

Julie Peppito : Tapestry Statement

I create tapestries out of objects that were on their way to becoming trash. A child's shoe, an old rag, a Disney figurine, false teeth, an Ikea carpet - they all have stories to tell. I consider the people who designed and manufactured these things to be my collaborators, even though I don't know them personally. By smashing, wrapping, and sewing these objects into canvas and other pliable surfaces I combine their stories into larger topographical narratives. By adorning them with detailed drawings, gouache and oil paintings, decorative filagree and blobs of paint, I add my story to theirs. My stories are inspired by articles and books about the degradation of our planet - and by the panic and confusion it stirs in me. By putting the names of the authors and titles of their pieces in the titles of my tapestries, I honor the work they do.

Traditional tapestries are combinations of fine art and craft, object and image, "woman's work" and "man's work." They are narrative and they serve a function. Conceptually they connect things that have since been separated into a hierarchical value system. It is this same system that has confused what we want with what we need so that often we can no longer tell the difference.

Crawling on Cancer (The Teflon Toxin by Sharon Lerner) is a tapestry informed by and named for a series of investigative articles in The Intercept about a chemical called C8. C8 is used for many things, including stain-proofing carpets. An Ikea carpet that I bought for my son, then almost discarded, became the base for this piece. For months, while sewing into it, I rubbed up against it. I scratched my eyes and wiped my nose, I can't remember if I washed my hands before I ate. In the article she details how this chemical is found in dozens of commonly used objects that touch our food, bodies and water... and that it causes cancer. I asked Sharon Lerner if Ikea carpets had this chemical. She said that, while she thinks Ikea seems to be more concerned with keeping toxins out of its products than many other companies, most stain-resistant carpets made before 2015 were made with either C8 or one of its close relatives. She also said

that many furniture and carpet manufacturers don't know what chemicals are in their fabric coatings. Though she has written 14 articles about this chemical, I doubt most people have heard of it.

The irony that my desire to have a fun and nice looking room for my kid could have increased his cancer risk is troubling. Also disconcerting is the fact that, although I make art about connection, I failed to see that my contact with the carpet could affect my health as well. But, we are almost all affected. According to 2007 study, C8 is in 99% of American's blood. And unfortunately, it is only one of many unregulated and untested toxins that are hidden in plain sight. But, we can choose to change this. *Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.* ~ Arundhati Roy