

Heart Strings:

Process of accepting the daily unseen

2019

By

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Dis-abilities and handicaps hid in plain sight. Some of us look so normal on the outside, that no one had a clue till something happens. I could fill this page with different sayings as to how a house can be painted yet be rotting on the inside or judging a book by its cover, but I won't. This work is a look into bringing those pages to life. The concept of taking a chart of data and applying a color key is nothing new, but neither are the forms each of these pieces are created using. The purpose of this body or these bodies within this collection of pieces is to bring the inner data that goes unseen that is brought to light by the Fitbit (how the heart rate jumps and time active) and colors the cart dictates. Each month being portable much like the carrying of the monitoring device or that we all have baggage, but I am choosing to color mine, by showing others that the inside of their own minds can do something to accept what might be happening and make the most of it. Acceptance is one of the hardest things we face accepting reality and the time going on without us. Technology continues to move forward, or we hope it will but remembering our past and where that technology began is important for us to learn from.

Weaving had its start back when domestication of animals began. Making nets, clothes, fences and pens to keep things in or out. To hold, store, sift and so much more. Basic technology started from the first looms Binary 0001101 however you want it said started with up, up, up, down, down, up, down, pending the pattern or weave structure and now this work with the basis of technology for the purpose of gathering the information to the thread that shows it in a less over whelming way. Other crafts not just weaving date back thousands of years a knitting was just found that was found to be over 3,000 years old (The science of knitting, unpicked). These traditions are our past and have been finding a new uprising here in the present and I hope to be one of the little blooms helping it grow in the future. Textile, pattern weaving, and tapestry are all making their way back into this world technology may be advancing but going back to the past techniques has been never the more present in today's history fascinated world.

In history things dye out. Even the 8-track tape was removed from the hard copy dictionary less than 10 years ago. Yet the 90's style comes back in fashion. It's how the world seems to work we go back to the past and advance to the future in other categories. Everyone has a different point of view, upbringing, mine was really without a lot of technology. I didn't have a cell phone till 2 months before I graduated

grade school and that was because I was going on a trip now toddlers have tablets. I had a piece of string or beads. It's amazing how the past can come back in times of need. Keys to our past can shape our future and remake us for tomorrow.

In the unmaking of one's self you are faced with mortality or when facing the end of one's life you are faced with "I must die-and soon" (Scarry,31) Scarry talks about how when people are told that they are going to be shot or executed death has already begun to the mind and the torture of oneself has already begun to unmake or unravel the psyche. In the same aspect we are also learning about our self, reliving regrets and good things as well as the good things in our lives. In 2012, I was faced with the end and things started to unravel in a way. While the world was contemplating the Mayan calendar of the end of the world, I was faced with a heart problem with a possibility to fix it that failed twice in 2012. On July 24, 2012 I had my first heart ablation procedure. Before it began, my last words to my father were: "at least I am going out of this world where I came into it." which was true on two accounts. First, I had accepted the risk that I could die during the procedure due to a blood clot or possible reaction to what was being done. Second, what I had been able to do physically before this procedure from day to day would never be the same. I went from thinking I was normal to looking normal but having forever unseen limits and a constant chest pain. I was unmade. My world was like a knitted sweater was being unraveled not once but a second time on December 18, 2012. Yet, while it was unraveling, it was also being remade in the repetitions of weaving.

Scarry reminds us of what Karl Marx said, "There is only one antidote to mental suffering and that is physical pain." (Scarry, 33) In other words while I was mentally suffering over the unmaking of myself and not knowing where to go, I put myself through the physical pain of creation. My body became the tool while my mind was overwhelmed with the world, I dove into weaving and the craft. Although a weight limit was applied to my physical being, the woven craft was now my saving light and how I overcame what was happening. Weaving was the focus in the beginning, but an exploration that when I looked back, I had given up on a what would be a new expression of myself. Facing the reality that medical technology had failed me, I accepted that my scarred and broken heart could not be physically mended. I began to look

outward. With a woven scarf I was able to help someone else stay warm in the cold winters of the north. I was able to make a table runner that brightened and livened up a room or a family gathering. I wove patterns that were repetitive. Over and over the same repeat such as a heartbeat where mine was far from regular and repetitive in that sense.

I had as Scurry said faced the end and looked back at not things I regretted because honestly I didn't regret anything I was happy with my life, though short to some but I had lived I had helped people but my only regret, was that if I do die, the pain of that death that I will cause those who care and would miss me. I could continue though, to leave with them a scarf, blanket, bracelet, wrist warmers, or a painting even to give them something to hug, hug them or look at and remember that hug, my hug, it would be enough. I also started looking back at my family, the things that I had tried to learn but couldn't grasp what they were teaching me at the time but now that I was unmade, I could step into finding the motion that I may have needed to move forward with a craft or craftsmanship of creation for others. I have done so with the practice or sample work while working on these pieces of collection. I crocheted a blanket for my mother and boots for a cousin. I knitted 2 baby blankets for my niece and nephew, a hooded cowl for a friend and knitted a scarf for a new friend with pockets.

