Mark your calendars! Our 26th Festival Opening Reception will be Sat, Sept. 26, 2026 from 5 - 9 pm!

World of Threads Festival

Artist Interview 33: Elisabeth Picard

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Elisabeth goes back and forth between making sculptures, installations, wall works and drawings, setting artist in small or big scale. Her artistic with fibre is based on manipulations and in the way she treats industrial materials and organic shapes. She instinctively explores some fibre constructions and techniques but in a sculptural scale.

← Artist Interview 32: Liz Pazol
Artist Interview 34: Emily Jan →

Cirque, 2011, 3D pen drawing, 21 x 10 inches (53 x 25.5 cm) Photo credit: Michel Dufresne photo credit

Hybrid, 2011, 3D pen drawing, 21 x 10 inches (53 x 25.5 cm) Photo credit: Michel Dufresne photo credit

Cocoon, 2011, 3D pen drawing, 21 x 10 inches (53 x 25.5 cm)

Tell us about your work?

As movement transforms matter in the universe, my work is oriented toward the exploration of the relationship between matter and the physical environment. The relationship between growth and transformation and the complexity of the structures they engender, inform my practice.

As I work on many pieces at the same time, I go back and forth between making sculptures, installations, wall works and drawings. I find that this way of working, that is to say, the process of making things, allows me to do research, to challenge myself and to renew my work constantly.

Where do you get your inspiration?

I get my inspiration through nature, architecture and design. Following the growth of a plant, the flow of a river, the movement in a landscape in order to create natural architectures. With the use of craft techniques, I try to create objects in materials such as wood, corrugated cardboard, felt, fabric, paper, etc. I try to let the materials express their own appearance and some new natural state. To achieve this, I use the craft techniques of folding, cutting, gluing, sewing, knotting, etc. through the repetition, layering to provide volume and texture, cutting for fractures, tension for movement and deformation, and lighting for transparency and shadows. I also use these techniques to alter physical and mechanical properties in order to elevate them to an refined state that demonstrates their architectural potential.

The richness of shapes, textures and colours guide my manipulations. As I am attracted by visual complexity, I tend to use repetition and multiplicity of elements.

My aim is to convince objects that are a figure of art, design and architecture as I put in relationship the notion of refined, serious non-utility, with the notion of utilitarian, functional, everyday life. My practice, in opposition to mass production that generally results in the creation of serial objects, is to laboriously fabricate unique, precious and refined objects. I try to create a dialogue between the environment in relationship to the universe, the landscape, its movements and the organisms that develop in it.

Leaf, 2011, felt, glue, polyethylene and paint, 36 x 35 x 15 in. / 91 x 89 x 38 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

Cocoon, 2011, felt, fabric, glue and paint, 36 x 35 x 15 in. / 91 x 89 x 38 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

My relationship with fibre is based on manipulations and in the way I treat industrial materials and organic shapes.

Why did you choose to go into fibre art?

As a teenager, I experimented with painting and object fabrication. I made my own clothes, I made my own furniture, I made my own friendship bracelets, loom beading and skein hook techniques.

In first art, at College Edouard-Montpetit in Longueuil Quebec and during undergraduate studies at Concordia University in Quebec in Montreal, followed the "academic" program. Sculpture was a way to experiment with the notion of the "monumental" in relation to the human body. I continued I used work practice, whereby I worked at home – deconstructions, layering of materials and transparency. The facilities department at the university provided me with a space, tools, and custom made pieces, finishing and presentation are referenced in the creation of high quality work.

Later, I discovered that my works were standing out, as my strength and creativity relied on hand making and material transformation. While doing the MFA fibre program at Concordia University, I figured out that I was attracted to the hand making process and to the versatility of the fibre field.

My relationship with fibre is based on manipulations and in the way I treat industrial materials and organic shapes. I instinctively explore assembling/ assembling pieces together without glue, by a physical relationship the interlocation or mortised and "self" materials the dedicated and many kinds of plastics. I reproduce instinctively some fibre constructions and techniques, but in a sculptural scale.

Constellation, 2011, felt, felt glue, paint and wire, 36 x 35 x 15 in. / 91 x 89 x 38 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

Constellation, 2011, felt, felt glue, paint and wire, 36 x 35 x 15 in. / 91 x 89 x 38 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

Which is your favourite fibre medium?

