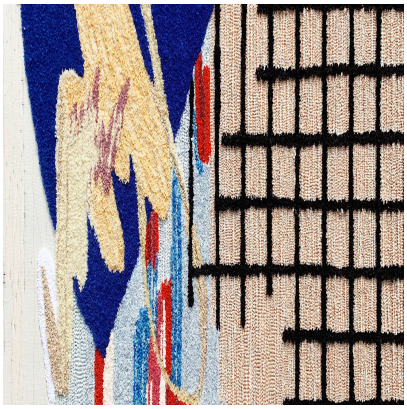
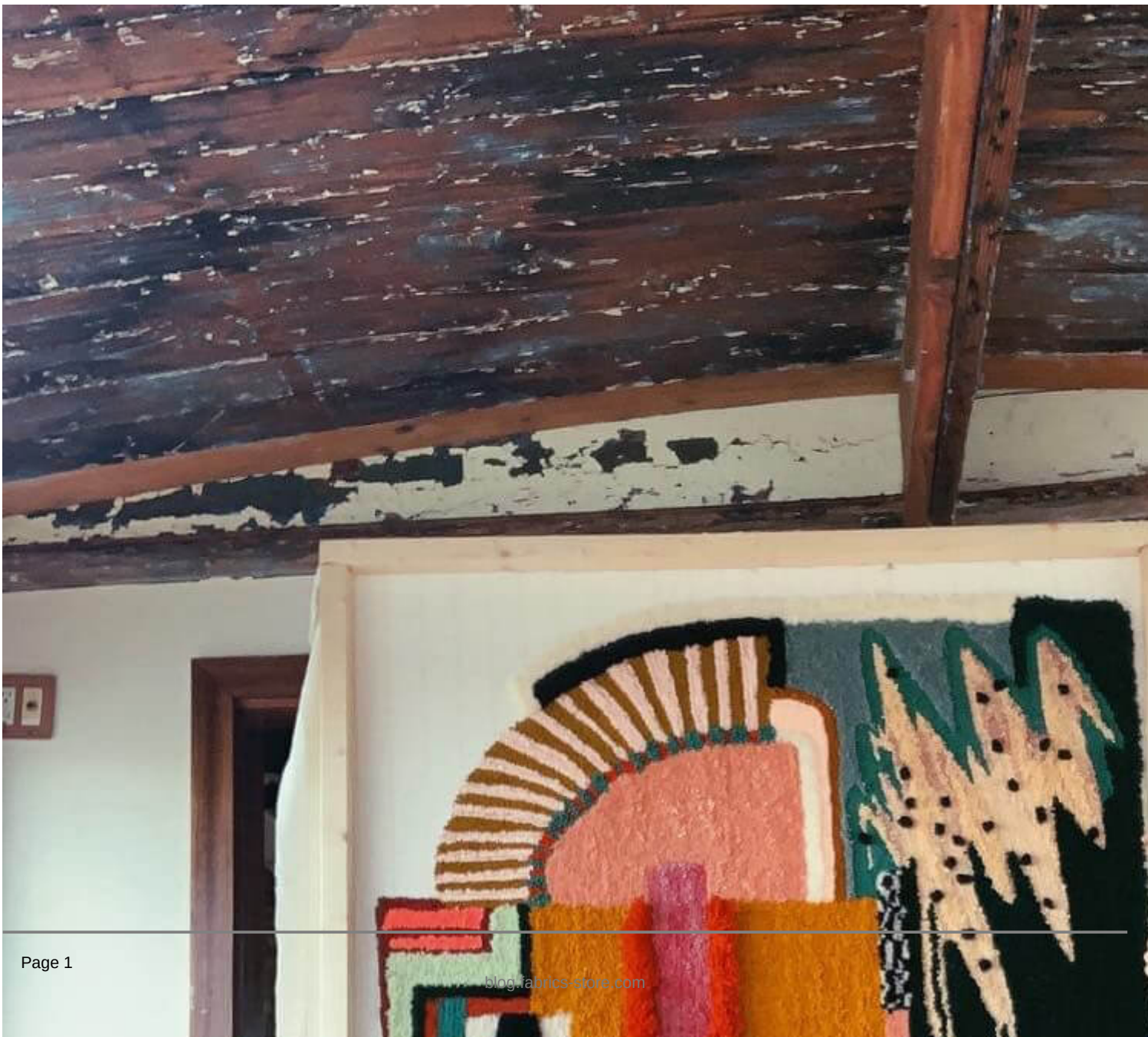


Tufted Textiles: The Madcap Art of Caroline Kaufman

Description



Caroline Kaufman in the studio

New York based textile designer and artist Caroline Kaufman takes a free-wheeling, experimental approach to creating textiles, working in an improvisatory way to produce surprising and unexpected results. She is perhaps best known for her recent, wildly complex tufted textiles, which play with madcap colour schemes and zany patterns to produce functional rugs that look just as at home on the walls of a gallery. She says, â??I usually make my best work when there is a lot of freedom and I allow the material to dictate the design.â?•



Tufted art by Caroline Kaufman

Kaufman was born and grew up in West Virginia, in a household filled with creative activities. Little surprise then that she chose to go on and study a BFA in Fashion Design at the Pratt Institute. Working with fashion naturally led Kaufman to textiles, as she explains, â??My background is in fashion design, so I first approached the world of textiles through that lens. I took my knowledge of pattern-making garments and started experimenting with knitwear.â?•

After graduation, she worked on a fashion collection with Anthropologie. She took an experimental approach to creating knitwear, which she attributes to a lack of formal training, noting, â??I am primarily a self-taught knitter. I think originally not â??knowing all the rulesâ?• allowed me to really push the confines of the medium.â?• Alongside her textile work, Kaufman developed a painting practice that was as daring and experimental as her fabric work, but she was, as she explains, constantly looking for a way to â??marry my textile and painting practice.â?•



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Tufted art by Caroline Kaufman

In 2016, Kaufman bought a tufting gun, but it wasnâ??t until 2018 that she fully embraced the new technique, spending many hours of trial and error working out a way of producing quality work with what she found a tricky, technical process. She says, â??When I discovered tufting it just clicked. As an artist you have to go through so many testing periods, I call it â??making bad art,â?? until you find the techniques that express your visual language.â?• Through her tufted textiles, Kaufman has been able to realise a way of bringing together her mutual interests in painting and textiles, in the most inventive, tactile, and visceral ways.

For her most recent tufted work, Kaufman works with natural, recycled and hand-dyed yarns, brought together into her wacky, experimental designs that are often vast and monumental in scale. She insists her designs are the product of pure experiment, having been built up in an improvisatory way, explaining, â??My approach to textiles looks a lot like a painterâ??s approach to an abstract painting: fling colour on a canvas and let your subconscious build the piece.â?• She adds, â??I donâ??t sketch out my textiles beforehand because I want to allow the work to tell me what itâ??s going to be as I make it.â?•



Tufted art by Caroline Kaufman

While her tufted textiles are the predominant strand of Kaufmanâ??s practice, she still continues to paint every day, describing the act of painting as a loose â??warm-upâ?? for the more labour intensive, time-consuming nature of making textile art. Painting allows her to get ideas out on paper without forethought or plan, and these loose, freeing works then feed through into her textiles, whether consciously or not. This means that, despite being the result of many hours of work, her textiles have the same spontaneity and vitality of expressionistic painting. For Kaufman, these two strands of her practice are inextricably intertwined, each one feeding into and complementing the other. She says, â??I think of the painting practice and the textile practice as lovers, they need each other to develop.â?•

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