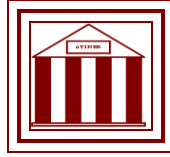


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**The Movements of Environmental
Fiber Art and Three-Dimensional
Sculptural Textiles**

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Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
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The Movements of Environmental Fiber Art and Three-Dimensional Sculptural Textiles

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Abstract

To the 1920s, textile artists do not see enough in terms of technique and materials Tapestry weavings, to bulk materials used and begin to multiply with the original technical interpretations, different approaches have emerged.

This type of approaches performed under the name of the art of weaving, the influence of art movements, the so-called fiber art, contemporary art, the basics of weaving has emerged. Contemporary textile artists, textile techniques and materials on a quest, constantly. Three-dimensional sculptural textiles are the result of this creative process and development.

Textile artists' interpretations, technique and materials have changed as a historical process, as a result of these changes, original and unique works of art emerged. The materials used in accordance with shape and surface texture consisting of elements, two or three-dimensional, different works have emerged. As a result of uninhibited use of materials and techniques, mixed media using the three-dimensional "Sculptural Textiles" was produced. Sculptural Textiles combined with the power of the materials and concepts, sometimes meanings contain the protest today, and sometimes it can be used to deliver this message to society.

Earth, in a way are not ignored, with the realization of the entry into danger, "the environment", has become a key word in many languages and has more and more complex meanings. Even the environment begin to disappear, new technologies, art, architecture and all the productions, people around the decomposition, and rupture the nature, the environment has led to this has been lost as a concept to be examined more than ever and whether it is aware of.

In this paper, the movements of enviromental fiber art and three-dimensional sculptural Textiles constitute an important place in the world and Turkish artists with examples of works, carried in the philosophy, materials, referred to the influence of this art and its place in contemporary art.

Key words: Textile, sculptural textile, three-dimensional textile, three-dimensional structural textile

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INTRODUCTION

Emerging in the world of art and design sculptural textile is a new movement inspired by dignified sculpture forms and products. Owing to the high technological innovations, structures and reliefs replace designs. Disorder creates mobile surfaces. Metal elements are blended with fabric and become an inseparable part of it. Shimmering surfaces are obtained through light and semi-transparent layers that have been folded, curled and draped. Artists dealing with textile more than any other discipline are categorized as household or woman profession. Spanning all through our lives and being at the center of it from the first breath we take to the end of our lives, textile is strong and effective material. No similar status has been granted so far within the traditional palette of the recognized visual arts. The use of textiles in art still continues to confront with prejudices. Lack of documentation in textile art history has prevented the recognition of this art and the enlightening information for this art. History reveals a significant interdependence between theory and practice for the evolution of art forms. This idea, most writers prefer practice rather than theory for clearly expressing their creativity, denies the status that they are unwilling to reject to write.

In the last fifty years, a great number of prestigious artists have added textile into their repertoires as everybody has some familiarity with textiles. The twentieth century has been characterized as a period of questioning and re-evaluation of materials. Since 1950s, there has been a big debate in the adoption of unusual materials both in art and craft worlds. The mixed-media technique, devised by Robert Rauschenburg in 1955, has opened new horizons. And in this method, the work 'Bed' thick paint decoration and a traditional patchwork technique have been used together. Artist has utilized 'merging' technique and used to benefit from every kind of material in combining. He has not been alone in his unusual mixed technique adventure and journey to escape from the conventionalism of old artistic surrounding .

In this study, along with examples from the works of artists having different journeys in this discipline in the last hundred years, we have prepared a presentation offering a viewpoint towards the movements of environmental fiber art and three-dimensional sculptural textiles.

