



Kat Howard - Toni Brogan  
Susan Martin Maffe - Sarah Boink

**FIBER HERE AND NOW!**

*september 7 - november 16, 2022*

**CROWELL AND WEST GALLERIES  
FEIGENBAUM CENTER FOR VISUAL ARTS**

*organized by union college department of visual*

**FIBER HERE AND NOW!** brings together the work of Sarah Boink, Toni Brogan, Kat Howard and Susan Martin Maffei. All four artists work with fiber as the primary medium of their practice expressed in a range of forms and techniques, from traditional woven textiles to immersive sculptural installations. The works selected for this exhibition share an engagement with the themes of trauma and healing both in the process of their fabrication as well as in their subject matter. Martin Maffei explores the environmental trauma created by climate change on various ecosystems and Howard, Brogan and Boink explore personal traumas of domestic violence, sexual assault, estrangement and grief. Their subtle and metaphorical approaches invite the viewer to reflect on these themes in relation to their own individual and shared experiences and also bring greater awareness and empathy for the traumas of others.

In keeping with the theme of healing, all four artists work with sustainably sourced materials including organic fibers, natural dyes, and handmade yarn as well as repurposing discarded fabrics and textiles. The material and texture of these objects also carry associations with warmth, comfort and protection. Thus, in their creation, the works also become extended acts of healing.

Collectively, the artists reside in the Hudson and Mohawk Valley, the lands of the Mohican and also the Haudenosaunee, an indigenous matriarchal society in which the women controlled land rights and decided if a man was to be removed from a position of power if found to be murderous, a thief or sexually abusive. And Mother Earth, to which all indigenous cultures hold an authentic and inherent bond, calls us to practice sustainable cultivation and protection of the land and break free from the social inertia that continues to perpetuate the climate crisis. It is equally imperative that we use our voice to hold non-eco friendly companies accountable to the earth and further trauma. In viewing this exhibition, it is important to consider the context of place and pre-colonial dynamics of power and belonging as we reflect on what we are doing, here and now, for the wellbeing of our planet and each other.

Lorraine Morales Cox, PhD.

*Exhibition Curator*

Lorraine Morales Cox, PhD is an Associate Professor of Art History and Chair of Union College's Visual Arts Department. Her research and teaching focuses on contemporary artists, specifically social critical artistic practices that engage with the themes of gender, race and the environment.

As an extension of the exhibition, the following programs are opportunities to hear directly from the exhibiting artists along with professionals whose work and practices intersect with the themes of the exhibition. The following two panel discussions are free and open to the public:

## **SUSTAINABILITY, FIBER, AND CREATIVE PRACTICES**

**October 4, 2022 Nott Memorial, 5:45pm**

*Sarah Boink, Artist and Owner of Sizz Handmade*

*Susan Martin Maffei, Artist*

*Tegan Frisino, Professional Weaver and Owner of Comfortcloth Weaving*

*Cecilia Tkaczyk, Owner of CeCe's Wool Farm Store*

## **ART, TRAUMA, AND HEALING**

**October 25, 2022 Nott Memorial 5:45pm**

*Kat Howard, Artist*

*Alex Thompson, LMSW, Art Therapist YWCA Northeastern New York*

*Sarah Caterina, LCSW-R, Director of Clinical Services & Community Engagement,  
YWCA Northeastern New York*

*The following workshop is free and open to Union College Students:*

## **INTUITIVE WEAVING WITH TONI BROGAN**

**October 13, 2022, FCVA Crowell and West Galleries 3:00-5:00pm.**

***Please contact Professor Cox (cox1@union.edu) to register.***



# SARAH BOINK

I create surreal narratives explored through my interpersonal, psychological, and metaphysical relationships. My material choices and artmaking practices are fueled by my strong respect and connection to the earth. The imagery, color choices, textures and objects presented weave a tale of childhood memories and personal convictions. My work deals with place and placement, revisiting history to help inform a new perspective.

