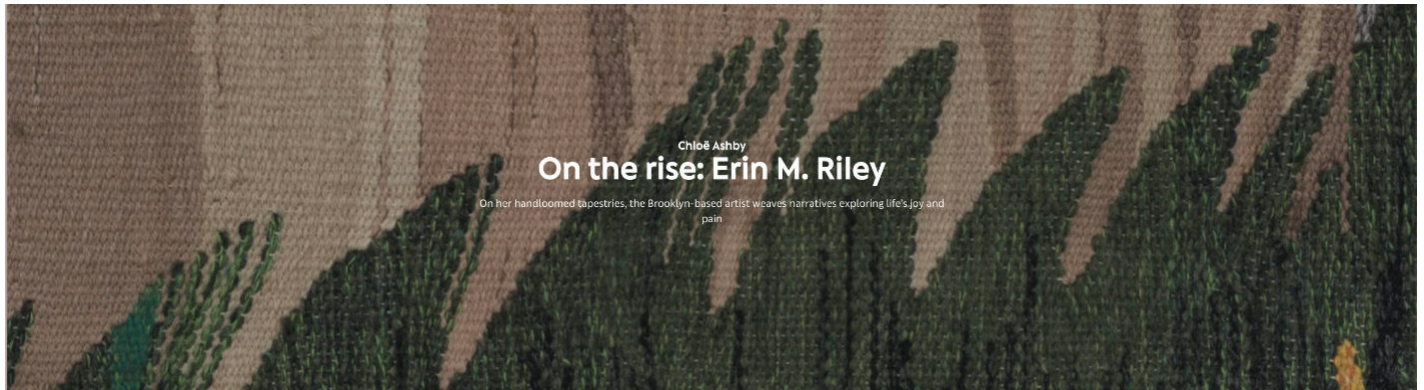


Ashby, Chloë, On the rise: Erin M. Riley, *Art Basel Stories*, 4 November 2022

Art Basel



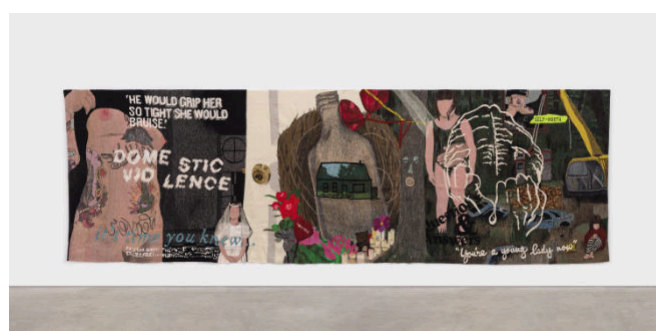
Erin M. Riley found tapestry in college. She was excited by the prospect of learning a tangible skill such as weaving and finding a place for imagery in a space that wasn't the painting department. 'It was an epiphany that has held my attention for almost 20 years, and it appeals to me because it's endlessly challenging, sometimes rewarding, and drastically slow,' says the artist, who lives and works in Brooklyn. 'The exciting parts are a thrill that no one will ever see or experience and, once complete, the work holds the energy of the days and weeks spent making it.'

Riley's medium may be traditional, but her content is contemporary. Her tapestries, which are raw and rich with meaning, range from still lifes of tampons and pill strips (like *Internal Defense*, 2021) to intimate portraits of tattooed women in various states of undress and sprawling, collage-like scenes such as *The Hidden Crisis* (2022). Often, she gives the viewer a close-up: a small piece of a larger narrative told through text and images. 'I want to make work from the perspective of the child inside of me,' she says, 'so I'm using images of me from my childhood, as well as reflecting upon the body I inhabit now and the words impacting me.'



Erin M. Riley, *The Hidden Crisis*, 2022. Courtesy the artist and P.P.O.W, New York.

At the center of *questions & answers* (2022), the vast work Riley is showing at the Meridians sector at Art Basel Miami Beach, is a reproduction of one of the houses she grew up in. 'I wanted this version of a "house" to be included almost as a portal,' she tells me. There's also a bottle of alcohol and a nest ('memorials of loss and grieving') and a forest ('a busied area of memories and language'). By stitching words such as 'domestic violence' into the fabric, she chooses to own rather than shy away from them. It's about pain, yes, but also validation. 'With work this big, I hope that the physical journey will allow for some unravelling of the elements,' says the artist. 'Like a magic-eye illusion, you'll catch things up close, but you might see more from far away if you squint just right.'



Erin M. Riley, *questions & answers*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W, New York.