We can sit back and contemplate the Bayeux and Brexit tapestry and the story it tells with its illustrations (Hurlock), mine may not be pictures but they hold information just the same. We can also talk about how Erin M. Riley's tapestries also show events of her past and processing and voicing the words from topics people feel uncomfortable about. Talking about any illness/ injury anything that puts a face to an accident, event story, happy or sad can make people uncomfortable, so I can see a connection. I don't want people to feel uncomfortable I just want people to be creative in finding their voices. Sara Weber's mother for all of 2018 documented her 40-minute commute to work based on the delays she faced (Mezzofiore). She found her voice and plans to do another one and the 2018 is to be auctioned off for charity. I can see similarities between my work and differences or really the fine thread that connects us all together as the fates weave our tapestries of life. I chose to go back to these different traditional crafts and plan to continue to explore the meaning of accepting this data.

***The Tools:** The knit picking parts of the work and some technical stuff*

The crafts collected in these yearly bodies depicting as normal as I can get days, rough days and some have nothing to report because technology wasn't able to see days. The chart was set at the beginning with a few calculations. 60 bps being my "normal" or around my resting heart rate and adding 20 to active state would put me at 85 bpm but the chart doesn't start counting the "active state" according to the Fitbit because I set that line on the application for 95 bpm. Every time the pulse is recorded going above 95 it is counted the Fitbit also calculates how long it's in this active state.

The Technology tools

Fitbit HR (Sept 2016 – July 2018) and Fitbit Alta HR (Sept 2018 to Current) both are the most basic Fitbits that you could get with Fitbit that monitor heart rates. There are other monitoring devices that would be considered more accurate such as an actual heart monitor but sadly this artist is allergic to adhesives, which means constantly wearing one would be causing more harm than good in this process besides the sleepless nights connecting these pieces together. Each are worked from January to December. Much like how our year works, we as beings tend to work day to day or month to month showing time in its magnitude. Each day accounted for with or without data recorded the Fitbit did was it was supposed to do in showing what it sees from the day to day.

The Materials tools

The material choices were made to represent the artificial with using the acrylic yarns Impeccable and Red heart yarns and a few different brands version of Heartbeat color yarns for the mixed color background reds. The gray in-between the months divides the months being its own measurement of time giving it the magnitude of its passing and showing how when one month ends another begins when we tend to look at data collected things. The acrylic in the main yarn isn't the only thing used in these pieces that remains. Somehow, they each have a natural fiber additive of cotton in some way.

The Stitch choices

The Woven stitch is a basic Tabby (under over under over). Just grouped up differently to make the blocks. Weaving was taught to me by Professor Morgan Clifford in 2012, she very much loved her cats. It amazed me that such an old craft of Fiber arts had a wait list to get into it and that it was an art class I hadn't taken yet at the time. I was thrilled with this craft that wasn't taxing on me after having 2 heart procedures I wasn't trying to carry plaster blocks or large canvases across campus or around town the weaving once it was off the loom fit in a tote or my backpack so I could work on it as I sat waiting for a ride or class or a group of friends for dinner. Portable was a new concept that would shape the next stages. Each back side of the day is kept neatly by a small piece of cotton string.



The Knitting is done in what is called a metered square. I learned knitting from My Grandmother June Sutherland McDuffie and my cousin Jillian McDuffie Reiner. My family being musically inclined on that a meter being a measurement in music seemed fitting as it were. Each calendar square creating a hole by which the square of data tries to fill. As it is attached by a single piece of cotton string to the corner. Acrylic Gesso is used to keep the back of each little square from fraying since watered down it works well as glue.



The Crocheted part is done in what is called a “Granny Stitch”. I learned crochet first from my Grandmother Joann Gulbranson. The Granny stitch I felt fitting in that my nana tried to teach me and my mother still hasn’t fully grasped crochet. Each of the squares are stitched together by the cotton thread.



The Cross-stitched is done as it states top left to bottom right and then bottom left to top right creating little x’s 99 x’s in each date square. My mother taught me cross stitch, granted she spent more time taking out my stitches than anything else. These x’s are about 3x bigger than what they would be if using the embroidery thread to accommodate for the large gage of the yarn.



Into the future the plan is for trying quilting which my friend Professor Lisa Kroutil introduced me to, and my Grandmother Joann Gulbranson attempted to get into. I am excited to learn something new, well maybe not the using the sewing machine part, but learning a new application for sewing.

The Color Key to the Collection

The colors of the threads go from a Red/Pink, to Lavender/Dark Purple, Blue/Turquoise, to Green/Sage, to Bright Yellow/Golden Yellow, and end with Bright Orange/ Burnt Orange and only two being the colors chosen for each day's data.

