



Joan Diamond, Artist

Talk about a piece that is important to you.

“Enduring” is the first 2-dimensional piece I’ve done that needs to be hung in space and not against a wall, rendering it a sculptural statement. In my prior Bojagi pieces, the network of shadows cast onto walls by the seams were integral to the “message” of each piece. (Bojagi, a sewing technique from Korea, renders seams finished on both sides of a piece.) “Enduring” is a big

themed piece, and the idea that it should take its place within the largeness of space, to be walked around and observed from different angles came to me when I first started it. Moreover, because it is made mostly with transparent mediums, as people view the piece from opposing sides they will see each other through the piece. To have people be a part of the visual sweep of the piece is complementary to its intention, and exciting to me.



“Enduring” 2020. 64”H x 44”W, silk organza, quilt remnants, single use plastic bags, repurposed netting

“Enduring uses readily available throw away materials, and recycling them is an important contribution to the theme of the piece. I have not considered myself an artist who does political commentary, but now am not immune to using cultural and political climates as fodder for artistic content. We are all a part of our times...it’s inescapable. This piece has given me courage to tackle more large pieces, two of which are underway and in different stages.

What is your background?

I come to textiles largely by accident. I have had a long history with clay, 20 years. The very minute I walked into the dusty basement pot shop in my senior college year I seemed to breathe better! I looked around at the works in progress, the light bouncing off the wet clay, and immediately felt I found home. If you have ever worked with clay you know that this gorgeously silky and complex medium encourages endless loops of interaction, and too, needs constant overseeing.



“Big Apple,” 10”H x 12.5”W x 2.5”D, reduction fired stoneware

Years later, interrupted studio time to raise three active boys and to work full time meant clay works in progress didn’t get completed. Lost in an over busy schedule is time. One needs time and attention to manage a clay project properly, to alter a piece as it dries before it reaches a point of no return, even if one has started to work on a very small scale.



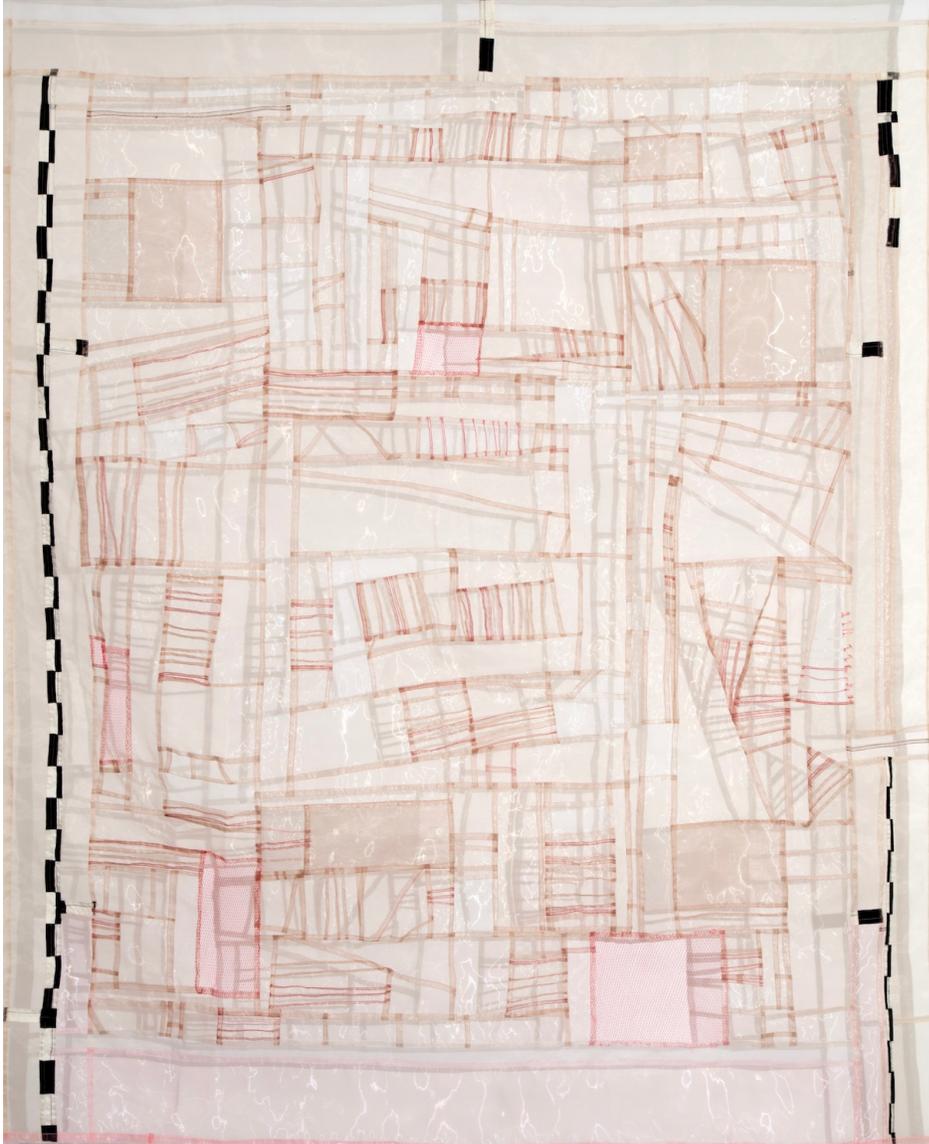
“Ceramic Pin,” 7”H x 4”W, oxidation fired stoneware with colored clays, luster, beads, feathers

