

TLH LOCAL

No medium is off-limits for fiber artist Teneé Hart

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COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Up and coming fiber artist Teneé Hart admits to being a bit of a hoarder, scouring craft and thrift store bargain bins for one-of-a-kind supplies. Returning to her studio, she adds to her collection of organized chaos, each textile, fabric, and plastic numbered and at the ready. Glitter clings to all surfaces, and those who visit leave with her signature sparkle. Hart sees herself as a mad scientist, experimenting to see what might work for any given piece.

"My studio is a laboratory for materials," laughs Hart. "And materials are my chemicals."

The strangest item hanging up in her studio is an inflated pig intestine, gifted by a colleague who was studying the material. Transfixed by its translucent and foggy qualities, the organ serves as a silent muse for Hart's ponderings.

Another source of inspiration comes from browsing the aisles of local hardware stores. Without knowing the functional purpose of many items, she collects a treasure trove in order to envision their potential and what they might become.

"It's kind of this cabinet of curiosity when I go because I start seeing things that I can manipulate, and start to transform them into something else," says Hart.

Hailing from Virginia, she credits her inherited craftiness to her mother and grandmother. Hart earned a Studio Art degree from the University of Mary Washington. During her undergraduate explorations, she considered herself a sculptural painter, and instead of using canvas or wood, she would melt down trash bags to use as her blank slate.

She continued to work sculpturally and transitioned into fibers during her graduate studies, earning her MFA from Florida State this past spring. Her artistic processes develop from a concept or theme and are driven by research. From there, Hart begins a series of sketches that act as an organizational tool, though she finds the piece rarely turns out as planned.

"Those are happy mistakes if it doesn't turn out like the sketch," reassures Hart. "It's kind of like an evolution of the process. If it does come out like the sketch, I feel I didn't learn as much."

Much of Hart's work explores women in relation to their biology, histories, oppression, and struggles, and the push and pull between past and present day ideals and expectations. She loves working with domestic objects, such as in her work, *Womb Veils*, which used shower caps, a dissected wedding dress and veil, and lace tablecloths.

"I think the female body in itself is just a beautiful thing," says Hart. "There's such symbolism and weighted context to the female body. It's perfect for art lingo. You can really expand on it."

The tactile nature of her medium lends itself well to femininity. Additionally, her technique of softening unexpected materials proves strategic, balancing out her weightier subject matter. Hart prefers a uniform aesthetic, using singular colors to help the viewer to digest each work fully.

"My concepts are sometimes disturbing, bizarre to the normal person," says Hart. "I want to lure viewers in with the beautiful quality of the textiles, but kind of let them walk away with the idea of the concept."

Hart reveals untold stories of women facing societal pressures. In *Cestoda*, she used tattered gauze and pearls to represent 1930s fad where women ingested tapeworms to lose weight. In *80Hg*, a giant bedframe spills over with metallic fabrics, exposing an ancient contraception practice of Chinese concubines. Communicating these extremes is important to Hart, as she wants to inform viewers, even if it leaves them a bit unsettled.

"The beautiful thing about art is that it can be interpreted by anyone," says Hart. "I try not to take bad reactions to my artwork to heart, because if you do that you're not going to get very far."

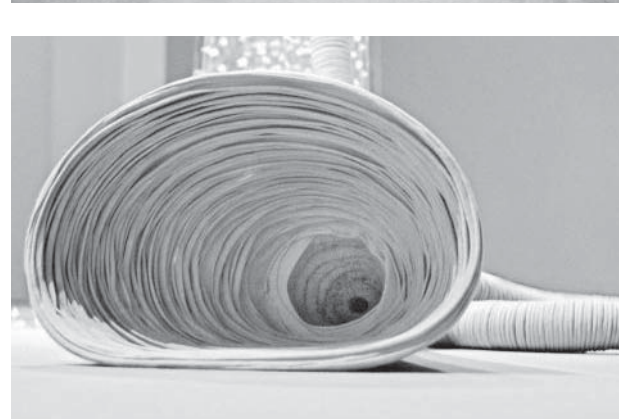
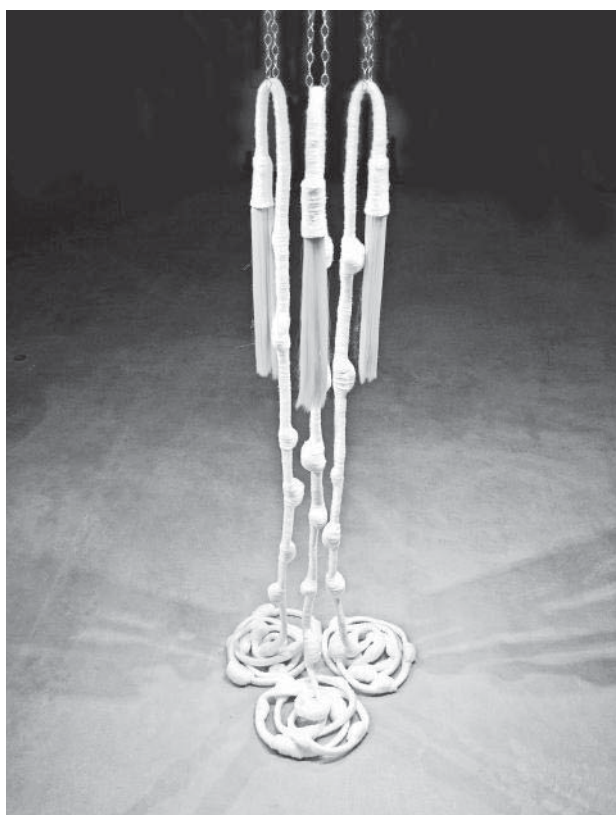
Hart's installations have been displayed around the Southeastern US, including Kentucky, South Carolina, and Georgia. Her family shows big-hearted support for her endeavors and successes. Hart's brother collects her paintings and her father has designs of converting the basement of her childhood home into an art gallery.

