



Bettina Matzkuhn

Bettina Matzkuhn has been a fibre artist for over 30 years. She explores personal and social narratives of history, geography and the natural world through textile techniques, materials and presentations.

What inspires you?

I grew up on sailboats, reading charts and paying attention to weather. As an adult, I hike and spend time outdoors so geography and environment have always figured large in my worldview and my imagination. There is always something to learn – about geology, botany, cartography, etc – so in a way, I'm inspired by my own ignorance.

What's integral to the work of a craft artist?

Investment in the material process and speaking through the materials, I think, is central to craft. If one has a material vocabulary, one can become more articulate. That said, I don't think it's necessary to have huge stockpiles of materials and tools – often work made with simple techniques and materials can be exciting.

What memorable responses have you had to your own pieces?

I displayed one of my maps, where you could place a pin in "emotional stops". Many people discussed and deliberated over where to put their pins. One woman looked at it, burst into tears, gave me a hug and left. It doesn't matter to me what her specific story was, but that her reaction was sincere.

What are you most proud of?

Proud isn't the word I'd use. I'm very grateful for the people who have shared their knowledge and enthusiasm with me during various projects. I pursued the degree in Liberal Studies as I wanted to look into topics apart from art and be around people from different backgrounds. Perhaps this attitude to learning propels my work as I have collaborated with a sailmaker, a meteorologist and a naturalist. I've hired woodworkers and metalworkers to make components for me. I try to find new forms and ways of presenting the work: embroidered global projections, tide currents on sails, or interactive pieces that people can handle. But I also try to challenge myself when making images to sell: how to capture the translucence of water over rock or the sense of light in a place.

Any advice for other artists/up and coming artists?

Margaret Atwood kept a binder of rejection letters - it's important to get used to rejection. If you have an opportunity to sit on a jury - and evaluate other stuff - that's the biggest education. Rejection isn't personal or always a reflection on the quality of your work. It's important to understand you have to suck it up and keep working on stuff. If you keep chipping away, and take advantage of the opportunities that are offered to you, it'll turn around. Live with it and keep working, keep exploring and it will turn around.

**Visit Bettina's website at
<http://www.bettinamatzkuhn.ca/>.
This interview has been edited for
clarity and brevity.**