

LESLI ROBERTSON

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— EDUCATION —

MASTER OF FINE ARTS, University of North Texas, Denton, TX (2006): Fibers and Textiles

BACHELOR OF LIBERAL ARTS, Auburn University, Auburn, AL (2000): Summa cum laude

—PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE—

MEKEKA DESIGNS, FOUNDER (2018 – present) www.mekekadesigns.com

- Design company developing new approaches to traditional Ugandan textiles and natural fibers through a focus on sustainability, development, and education.
- Collaborating with Ugandan partners on research and development, sampling, and implementing new designs with artisans based on traditional patterns and materials

FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST, AKA GALLERY, KAMPALA, UGANDA (2018-2019, 2 trips)

- Partnering with community leaders and organizations to strengthen systems of textile production for Mekeka Designs
- Working with rural artisans on group and individual needs assessments, small business training, and quality control/production standards for new samples and products
- Facilitating system for supporting the textiles from tree to product in Uganda; partnered with BOFTA farming co-op to plant palm trees for future mat production

BHAVANA WORLD PROJECT, CONSULTANT (2018), with My Handmade Armenia, a collaborative program between USAID, Smithsonian Institution, and Armenian stakeholders

- In partnership with My Armenia and Bhavana World Project, contributed to the goals of the program to strengthen cultural sustainability through community-based tourism development by expanding textile based products offerings.
- Developed workshop curriculum to teach design, color theory, research methods, and prototyping. Taught 2, 10 day dual language workshops (with assistance from a translator) on product design and development with a focus on contemporary approaches to Armenian textiles
- Worked individually with artists to create 3-5 new design ideas/prototypes utilizing their textile techniques including knit, crochet, natural dyes, weaving, lace making, embroidery, fashion design, quilting

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP LEADER (2008 - present), partner with institutions and organizations to develop and lead art based workshops.

- Nasher Sculpture Center, Textile Workshops for the Community (Dallas, TX, 2019)
- The Warehouse, Under Tension Workshop 2, (Dallas, TX, 2019)
- The Warehouse, Under Tension Workshop, (Dallas, TX, 2018)
- Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Experimental Looms Workshop, (Gatlinburg, TN, 2018)
- Dallas Museum of Art, Center for Creative Connections, Dallas, TX (2009-2015); Side by Side (August 2014); Family Forum Workshop (January 2013); Transformation, Creative Thinking Workshop with Dr. Magda Grohman (2013-2015); Trustee Workshop (November 2012); Analogies, Creative Thinking Workshop with Dr. Magda Grohman (March 2012); Slant 45 Art Workshop with Big Thought (July 2010);

Sketching in the Galleries (2009); Material of the Month, Raffia (April 2009); Material of the Month, Bark Cloth (May 2009).

TACOS4LIFE, DESIGN CONSULTANT, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS, (2017, 6 mos.)

- Designed and developed conceptual framework for interior design in growing restaurant concept (projected 15 restaurants through 2018). Partnered with founder to create standard operating procedures for design that would allow for consistency of vision and scalability while allowing for creative freedom and individuality from restaurant to restaurant; created signature installations using handmade Ugandan baskets and Haitian lanterns.

FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST AND PROJECT CURATOR, KUWAIT CITY, KUWAIT, (2015 - 2016, 3 trips)

- In partnership with Al Sadu House, co-curated and designed a community-based interactive exhibition (*Weaving Stories*) and artwork to educate on the tradition of Sadu weaving
- Collaborated with international team of artists and educators in partnership with US Embassy and Kuwait Nat'l Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters
- *Weaving Stories* exhibition and program reached over 1000 people through the outreach events
- Taught dual language workshops (translated into Arabic): Designing for Innovation (2/2015), Woven Paintings I (5/2016) and Woven Paintings II (11/2016), including visuals and handouts for each workshop
- Co-developed weaving curriculum for Kuwait Ministry of Education to support integration of craft practice into national school curriculum

CO-CREATOR, THE MOTHER LOAD (2012-2017) with Natalie Macellaio. Launched a collaborative project that addresses what it is to be an artist and mother by networking with over 100 artists in 10 countries.

