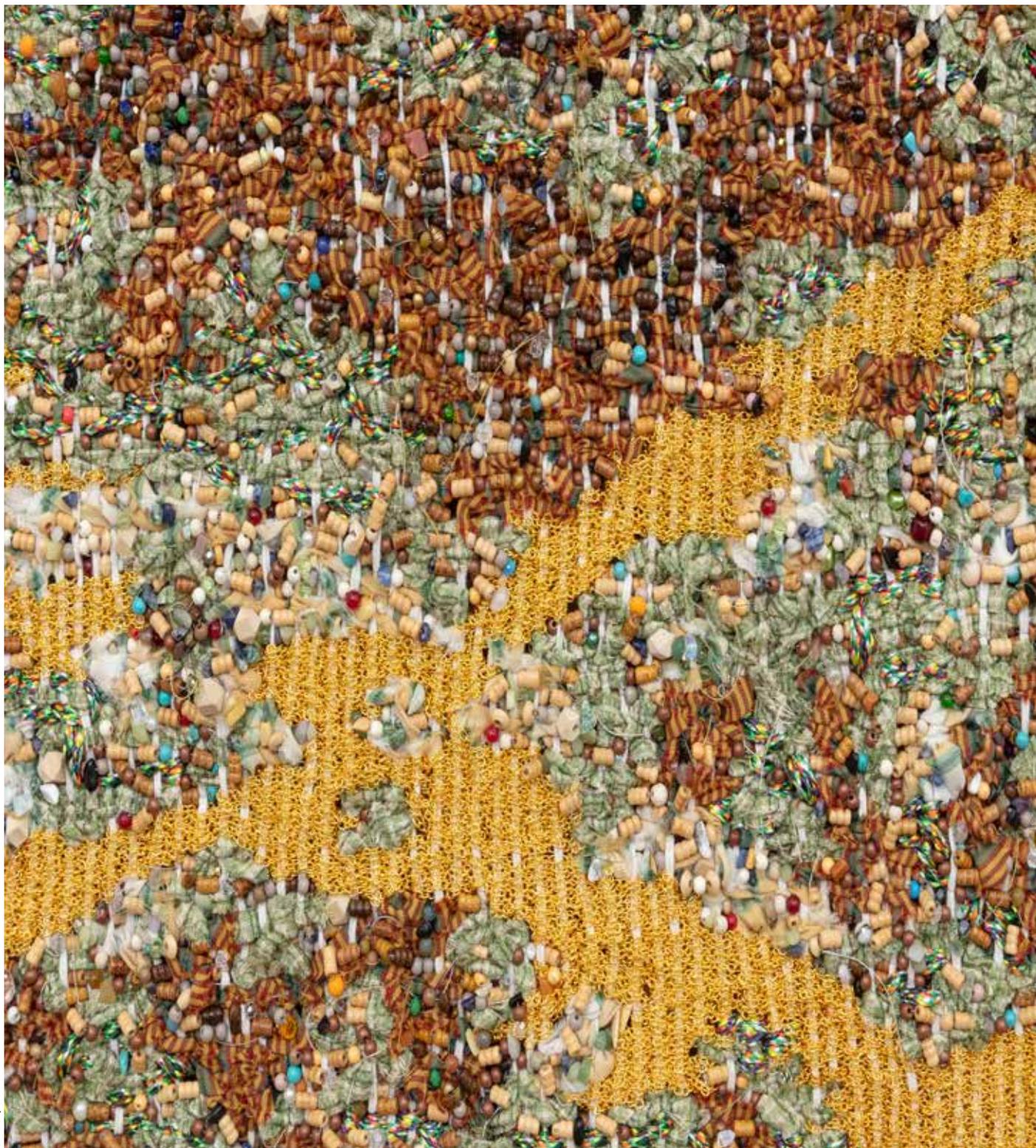


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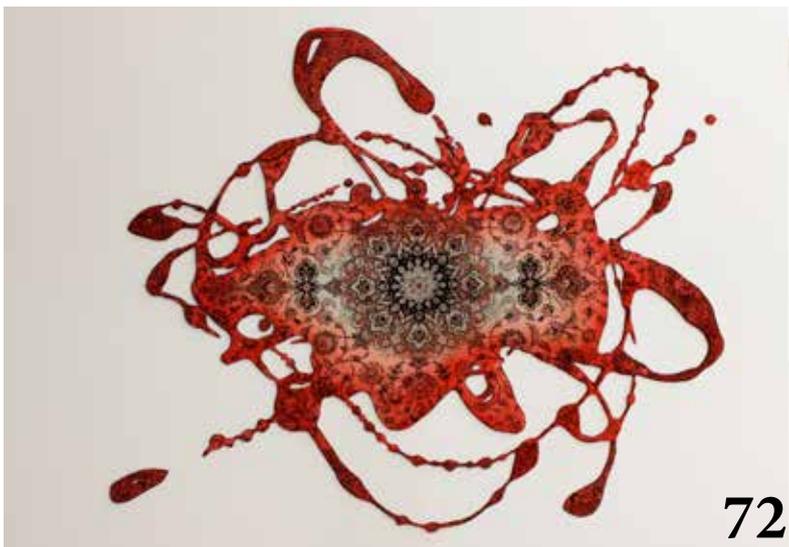
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CONTEMPORARY TEXTURES: MICHAEL RADYK



Exhibition view-detail, Exhibition Photo Credit-Matt Seaver Photography, courtesy of the artist

<http://www.michaelradyk.com/>

Michael Radyk, a textile artist originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, trained at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). He has been a professor of textiles at several prestigious universities including RISD and Kutztown University of Pennsylvania and founder of the magazine American Craft Inquiry.

Michael Radyk's research focuses on weaving, exploring and studying traditional techniques of producing materials such as corduroy and moleskin, using the loom to create warp and weft structures that he then modifies, cuts, sculpts and manipulates.

Radyk's sculptural weavings are daring and unconventional, drawing on tradition but reworking it with a contemporary language and sensibility that goes beyond the obsolete distinction between artistic and poor materials, thus positioning the work at the crossroads between history and the present, memory and change.

How did you approach art, and what path contributed to your artistic growth? When did your interest in weaving begin?

My early interest in weaving comes from my grandparents. My father's parents made furniture, textiles, and porch swings. My grandmother was a weaver, so I have very early memories of sitting next to her at the loom weaving rag rugs.

