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Herron School of Art and Design faculty member Meredith Setser among newest Efroymsen Fellows



Meredith Setser
Photo credit: Herron Staff

Meredith Setser, assistant professor of printmaking, has become the latest artist from Herron School of Art and Design to compete for and win an Efroymsen Contemporary Arts Fellowship. The judges were wooed by Setser’s handmade felt and etchings. She said she will use her \$20,000 award to “push her work in new directions, possibly with the integration of technology and new media.” She’ll rent a larger studio space, travel to Argentina for a residency program in printmaking and round out the use of her funds by purchasing supplies and equipment and documenting her new work.

“It’s humbling and wonderful,” Setser said. “I still feel like I don’t deserve it.” She observed that “The 2011 group of artists seemed inclusive of people who worked outside of traditional materials. That was almost a theme—very tactile and material-driven in some ways, as well as having very interesting content.” Setser characterizes each year’s Efroymsen fellows’ collective body of work as “always a great survey of contemporary art, strong work from the Midwest that’s as good as from anyplace else in the country.”

Setser has a particular interest in fiber and felt making although she “was trained as a traditional printmaker—fine art on paper—but I use fiber to expand the opportunities of two-dimensional print into the realm of installation,” she said.

“I love the historical and social relevance of felt,” said Setser. It’s “the oldest textile known to mankind and still used in a lot of industrial processes to this day. It’s an interesting medium and substrate. The process of making felt is simple. A five year old can do it, but the process is also magical.”

Setser started her undergraduate work at Edinboro University, but transferred to Herron in her third year when her family moved. “Definitely the printmaking faculty here was very inspiring,” she said. After earning a B.F.A. degree in printmaking in 1998, she completed an M.F.A. degree in 2004 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

She was introduced to felt through serendipity. On a lark when she was 18, she and her mother attended the Michigan Fiber Festival and “were totally captivated,” she said, “by the farmers with llamas and various sheep breeds, and the artisans spinning and weaving.”

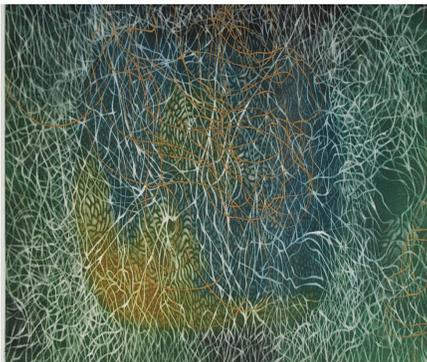
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Grotto, interior detail
Image credit: Meredith Setser



Wild Tussah
Image credit: Meredith Setser

Setser's mother built this initial exposure into a business. She now has one of the largest herds of Cormo Sheep in the Midwest and travels the country selling her raw materials, fibers, spinning wheels, looms and artwork.

Setser chose the residency in Argentina for several reasons. She "loves contemporary, very socially engaged works by South American artists including Colombian Doris Salcedo and Brazilian Ernesto Neto." Plus, "when I was home with my new baby, I was watching more TV and saw a travel show about Argentina. A friend of mine had gone to the residency program and said Buenos Aries was fabulous." Last year, artists from Australia, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the U.S. were part of the residency program.

Setser's area of study will relate to mining issues. "I want to investigate the real impacts of the pursuit of precious metal on the people in the towns," she said. "Everything I do has some sort of social relevance but this will be a new direction for the work."

In the seven years of the Efroymson Contemporary Arts Fellowship competition, which is open to artists in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio, 15 of the 35 winners have been Herron faculty members or alumni.

This year there were 198 applicants for the five annual fellowships. Winners were selected by a panel of judges from across the country including: Jeremy Efroymson, vice chair of the Efroymson Family Fund; John Spiak, director and chief curator of the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana, California; Allison Peters Quinn, director of exhibition, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Nancy Solomon, founder, owner and director, Solomon Gallery, Atlanta; and Stephen Wicks, Barbara W. & Bernard E. Bernstein Curator, Knoxville Museum of Art. The fellowships are funded through the Efroymson Family Fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation.

For a look at more of Setser's work, go to <http://www.herron.iupui.edu/faculty/meredith-setser>