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THE YAM PRESENTS *Brooke Atherton: Mothers and Daughters*

[Billings Montana]

Brooke Atherton: Mothers and Daughters

October 15, 2020 – January 10, 2021, Charles M. Bair Family Gallery and Northwest Projects Gallery

Is this what you think being a liberated woman is all about?

“That’s the question my tired mother asked me when I got home in the middle of one night in the 1970s, smelling like wine and sex.

That question has followed me through time and across the country, through all the interesting events in my adult life.”

—Brooke Atherton

Billings-based artist, Brooke Atherton seeks to answer the question in her new exhibition, *Mothers and Daughters*. Exploring maternal, marital, and sisterly relationships, this large-scale installation features new work using her mother’s antique satin wedding dress, a collaborative series based on trees, and a free-standing installation repurposed from an army tent. Many of her works relate to specific stories and events, with underlying themes of overlapping histories and passages through time and space. By stitching together meaningful fabrics with found materials, maps, calendars, and measuring devices, she creates loose narratives linking geography, gender, memory, history, and craft.

In her early adult life, Brooke worked at an archeological dig, excavating the site of an ancient village with a matrilineal/matrilocal social structure. According to Brooke, “Our work crews were directed by professional archaeologists who were women and our work crews were often more than 50% female. That may not be the norm, but it was fitting for that site.” This early life experience informs Brooke’s work, as archeological grids connect generations of past female figures in her life and beyond. In addition, Brooke is interested in the tools people use to record their journeys, such as maps, calendars, and measuring devices.

Materials and labor are central to Brooke’s practice as she layers heirloom fabrics of silk, cotton, and wool worn by her friends and family with found materials, thus linking her personal memories with history and culture. Her techniques include sewing, ripping, burning, and allowing materials to rust, thus inviting collaboration with natural forces and chance. Time threads through all of her work like tiny stitches.

Originally from Springfield, Ohio, Brooke Atherton has a BFA from Wright State University and has been exhibiting her work since 2007. Her work has been shown in over 50 exhibitions throughout the country, including the annual Yellowstone Art Auction, having been included every year since 2012. In 2013, she received the Montana Art Council’s Artist Innovation Award for Visual Arts.

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