There were lots of handmade textiles throughout the home.

I grew up in a hybrid landscape, both rural and near heavy industry. Rolling hills of green next to steel mills, coal mines, quarries, and black shale mounds.

A surreal landscape. Growing up as a gay or queer teenager in the mid to late 1970's I really found my safe space in the worlds of material-based craft, macrame, knotting, recycle culture, garment making, crafting creatures from combed out and braided acrylic yarns, fluffy Pekinese dogs to well-made braided octopuses. As a teenager with fiber "Agency", I volunteered at a few local nursing homes teaching acrylic yarn octopus making and macrame. Everyone loved making those creatures.

Peace, healing, learning, and community with textiles.

Unfortunately, the classes had to be shut down from overproduction. What do you do with 400 acrylic yarn octopuses? Everyone's relatives received at least five as gifts for loving, regifting, disposal or recycling. We flooded the regions nursing home's craft stores and charity shops with these crafted beings. They may still exist somewhere. Hopefully loved.

Maybe now, I would fill an ambulance with the yarn octopuses and drive them to cemeteries or landfills as a performance and installation.

So, a quest for conceptual thinking, advanced techniques, production knowledge, formal weaving training, design, and undiscovered material engagement is what led me to study art, teaching, and design. Another early spark to my imagination was a family trip to the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in the United States and New England mill towns.