When my mother passed, I inherited all of her fiber art tools including a spinning wheel and a loom. Since then, I have utilized my mother's fiber art tools and have taken up the art of tapestry weaving in order to process my grief and revisit my history in order to inform a new perspective. All of my yarns are hand spun and hand dyed using traditional natural dye techniques. The process of transforming wool and raw materials into yarns and colors inform my work as my attempts to transform trauma into healing.

My material choices are sustainable and compliment my ethos, my love of hip hop, surrealism, abstract expressionism, and postmodern ideas. I weave these types of storytelling concepts together through texture and the juxtaposition of color. My weaving process leaves room for improvisation of form, color and texture, and the arrangement of objects combined with tapestries made with my own hands tell stories through my lens. I hope to relate to others' experiences, even if unconsciously understood.



*Self Portrait*  
55"x19"x10.5"  
Fiber, Wood

"The tapestry is upholstered around an old wooden crate. The tapestry is woven with handspun yarns from the hudson valley and hand dyed using natural dye techniques such as indigo, cochineal, turmeric, logwood from the bark of a tree, and turmeric. Imagery of the dragonfly, the artist and the rainbow represent the strong bonds between mother and daughter, and the earth. In this case, three generations of the matriarch."

*Things Left Unsaid*  
Fiber, Ceramic, Wood, Glass  
49"x53"x36"



"This piece personifies the stacking of subconscious thoughts imprinted and felt in conversations, especially those delicate moments when something may be interpreted in a manner that may or may not have been intended. This could be a conversation with a stranger; a family member; a friend, or even a conversation happening inside my own head. These objects represent memories from the past, something that is occurring in the present moment, or an encounter that hasn't happened yet. The objects are often gifts or found objects sourced from the local environment that may have been discarded; but once had a special meaning or purpose. The stacking of these associated objects with other objects, and with objects made with my own hands, builds a new meaning embedded with humor, hopefully revealing the countless hours processing emotions of joy, happiness, grief and frustration, and the passage of time in space."

*Untitled Landscape*  
Fiber, Wood  
15"x15"x6"

"All the fibers are hand dyed using natural materials such as indigo, cochineal, madder root, turmeric, and logwood from the bark of a tree. The process of weaving this piece was time consuming but intuitive, which alleviated a lot of stress and helped me process my day to day situations. The juxtaposition of both the urban and rural landscape, soft and coarse materials, and big scale and little scale combinations, are collectively combined in such a way to blend time and space and mirror the process of being in the present moment."





### *Guardian of the Land*

6.5' X 4' X 4'

Wood, metal, fiber

"A primitive lamp, a yarn spinner, an antique land surveyor, and a tapestry wrapped around a pole in bold flag-like colors are constructed together in such a way to create a new object that embodies hope for the future standing tall and proud as it looks out the gallery window standing confident and fanciful.

In my work, I create surreal narratives fueled with a strong respect for my connection to the earth, childhood memories, and my interpersonal sociological, psychological, physical and metaphysical convictions explored through relationships. As a sixth generation Schenectady resident, my work deals with place, looking back at the history and defining a new sense of space. When my mother passed away over a decade ago, I inherited all of her fiber art tools including a spinning wheel and a loom. Since then, I have processed my grief, using her tools through the art of tapestry weaving. I hand spin and hand dye all of the yarns in my tapestry using traditional natural dye techniques. The process and materials inform the work as I attempt to transform the trauma into healing.

I often use found objects and materials from the local community. For example, the historic surveyor in this work is the primary character, a metaphor of an artist who reclaims our history into something transformative. A surveyor is a guardian of the land in much the same way as the artist is."

### ***About the Artist***

Over the past thirty years, I have worked in the nonprofit industry alongside being a practicing artist. In my artistic career, I have curated and installed over 100 art exhibits and public art projects teaching art to children and adults from marginalized communities. Currently, I work full time at SUNY Schenectady as a Stewardship Officer for The Office of Development and External Relations.