The History of Sculptural Textile Art

History of textile art is limited and fragmented and inextricably intertwined with craft. With regard to its nature, fabric is not long lasting, so that very few examples of the ancient pieces have survived to the present day, but the acceptance of the idea that all pictures on the canvas are textile artworks, proofs dating back to twelfth dynasty in Egypt, Bayeaux Tapestry embroidered by an English woman in 11. century are the bestknown examples of ancient textile. Arts and Crafts Movement has been a renaissance along with

the Royal Crown Crafts School established in 1872. This school has encouraged students to approach handicrafts as an art form.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, artists in Europe have begun to challenge the rules of sculpture. Bauhaus was founded by Walter Gropius in 1919 in Germany, and the following speech at the opening ceremony was addressed: 'From now on, along with the masters knowing class consciousness, we will try to create a new body between artists and artisans where there is a high wall (Constantine and Reuter, 1997).

Anni Albers, Bauhaus modern weaver, also advocated the materials: "neither expensiveness nor the durability of the material are pre-conditions... Any material, any working procedure and any production method, manual or industrial, can neither be are nor serve art (Rowley, 1999). This German directive aimed at familiarizing with the artistic potential of all materials and particularly it redefined textile as a valuable source. Kurt Schwitters used unusual materials in his works of art: bus tickets, news clippings, pieces of metal and wood, and fabric remnants, artist has particularly chosen to use the wrecks of the street rather traditional materials. Schwitters' collection of contemplative statues and reliefs, impose the cultural and political examples which reflect the turbulent period of Europe. In 1926, "New art emerges on the ruins of old culture" (Celant, 1995) said Schwitters.

Joseph Cornell, an important American surrealist sculptor, along with the magic reflected by an ordinary respected topic, used everyday objects. Most of his works create powerful symbols in his own life story. Actually, Cornell became a textile designer at the request of his family. His work named 'box' is said to be made by him as a toy for his disabled brother.

After the period of 1960s, surrealists were particularly effective on the development of Pop Art "soft sculpture" philosophy, and were an inspiration to many people. Charles Oldenburg, the founder and true representative of the movement 'soft sculpture', used courageous materials. His sculptures aimed to question our ordinary and everyday views and it imitated the everyday symbols of American culture. By totally using objects such as fast food, telephone, toilet, typewriters, cardboard, duplicated, soft vinyl, canvas hardened with plaster or polyester resin, he investigated soft/hard dilemma with giant sculptures. This material manipulation, when combined with great changes, focuses neither on the society nor the corporeality of 'sensitive' objects. Unlike preceding levels, his vision has been to embrace textile as a form of sculpture expression. Fabric-textile is absolutely sculptural and this emphasizes masses, simplicity, expression and even color.

Meanwhile, there was an important action involving artists generally working with textile and those directly working in it in the same period. A new moment meaning "Fibre Art" began in order to save textile from the wall and bring it to the field. Magdalena Abakanowicz, a Polish artist, transformed weaving into a dynamic sculpture technique in order to create monumental forms. Her revolutionary use of fiber and innovative approach to the technique made the artist and effective force in 1960 and 1970s. She used sisal, jute and burlap in order to create sculptural analogies in the forms of animal, plant and

mineral. Main fiber taste and natural world of the artist is described as following in her article:

"While building the organic world in our planet, I consider the fiber as the most mysterious element of our surrounding. We, all living things, plants and tissues were formed from fiber. Nerves, our genetics code, veins, muscles. All these are strands. Our heart is surrounded by the heart muscles. By processing the fiber, we, in fact, process the unknown. A dry leaf has a network that reminds of a dry mummy. To which artist's hands and intuition can fiber guide? What is the fabric? We weave it, sew it, shape it into forms. When the biology of our body fails, skin can be cut in order to gain access under it. Then, just as cloth, it can be sew. Fabric is our shell and dress we make with our hands, and this is a record of our souls"(Constantine and Reuter, 1997).