What I needed to satisfy my art itch, at that point, was a stable medium. My art work had to be tolerant of irregular studio hours and remain as I had left it. This led me to experiment with a surface design class at The Newark Museum of Art. I have been busy expanding my textile vocabulary ever since that class. Occasionally I do get to work with clay and still feel connected to its world: sturdy, timeless, quiet. I sharpened my art teeth on clay; and my foundation in clay influences my work today. My last notable clay project was a marriage of clay and fiber: stitched clay monoprints.



“Tethered,” 2019, 19”H x 37”W x 19”H, clay monoprints, archival pigment prints, monofilament, embroidery floss, steel frame

I have no formal training in textiles, nor grannie or mom from whom I learned sewing skills. Until quarantine, an active international travel schedule and workshops served to fulfill my curiosities and be a wellspring of inspiration.



“Possibilities,” 2017, 60”H x 48”W, Bojagi piece inspired by a trip to Morocco. Commercial fabrics, netting

What are you working on now?

Sheer fabric promises that light will be a part of the art. Ongoing are explorations with translucent cloth, and too, I am loving dyeing fabrics.

New to me this past year I explored Nui (Stitch) Shibori with machine stitching. Making scarves with this technique functions for me as a kind of sketchbook. I get to understand the complexities of how I can push the technique, and I wind up with a pretty scarf in the end instead of just a