I studied painting at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Purchase College, State University of New York. My artwork is in permanent collection with The Albany Institute of History & Art as well as private collections, and I received the Nancy Hyatt Liddle Award presented by This Historic Albany Foundation. I have curated public art exhibitions including Sculpture in the Streets and Night Fire in Albany, NY and I am most recently, I participated in Community Weave, a public art project free and open to the public as part of the 2022 Northeast and Mid- Atlantic Creative Placemaking Leader Summit.

I have exhibited my work at Proctors Schenectady, Jarvis Rockwell Gallery, Downtown Saratoga Business District, Albany Center Gallery, Envision Architects, Hudson Opera House, Fulton Street Gallery, Kismet Gallery, Hudson Mohawk Weavers Guild Annual Show & Sale, alongside Albany Symphony Orchestra, as well as other group shows and public art projects.



# TONI BROGAN

These works, *Here comes the Bride*, *Spinal Discord* and *Sometimes in my Nightmares* are all a deeply personal exploration of family dysfunction, mental illness, estrangement, death and understanding the trauma of childhood that we carry into adulthood. Creating art born from trauma gives me a better understanding of who, why and how I am as an adult today.

I work primarily in a monochromatic palette, through the calmness of white to the intensity of deep blues and indigo, letting the pieces speak through the fibers they organize my internal thoughts, I therefore gain a better understanding of who I am.

Collecting, recycling and foraging for fibers is part of the process and using a variety of techniques such as knitting, binding, weaving, crochet and ropemaking gives my work the heavy texture and multiple layers that mimics the complexity of family relationships.



*Nature's Throne* is my ode to the stunning natural landscape that surrounds me in the beautiful Catskill Mountains... foraged from my fields in fall and using a 18th century walnut chair as my loom, this piece is dedicated to our environment, and its ever changing seasonal cycles.

(above) *Natures Throne*

36h x 24w x 28d

2021

Reclaimed 18th century walnut chair. Foraged plants, horsehair, jute, sisal, paper, insects, cocoons, hemp.

"Mother nature how she nurtures.. Always forgiving, never demanding."

(left) *Spinal Discord*

6 ft x 6 ft

Iron, cotton, wool, silk, vintage thread, antique yarn, recycled yarn, rope.

2020

"The family tangles and untangles itself endlessly, grasping, strangling, forever separating but never releasing."









(left) *Sometimes in my Nightmares*

3 ft x 5 ft

Handwoven indigo dyed jute, cotton, sisal, paper, bed sheets, vintage thread, recycled clothing, raw hemp.  
2020

"I wake, realizing I've had this dream before. No way out, the house, oozes, stretches, hides its exits."

(right) *Here Comes the Bride, some people should never marry...*

40 x 40 inches.

Iron Frame, recycled donated wedding dress, antique gloves, stockings, tulle, silk flowers, shoes.

"Thanks to my friends and neighbors for contributing their wedding dresses and shoes for this piece.

Mrs Wayne Pebbler

Mrs Brandon LeNoir

Mrs Nathaniel Weiss

The former Mrs Frederick Garland Baker

The former Mrs Jim Wheeler

The former Mrs Peter Brogan."



### ***About the Artist***

Toni Brogan was born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand, upon leaving her homeland, she traveled the world extensively before settling down in NYC. After a successful career in food styling, working for such clients as Gourmet, Bon Appetit, Kraft, Oprah, Starbucks and Delta Airlines, she switched gears and left the food profession to explore fiber as a full time artist.

This second act includes commissions overseas, 38 pieces in an upstate boutique lodge, multiple group shows and her first solo show in 2024. Toni's work has been featured in Elle Decor, NY Times, American Tapestry Alliance, Upstate Diary, Catskill Mountain News, Fiber Art Now, Torpedo Factory, Hunter Design and Travel. In 2022 Toni released a collection of one of a kind hand woven handbags, currently sold in Spain, Mexico, New Mexico and New York. Please contact the artist directly for available work and commissions. Toni currently living in Roxbury, NY.