At this point, it is worth mentioning the German artist Joseph Beuys who combines elements of human and nature. Beuys is one of the most influential artistic figures in the last century. There are no books on sculptural textiles mentioning his creativity. Beuys usually worked with felt and fat as a material. The case how he supplies his materials is a myth. After he was hit with his plane during World War II, his materials were given by the Tatars in the region where his plane fell. After this near-death experience, Beuys adopted using seals and oil not just for autobiographical forms of expression but also as an extended metaphor. Because this was an "Extended sculpture theory".¹

Sculptures Outside the Gallery and in the Environment

Sculptors questioned gallery-based decorative role not only for concept and material but also for the selection of the sculpture. Therefore, after the 1960s, they have brought their works out of avant-garde sanctuary gallery rooms into the environment. These movements in the views of sculptors are reflected as a revolution in art. These types of art are: Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Minimalism, Land Art, Performance Art, Montage Art and Environmental Art. Bulgarian artist Christo Javacheff and his wife Jeanne-Claude, by making packaging around the border signs and patterns, used exaggerated long cloths and gained an international reputation with this passionate participation. Christo, appearing with his quite humble and ordinary packing works, then began using powerful expressions and packings in open areas. Similar to Christo's studies, environmental art in 1970s and 1980s was redefined in accordance with the art, material and scale acceptability and the situation of the sculpture. This was not simply "Packaged Pont Neuf", the transformation of 400-year old Paris bridge by using a bright fabric waterfall (Constantine and Reuter, 1997), but also sculptors using their fund-raising abilities in an unbelievable extent spread their views to ten-year projects.

¹Scott J., 2003, Textile Perspectives in Mixed-Media Sculpture, The Crowood Press LTD, Ramsbury, England, p.10-11.

Sculptural Materials

Sculptural materials are used sometimes as a metaphor, sometimes as a means of expression and sometimes as both of them, they are selected according to the different logical angles, but the material physical property factor, is of equal importance.

Material properties in both way affect a sculptor's creations. Physical properties are the ones peculiar to the material and this includes factors such as strength, smoothness and hardness. Concepts having an integral connection with the material are weight, balance and scale. They have always been of primary importance in sculpture and their role is not diminished in the light of the other factors put forward.

Touching is usually a less controlled action compared to seeing and for this reason it is considered to be evaluated without being accepted. The bodily existence of form is evaluated by body weight and communication is provided, and even though this has been provided with a positive physical contact it has not occurred. Therefore, when it occurs, the effect is more confirmed. This theory which requires a more complex interaction attracts artists who prefer to work in the mixture of physical and visual materials. Artists often see textiles as a factor that creates a powerful addiction after touching and textile is completely passion for them. A wide range of textured surfaces are an ideal complement to other materials.

Examples of Three-Dimensional Sculptural Textile

If we look at the work of Sheila Hicks, "The Principal wife goes on" (Figure 1), its countless numbers of linens made up of long, hanging and wrapped hasps led to some criticism that these kinds of works are "decorative". The artist, in the production of non-utilitarian materials in fiber, in the late 1960s and 1970s, along with hand-made examples by fiber artists monitor an aesthetic inconsistency of programme created in the weaving mainstream of society with the skill and pleasure norms. In this case, Hicks contradicts with the understanding in the society and societal foresight is of the view that none of these studies are the product of the skills. According to critics, Hicks' work is not functional, it is in the opposite form of cultural and historical fiber arts techniques, their meaning and importance. This led other fiber artists who work like Hicks, exploring material and technique consciously, believe that it was pointless to connect handcraft congresses with craft by manipulating them and forced them to express their views on orienting them towards art. But along with these aspects suppressed, works holding a hybrid position like art and craft, eliminated the basic views of critics on both crafts and fine arts, such as the views of Constantine and Larsen.

The purity of these categories undermines the hybridity of the work. Studies in this period was not accepted as a legitimate artistic identity in the American art world. With their potential to bridge the gap between art and craft

and containing the works of fiber artists, hybrid categories met with serious resistance. These two categories were soft art and soft sculpture.

Claire Zeisler's "Untitled" work (Figure 2), is an example of the Postminimalist sculpture developing in the late 1960s. She used fabric, wire, rope and pad in his works. Her sculptures highlight tissue rather than form, as well as the correct emphasis of the tissue, the visual effect of material is exaggerated and this creates a relaxing effect. The revival of the craft and the craze of "macrame led the critics view the fiber art as a profession of women.

In an interview in 1979, an art journal asked Claire Zeisler a question on the "decorative" node technique used by "macrame artists": In what sense you are different from other fiber artists by using these kinds of knotting and cutting techniques?

