

# UN/COMMON THREADS

Curatorial Essay  
by Kat Singer

---

**Brandon Wulff | Khadija Aziz | V Vallieres | Apanaki Temitayo | Kingi Carpenter  
Paulina Wiszowata | Catherine Heard | Estée Klar & Adam Wolfond**

---

***Un/Common Threads*** brings together the works of nine dynamic artists whose textile works challenge the dichotomy of mental health and mental illness, highlighting the complexity and diversity of human experience. The title of the exhibition alludes to the tactile nature of the medium, the multitude of stories a textile piece can contain, the connection between the works chosen, and also to the importance of open dialogue that values a variety of perspectives. The smorgasbord of textile art forms on display includes quilts, rugs, embroidery, clothing, and more.

Curated by multimedia artist Kat Singer, a textile enthusiast who balances their artistic vision with a deep respect and admiration for the artists and their works, *Un/Common Threads* features works by artists from across the gender spectrum, challenging the assumption that textiles are a predominantly "feminine" medium. Singer's passion for the medium, understanding of the creative process, and lived experience as a multiply neurodivergent person enable them to craft a thought-provoking exhibition that welcomes and celebrates Mad and neurodivergent perspectives.

The exhibition is held across multiple locations, both physical and virtual. Tangled Art + Disability at 401 Richmond St W hosts a vitrine display. Workman Arts OFFSITE, located in unit 302 of Artscape Youngplace, presents an immersive tactile installation. For a nominal fee of two dollars, visitors can also obtain unique pieces of art from participating artists via Catherine Heard's artist multiples project, *The Magic Gumball Machine of Fate*, located in the hallway outside OFFSITE. Visitors will be able to expand their understanding of the artworks by accessing recordings of informal studio visits with the artists on the exhibition website, in lieu of reading traditional artist statements and bios.

The artworks in the Tangled Art Gallery vitrines are arranged in a way that appears symbolic, or even ritualistic, like pieces of a mysterious puzzle. This mode of display reflects two opposing tendencies in the curator's mind: their Autistic craving for order and routine juxtaposed with their ADHD urge for playful chaos and spontaneity. It also invites the viewer to ponder the connection between these distinctive artworks, and to "complete" the puzzle by experiencing the other parts of the exhibition.

The pieces on display in the cozy, intimate space at Artscape Youngplace are all touchable, allowing visitors to engage with the texture and materiality of the artwork, deepening their connection to the stories and experiences represented. Whether gently running one's fingers over the intricate stitching of Brandon Wulff's *Visibly Mended*, stroking the silky scales that form the border of V Vallières's *Iceberg Heart*, or arranging cutout shapes on Khadija Aziz's *When We Felt Together* (At Workman Arts), the viewer gets to be up close and personal with the works. The unconventional use of the gallery space pushes against pre-established display conventions, representing the way a neurodivergent mind defies societal expectations. Kingi Carpenter's vibrant screen-printed installation, *Into My World*, takes over the office area that is normally left untouched. Paulina Wiszowata's cheerful tufted rugs, with the tongue-in-cheek title: *Textiles are very in right now*, exuberantly pop up across multiple walls, refusing to be confined to a single area.

Through their use of fabric, yarn, thread, and other mediums, the artists tell personal and collective stories of hope, perseverance, and triumph over challenging circumstances. These artists come from diverse backgrounds and cultures, each with their unique aesthetics, techniques, and materials. Some have been working with textiles for decades, while others are relative newcomers to their respective art forms. Some have a long history of showing their work in galleries, while for others, it is their first time. Some have received a formal art education, while others are almost entirely self-taught; however, all demonstrate innovation in the way they create their works. While each artist in the exhibition has a unique and distinctive style, their bodies of work share several common threads.

One such thread is the importance of relationships at the individual and community level. Apanaki's art quilt *Little Joy* features a screen-printed portrait of her daughter Iyiola, emphasizing a parent's admiration for her child. Estee Klar and Adam Wolfond, a neurodivergent mother-and-son duo create their art pieces in collaboration. Klar uses her weaving skills to integrate objects that are part of Wolfond's sensory world, such as sticks he collects on his daily walks, and Tabasco sauce bottles, into their yarn-wrapped sculptures. Aziz shares authorship of her work with the audience, as visitors contribute to a changing collage-like design by adhering pieces of felt to a "tactile drawing wall".

Heard's participatory embroidery project *The Emperor of Atlantis* invites participants from around the world to contribute their own redwork pieces to the communal quilt, forming a virtual embroidery circle that expands across time and space.

Another thread is the artists' engagement with themes of repurpose, reconstruction and repair. Wulff uses visible mending techniques on antique shawls to showcase the beauty in the process of healing.

Heard deconstructs and reconstructs recorded history by integrating pieces of antique redwork quilts she had obtained from the secondhand market into her project. Both Apanaki and Vallières use fabrics gifted to them by friends, imbuing their quilts with deeper personal significance.

