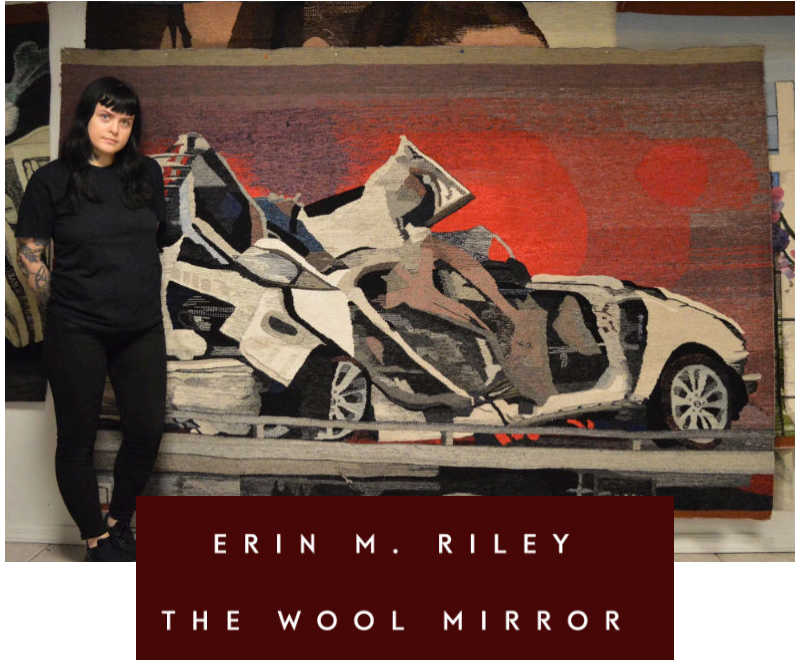


Balestrin, Sofia, Erin M. Riley The Wool Mirror, *Metal Magazine*, 6 July 2021

# METAL



Since finding in tapestry weaving her unique way of self-expression, Brooklyn-based artist Erin M. Riley has been presenting to the world intimate yet relatable pieces that perfectly expose the reality and feelings of a society stuck between the physical and virtual worlds. Her unmistakable style and technique shine a light on issues that might be so intrinsic to our daily lives that go unnoticed... That is until her thought-provoking title and image combinations hit you – and they hit hard.

**Your chosen technique, weaving and working with textiles instead of regular canvases is a form of art in itself. Why did you decide on this specific medium?**

Weaving found me in art school as I was deciding between a career in making clothes or paintings. I have always enjoyed logical processes; math was always quite soothing. With weaving there is a lot of math initially, you follow a set of rules, you learn how the loom behaves and while there are some surprises as far as the loom is concerned it's a pretty predictable tool. I have been weaving tapestry for 17 years and it's been something that I enjoy and am still challenged by and curious of.

**When working on a new series, what is your go-to inspiration source?**

Usually, I start to look at the world around me and then look at how it's affecting me. And then I often think about how much I wish things were different or that people would try harder, and then I try to examine past events that are currently repeating. I think sexuality is one of the markers of how we are feeling, coping, etc, and I like to examine how the stressors of the world and certain events are affecting how one feels in their body and mind.

**There are many single objects that appear in your work, such as old radios, tweezers, tapes or phones. What's the meaning behind this selection?**

I really like nostalgia, maybe too much, and as a loner kid who went through a lot of stuff in my head, objects are incredibly important. I embed a lot of meaning into the things I interact with and often things mean more to me than maybe is apparent.

Music is the romance, angst and sadness and probably the first time I experienced evocation of emotions through art. Tweezers are a nod to my trichotillomania, they are significant and yet despised but also objects that by using them helped/hurt me through mental blocks. Phones are our lovers and friends and the places we fall apart and expose ourselves.

**There's a very noticeable unique approach when it comes to your pieces, not only due to the medium chosen, but also in terms of sensibility and colour usage. Do you see your work fitting in any specific art genre?**

Wool is an interesting medium because it holds colour and absorbs light in ways that paint does not. It softens a lot and has a fuzz that makes colours feel different. I am not sure my work fits into a certain genre because it straddles multiple worlds just by existing.

***The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies* seems like both an extremely private and widely relatable series that explores the effects of isolation on self-perception and care. What's the main message you'd want your audience to leave that exhibition with?**

I would like people to be able to see me better, and in turn, be able to see the world around them better. I think the interesting thing, historically, about tapestries is that they held reverence, and the act of weaving them is imbuing the subjects with that but I wish people could have the bodily understanding of the process so that they could slow down and observe life more closely.

**Is there any specific piece in *The Consensual Reality of Healing Fantasies* that you feel most connected with?**

I am in love with the bruised hand, An Accident. It is the simplicity and complexity that does it for me. The layers of trauma and the ways in which it heals into us and despite eventually not leaving visible scars it changed us in a way that is irreversible.

**Finally, what can we expect from you in the near future?**

I am working through the topics from the exhibition still and I will continue to delve further and work to expand my explorations through historical and imagined imagery.