"When I first started the technique of knotting it was not a trend. I am one of the first to use it, or I am definitely the first to use it in a three-dimensional sense. Some people called this technique Claire Zeisler macrame. This was when my technique reached the summit. I do not deal with the words macrame or craft. Today, macrame is a decorative knotting technique, But I use this knotting only as a part of structure. You can not even see most node in most of my works. Just as the canvas fabric is a structural part of the canvas painting, knotting is a structural part in my work.

His "structural parts" highlight the stylistic meticulousness of art. The felt works of Robert Morris could be analyzed in 12 series. First felt work is "Untitled" study (Figure 3) produced in 1967 and 1968. While felt is used as a material for insulation and packaging, Morris uses felt in simple, task-oriented regulations. The series of 1960s are felt works in the form of single or multi-layers made by long and simple cuts called "shambles" "catenary" and "legs". These studies are in the foreground with their tactile qualities. In his studies, Morris constituted a form with the forces of gravity, moisture, weight and density of the material itself.

The first live performance of soft sculpture, was made in 1976 by Faith Ringgold with "waking up two hundred years-old black people and the Resurrection" installation (Figure 4). Working consists of figures married couple Buba-Bena, mother and grandmother of Buba. According to Ringgold, the work was a response to the 200. celebration of America. Although there was no reason to celebrate the two hundred years of American independence due to the suppression of black people, she created this work in agreement with many racemates. So, this was a wake up, not a celebration. The artist, including the suppression towards him along with the drug addiction, wanted to create a visual narrative expressing the dynamics of racism.

The first works of Harmony Hammond, creating his works after being inspired by Native American art, are known to be as blanket pictures. Some of these works were created by the addition of his own hairs, worn blankets, leather, fabric sheets on the edges. The first exhibition of Hammond, inspired by Native American art, was held in New York in 1973. He exhibited works called "garment sculpture" made by fabric strips sprayed paint over "Presence V" (Figure 5). In a group, fabrics, diagrams and drawings were displayed, also

known as bags. She gathered her female friends together in her art and consciousness-raising group and she opened exhibitions including hand-woven sandals and basket that highlight the common ordinariness and cultural identity of the objects and that are similar to the forms of ceremonial dresses of Native American women. Hammond was recognized with the "Presences" exhibition. At the same time, Hammond took a mythical role for all women in the past and future. Her hand-made sandals and baskets in the exhibition, including Hammond, a recontextualization of objects such as art, craft useful, as well as the devaluation of the utility regularly stressed the importance of women's creative labor.

African Yinka Shonibare, using the technique of batik painting on fabric, have conducted studies to explore the past colonial relations and the present heritage (Figure 6).

The sculpture "The echo of the lost souls" (Figure 7) was made of spray and pot paint and later with polychromed plaster and soaked cotton. This was developed as a response to the Edith Durham Collection in Bankfield Museum. It was created through the transfer of traditional Albanian dress, a giubba and a pair of shoes and a design into the fabric and through freezing plaster in order to create sculpture. The concept of the sculpture is the savagery of genocide. Giubba, the traditional Albanian dress, was cut in the form of a gloomy funeral clothes and was hanged without any ornamental or decorative worries. No bodily form was used for the intensification of the emotions.

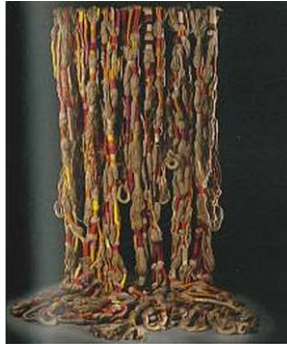
With their gigantic presence, the noble and strong sculptures of Gemma Smith cover an area. The size of the work requires even a physical affirmation and view from the everyday audience. The creations of Smith go beyond the boundaries of all disciplines, they are in the form of expression of themselves rather than pre-determined rules. Smith relates to the physical world, he creates his works through the discovery of the human form, the primitive sources of the ancient world, the gods and myths, and metaphysical concepts. She aims at the sense of humanity spanning the time and geography. The inspiration composition of the ancient world and the ontology creates an intimate language, transformed and different sculptures and works that remind of paradoxical physical strength and emotional vulnerability when it comes together with the material repertoire of the artist A strong impact in the form of animals, exposure and length restless currents, generating business encompasses.