Multiple works in the exhibition speak out against various forms of systemic violence. Wolfond and Klar's triumphant creativity pushes back against neurotypical behavior norms that limit connection, undermine Autistic autonomy, and stifle Autistic joy. Carpenter's reclaiming of symbols and colors traditionally associated with femininity pushes back against a simplistic understanding of what it means to identify with the Feminist movement. Apanaki's focus on Black womanhood makes a strong statement about intersectionality. Wiszowata's use of machine tufting is a protest against the elitist, exclusionary art scene that often limits the mediums considered to be "worthy" of being used for artistic expression. Heard's choice of historic imagery brings to light the shameful legacy of colonial oppression and abuse, illuminating the ongoing struggle against such injustices.

Textile art provides a unique form of nonverbal storytelling that can be particularly valuable for Autistic creators, who may have limited or intermittent speech. Vallières, for example, prefers to express their emotions through visual imagery rather than words, hence the title of their quilt *Iceberg Heart* which invites both a literal and poetic interpretation. Wulff's *The Wandering Eye*, currently displayed at *Tangled*, illustrates the tendency among Autistic individuals to interpret metaphors literally, often with humorous effect. Wolfond's work serves as a testament to the powerful voice that can be found in non-speaking individuals, and offers a window into his unique perspective.

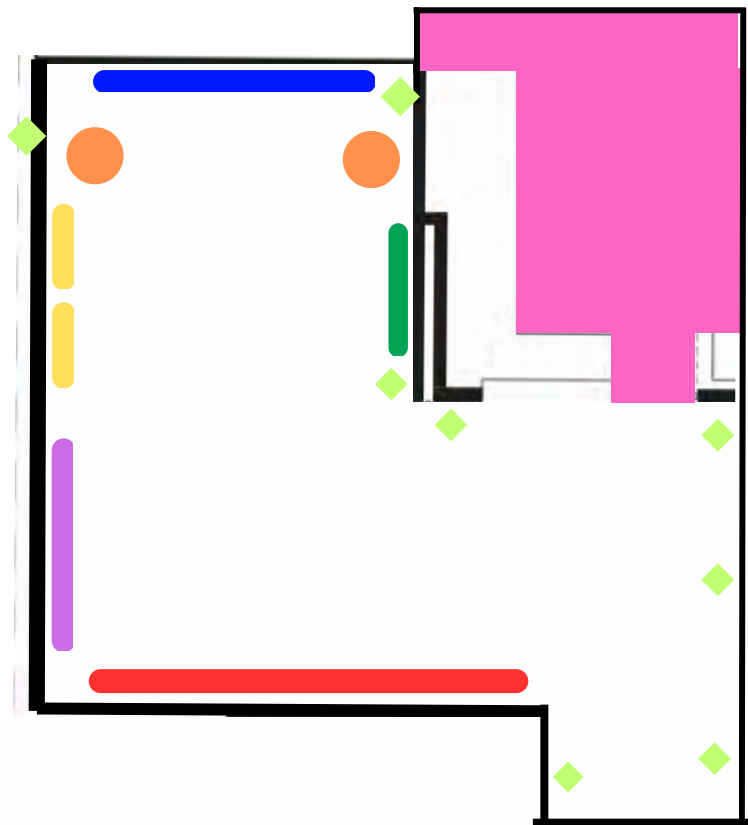
All the artists share and benefit from the slow and repetitive nature of their artistic process, which involves performing similar movements multiple times. Whether cutting, stitching, weaving, tufting, or screenprinting, the artists engage in a meditative and contemplative practice that requires mindfulness, patience, and perseverance, and contributes to their mental well-being.

Building on Kat Singer's previous curatorial projects, *Un/Common Threads* offers another step towards creating a future where diversity is embraced and celebrated. To convey the idea of valuing both commonalities and differences, Singer has incorporated the fabrics and techniques used by the nine participating artists into the handcrafted letters spelling out the exhibition title. This sprawling, multi-part exhibition serves as a platform for fostering connection and mutual understanding among artists and visitors alike, with the ultimate goal of promoting a more compassionate and inclusive world.

# UN/COMMON THREADS

April 4 - 27

WORKMAN  
ARTS  
BEING  
SCENE



-  **Visibly Mended. Brandon Wulff, 2022.**  
vintage indigo dyed shawls, linen sheet, cotton thread, 74" x 60".
-  **Sit Still. and Look at Me. Estee Klar and Adam Wolfond, 2022.**  
chairs containing various objects wrapped in yarn and fabric, dimensions variable.
-  **When We Felt Together (at Workman Arts). Khadija Aziz, 2023.**  
felt. dimensions variable.
-  **Little Joy. Apanaki Temitayo, 2023.**  
quilt, 78" x 80".
-  **Redwork: The Emperor of Atlantis. Catherine Heard, 2023.**  
antique fabric, embroidery, dimensions variable.
-  **Textiles are very in right now. Paulina Wiszowata, 2018 - present.**  
series of rugs, dimensions variable site specific installation.
-  **Iceberg Heart. V Vallières. 2023.**  
quilt, 45" x 60".
-  **Into My World. Kingi Carpenter (Peach Berserk). 2023.**  
screen printed textiles, found objects, site specific installation.

Workman Arts OFFSITE. 180 Shaw St. Suite 302.

**Hours: Tuesdays to Saturdays from 1 - 6 PM. Thursdays from 1 - 8 PM.**

Accessible Washrooms available nearby. Please ask active listener for details.