As I have a tinnitus approach to materials, my manipulations lead my work through basketry techniques / favour mechanical assemble and the use of industrial materials and organic shapes. I instinctively with sions of paper and single layer cardboard. Their flexibility allows me to create organic shapes and because the material is paper / cardboard, I can transform it into felt. I can also manipulate and make a new parallel between my subject matter and the substrate.

During my residency in the Rivard-Ile-in Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, Quebec, I discovered the Japanese Washi paper. I was fascinated by the material. Washi paper is traditionally created by hand using several stages of manufacture, formations the mesa, dye, lichen, or deformations within drift rock and wood and rocks in the mud. I do not know yet what I will do with these, but they relate in a formal way to my work.

Constellation, 2011, felt, felt glue, paint and wire, 36 x 35 x 15 in. / 91 x 89 x 38 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

Constellation, Detail of one element of the single segment, 2011, felt, felt glue/glue, 9 x 10 x 9 inches / 23 x 25 x 23 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

What other mediums do you work in, and how does this inform your fibre work?

I worked a lot with Russian plywood. Following fires of the grain on the surface. I created cut outs to create the pulse, where positive and negative shapes are in balance. I also used Russian plywood to create a flexible surface the same kind of gigantic lure.

I have recently introduced drawing into my practice. Using pencil or pen and ink, I try to create a flow of lines that evoke the movement of hands. These multiplied drawings are a manifestation of flexible lines that twist and multiply. Organic patterns are created as some elements are repeated and others are altered. I also use these to make a new parallel between my subject matter and the substrate.

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Detail, Extension Ingrainghangers, 2005, Russian plywood and single-face cardboard, 96 x 27 x 7 in. / 244 x 69 x 18 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

Extension Ingrainghangers, 2005, Russian plywood and single-face cardboard, 96 x 27 x 7 in. / 244 x 69 x 18 cm, Michel Dufresne photo credit

What specific historic artists have influenced your work?

The drawings of **Emma Kunz** (Swiss) are very inspiring for me. Their psychedelic and pulsing appearance translates the powers of nature and the cosmos. I also have a great appreciation for the work of Hilma af Klint. Spiro graph. I was looking at mathematical patterning, hypnotic and progressive arrangers for contemplation.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (Swiss) is another artist on one of my favourite painters. As part of the post-Hellenistic, she created a new way of making sculptures and wall works with the use of craft materials and techniques. Her sculptures are made of wood, felt, and other fibre artist series. I feel that my work relates to her, in the way I sculpted mini within a certain purity and formal approach. Moreover, She has / changing many different types of wall works as singular sculptural objects.

Karl Blossfeldt (German) did nearly 6000 photographs of nature specimens. When I look at my favourite ones, I see the mini-cultures of architecture or sculptures. They make an appreciable nature shapes and forms and I feel that I can relate to this in my own work and I invite me to observe nature in different scales, as a microcosm can be a macrocosm and vice versa.

Eva Hesse (American) is the youngest artist of the time Fiberarts. Her use of sweat and transfer is amazing. He work with the trace of life embedded in the growth of wood. He follows the grain of marble and sculpts to surface as human skin.

Interrogo, 2008-2009, Extension paper, 15 x 18 x 18 inches, Elisabeth Picard photo credit

Interrogo, 2008-2009, Extension paper, 15 x 18 x 18 inches, Elisabeth Picard photo credit

Interrogo, 2008-2009, Extension paper, 15 x 18 x 18 inches, Elisabeth Picard photo credit

What specific contemporary artists have influenced your work?

Frank Gehry (Canadian architect based in Los Angeles), interests me a lot with his creations of a phenomenon. Enzo Ragni (Lombard Sculptor in Montreal) is a fantastic piano technician and his amazing hands. I think that he is a great sculptor and I like his work.

Hwang Ik-Ho Weaver (Swiss) a dear of architects. I discovered their work and amazing models in the exhibition Archologie de l'architecture, Centre Pompidou, Paris. Their work is mixed, non-expensive or common materials to create some flexible architectural coatings and structures.