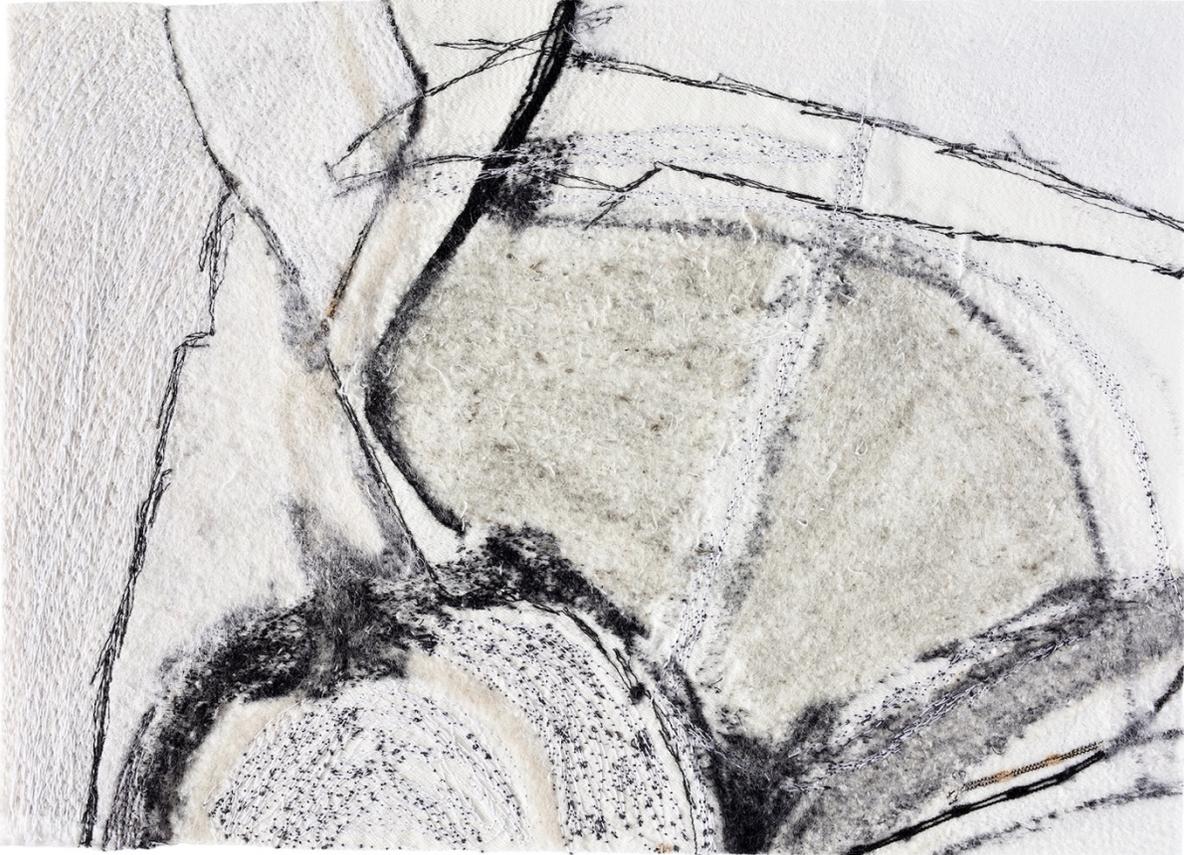
sample book. And, the learning from many discoveries with different fabric substrates led me to art work.



“It Helps Sometimes To Take the Long View,” 2021, 52”H x 50”W x 6”D, machine stitched Shibori with variety of silks and wools, single use plastic bags, embroidery floss

Joan Didion famously wrote, “I don’t know what I think until I write it”. March 2020 brought with it the shock of global contagion and death and the precipitous cut off from everything that had been normal. We were to be shut-ins, suspicious of everything: groceries, counter tops, family, friends, neighbors, etc. In the studio I felt an urgency to work in black and white, something I had never done before. With my dyes, threads, and monoprints I normally live squarely in a world of color. Now, without question the challenges of working with a colorless palette were compelling and

appealing. Drawings made with various marking mediums such as charcoal and ink were translated to fiber. After doing three “textile drawings” and evaluating them I realized all three had something in common: a blob of some sort encircled and overwhelmed by a bigger blob of sorts. I realized how faithful a barometer art can be of the times we witness, and how much art helps me process thoughts in ways that are so profoundly different then coming to a cerebral understanding of facts.



“Covid 3” 2020, 8.75”H x 12”W, textile drawing with commercial fabrics, yarn and thread

Any comments on how you work?

In the studio I work on several different scales of projects. For me, the main value of a smaller project is that it keeps me going. Big projects take big time. So often it is hard to envision an actual end, and then there is the grit I need in order to plow through that middle part of the project, when I seem to hate or doubt every step I take. So, small projects are a reward, and a gift that gets the ideas out faster.

I enjoy the many processes I've been involved with to date. I would say I'm not yet finished exploring the nuances of transparency, nor textile drawings, nor stitch Shibori, and certainly not dyeing. For the time being, fascinating clay will have to make do with a rain check. Should a new concept begin to take shape and ripen in my percolating thoughts, and should that new concept warrant a new tool in my toolbox of techniques, I consider it a challenge to hunt it down, pursue and develop it. My training as an occupational therapist, where I needed to use the right therapies for the right outcomes, taught me well to think outside the box. And after all, the many decisions made for best expression in any given piece morphs into a kind of collective intimacy of my own imprint, preserved so-to-speak in these urges to make art.

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