

## Arts &amp; Culture Artscape

# In Bog Etudes, textile artist Moira Bateman lets landscapes leave marks on fabric

Moira Bateman hopes to raise awareness of the importance of bogs through textile art steeped in them. Her work is on display at Form + Content Gallery and opens at the Textile Center next week.

By [Sheila Regan](#) | Columnist



Moira Bateman has a cabin in northern Minnesota, near a vast bog called Sax-Zim. She became interested in using the bog water to dye fabric.

*MinnPost photo by Sheila Regan*

Jan. 10, 2023

At Form + Content Gallery, you notice what's missing from the fabric draped from the ceiling and hung on the walls just as much as the material itself. The long pieces of silk, which artist Moira Bateman has left to steep in bogs, are thick with sediment and mud. They hold a sense of decay, with the bog water eating away at the fabric. There's also a sense of absence, with its cut out shapes that bear resemblance to bogs themselves.

Bateman's background is in landscape architecture. After her college studies, she worked in the landscape design field for a time, with a focus on native landscape reclamation projects and wildlife refuge areas, but she quickly moved toward studio art, and eventually, work with textiles.

One of her first projects was a collaboration with writer Patricia Eakins for her story "The Hungry Girls." Bateman created an installation for a play based on the story, making 10-foot dresses by felting raw sheep fleeces into linen. "I loved working with textiles so much that that's kind of what stuck out for me," she recalls. "My goal after that was to kind of go back to my original focus, which was landscape, and that's when I started weaving fabric in different waterways, for periods of time to make marks on it."

Bateman has a cabin in northern Minnesota, near a vast bog called Sax-Zim, where arctic birds like snowy owls stay in the winter. She became interested in using the bog water to dye fabric, and got the chance when she was named a 2022 McKnight Fiber Art Fellow.

Through the fellowship, Bateman received funds to study at Botanical Colors in Seattle, where she took a mud dye class with Aboubakar Fofana, a master of creating Bògòlanfini cloths. "It helped me solidify what I'm doing, basically," Bateman says. For her bog pieces, Bateman uses a technique similar to the Mali mud dye technique which uses the iron-rich bog mud as a dye.

Later this month, Bateman's work will be shown at the Textile Center for the McKnight Fiber Artist Fellowship Exhibition, where she'll be showing with fellow Blair Treuer. That exhibition, called "Etudes: Watersheds, Bogs, Kayaks," will have a kayak Bateman has made of waxed silk, as well as similar work to the Form + Content show.





Later this month, Bateman's work will be shown at the Textile Center for the McKnight Fiber Artist Fellowship Exhibition, where she'll be showing with fellow Blair Treuer.

*MinnPost photo by Sheila Regan*

The material is preserved by applying wax, after cutting the fabric into shapes. The result has the effect of dyed fabric, with a textured, earthy feel. The assemblages are sculptural and evocative of the watersheds, offering a record of sorts of our natural world and the impact humans have on water.

"I'm hoping to tell the story to help people love these places, especially bogs because they are very important for climate," Bateman says. "They hold more carbon than even forests do. I'm hoping to help raise awareness about bogs and help protect bogs."



The material is preserved by applying wax, after cutting the fabric into shapes.

*MinnPost photo by Sheila Regan*

She also explores the contrast between strength and fragility, through the deterioration of the material as well as the holes she cuts out in the cloth. For Bateman, these elements represent the disruption of landscape.

The Form + Content Gallery exhibition runs through Feb. 11. The Textile Center exhibition runs Jan. 17 to April 8. The artist's conversation and reception at

Form + Content takes place Saturday, Jan. 28 from 3 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., with reception following until 5:30 p.m. (free). [More information here.](#)



## [Sheila Regan](#)

Sheila Regan is a Twin Cities-based arts journalist. She writes MinnPost's twice-weekly Artscape column. She can be reached at [sregan@minnpost.com](mailto:sregan@minnpost.com).

[Show comments or leave a comment](#)

### Thanks to our major sponsors



Additional thanks to our [top philanthropic supporters.](#)

# MINNPOST

is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit newsroom

MinnPost | P.O. Box 18438 | Minneapolis, MN 55418 | [612.455.6950](tel:612.455.6950)