Seeing those mechanized looms capable of weaving large quantities, and the scale of production was eye-opening.

This was my starting point to studying textile design. Later learning about the environmental and human impact of the textile industry was also an important point.

Since my teenage years to very recently, I witnessed the slow demise of the textile industry here, especially where I currently live in Philadelphia and the Southern states of the USA.

The factories are gone, but the impact is not. On the flip side, today, in full view, you can see and experience the real impact and influence textiles, fiber art, quilt making, the handmade and early craft-based teaching and learning has had on contemporary art in our current art world.

What research lie behind your production? What are the main influences on your imagination and art practice?

My research is place and technique based with material engagement using mainly recycled and repurposed materials at the core. I love having a direct observation with historic textiles and objects, if possible.

My initial research can have many twists and turns depending on what is available to see in person versus online.

I create yardages of textiles for use in my sculptures.

My research is focused on weft cut textiles, fustian and corduroy structures and their potential for manipulation and transformation.

The making of woven cloth is at the core of my artistic practice. In my work, I use both the industrial Jacquard loom and the traditional handloom in parallel research.

This connective process activates both my textiles and structures to exploit their potential for sculptural surfaces and forms. My investigation into weaving and textiles is inspired by the qualities inherent in their structure, production, design, craft, and history. My work involves the reinvention of the corduroy structures and cutting.

Fustian is a fabric made by weaving two or more sets of wefts or fillings, and these fillings can be cut for a pile fabric.

Fustian can be a heavy cotton fabric, some of which have pile surfaces, including moleskin, velveteen, and was later renamed "corduroy", corde du roi (from the French, the cord of the King), an early example of early rebranding of a textile to alter its usage and appeal.

For me, the corduroy textile structures represent an example of the early transition from home or cottage-based workshops to the consolidation to mills with industrial production and materials. As the Industrial Revolution expanded its reach, both hand weaving and hand cut textiles were subverted.

In England, the cutting of fustian had always tended to be a cottage industry, carried on in homes or small workshops close to weaving mills and manufacturers of the cloth.

In addition to being a well-known and respected artist, you were also the founder and editor in chief of American Craft Inquiry magazine. What impact has this professional experience had on how you look at art?

The mission for the journal was to feature in-depth essays on contemporary and historical issues with a deep, detailed look at diversity, equity, and archives. Founded on the principle of collaboration – with writers, curators, scholars, artists, the designer Moon Jung Jang, along with the printers and readers.

The opportunity to interview, talk, and focus on some incredible artists and makers was inspiring, and I really was moved by their stories. The shoemaker Amara Hark Weber, weaver Lily Hope, artists Jiseon Lee Isbara, Jennifer Ling Datchuk, Andrea Haffner, and Mark Burns to name a few.

Your latest project includes works such as Blue June, Long July, Blue December. Can you tell us more about this series?

In late 2019 I was working on a research project on corduroy at the textiles archive, the Clothworkers' Center for the Study and Conservation Clothworkers' Center for Textiles and Fashion at V & A Museum in London.

I was planning to implement this research at a few long-term artist residencies in 2020 and further research in the United Kingdom. As a starting point, I used English artist, designer, and weaver Alastair Morton of Edinburgh Weavers original corduroy weave draft from which all handwoven corduroy pile weave structures are derived. This structure or weave was further explored by English handweaver Peter Collingwood in his 1968 book "The Techniques of Rug Weaving".



"Blue June", installation, 2021, mixed media, handwoven corduroy, hand cut and manipulated textiles, recycled, and repurposed plastic tape, phosphorescent tape, 72"h x 42" w x 36" d, 183h x 107w x 90d cm, ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist



"Blue June-detail", installation, 2021, ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist



"Pulse-detail"
ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist



"Pulse", installation, 2018, mixed media, handwoven corduroy, hand cut and manipulated textiles, recycled, and repurposed plastic tape, fique, hand embroidered paillettes, vinyl coated recycled polyester, holographic tape, feathers, holographic tape, 72"h x 42" w x 36" d, 183h x 107w x 90d cm, ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist



Exhibition view-full, Exhibition Photo Credit-Matt Seaver Photography, courtesy of the artist

I was able to view both Morton's and Collingwood's textiles at the Clothworkers' Centre, V&A Museum. Collingwood's book is still a great resource.

