

PAPER + THREAD

DONNA RHAE MARDER



HERE: 50s
Apron (back);
2019; 1950s
Gourmet
magazine
covers, assorted
papers,
tulle, my
grandmother's
buttons; pieced,
sewn, women's
size 10

OPPOSITE
PAGE TOP:
Three Sisters;
2016; photos,
gold tea
chest paper,
postcards,
antique
book paper,
handmade
paper, my
grandmother's
buttons; pieced
and sewn; 3
pieces, largest
18 x 16 x 12 in.

BOTTOM: 50s
Apron (Detail)

BY JANET MENDELSON

STEVE GYURINA



DEAN POWELL



Although we've just met, Donna Rhae Marder seems relaxed and unpretentious as she walks me through her home in suburban Boston. Each room is a gallery of arresting art made from unexpected materials—the discards of her family and friends. It's apparent she loves the tactile experience of working with paper and a sewing machine, which she calls her sculptural tool.

Marder kiddingly calls herself “an indigenous suburbanite trying to make use of native materials.” When her parents downsized, their matchbook collection became a Rya rug that she created from hundreds of the cardboard booklets, matches bent up. She folded and coiled their *National Geographic* maps, stitching them into bowls. Pages of 1950s *Gourmet* magazine became fabric for a charming retro apron tied with a bow. Used tea bags that she saved for years are recycled as little girls' dresses and Japanese teapots.



STEVE GYURINA

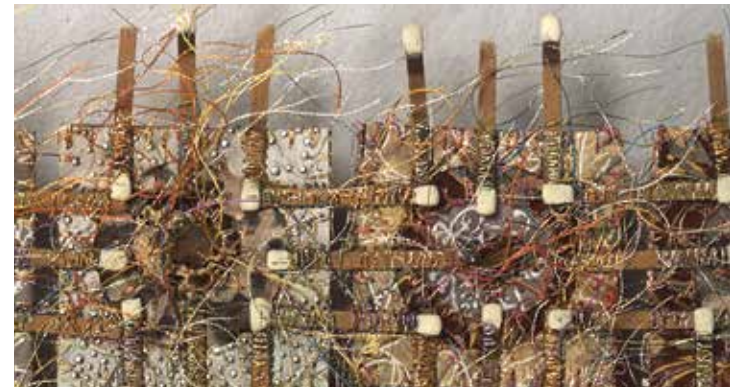
DEAN POWELL



Seemingly nothing is off limits; coffee filters, newspaper obituaries, film negatives, and foreign currency are fair game. She says, "For more than 25 years, I've used whatever was lying around the house."

When stymied in the studio, Marder plays solitaire, which she describes as "equally repetitive and time-consuming as sewing." For *Double Solitaire* (2001), Marder snipped the numbers and suits from two decks of worn-out playing cards to make a lacy coverlet. "I'm a second generation American," she says. "Growing up in the fifties, my first generation, aspiring parents played bridge—men only, with drinks; women only, for lunch; mixed couples, with cocktails. My Lithuanian grandmother used cards to tell fortunes." *Double Solitaire's* excised information and the spaces left behind speak to the removal and moving of something essential and the void that remains.

THIS PAGE LEFT: **Yardage 5**; 2005; matches, paper; layered, sewn; 42 x 30 x 2 in. BELOW: **Yardage 5** (Detail) OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: **Craft Vessel I**; 2007; 35mm slides, wire; sewn; 15 x 14 in. dia. CENTER: **Craft Vessel I** (Detail)



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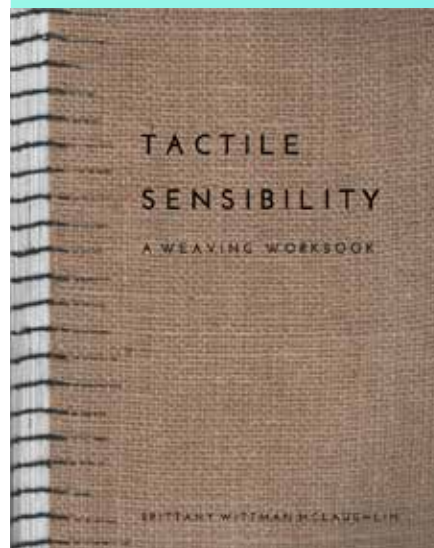
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Recently, Marder has been addressing global concerns. For *Migration*, a curated exhibition at Emerson Umbrella, Concord, Massachusetts, she created *Caravan Bowls* (2018) from *National Geographic* maps of Central America. Leaving place names exposed honors the journeys of others.

At the Boston Society of Arts + Crafts, in her solo exhibition *The Cover Up*, she displayed religious and culturally weighted garments—a burka, a tallit, a sari (the latter created from her father and grandfather's silk ties)—asking how simple cloth can be a target of social conflict. That 2018 show led the State Department to commission a large piece honoring traditional Paraguayan ñanduti lace for the US Embassy in Paraguay, due in 2021. See more of Marder's work at www.Mobilia-Gallery.com/Artists/Donna-Rhae-Marder.

Janet Mendelsohn, a freelance writer and author of *Maine's Museums: Art, Oddities & Artifacts* (Countryman Press), especially enjoys writing about travel and the arts. She welcomes readers' story ideas. www.janetmendelsohn.com

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