



FIBER REINTERPRETED AWARD

Carolyn Mason

Los Angeles, California, US

I turn personal history and my obsession with textiles into the realm of the wondrous and the hybrid. The *Cross-Pollination* series marry two distinct types of fiber that intermingle and grow together: hand-felted wool—including hand-dyed with natural indigo—and industrial machine buffers. I create sculptural forms with diverse elements that reference nature and biological generativity.

The hybrid nature of *Cross-Pollination* reflects my family heritage. I inherited a natural affinity for wool from my mother. She was born on a Colorado sheep ranch, as was her mother, and carded, spun, dyed and wove with projects often

spread through every room of our house. From my father, I received an understanding of industrial environments and processes as well as a love of working with my hands. I can often be found exploring and experimenting in my own garage/studio. My father worked in textile manufacturing as a plant manager in Hayward, California. He was tasked with fabric and machines, and was always tinkering with various contraptions in the garage.

Right page: **Carolyn Mason *Cross-Pollination I*** 2018, wool, cotton and jute machine buffers, copper tubing, felted, indigo-dyed, 48" x 37" x 34". Top: detail.





I view my studio as a laboratory where I collect, observe and experiment with many different materials. I imagine their secret lives and hidden potential. Wool is inherently dynamic—it is hair, animal, warmth and comfort, and history. The machine buffers, on the other hand, are ready-made, functional objects that I collect and re-purpose. The buffers are mostly made of cotton, often recycled, and are intended for polishing and resurfacing. The machine elements come in an array of sizes and beautiful shades of yellow and saffron. Crocheted doilies are used to highlight the buffers' surprisingly delicate and lace-like qualities. Copper plumbing supports are a natural companion to the work as it is hot water that felts the wool.

I want the forms to be delicate, playful, whimsical—but also potentially ominous. My aim is to evoke the marvels of biological life both aesthetically and metaphorically. The mystery and sublimeness of cells; the fascinating patterns of moss, vines and fungus; the magic of underwater plants and creatures; the mesmerizing serpentine movement of snakes; the complexity and adaptability of nature serves to inspire. Fecundity—growth, fertility, and expansion—is particularly compelling as it reminds us of an integral part of nature. There is, of course, a monstrous side which can creep and spread like a fungus taking over. This proliferation, including human nature and the creative process, is an integral part of the work. Ultimately, adopting natural forms and using materials I love are expressions of reverence, and assertions of beauty and wonder.

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—Carolyn Mason currently lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her MFA in Sculpture from Mills College in Oakland, California, in 2005. She has been awarded residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and the Banff Center for the Arts in Canada. She has exhibited in venues including Artists' Television Access in San Francisco; den contemporary in Los Angeles; the London Design Festival; the Los Angeles World Airport; and most recently, Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

Carolyn Mason *Cross-Pollination II* 2018, doilies, wool, machine buffers, copper and steel tubing, felted, crocheted, 47" x 35" x 31". Bottom: detail.

