

Erin R Miller: Artist Statement

As a weaver, I am deeply concerned with the human relationship with cloth and how the connection we have with it can be related to other materials and experiences. Humans spend a significant amount of time physically interacting with textiles, but contemporarily very little time thinking about them. In the book *Art & Textiles* Beverly Gordon explains “To be human is to be involved with cloth. We are touched by fiber and fabric literally from the time we are born – until the time we are laid to rest. No matter where we come from, we interact with cloth every day”. Cloth is something that we know intimately with our whole bodies, but its place in our lives has become mostly an afterthought. We have developed a disconnect with the origins of one of our most basic necessities, and its value has been lowered both monetarily and personally. My consideration of our current experience with cloth has led me to investigate other materials that may now be considered nearly its equal in that respect. The most important connections I am making between them are more concerned with what I consider to be their positive attributes which include protection, comfort, warmth, and aesthetics. In order to fully appreciate the usefulness of these materials I act to spend a considerable amount of time with them, as I would with my most cherished textiles.

Before the onset of the industrial revolution cloth was still somewhat of a luxury, and even the most worn garments and linens were reused and repaired until they nearly vanished. What interests me specifically about the items I am rendering, which include things like bubble wrap and mulch, are that they have always been manufactured and distributed as “temporary” materials. Today, clothing is produced in a manner that has pushed it into the realm of temporary commodity. By rendering temporary materials with fibers I seek to revalue both materials and offer to extend their lives significantly. The manner in which the weavings are made forces a disconnect between me and the finished product which reflects the relationship that I am evaluating between myself and the materials. The physical structure of the cloth, and thus the imagery inherent in the structure, is created digitally and then sent to a manufacturing facility where the actual creation of the textile is completed by an industrial computerized loom. The process by which the weavings are created is also indicative of the way that we experience the materials that I’ve chosen to render. When I pass a beautifully manicured lawn my instinct is not to celebrate the mulch and grass for so gracefully blanketing the earth, it is to celebrate the landscaper for telling it where to lie. There is a considerable amount of labor that goes in to making something aesthetically appealing, but it is a process that has become foreign to most consumers. My intention is to offer the viewer an opportunity to experience their personal sensory memory of the materials I am rendering, with a gentle suggestion that they be considered in relation to the cloth that the materials are being rendered with.