



VEILS OF COLOR



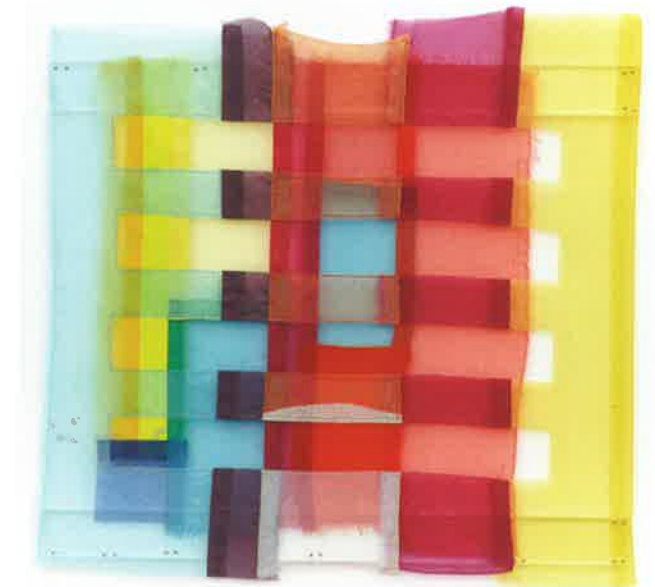
BY BARBARA DELANEY

New York artist Linda Schmidt has always been intrigued by layers, especially thin veils of color, but fiber is not where her art life began. Her original fascination involved paint. She took a detour from painting when, during an artist residency, she was challenged to work with a medium that she had never worked with before. This “challenge” started her on a whole new trajectory.

Since Schmidt had been sewing for as long as she could remember and loved to collect different kinds of fabric, textiles seemed like a logical path to explore. Her initial experiments with fabric and paint didn't work out quite the way she hoped, so she decided to try fabrics with different opacities—sheer, medium sheer, and opaque—to see if she could get the effect she was going for. She liked the results she achieved and got a lot of positive feedback. That encouraged her to work on something more involved—the works we see today. She said, if this challenge had come at any other time, she may have been too busy with her painting to make the jump to fiber.

A new piece frequently starts with a combination of fabrics, often two or three colors, that catch her eye in one of the many bins that fill her studio. Sometimes, those combinations are the beginning of a new project; sometimes, they go nowhere. “It's hit or miss, trying to see what works together. I look for a rhythm,” she said. Building the layers in both her small pieces and her installations is intuitive and “kind of architectural.”

OPPOSITE: **Pool**; 2023; fabric, thread, pins, plastic; hand and machine stitched; 12.5 x 13 in.



With the initial combination of fabrics in place, Schmidt continues to add pieces of varying thicknesses, types, and colors, moving the different parts around until she gets the look she desires. Her projects defy “the rules” of combining fabrics: sheers are just as likely to be combined with utility fabrics and vinyl as often as with other sheers. She likes to mix “cheap” fabrics with expensive ones as a bit of “rebellion,” she said.

Schmidt uses a lot of remnants in her work, and most of her fabrics are acquired in thrift stores. “There’s something about finding fabric that someone else found and used before,” she said. “They had high hopes, some idea ... and it didn’t work out.” She loves the concept of taking someone else’s “mistakes” and making them work for her. Her sheer silks and outdoor fabrics, however, are often purchased new.

Optimistic by nature, she is drawn to using bright colors, but she limits her selections to solids. The bright colors lend an almost whimsical feel to her work.

Assembly involves a lot of starts and stops. As Schmidt works, she steps back and looks at a piece from a distance. “I just see what the piece needs and whether the interactions between the fabrics are doing something interesting—whether the textures and colors work together. I see how the layers interact,” she said. “Sometimes, I have to add more or take parts away.” She wants to make sure the pieces “glow” the way she wants them to, that they are not too dark or dull.