Most recently Hart was named as one of COCA's 30 Under 30 Juried Exhibition artists.



TENEÉ HART

One of artist Teneé Hart's many fiber art installations.



TENEÉ HART

Hart's fiber artwork piece.

Thrilled by the opportunity, she says the experience has made her feel like a legitimate artist, giving her a taste of what it might be like to officially become part of a gallery someday.



TENEÉ HART

One of Teneé Hart's fiber art installations.



TENEÉ HART

LEFT: One of artist Teneé Hart's installations.

RIGHT: One of Hart's art installations.

IF YOU GO

What: COCA's 30 Under 30 Juried Exhibition
When: 6 p.m., Oct. 30, Public Reception & Awards Ceremony
Where: City Hall Art Gallery, 300 S. Adams St.
Hours: 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, Sept. 30-Nov. 16
Cost: Free
Contact: For more information please call 850-224-2500 or visit <http://www.cocanet.org/city-hall/>

For now she can see herself continuing on the path towards a career in art education. An adjunct professor in FSU's art department and the MFA Studio Manager, she's humbled to teach soft sculpture to upper-level students. Energized by their new approaches to the conceptual work, Hart counsels them to take pleasure in the simpler details.

"Be aware of your surroundings and don't ignore the everyday," says Hart. "I think sometimes you find the best inspirations in the things that are unnoticed."

Back in the studio, Hart reminds herself of this advice as she reaches breaking points, throwing out uncooperative materials or abandoning her original sketches. She appreciates the journey to the final product, and doesn't mourn anything as lost effort.

"I think almost every single one of my pieces has failed," says Hart. "But I think through failure comes the success and whole gratifying experience of seeing the piece come to life."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

ADVICE FROM AN OCTOGENARIAN

Fact checkers: Getting to the truth of the matter



Kent Miller

GUEST COLUMNIST

If you watched the recent debates by Presidential candidates you heard accusations, denials, he said/she said, lots of claims, backed up with contradictory statistics, etc. How do you decide what is factual?

Ideally you turn to a fact checker. You probably have never met one, but there is a sizable industry of individuals and organizations devoted to doing the research to get to the truth. (A German weekly, *Der Spiegel*, is probably the world's largest fact checking operation, employing the equivalent of eighty full-time workers).

To get a feel for what they do we turn to the Democrats. Following the first debate, FactCheck.org came up with an eight page summary of the falsehoods (lies) and misleading claims made by each of the candidates, along with details confirming the errors.

The lists were long, with similar findings for the Republicans. A quick scan of the reports failed to have much impact on my assessment of the debaters. In large part because they are politicians, and their primary purpose is to get elected. A little leeway in the heat of debate comes as no surprise and I am willing to cut them a little slack.

Not so for the news organizations. Look at this analysis by PunditFacts, in 2014. They used their news judgment to select which items to check, including statements made by a pundit, a host, or paid staffer. Each statement was rated as mostly False, False, or Pants on Fire. Forty-five percent of NBC and MSNBC for 58 percent statements received one of the ratings above. The corresponding figure for CNN was 22 percent, and for 58 percent for Fox and Fox News Channel. Scary?

A visit to Wikipedia Fact Check is simultaneously troubling and reassuring. At the top of the first page

there is an insert reading: This article has multiple issues. This article needs additional citations for verification. Some or all of this article's listed sources may not be reliable.

All of this suggests that a certain amount of skepticism can be a healthy thing. Even with science as our guiding star, that which we take as factual today may not be tomorrow. e.g. The Harvard Medical School is dramatically modifying its curriculum, in part because biomedical science and the practice of medicine is changing so rapidly. Dean Edward Hundert tells new students "half of what we teach you during your four years of medical school is going to turn out to be wrong or irrelevant by the time you graduate."

This is not to degrade science in any way. When almost all climate specialists agree that global warming is caused by man, it probably is).

In searching for what is true there is a tendency to

look to sources that we know will reinforce currently existing beliefs (not so for you and me, of course).

So. We need to identify the things we are sure of and hold the rest at a little distance. Trust your mother but cut the cards.

(This column has been fact checked).

Kent Miller used to teach psychology at FSU. Now, at 87, he finds himself dealing with life as an octogenarian and its issues — death, sex at 80, money, loneliness, long-term marriage, maneuvering through the health care system. Reach him at ksmiller@fsu.edu.

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