This research led me to expand my technical language to include the structure of diagonal corduroy, a more nuanced and flexible structure.

Not able to proceed with travel during 2020, the conversation I was planning to have with historical textiles, archives, locations, and objects was rethought.

Conceptually, I armchair traveled to my 1970's childhood. Visions of shale mounds, strip mines, and landfills, brightly colored and toxically infused local waters.

Memories of summer camps, pool days, and art made from recycled and repurposed stuff. Corduroy did have a resurgence in the 1970s; I felt a connection here to memory and material. Each piece in this series is a small installation.

This work evolved in a much-altered space and focused on reimagined landscapes, emotional color, and touch.

Your weavings involve the use of materials of different nature and origins, such as phosphorescent tape, cotton, recycled polyester and recycled plastic tape, corduroy. What is the relationship between the material and the work? Does the medium become the work, the message, or does it remain exclusively a medium?

One of the materials used is an extruded tape used here in the USA at children's summer camps for making knotted key chains. People have an immediate reaction to this material from childhood and early object making. Another material is vinyl coated recycled polyester. This yarn is so ubiquitous, from designer handbags to outdoor furniture to camping equipment, so there is this strange connection we have to material. Conflicted and reassuring. Comforting and wasteful.

My goal is to bring the artist's hand and contemporary sensibility to the process of fustian cutting and weaving. I find inspiration in repurposing and the reinvention of a variety of industrial

and machine-made materials I can integrate into my work. The ubiquitous nature of the materials I use is interesting to me because they usually defy desire and beauty. After I design and weave many samples, I weave and name the final yardage for use in my sculptures. The naming of these textiles is important for me to anchor the concepts. Yardages like Orange Plastic Prison, Sow Sow, Pulse or Blue States end up as the conceptual center of the work.

A work or a project to which you are particularly attached?

I would pick my work Swan Point. This was my first exploration of weft cut textiles. I was pushing a huge industrial Jacquard loom to its limits, using

heavily coated recycled polyester and wool yarns to create four layers of cloth or quadruple cloth. The result is a sound absorbent textile that can be stacked to unlimited height and is hand cut, a section of the Swan Point is in the contemporary textile collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art. I included a new cutting of Swan Point in my current exhibition: REE-MEGENCE.

What are you currently working on?