# KAT HOWARD

This collection interrogates the insidious nature of what it means to exist within and be controlled by the dynamics of an abusive relationship. Each installation invades the viewer's personal space. Existing as bound seeds, hanging limbs, or writhing abstracted bodily forms, the sculptures emulate the feeling of tension.

Repetition and labor are vital aspects to the work. Through the labor, the anxiety of longing for touch is palpable. I want the viewer to sense the thousands of hours, and the fevered precision which act as an echo of the madness in the mind that comes to claim the body when it is a victim of abuse. Looking in from the outside, the control is invisible and can only be witnessed upon closer inspection in nearly transparent threads, thousands of knots and haunting appendages.

## *There is No Calm in Stillness*

raw cotton, cotton thread, one spool of polyester thread, meat hook  
8' x 6' x 4'  
2022



I create visual art that uses abstraction, the innate language of texture, and the repulsion/attraction of touch to interrogate my own identity as a survivor of abuse and sexual violence. The material and texture of the object is integral to my practice, and its connection to the body. Evidence of the hand and the physical marks of the body are always present in my work. What happens to the body when it is forced to become a vessel for trauma? In what ways do we physically carry pain? How is the self altered afterwards? These are some of the questions I examine in my practice. My pieces either have a physicality to them that feels almost human, or they are twisted abstractions from the domestic landscape.

"This installation was constructed of 1000 yards of raw cotton that was stuffed into a cotton thread sleeve created on a knitting machine. It was then hand knotted into a series of continuous chains and amassed on wooden platforms on site. They emulate viscera as they spill and pile, pulling away from the corner. The chains were bound with one spool of polyester thread that was chosen because it is such a bright white, its unnatural quality contrasts sharply with the natural cotton forms. The thread is anchored from a meat hook installed in the wall, referencing the violence of controlled movement. From afar the muscular mass looks like it is resting by choice, but upon closer inspection the viewer realizes that its inert position is an illusion and that it is being constricted and bound, held in place by this seemingly benign material. The tension of the single ply thread constraining the monumental sculpture is palpable. How is it possible for a thin thread to constrict and force a body to be restrained? The title "There is No Calm in Stillness," begs the viewer to question appearances and understand that just because something appears dormant, it does not mean that it is tranquil, or that it is still by choice."





*I Must Like it If I Stay*

raw Supima cotton, cotton clothesline, cotton thread, nylon

8' x 10' x 14' - Installation size may vary.

2022

"This installation is made of hundreds of hand-stitched nylon tubes filled with raw cotton that are suspended from the ceiling by cotton clotheslines. The nylon stockings were all altered so that there are no feet, only cinched ends at the bottom of each appendage; their capacity for movement is restricted. The waistband of the nylons were left dangling; in their multitudes they emulate a haunting resemblance to white flags of surrender. They are filled with raw cotton, which in its just picked, carded state, and has a visceral animalistic quality to it. Its texture straining through the nylon is evocative of mottled flesh. There is a feeling of reaching, of tension. Each nylon appendage is attached to the ceiling with the same knot. The uniformity and precision of the order used to organize something so bodily is unsettling. The vertical lines of the clothesline create the optical illusion of bars on a cage. The suspended forms are tethered between the ceiling and the floor, their amorphous tips barely in contact with the rough and wild texture of the raw cotton strewn below that spills out from the edge of the opening of the installation. 'I Must Like it If I Stay' considers my personal history and that of the Shadow Pandemic: the rising violence against women during Covid-19, and the disorientation of solitary confinement within domestic abuse. According to a study by the UN, since the Pandemic began, 1 in 3 women has experienced abuse by an intimate partner. These situations are in plain sight. Looking in from the outside, the restraints and control are invisible. Often-times, the first question asked is why doesn't she leave? But from within the domestic space, the walls appear solid and impenetrable. Victims are unhinged by constant touch, loss of time in darkness, and dampened sound. The opening is right there, but they can not see a way out".