She said the process is really “trial and error.” Her seam ripper gets a lot of use, as there is plenty of ripping out before she is satisfied

ABOVE: **Untitled**; 2021; fabric, thread, pins, plastic; hand and machine stitched; 12 x 11.5 in. OPPOSITE: **Pair**; 2023; fabric, thread, pins, plastic; hand and machine stitched; 11 x 10.5 in.



with the results. Regular sewing thread is used in all of her work, including her outdoor installations, and it has never been a problem.

It is important to Schmidt to have a sense of gesture in her work. In drawing and painting, she achieved this feeling of energy and movement with drips, splashes, and brushstrokes. In her fiber work, she achieves it by leaving some of the edges unfinished and frayed. "It's a challenge to make it look intentional, but also embrace the puckers and other imperfections," she said.

Many of her larger hanging pieces are two-sided, so it's important to make sure each side "works." These pieces typically have three or four panels, with each panel ranging from 36 to 60 inches in width and up to 144 inches in length. Every work is different, so they have different hanging requirements, which necessitates figuring out what will work best each time. She likes to keep things simple, but she also doesn't want the hanging devices to show. As a result, she is always looking for

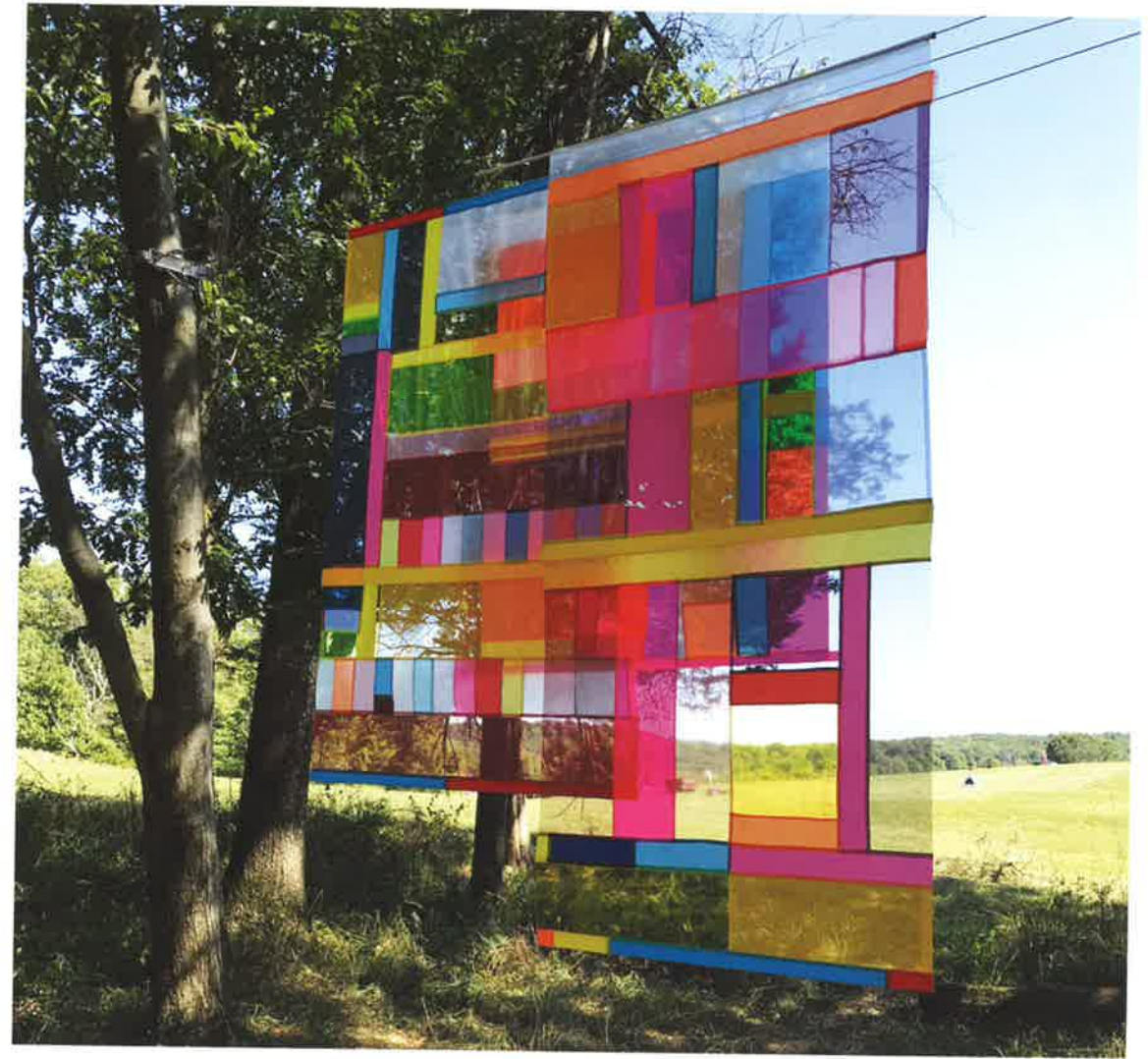
new methods to hang her work. Fishing, plumbing, and electrical supplies are often employed: fishing line, marine tape, PVC pipe, acrylic sheets, and more.

