



2022 Next Step Fund Sample Grant Application

Amy Usdin

Pronouns

She/her

Project Name

Creating Sculpture from Complex Loom-Woven Structures

Project Description

Funding for a floor loom to create sculptural weavings, extending my practice beyond current off-loom work and allowing continued growth as an exhibiting artist.

The Artist

Warp: vertical thread under tension, providing structure on which to weave horizontal weft

1. Through off-loom techniques, I weave abstract mental and physical landscapes onto aging fiber artifacts—leather and rope fly nets for horses and vintage cotton fishing nets. The rope structure of these nets acts as warp, the ragged imperfections woven into the new. This transformation creates new narratives, informed by familial moments and unexpected associations that their previous lives evoke. By giving these once-functional nets new volume, I honor the revolving intersections of past and present. When I first began weaving on discarded nets, I'd been caring for an elderly father in significant decline. In that, I felt an abstract parallel to the careful but imperfect tending of worn objects that had outlived their functionality. The slow process of weaving within and across the fixed borders allowed me space to begin to process the layers of my own history. As I continue this work, redefining these nets through a personal lens, I consider my own changing use.

Though I explored fiber art throughout my teens, it was only in 2018 after a career in art direction and raising a family that I reengaged the medium. I have been creating steadily since with work juried into museum and gallery exhibitions nationwide, including several prestigious shows representing the diversity and breadth of contemporary craft and fiber art. Recent recognition includes the 2019 Surface Design Award in the Surface Design Association's International Exhibition in Print, a 2020 Artist Initiative

Grant from the MN State Arts Board, the 2021 Textile Center Award for Excellence and Innovation in the MN State Fair Fine Arts Exhibition, and interviews and curatorial features on international sites and e-zines.

I bookended 2021 with two exhibitions at local venues: Artistry in Bloomington, MN, my first small group show, and The Phipps in Hudson, WI, my first solo show. The Phipps show, "Places We Might Have Been," featured work that, though deeply personal, speaks more broadly to histories, to loss and longing, and to the dissonance of nostalgia. These are the themes my loom weavings will embody.

2. Though I have decent inventory, the vintage nets I use are rare and increasingly hard to source. I need to ensure I'll be well positioned to develop new bodies of work as my supply dwindles. Access to a floor loom will allow me to weave independent of the nets, which will sustain and build my practice, allowing me to continue and to increase my presence as an exhibiting artist.

Through these nets, I've developed a clear voice and learned much about form and materials. While I enjoy the challenge of working within the limitations they impose, I'm intrigued by the possibilities of expanding beyond their borders. The myriad possibilities of loom-weaving, including shaping sculptural form through advanced techniques, will provide a natural path for furthering my work conceptually and aesthetically.

My days weaving as a teen will provide a smooth transition back to the loom. As I reacquaint myself with its mechanics, I'll be able to weave simple extensions to augment my ongoing net sculptures, increasing their dimensionality. I'll work toward developing a body of work that is solely loom-woven, authentically informed by my current sculptures. These new weavings will allow continued growth of my practice—and further reflect the idea of change underlying my work.

3. A Next Step Grant will fund the purchase of a Macomber eight-harness loom, the recommendation from several experts I polled as most suitable for the work I envision. Multiple harnesses, the frames that lift various warp threads, and a double back beam, allowing separate tensions within the warp, will support the weaving of complex, layered, sculptural cloth as well as dense, shaped tapestry. Both woven structures are a natural and necessary progression of my current work on fishing and horse fly nets.

The Project

1. I seek funding for the purchase of an 8-harness, double-beamed Macomber floor loom. This loom configuration will allow for the creation of two kinds of cloth: delicate and layered weaves in the vein of my fishing nets as well as dimensional tapestry that will build on the aesthetic embodied in my fly net sculptures. While this loom will expand the potential for my ongoing net sculptures, its greater purpose is allowing the development of new bodies of work independent of these nets—a gradual, natural evolution of my current practice.

2. Upon approval, I'll order the loom for my studio; currently Macomber is shipping eight months out. As I continue to create work with nets as warp, I'll use these months to ensure expertise with this particular loom through reading and tutorials. Once it

arrives, fully set-up, I'll methodically weave a series of studies that will help me harness the loom's potential for creating multi-layered and multi-tensioned structures. This will be on-going work extending beyond the grant period.

3. Though I am invested in and excited by my work on nets, they are a finite resource and this loom is a necessary "next step" to continue my practice. It will allow me to reengage the art of loom-weaving with the ultimate goal of creating independent bodies of sculpture that further the concepts and aesthetic I've developed with vintage nets. Because the learning curve for advanced loom techniques will be significant, it's critical I begin this effort now so that I'm able to continue building my practice rather than stalling if I find myself unable to maintain an inventory of these hard-to-find nets.

4. The ability to weave on a loom will benefit my practice greatly. First, the addition of loom-woven sections will create new possibilities for increasing the dimensionality of ongoing net sculptures. Second, weaving on a loom will provide relief from the physical strain of working with nets. Needle-weaving—moving a threaded needle under and over individual strings or ropes—is hard on the hands and wrists especially when working between small, fixed areas of thick rope. The ropes become especially heavy when combined for larger, suspended pieces, making works-in-progress cumbersome and physically challenging. Finally, the ability to conceive and weave new bodies of sculpture related to but entirely independent of these scarce nets will ensure I can keep my practice moving forward.

Project Budget Expenses

Macomber floor loom:

32" Type B Folding Loom Large Mac, 8 harness

\$3900.00

Additional parts necessary for intended work:

Friction brake

\$ 75.00

Sectional beam with ratchet

\$ 345.00

Second brake pedal

\$ 38.00

Double back beam

\$ 65.00

AD30 Bench

\$ 375.00

Shipping

\$ 450.00

Total

\$5248.00

*Personal savings, including MN State Fair Fine Arts Exhibition award

-\$ 248.00

Requested grant funds
\$5000.00

Total Project Cash Expenses
\$5,248.00

Amount Requested
\$5,000.00