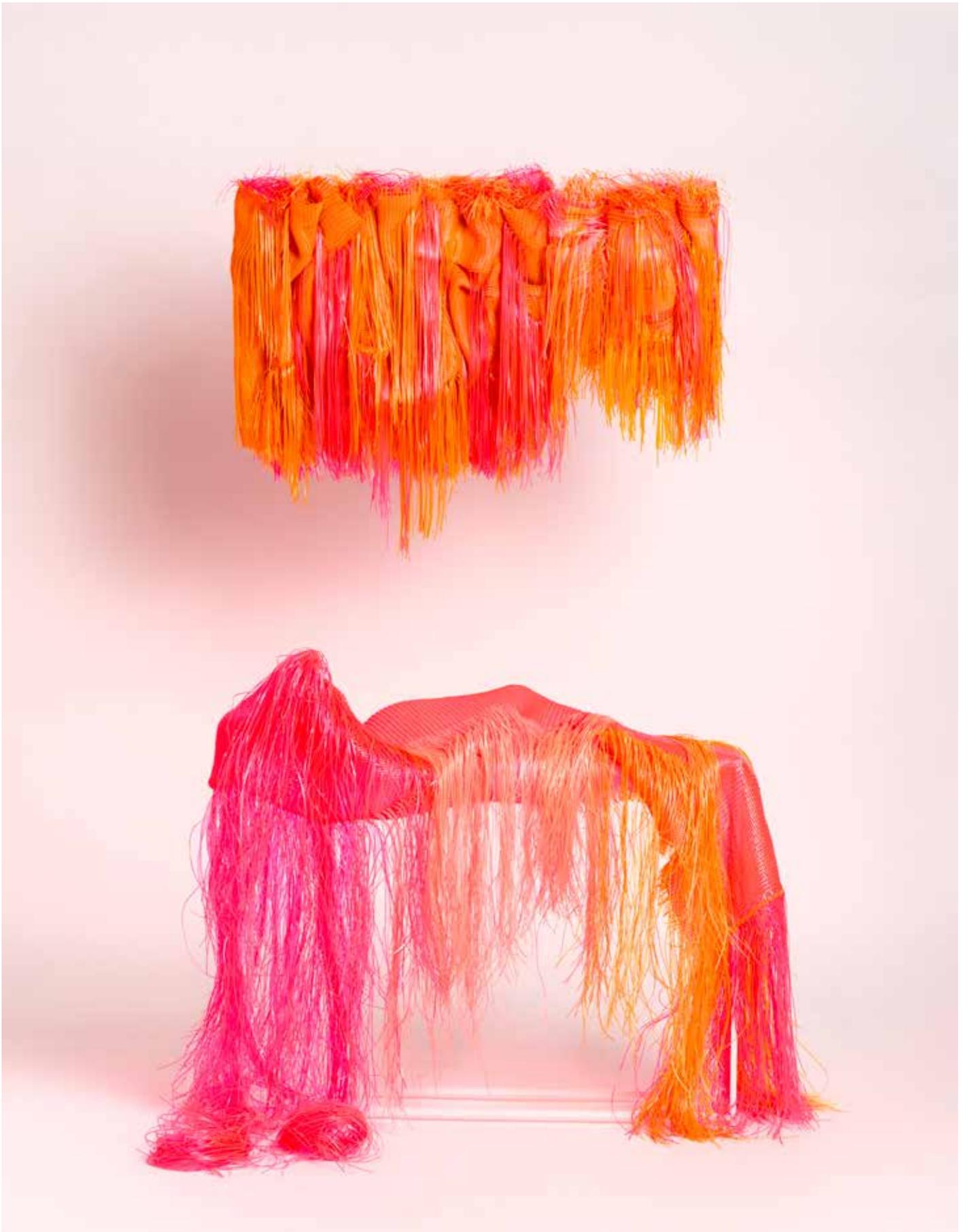
I just finished setting up an installation called Land Feels and Beachfront Properties in a repurposed gallery space that once housed two cash machines or ATMs in the lobby of a near empty office tower on the site of a former textile mill. Also, a Spring 2022 solo exhibition and lots more corduroy!



“Yellow Corduroy”, 2016, Mixed Media, handwoven corduroy, hand cut and manipulated textiles, recycled polyester, nylon, glass fiber, retro-reflective tape, vinyl coated recycled polyester, recycled, and repurposed plastic tape, feathers, 32” h x 36” w x 8” d, 80h x 90w x 20d cm, ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist



"Swan Point" and detail, 2016-2021, Collection-Cleveland Museum of Art, digitally designed Jacquard woven textile, hand cut, quadruple cloth (4 layers), vinyl coated recycled polyester, wool, cotton, 54" h x 70" w x 5" d, 137h x 178w x 20d cm, ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist



"Burst", installation, 2021, mixed media, handwoven corduroy, hand cut and manipulated textiles, recycled, and repurposed plastic tape, phosphorescent tape, 72"h x 42" w x 36" d, 183h x 107w x 90d cm, ph. cr. John Sterling Ruth, courtesy of the artist