Schmidt chooses titles for her work that have a dual meaning—words like "corner" or "stack" that can be either a verb or a noun. Her titles are most often one word. She looks at the completed piece and sees what words pop into her head, but she also keeps a list of possible titles, in case that doesn't work.

In a protected area, her outdoor pieces can last a year or more, but she doesn't mind if a piece becomes weathered. If the damage doesn't cause a piece to fail, she may leave it, letting the rips and tears become part of the design. Depending on the location of her installations or the extent of the damage, Schmidt may have to make repairs, then it becomes almost a performance piece!

Her smaller framed pieces are also comprised of layers and are placed behind UV glass, so the colors don't fade. Since these works are not exposed to the weather, she

ABOVE: **Solar Garden**; 2019; fabric, thread, wood; hand and machine stitched; 48 x 108 x 12 in. (each panel)
OPPOSITE: **Buoyant**; 2022; fabric, thread, pins, plastic; hand and machine stitched; 10 x 7 in.



is able to have more variety in her fabric choices, such as silks and other fabrics that absorb water or can't get wet. She includes some basting stitches in these smaller pieces as a nod to quilting, an art that was part of her early family life.

After creating a piece in her studio, Schmidt often brings it home, so she can live with it for a while and make sure everything is working the way she wants it to. "It's helpful to see the larger work in a different context and with more space around it. It's there as I'm going in and out and at different times of the day," she said. "This is helpful, especially if I'm trying to decide if I want to keep or change part of a piece. I need to live with it a while before making the decision to do something drastic to it or ... not."

Schmidt's work has been exhibited throughout the United States and abroad and is included in collections around the

world. She is represented by Garvey|Simon Gallery in New York City, New York, and San Anselmo, California, and currently has three large two-sided hanging pieces in the windows at Richard James of Savile Row on Park Avenue in New York City, a bespoke tailor and contemporary menswear company that features local artists.

She said the way her work is created is always evolving. She experiments with different fabrics and colors and indulges her curiosity. She is always trying new things.

lindakamilleschmidt.com | [@linda_k_schmidt](https://www.instagram.com/linda_k_schmidt)

BARBARA DELANEY is a wordsmith, avid sewer, and quilter who makes her home in Massachusetts.

ABOVE: **Transom**; 2019; fabric, vinyl, thread, plastic, PVC tubes, cables; hand and machine stitched; 89 x 76 x 12 in.
OPPOSITE: **Escape**; 2023; fabric, thread, pins, plastic; hand and machine stitched; 12.5 x 10.5 in.

Fiber Art Now



VOL 12 | ISSUE 4 | FALL 2023 | IRENE RODERICK, CONVERSATION