do it.
- Ask a **friend**, a teacher, a parent/guardian, online videos, etc.



Elizabeth Carefoot, *My Totem*, 2012
Knitted yarns, beads, fringe and miscellaneous materials.

In this installation, Carefoot combines sea creatures and totem-like forms. Carefoot wanted to create a monument honouring the dying coral reefs as well as the beautiful forms and colours of marine life found within. With the use of knitted yarn, she also conceives of the guardian-like figures as a monument to women who safeguard home and family. This artwork is emblematic of Carefoot's interest in the spirit world.