*Skin: Pathetic Barrier*

European water chestnuts, nettle yarn, linen thread, galvanized steel wire

38" x 68"

2021

"This installation was made of hundreds of European water chestnuts, an invasive seed that was foraged along the Hudson River. The plant produces primeval seed pods with spiky thorns that interfere with the ecosystem, blocking out the light and preventing other flora and fauna from getting the nutrients that they need from the sun. They take years to germinate and pose a physical danger to those navigating the space that they inhabit. Hundreds of these seeds were individually bound in a handspun nettle yarn. There is a fevered obsession encapsulated in the labor required to create such a piece, and yet also a futility. The water chestnuts were then threaded onto linen to create a piece that emulates chainmail. Yet, while the barbs on the seed armor would protect against invasion, this could not be donned without the wearer also being wounded, implying that the cost to protect, is to punish. As an armor it then fails at its task. The panel is installed and anchored between four points centered in a doorway, it is stretched like a hide being tanned. The installation acts as a barrier between rooms. It prevents the viewer from passing through the threshold freely, and yet the eye can see through the gaps in the thorns. This dichotomy forces the viewer to consider how protections and barriers function internally and externally, do they succeed, or do they fail, and at what cost to our sense of self."



***About the Artist***

Kat Howard was born in Rochester, New York in 1984. She earned a BA in Creative Writing and Art History from Brandeis University in 2006, and worked at the Whitney Museum of American Art as their first Manager of Interactive Media until 2010, when she left the museum world to pursue two MFAs contingently in Studio Art: Book & Paper Art and Creative Writing: Poetry, which she received from Mills College in 2013. Since graduating, she has been working as an independent artist. She has been featured in DesignSponge, Houzz, Architectural Digest, and Chronogram. Her work is available through the artist directly, and through Lawton Mull in New York. Howard lives in Kingston, New York.



# SUSAN MARTIN MAFFEI

The human footprint has changed our natural world and affected animals large and small. Invasive species, disease, climate change and disappearing environments endanger the balance of nature at alarming rates and to consequences yet unknown. There is beauty to be found in all things living and attention to its role in nature's balance is crucial. The Pandora Box series attempts an awareness of both their beauty and destruction.

These works combine textile and book arts in a series of narrative visuals. Each contains a tapestry woven tunic which references our

human footprint, as well as tapestry woven insects, feathers and plants. Frequently crochet, collage, drawing, painting and both found and constructed objects fill these panoramas, most of which are enclosed in hand-made boxes or books.

In these works I depict a very personal graphic view of my surrounding world. The historical precedent of mark making particular to tapestry is coupled with tactile and intense flavor of modern yarns and colors. Selected memory, process and materials combine to form this imagery which can only exist as fiber.



*The Pandora Box Series: Black Walnut Tree*  
30" x 25" front (right) and back (above) 2022  
Folded, Linen warp, wool and linen weft, rami & linen  
knotted net, found walnut shells, cotton lining, plexiglass  
support pedestal.

"Black Walnut trees (*Juglans Nigra*) are native to eastern North America. Two native insects of interest that inhabit and influence these trees in some way are the walnut twig beetle and the lace bug. The Walnut Twig Beetle (*Pityophthorus juglandis*) is responsible for the spread of a deadly fungal disease to Walnut and Black Walnut trees. This tiny insect is about the size of a third a grain of rice. The beetle itself does little damage to the trees but when coupled with a hitchhiking fungus "*Geosmithia morbida*," it causes what is known as thousand cankers disease.



When infected, the health of the tree declines and within a few years can cause death. Although native to a just few states in western U.S. they have now invaded the Northeast.

