

Gin Stone

Career Narrative

I am a multidisciplinary artist with a focus on fiber and mixed media constructions and installations. My creatures and life size diorama are created with materials that include hand-dyed commercially fished line and ghost gear. I also implement recycled and antique textiles, fabric printed with cyanotype emulsions and found objects. These materials come together to create a universe only slightly different from our own.

I convey environmental activism through a focus on a material based sub-text in my work. In many of the installations I am currently undertaking, animals are an allegorical character that are used to highlight and reject the use of women and nature as a commodity that is exploited by a patriarchal capitalist society (ecofeminism). Earlier series of mine have explored the myth of ancient religions and goddess worship through my creation of three-dimensional life-size chimera, much of which were heavily influenced by my readings of Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés and Joseph Campbell. Use of spent bullet casings in some past pieces address a more current social commentary, that of American gun culture, school shootings and hate crimes.

Having left school in 1991 before attaining a degree in painting, I am largely a self-taught artist. From 1989 until 2010, I worked solely as a painter, and that background gave me a strong knowledge of color and form. Over a decade ago, I began experimenting with fiber, particularly reclaimed fishing gear and line. From trial and error with different types of gear, I found that longline, used locally for commercial fishing of haddock and cod, could be hand-dyed and manipulated into a strong color pallet with a uniform gauge. This process brought me to learn as much about the material's ability as possible. I worked for months creating abstract flat color studies with it, before moving on to three-dimensional sculptural work.

Over foam, plastic, chicken wire and plaster forms, I then began to apply cut, torn and re-pieced material to form the skins and include hand carved detail from found shell, stone, wood, and metal. Keen studies of nature and the environment (along with a borderline obsession for collecting elements relating to the very basics of life, such as bones and minerals) help form the concepts and physiology of my work.

Using the materials to change the surface of recognizable animals, I create a veneer of unexpected color and imagery on taxidermic forms. This forces the viewer to consider the shape more carefully by exploring its new visual topography. The creation process can be likened to painting with fibers on a three-dimensional canvas. Intense work is then spent creating the eyes and ears of the completed forms to convey the emotion of each animal through layering and staining torn fabric.

As I progressed in my practice, I began to include working with stitched, nailed and pinned textiles, recovered ghost gear or fabrics that have the feel of an abstract painting when combined. I also incorporate my own cyanotype printed cottons which integrate imagery that reinforces the narrative of the piece.

An example of such treatment is *A Remembrance*, a piece reflecting the past life of a deer through its floral and leaf motifs cyano-printed on an uninterrupted trailing 80" drape of cotton to its cyano-printed deer skull fabric mounted over a three-dimensional deer head form. Eyes are painted with deeply matte black paint conveying the perception of deep holes. The fabrics used are entirely tacked onto the form using nails found in my late father's workshop.

Over the last several years, longline fishing gear has disappeared completely from the local landscape, a result from the decline of small fishing fleets due to decades of over-fishing and resulting federal regulations. My materials continue to evolve and now include other types of retrieved ghost gear and netting. This material is acquired through my relationship with conservationists and biologists at marine labs local to my studio on eastern coastal Massachusetts, chiefly the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown.

When the scientifically and historically significant fiber that I currently employ arrives at my studio, I carefully clean, hand-dye, cut apart and reassemble it into biomorphic designs (patterns of bacteria, fungi, molds, minerals and geodes in color and shape). The location of the materials' retrieval has been carefully catalogued by scientists and passed along to be used as an identifier of the artifacts in my work. A material's provenance is very much a part of the narrative. This chronicling of the materials and fibers allows me to pass on the role of witness to a wider audience. Thus, I enable people to think more carefully about the timeline involved in where things come from. In turn, it gives them the ability to consider where the things *they* discard go; to consider the life that an object leads after escaping the hand's grasp.

For example, the ghost gear I am currently working with was recovered from 600 feet of water, 18 miles off the shore of Provincetown, by the trawler the Donna Marie. This gear, according to scientists and many fishermen, is most likely Russian commercial fishing net with its use dating prior to 1976. It was during that time that international waters only began at 12 miles off the US coast, and unregulated foreign fishing fleets operated unchecked. The netting material and attached ropes were apparently discarded in these waters and lay at the bottom of the ocean for 50 years before seeing the light of day once again and being used in my work.

When I have depleted this ghost gear netting, I will move on to another cache of materials I was honored to be tasked with keeping from the land fill. The fibers mark some of the last of the weir fishing gear used in New England. The net I acquired belonged to a family who had been using weirs to fish since 1953. In 2021, I received several hundred pounds of it after their final season of using this fishing technique, which has evidence of being used in North America for some 15,000 years.

Another material I find uses for, lobster rope, was the basis for a recent outdoor installation commissioned by the Heritage Museum and Gardens titled *Man, materials, and our lasting legacy in the sea*, a large-scale abstract sculpture of a North Atlantic Right whale ribcage. It represents the connection between whale entanglement and subsequent death by being created from the actual material that is a leading cause. I

built the piece to life scale for a partial whale ribcage (approx. 11 feet high by 15 feet wide and 20 feet long) and utilized nearly 6,000 feet of reclaimed lobstering gear.

In 2018, I was invited by the Provincetown Art Association and Museum to conduct a course at the Lillian Orlowsky and William Freed Museum School on exploring new processes and creating a cohesive body work. I also have work in PAAM's permanent collection alongside such notables as Robert Motherwell, Hans Hoffman and Edward Hopper.

I have delivered talks at the University of Rhode Island; Twenty Summers and the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, MA; the Fountain Street Gallery, Boston; and the Chandler Gallery and the Cambridge Art Association in Cambridge.

In collaboration with Fountain Street, Chandler and Kathryn Schultz galleries, I curated several shows that included my own work in the Boston and Cambridge area. My pieces have been included in exhibitions by such notable curators as Randi Hopkins, Director of Visual Arts Boston Center for the Arts and Paul Ha, Director of the MIT List Visual Arts Center.

Since 2001, I have been included in exhibitions from Los Angeles to Atlanta and New York to Portland, ME.

Foundations which I have received grants from include the Rauschenberg Foundation, the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod, the Puffin Foundation for Environmental Artistic Activism, the Awesome Foundation, and the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. At the art non-profit Twenty Summers in the historic Hawthorne Barn in Provincetown, MA in the spring of 2023, I created a temporary installation and gave a subsequent public talk on the work.

In 2024, I was awarded a residency with the Peaked Hill Trust's Arts and Science Program.