Jean-Pierre Raffarin (Montreal, Quebec) transcends common materials into a refined state. She also works with industrial glass and refraction, emphasizing the sublimes of light and coloured shades of whites.

Rachel Gagnon (Canadian, Montreal, Quebec) has a very creative use of materials. Her work is very organic and she uses a lot of the process of working on some kind of excavation really interesting. However, I see more abilities of material than sublimation. We both like to use the material in the wood like a topographical drawing that we would like to release.

Tara Donovan (American) uses cheap industrial materials. She layers and stacks, glues and pins, folds and cuts, and transforms into clouds, stalactites and arrangements. I love her work a lot, but I feel that she is more minimalist than I am.

Tom Sachs (American) sculpted in a very interesting way to his fabricated. His work plays with the realm of design and the confusion between handmade and look alike machine-made.

Olafur Eliasson (Icelandic) works with nature phenomena. He recreates waterfalls, mist, water waves, refraction and sunset, with a lot of humility. I feel that his work is a meditation set up, the viewer is often immersed into his big scale work.

Sway, 2011, felt pen drawing, 21 x 10 inches, Drawing on the right, Michel Dufresne photo credit

Circus, Ink on Dafen, 2011, felt pen drawing, 21 x 10 inches (53 x 25.5 cm) Michel Dufresne photo credit

What other fibre artists are you interested in?

Philip Beesley (from U.K. lives in Toronto) is an architect and teacher at the University of Waterloo. I like the way he uses technologies to create his work. Beesley's work is composed of a complex network of laser-cleaved parts that are finally assembled by hand with electronic components. His pieces evoke reefs, which develop like some sort of biomechanical ecosystem. His nacre use of lac-bass could be partly stimulated to his work.

Terminaisons chromatiques, 2010, Single face cardboard, acrylic paint and plywood, 49 x 44 x 40 inches, Detail, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Terminaisons chromatiques, 2010, Single face cardboard, acrylic paint and plywood, 49 x 44 x 40 inches, Detail, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Tell us about your studio and how you work:

My studio is separated into three parts. One part is used for drawings, little models, small experimentations and storage. A second part is used to do assembling, detail work, finishing and painting. I can close off this part to use encaustic with ventilation. The last part is used for more heavy work with machine tools, cutting and woodworking.

Topographie, 2009, Pencils colors drawing, 30 x 22 inches, Alexis K. Laflamme photo credit

Topographie, 2009, Pencils colors drawing, Detail, Alexis K. Laflamme Photo credit

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Fibre art continues to strongly position itself by its high quality of fabrication.

What role do you think fibre art plays in contemporary art?

Fibre art may strongly relate to historical and cultural craft-making techniques, hand-making and technology development, as weaving was a precursor to the first computers. Today fibre art intersects with many types of art. It can be exploited through painting, sculpture, installation, video and performance. Even if today fibre artists continue to integrate new technologies within their work, like electronic and L.E.D. lights, fibre art continues to strongly position itself by its high quality of fabrication. Hand working and hand manipulations are precious values that tend to disappear with today's modernization of gigantic factories and assembly lines.

Intervalle, 2010, Plywood and latex paint, 60 x 60 x 10 inches, On the left, and Brèche, 2010 Plywood and latex paint, 60 x 60 x 4 inches, On the right, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Intervalle, 2010, Plywood and latex paint, 60 x 60 x 10 inches, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Brèche, 2010, Plywood and latex paint, 60 x 60 x 4 inches, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Where do you imagine your work in five years?

I am very interested in the integration of art through architecture. I would like to experience making permanent work by commission. I would like to succeed in producing art works reflecting my contemporary vision. The challenge will be to find a way to continue to make refined works with different scales and gravity issues. I wish to work in collaboration with other people and use manufacturing technologies in a design and custom making way.

Intervalle, 2010, Plywood and latex paint, 60 x 60 x 10 inches, Detail, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Brèche, 2010, Plywood and latex paint, 60 x 60 x 4 inches, Detail, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

What interests you about the World of Threads festival?

It is a way to discover a lot of artists that are new for me. It shows a big diversity of exciting work of fibre art. It is another way to get in contact with people that appreciate art and to learn more about our living culture.

