

# Artwork Stories: Scientific Theories Find New Meaning in Threaded Art by Laura Kaufman

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by Steve McCloskey

Artist Laura Kaufman is an explorer. Seeking answers to the uncertainties and ambiguities presented by everyday life, she studies published articles on quantum physics and dark matter. This investigation has inspired her “Redacted Samplers” series which she’s been making over the past few years.

She begins by appropriating a phrase from a science journal or newspaper article and then generates a list of anagrams into stacked designs. She then redacts the phrase, leaving spaces between the ghosted words, then adding geometric patterns and embroidering metallic threads into the framed linen.

This series is part of a solo show currently on view at MARQUEE PROJECTS in Bellport, NY on Long Island where she also presents drawings, sculptures and paintings. “Laura Kaufman: Yearning for New Physics” is on view May 4 to 27, 2019.

Her painting, *The Most Mysterious Fact*, began with a phrase taken from a recent science article in the New York Times. “I love that the article suggested that there really are no ultimate facts and that everything is up for debate,” Kaufman said while hanging the show. “So, I exploded the phrase like matter in a particle collider and generated a list of anagrams made up of its rearranged letters. *Math Costume Fit Oysters* and *Soft Hair Matt Ecosystem* are two favorites.”



“The Most Mysterious Fact” by Laura Kaufman, 2018. Thread, watercolor transfer pigment, rabbitskin glue on linen, 18 x 18 inches. Courtesy MARQUEE PROJECTS.

After rearranging the anagrams on paper—always mindful of the warp and weft of weaving—Kaufman searches for a pattern created by the words and their negative spaces that would balance density and openness. “It’s rather like searching for meaning in chaos,” she said.

Using red transfer pigment, she marked the outline of the grid-like pattern onto portrait linen, creating an underlying graphical structure for the artwork. For *The Most Mysterious Fact*, certain areas of the grid were mapped out in black Japanese watercolor to establish yet another structural pattern, balancing the rectilinear versus the curvilinear and painted areas against the vacant ones.

A final pattern of embroidered French gold nylon shifts in the light as the viewer moves around the piece with vertical, horizontal, and diagonal threads shimmering elusively “like floating clouds in classical Japanese *Yamato-e* scroll paintings and folding screens,” Kaufman suggests - a reference to the elusiveness of reality itself.



Her love of working with fabric arose from a rigorous studio investigation of materials while studying at Vassar and RISD, but she later realized that a long line of family members had “ties” to the field of textile arts/crafts as well. “My mother once owned a needlepoint shop, and our home was filled with Early American samplers sewn by various ancestors,” she said. “And my grandfather published how-to books on nautical knots.”

Her art practice and forays into the *terra incognita* of particle physics have led not only to an expansion of the script and history of samplers, but have brought her back home – metaphysically speaking.



“Passing Through Our Bodies” by Laura Kaufman, 2018. Plaid Transfer pigment on paper, 20 x 15 inches. Courtesy MARQUEE PROJECTS.



“Passing Through Our Bodies” by Laura Kaufman, 2019. Thread, watercolor transfer pigment, rabbit skin glue on linen, 18 x 15 inches. Courtesy MARQUEE PROJECTS.



Installation View “Laura Kaufman: Yearning for New Physics” at MARQUEE PROJECTS. Courtesy of the gallery.

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**BASIC FACTS:** “Laura Kaufman: Yearning for New Physics” is on view May 4 to 27, 2019 at MARQUEE PROJECTS, 14 Bellport Lane, Bellport, NY 11713. [www.marqueeprojects.org](http://www.marqueeprojects.org).

To see artwork exhibited in the show, [click here](#).

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