- *The Mother Load: Dallas*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas (2014); Curated with Susan Diachisin, created site specific interactive sculpture that hosted over 6,000 responses from museum visitors; Hosted Visiting Artist, Shira Richter from Herzliya, Israel, coordinated speaking engagements at the Dallas Museum of Art, Eastfield College, Brookhaven College, and University of North Texas; Developed parent/child workshop at the Dallas Museum of Art in collaboration with BIG Kids Magazine of Australia.
- *The Mother Load: Dundee*, Hannah Maclure Centre, Dundee, Scotland (2016); Curated with Clare Brennan, Dr. Simone O'Callaghan, Pernille Spence; hosted live stream Symposium "Creative Practice and Motherhood: A Global Perspective" in Dundee with panelists from Israel, Australia, and the US; collaborated on artwork for exhibition with the Young Mums Unit from Menzieshill High School titled "Quilting Bee for the Tech Age"; Created additional programming including parent/child workshops, film screenings, and performance workshops.

PRODUCT DEVELOPER AND CURATOR, UGANDAN CULTURAL AND VISUAL ARTS (2008-2011)

- *Material Evolution: Ugandan Bark Cloth*, Exhibition curator, University of North Texas Art Gallery (2011)
- *Renewing Material: Nurturing Environment*, Kampala, Uganda (2010). Collaboration with Ugandan non-profit, Let Art Talk to create interactive programs on local bark cloth in Kibinge, Uganda with Ugandan artists, scholars, and ten area schools
- *Renewing Material and the Handmade: the Story of Ugandan Bark Cloth* (2008-9) Interdisciplinary project with the UNT Art Gallery and UNT Student Art Educators Association. With visiting Ugandan artists/

scholars, hosted workshops for 7 schools, over 700 participants in the DFW area. Developed "Talking Mural" exchange between participants in the US and Uganda.

INAUGURAL VISITING ARTIST, CENTER FOR CREATIVE CONNECTIONS, DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART, DALLAS, TEXAS (2009-2010)

- Developed interactive programs with 16 community groups (over 550 people) to contribute small works to *Woven Records*, an interactive exhibition in the Center for Creative Connections.
- This installation was shown at C3 for 6 months and included interactive vertical looms and video elements to encourage continued contributions from museum visitors.

— ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE —

PRINCIPAL LECTURER, FIBERS, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS, DENTON, TEXAS, (2006-2017) Taught courses for graduate and undergraduates on textiles, including multiple levels of weaving, surface design, introduction to textiles and alternative processes. Additional administrative and service work was performed during tenure.

Community/University student partnerships:

- Faculty Sponsor for the UNT Natural Dye Garden, (2012-2017); a funded project from the UNT We Mean Green Fund (\$25,000); Responsible (in collaboration with Fibers students) for design and maintenance of a natural dye garden and interactive space on campus, including research on plant dyes produced; Collaborated with artists Make Art with Purpose (Janeil Engelstad) and Greenmeme Design (Brian Howe and Freya Bardell), in addition to Susan Goethel Campbell on public artwork for the garden; Designed and developed series of limited edition products, including scarves and notecards, sold to support garden maintenance; Students hosted a variety of workshops including yearly dyeing explorations with primary school students from Colegio Union Mexico (Guadalajara, Mexico) and Big Thought/Dallas ISD middle school students, as well as other tours and groups; Published archive of the dye garden to be added to and updated every two years by future students;
- Student participation in Weaving Stories, Kuwait City, Kuwait (2016); organized opportunity for students to create works for interactive sculpture for exhibition in Kuwait; 20 students submitted work and 10 were selected to be included in exhibition.
- Waxed: Batiks from Java, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX (2016); Advisor for 2 students to design and develop hands-on examples for exhibition in coordination with Dr. Rozlyn Walker, DMA Curator.
- Inca: Conquest of the Andes, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX (2015); Through the Topics in Fibers course, students worked with the DMA exhibitions team and curator Dr. Kimberly Jones to design and develop hands on woven interpretations including backstrap looms and naturally dyed woven tapestries for the Inca: Conquest of the Andes exhibition, on view May 15, 2015 to November 15, 2015.
- Evergreen Life Services, Dallas, TX (2015); Through the Topics in Fibers course, students collaborated with adults with disabilities to create a permanent fiber based art installation at Evergreen Life Services Headquarters in Dallas.
- Border Crossings Project faculty participant (2012-2015); Through the Topics in Fibers course and Advanced Weaving course, participated in interdisciplinary student and faculty project that links international group of students through project participation and online forums within our classrooms; with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee, Scotland; Faculty of Design, University

of Primorska, Slovenia; and College of Visual Arts & Design, University of North Texas, USA and University of Lapland, Finland.