Plaster, cement, steel, wire mesh, paint, plastics are materials in his work, Smith enriches his work with complementary materials. These are: textiles and textile accessories - beads, buttons, fasteners. The topic is his own state. She creates his work through the weaving, knitting, printing, painting and felting processes by covering "tailor-made" materials for movement and transformation.

In her work "Headless Woman", the effect of strong animal spreads all over the form and size of the study, but the lower fringes give people the feeling of discomfort (Figure 8).

Nicola Morris' work named "Glove" used the effect of size in order to challenge the viewer's perception by changing the size of ordinary objects. By creating a focus on the importance attached to the good manners and clothes beginning by the 1950s and becoming more important during the nineteenth century, this study identifies the society's tendency with its basis on the romanticism of the past. Belonging to one of artist's aunts, lace knitting design book was like a treasure for the artist. A delicate woman accessory became the source of inspiration for the artist. In order to create a thick and gigantic glove, Morris, after changing the material, used a dish cloth made from cotton with polyester resin. The desire of the artist with regard to this work was to exhibit it in outdoors in a bright garden setting as a sculptural textile resistant to the bad weather conditions "Glove" trees and flowers, along with pre-Raphael, Bronte and other populist emotional poems of the time, were exhibited in a romantic English garden.

Figure 1. Sheila Hicks, *"The Principal wife goes on"*, Silk, linen and wool., 4.57 cm, Smithsonian Museum, 1977



Reference: String Felt Thread, the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art, Elissa Auther, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, London p.43

Figure 2. Claire Zeisler, *"Untitled"*, 1967, Jute, Denver Art Museum, USA



Reference: Auther E., 2010, String Felt Thread, The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art, University of Minnesota Press, p. 249, Minneapolis, London, p. 24

Figure 3. Robert Morris, 1967-70, "Untitled", different sizes gray felt, Williams Collage Art Museum, (the gift of Leo Castelli) New York



Reference: String Felt Thread, the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art, Elissa Auther, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London p.52

Figure 4. Faith Ringgold, "Ìkiyüz The wake and Ressurrection of the Bicentennial Negro", Life- sized soft sculptures Bena and Buba, 70 x 36 x 4 inches; Moma and Nana, 67 x 40 x 16 inches. Flag Pad, 70 x 36 x 2 inches; flowers, 18 x 22 x 12 inches. Collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem. Courtesy of the artist



Reference: String Felt Thread, the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art, Elissa Auther, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London p.112

Figure 5. Harmony Hammond, Presence V, 1972. Cloth and acrylic, 78 x 28 x 18 inches. Courtesy of Dwight Hackett Projects, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Art copyright Harmony Hammond. Licensed by VAGA, New York, New York



Reference: String Felt Thread, the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art, Elissa Auther, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London p.137

Figure 6. Title of figure Yinka Sonibare, Yinka Shonibare MBE, *Scramble for Africa*, 2003. Fourteen figures, fourteen chairs, table, Dutch wax printed cotton textile, 52 x 192 x 110 inches overall. Commissioned by the Museum for African Art, New York. Collection of Alden Pinnell. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Reference: String Felt Thread, the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art, Elissa Auther, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London p.170

Figure 7. Jac Scott, 'Echo of the lost souls', 2001. Materials; plaster, cotton cloth, acrylic paint. Dimensions: 153 x 145 x 95cm



Reference: Scott J., 2003, Textile Perspectives in Mixed-Media Sculpture, The Crowood Press LTD, S. 160, Ramsbury, England, p.47

Figure 8. Gemma Smith, *Headless Woman*, 2001., 190x155x120 cm



Reference: Scott J., 2003, Textile Perspectives in Mixed-Media Sculpture, The Crowood Press LTD, S. 160, Ramsbury, England, p. 90-91