With typical exercising the heart rate would not jump from 60 bpm to 210 bpm and back within 5 beats. So, the First color (Pink, Dark Purple, Turquoise, Sage, Golden Yellow, and Burnt Orange) depict the data of how many spikes where it jumps past 95 on that given day. These arrhythmic jumps aren't just lingering in those high numbers they are attempting to jump back down shortly after the initial spike sometimes just 5 beats after the jump and then jumping back up. So, these counts are that of that jump spike where the heart rate is in that "active" state.

In the following the first color would be the inner color of the square and the outer color would be the second color.



1st Color	Times recorded above 95bpm
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Pink	No data or the heart rate remains low or only goes to 95 which would be a normal "active" state.
Dark Purple	1 to 10 jumps
Turquoise	11 to 20 jumps
Sage	21 to 30 jumps
Golden Yellow	31 to 40 jumps
Burnt Orange	over 41 jumps (some have been over 65)

The Second color (Red, Lavender, Blue, Green, Bright Yellow, Bright Orange) depict the data of time, time thought by the Fitbit was spent being active such as exercising, working out or pushing one's self past a heart rate of 95 which is about 30-35 points higher than my typical resting heart rate of between 55 and 65 beats per minute.

2 nd Color	Amount of time in "active" state
Red	No data or no time shown as "active"
Lavender	1 minute to 1 hour
Blue	1 hour 1 minute to 2 hours
Green	2 hours 1 minute to 3 hours
Bright Yellow	3 hours 1 minute to 4 hours
Bright Orange	Over 4 hours 1 minute

My Process of processing

In the process of creating these bodies I have found many connections to the past not only in centuries of the craft being passed down but I how as I have gotten older the time, energy and study of each of these forms has also taken many forms. Such as making things for others. Many do swatches, sketches or practice pieces but when it comes to learning something new, I tend to dive right on in, I blame weaving.

It's not just a playful statement but it's a truth. When I was introduced to weaving it was in making tapestry but when I was introduced to my first loom in the studio I made scarves I hated making samples when I knew that the color wouldn't be replicated I could get close but I never really wanted a twin to the original piece. The rough thing with these works is that they can be replicated they are store bought elements put together to create or bring to light my heart's activities. I much enjoy making things for others. Scarves, table runners, cowls, boots or a blanket to name a few have been things since I started weaving that have sparked other creations in the other craft forms. Scarves and table runners were my focus in Weaving on the looms, I knitted a cowl for a friend to keep them warm while he goes out doing camping trips on weekends. I crocheted boots from store bought slippers for my cousin for the holidays and made my own mother a blanket that is way too big for her to wrap up in so when she misses me since I live so far away that it can be like a big hug. I make these samples, sketches so others can still have that connection. Something to leave behind that may get worn, torn and degrade over time. But still has that opportunity to leave a memory to a person. Let say you buy a blanket from the name brand store, it's nice its warm it's what it was meant to do. You buy a blanket from a person who made it. You may know this person, or you might not but still a thought is there that time, or that person's presence of time in time is there. Even buying a kit from a person verses a regular store has a hand feel to it verses a machine.

These bodies of time have been and will continue to be a challenge for me. They aren't going to be worn, they aren't a present or something I would say sell on Etsy daily. They aren't for someone. They are for me to help inspire others that it is okay to be selfish in small yet big ways. Its ok to take time and process the world since it changes constantly. They may look like scarves, but those days have already been worn and I, by making these works have let them go. I may stitch in ends here and there, but that motion, I have found to be an accepting ritual for myself. The cross stitch as it goes seems to be a more, how to do I say it, neat stitch as you go sort of thing. Which I am finding other details to add to 2019 piece to find more ways to process the data through doing more with the piece.

Other findings while doing this work there is no pattern or repetition besides the stitch. I cannot predict tomorrow's colors or make up colors. Therefore, when I was without a Fitbit the data shows as Red

and pink. Stop signs if you wish. You may think “OH MY THAT LOOKS HORRIBLE” it is, we don’t know what was happening, nothing was recorded.

I also discovered while working and continuing to work on this work that sometimes just setting up a chart, graph or key to the numbers can be the most control over the work and something as simple as letting the “heart” decide on the day to day of what it might be was and will continue to be the best learning experience while working with fiber materials. I plan to continue this work into the future. It started with Weaving (2016), Knitting (2017), Crochet (2018) and Cross-stitch (2019). I now have plans to do Quilting for 2020. I think it is important that this body of work doesn’t just stop here that it keeps going because of its possible connection or possible inspiration to those who have disabilities that can't always be seen by the naked eye. I also keep thinking what if, what if I took this data and applied a different color chart such as 6 steps of monochromatic color scheme? Or all crocheted years and connected side by side so it's like one big piece? How would it make the viewer feel? How would that make me feel? So many things to explore and learn. I for one am happy that my life didn’t end in 2012 but got a new start. Yet if things end tomorrow, I will still be alright. I have had an adventure with learning and will continue. I feel that that is what is important in life is to keep learning and things from the past even methods that are thousands of years old can find their ways into lessons of today to be bases for tomorrow’s inventions and creations of tomorrow.

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