- Center for Creative Connections, Dallas Museum of Art (2014); Through the Topics in Fibers course, students collaborated with the DMA Center for Creative Connections to create proposals for adult workshops, 4 students were invited to teach at the DMA as a result; this collaboration led to 5 students getting DMA internships.
- Faculty Lead, UNT Tartan Project (2014); Worked with Advanced Weaving course and UNT Tartan Committee to design and develop a UNT Tartan that is registered with the Scottish Tartan registry and is a trademark image for UNT.
- Maho Bay Art Center, Textile Department, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands (2012); worked closely with the Textile Department director to advise and participate in the creation of sustainably produced textiles from the eco-resort waste; as a delegate from UNT, I developed summer internship program between Maho Bay Art Center and UNT Fibers Program.

— SELECTED PUBLICATIONS - PRESENTATIONS —

- Author, "Weaving Stories: Sadu Weaving of Kuwait," TSA Newsletter, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2017
- Presenter, "Sadu Weaving," Textile Society of America Symposium, Savannah, Georgia, 2016
- Author, "Weave Around the World," Fulbright Scholar Blog, October 2015
- Co-Presenter, "The Mother Load," Creative Dundee Org. Pecha Kucha Night, Dundee, Scotland, 2016
- Presenter, "The Art of Engagement: Bringing Communities into the Creative Process," Qurain Cultural Festival event hosted by Al Sadu House, Kuwait City, Kuwait, 2015.
- Presenter, "Ugandan Bark Cloth: A Model for Innovation," Textile Society of America Symposium, Los Angeles, CA, 2014.
- Author, "The UNT Natural Dye Garden: Finding a Space for Community," Hand/Eye Mag., 6/20, 2014
- Co-Presenter, "Border Crossings: the Dynamic Interplay Between, Place, Culture, and Creativity," ELIA (European League of the Institute of the Arts) Biennale Conference, Glasgow, Scotland, 2014

— SELECTED EXHIBITIONS (*solo/two person)—

- 2017 *Weaving Stories*, 360 Mall, Co-organized by Beit Al Sadu and the Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Letters, Kuwait City, Kuwait
- 2016 *Weaving Stories*, Al Shaheed Park, Co-organized by Beit Al Sadu and the Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Letters, Kuwait City, Kuwait

Veiled Grace: Works by Lesli Robertson and Shayema Rahim, JM Gallery, Dallas, TX*

The Mother Load: Dundee, Hannah Maclure Centre, Abertay University, Dundee, Scotland; Co-curated with Clare Brennan, Natalie Macellaio, Pernille Spence, Simone O'Callaghan

FACET: Diverse Work by Women in the West, Leech and Hoffmaster Galleries of the Wriston Art Center at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI

- 2015 *From cloth: indigo, metal, concrete*, Brookhaven College, Dallas, TX*

The Mother Load: Dallas, Center for Creative Connections, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX*

Show me your Lone Star, Brick House Gallery, Springfield, MO

- 2014 Things that are now visible, Eastfield College, Mesquite, TX
 Intangible Cultural Heritage - Third International Photography Biennial, National Art Gallery, Beijing, China
 Bark Cloth to Art Cloth, Creative Stitches, NEC Birmingham, UK and Creative Stitches, EXCEL London, UK
 TBD, Build a Better Block, Oak Cliff, TX*
- 2013 Weaving the Future, Perot Museum of Nature and Science and in conjunction with MAP 2013, Installation event held November 7, 2013; In collaboration with Ruth West and Amie Adelman; Curator: Janeil Engelstad
 NY Art Search 2013, ISE Cultural Foundation, New York, NY; Juror: Nancy Lim, MoMA
 OBJECT OBJECT! A selection of smaller works, Helmuth Projects, San Diego, CA; Curated by Helmuth Projects and good good things
 Creative Differences: 35 Years at 500X, 500X Gallery, Dallas, TX
 Trace, Prescott College Art Gallery at Sam Hill Warehouse, Prescott, AZ *
- 2012 Stratum, Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Fort Worth, TX *
 Constructed Realities, K Space Contemporary, Corpus Christi, TX*
 The Summer Show, St. Tammany Art Association, Covington, LA
 Woven Records, The Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Dallas, TX*
- 2010 Woven Records, Center for Creative Connections, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX*

— SELECTED COMMUNITY SERVICE —

Board Member, Secretary, Textile Society of America (2016-present)

- Involved in ensuring structure and function of organization in coordination with international board members
- Support biennial textile symposium with international scholars, artists, researchers, and practitioners