Amplitude, 2010, Plywood and single face cardboard, 84 x 43 x 15 inches, Detail, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Amplitude, 2010, Plywood and single face cardboard, 84 x 43 x 15 inches, Guy L'Heureux photo credit

Dawne Rudman

← Artist Interview 32: Liz Pead

Artist Interview 34: Emily Jan →

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Elisabeth Picard

Montréal, Québec, Canada

Présentée au Centre d'exposition Raymond-Lasnier
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Waitomo cave

Ma démarche s'inspire des structures architecturales engendrées par les processus de croissance et de transformation de la nature. En réponse à l'esthétique du design et de l'architecture, qui utilise les nouvelles technologies afin de produire des structures organiques complexes, ma pratique m'a amenée à développer une manière analogue et personnelle de créer mes propres sculptures et écosystèmes. J'impose aux matériaux industriels des techniques artisanales, créant un contraste entre l'apparence brute de ceux-ci et l'aspect naturel que je leur donne, les élevant ainsi à un niveau de raffinement où s'exprime leur potentiel.

Suite à la création de l'œuvre majeure Rainbow mountains en 2015, l'installation **Waitomo cave** réalisée pour la BNSC 2016 s'inspire elle aussi d'un lieu naturel extraordinaire : la grotte de Waitomo en Nouvelle-Zélande. Cette cathédrale souterraine héberge une importante colonie de vers luisants (estimée à près d'un million de spécimens) qui scintillent afin d'attirer leurs proies dans des pièges filamenteux. Travaillant essentiellement avec les attaches à tête d'équerre (Ty-Rap), pour ce projet, j'ai poussé plus loin ma recherche et utilisé de nouveaux matériaux industriels et technologiques afin d'interpréter le déploiement des structures translucides et collantes créées par les vers luisants. L'installation se présente tel un écrin futuriste abritant un environnement féérique lumineux.

Photo : Jean-Michael Semiaro

Photo : Jean-Michael Semiaro

Photo : Lise Barbeau

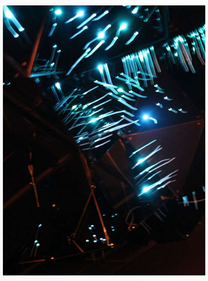


Photo : Lise Barbeau

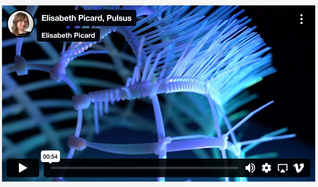
Photo : Sébastien Cossette

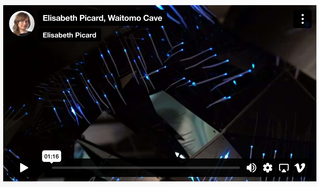
Dans votre parcours artistique, quelle perspective vous relie à la thématique Le Meilleur des mondes?

Dans le roman d'Aldous Huxley, l'être humain prend naissance dans un flacon de laboratoire. Conditionné à ne pas avoir de fluctuations d'émotions, il est « satisfait » d'occuper une place précise pour la régularité et la stabilité de la société idéale. Il est entre autres éduqué à surconsommer des choses neuves sans arrêt et à détester la nature. En contraste avec l'ordre établi du Meilleur des mondes, **Waitomo cave** se veut un reflet industrialisé de la vitalité de la nature et de ses irrégularités hors du contrôle de l'être humain. Cependant, la cohabitation dense des éléments lumineux se présente tel le milieu urbain de « l'état mondial » du roman. La structure en facettes géométriques de la grotte avec ses multiples lumières scintillant à un rythme aléatoire nous rappelle que la cogitation individuelle et personnelle est un atout indispensable pour la société.

Biographie

Née en 1981, Elisabeth Picard vit à Montréal. Plusieurs fois boursière (SODEC, CALQ, FQRSC, CRSH, Université Concordia), elle a obtenu une maîtrise en Beaux-arts de l'Université Concordia en 2011. Son travail a été diffusé au Canada, à Cuba, en France et en Lituanie, notamment à la Lonsdale Gallery qui la représente (Toronto), ainsi qu'à Division, Circa, Diagonale, MATERIA et à la Biennale internationale du lin de Portneuf (2013). En 2016, elle réalisera une importante œuvre d'intégration à l'architecture du nouveau CHSLD d'East Angus.





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