Figure 9. Nicola Morriss, "Glove", 120x58x35 cm



Reference: Scott J., 2003, Textile Perspectives in Mixed-Media Sculpture, The Crowood Press LTD, P. 160, Ramsbury, England, p.98

Figure 10. Akiko Ikeuchi, "silk vortices". Although they seem chaotic with regard to complex installations, each work of Akiko has a plan. Hurricanes, whirlpools, and galaxies: the works are reminiscent of nature's great forces



<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=483363468356061&set=a.351980568161019.105695.337671456258597&type=1&theater>, 27.06.2012

Figure 11. Suhandan Ozay Demirkan, (Turkish fiber artist), Anatolian Fiber Shoes



<http://v3.arkitera.com/news.php?action=displayNewsItem&ID=16772>, 03.08.2012

In her collection "Fiber Games", Turkish artist Suhandan Ozay Demirkan used silk and paper shoes, robe-kimono reviews and outdoor textiles. Suhandan Ozay Demirkan, having an equivalent discourse with plastic arts platform, used an arrangement including a mixture of usable and abstract-conceptual in her exhibition "Fiber Games". The artist considers that the art of fiber provides new offers in the the art of transformation of two-deimentional narrative of traditional textile technique and materials into three-dimensional spatial

reviews. This collection, made up of sculptural elements, is based on the perception of time and place, feelings and thoughts enriched by the conceptual experiences. To her, this collection is an evidence of how art and craft create a free creativity stage. "Fiber Games" is a small mixture of art travelling between the dream and reality, yesterday and tomorrow, tradition and modernity.

Conclusions

In sculptural textiles, in which figures and materials are transformed into humans, mineral and rocks into other products and vice versa, owing to the high-tech innovations structures and reliefs replace designs. Disorder creates mobile surfaces. Metal elements are blended with fabric and become an inseparable part of it. Shimmering surfaces are obtained through light and semi-transparent layers that have been folded, curled and draped.

Material is rebuilt. It is divided into parts, is brought together, stretched and handled like sculpture. The nature of textile has maternal associations, it begins from the first fabric of baby's cradle and continues to be the center of our lives. Textiles are our second skins in protection and covering and as a material they refer to character, status and ownership. Beyond its relationship with the body, textiles have numerous roles in several industrial applications and at homes including temperature and decoration. The use of textiles, with every new product, expands the formation. The material character, when combined with the relative cheapness, gives an artistic freedom allowing some other materials. In this respect, it expanded the horizons of many artists both materially and structurally. Christo is the most exclusive messenger of this application.

Art works, if power of the work which was reflected with the help of audience unite with aesthetic feeling, and with this movement coming to our inner worlds, may evoke much deeper instinctive responses. The truth and life power may realize themselves only by developing a dialogue with the audience, however, the most memorable art can be achieved by igniting our inner world, thus building conceptual foundations. The phrase "dematerialize" was coined by the critic Lucy Lippard during 1960s. In her article (Dematerialize the art) which is debated in contemporary art, objects would lose their loyalty regardless of what the art form is- studies would comprise outsides of production facilities instead of studios.

Enlightened person and material content have a symbiotic relationship which creates this association from numerous and a wide range of material repertoire. Their discourse may focus on more intellectual themes ranging from environmental and natural forms, journeys and imaginary creatures, ritual ceremonies, gender and family roles, genetic engineering, waste management, medical and metaphysical concerns to politics. Sculptural textile applications have changed beyond recognition in the second half of the twentieth century. Mixed-media has prepared books, articles and a variety of contemporary documents to show the value of sculpture.

Fiber materials which were used both by all the artists in whose works some of their examples were given and in other artists' works as well, continue to be used today to define not only the feminist movements but also gender discrimination, racism, war, environmental issues and personal problems. Other themes are sexual identity, lost traditions, cultural conflict, globalization, and migration. Modern three-dimensional sculptural textiles are gradually increasing their power in textile as well as in the art of sculpture with the help of fiber, textile, different, mixed materials and theme.

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