The Walnut lace bugs (*Corythucha juglandis*) are tiny insects that range from 1/8" to 1/3" long. They feed on the underside of leaves and can discolor the leaves but do not normally affect health. They are distinguished by the unusual doily-like lace appearance of wings and thorax."



*Pandora Box – American Burying Beetle*

13" x 13.5" x 20" (closed), 34" x 19" x 20" (open), 2019.

Tunic: wool warp, alpaca, wool, silk & silk wrapped stainless steel weft. Cotton lining. Word banners: cotton warp, wool and ramie weft. Drawer contents: cut & folded brown paper. Tapestry woven beetles: silk wrapped stainless steel warp, wool and silk weft. Carcass: wool warp, alpaca weft. Bird skull. Handmade box: Davey board, Canson papers, Iris book cloth, black locust thorns.

"The American Burying Beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*) was the first insect added to the federal Endangered Species List in 1989 because it had declined so drastically in numbers and range. Historical records show that it once lived in 35 states. Natural populations now live in only four (Oklahoma, Arkansas, Nebraska and Rhode Island), but efforts to reintroduce the species have been undertaken in two additional states (Ohio, Massachusetts). Burying beetles are unusual in several ways. Both male and female take part in raising the young. Upon finding a carcass they move it to soft soil by lying on their backs and moving it with their feet. They then pluck and bury it and then mate. The female lays her eggs in an adjacent tunnel and when the larvae emerge the adults feed and tend the young until they crawl into the soil to pupate or develop. Average life span is twelve months. It is believed that several changes have added to the near extinction of this beetle: widespread use of pesticides; smaller populations of their prey (small birds and mammals); changes in land use; the decline of large predators which open carrion to smaller scavengers; and even the extinction of the once plentiful passenger pigeons (which was the ideal sized prey for the American Burying Beetle). Carrion beetles are important in that they recycle carcasses and return nutrients to the soil, indicators of environmental health."





*Pandora Box – Blue Jay In Decline*

17" x 15" x 8" (closed), 20" x 40" x 17" (open), 2018.

Tunic: wool warp, silk, cotton & wool weft, found blue jay feathers. Nest: chicken wire, ramie eggs & Corvid bird skull.

Handmade box: Davey board, Asahi bookcloth, handmade papers, plexi rod, colored pencil drawing, velcro.

"In the northeast, Blue Jays experienced a 25% decline between 1989 and 2013. The strongest losses followed the intense West Nile virus epidemics. Since the virus was discovered more than 300 species of birds have been affected. Crows and Jays frequently die from the disease, other birds usually survive. Neurological signs of infected birds include loss of coordination, head tilt, tremors, weakness and lethargy. Most Corvids die within three weeks. There has been a recent rebound in the Jay population and some believe that they may now be immune. Their population is being monitored, but as it stands today, they are not eligible for a vulnerable classification and only remain stable."

### ***About the Artist***

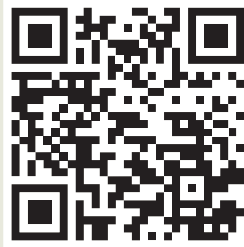
Susan Martin Maffei is an internationally known tapestry artist whose background includes art studies at The Art Students League in NYC, tapestry training at Les Gobelins in Paris, apprenticeship and studio work at the Scheuer Tapestry Studio, NYC and conservation of antique textiles at Artweave Gallery, NYC. She has been weaving her work professionally since 1985. She has taught, lectured and exhibited in the U.S. and abroad and has work in both public and private collections.

# UNION

---

## C O L L E G E

FOUNDED 1795



Scan QR to learn  
more about the  
department of  
Visual Arts at  
Union College.

*Exhibition branding and marketing materials designed by  
Lilith Haig, BA in Studio Fine Arts and Art History, Union  
College class of 2021. Lilith is a freelance designer based  
out of New York, specializing in branding, web design, and  
animation. Please reach out to [lkhaig@gmail.com](mailto:lkhaig@gmail.com) for more  
information and/or project requests.*