**SEMESTER 1 STUDY PLAN**

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| The study plan for one semester describes, specifically and in detail, what you will accomplish this semester.   **Areas of Inquiry that provide the academic and artistic context of your studies.** Art and Trauma Improvisational Forms in Folkloric Textile Patterns and Myths The Materials and Stories of Itinerant Rest and Shelter The Improvisational Archetypes of Migrancy: The Wanderer, the Mendicant, the Refugee, the Pilgrim, the Migrant and the Artist  **1. What are your overall learning goals for the semester? Describe the areas of inquiry, central themes, concerns and/or questions that your learning activities will address. How do you envision your creative and intellectual work evolving? How do you anticipate this work will move your practice forward?**  This first semester I am considering how textiles commonly accompany us through our rites of passage. Some of these textiles include diapers, prayer rugs, textile wedding and dowry items, shrouds and mourning garments.  In the originary, evolutionary context, the human sense of exposure was to landscape. The landscape was the original site of anxiety, the site in which the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter held sway.  Artists are figures of exposure, sharing common experiences with the Wanderer, the Mendicant, the Pilgrim and the Refugee as figures that invoke improvisation, spontaneity and the search for expedient and ecstatic possibilities for protecting what is dear to us.  Having a twenty year history of collaborating with people who have perceived disabilities, and artists who are located outside of academia, I have been influenced by the Outsider/Visionary Art discourse and how it is reflected in what art historian Roger Cardinal calls, "the psychic elsewhere.”  Capitalist society often sees artists in the same category as migrants, often viewing these beings as non-essential or superfluous, needing to justify their position or value, and by extension, the validity of their interpretations, contemplations, relocations and devotions. This brings the artist in dialogue with the archetypes that relate to the Migrant, as these beings must find ways to creatively shelter our most precious cultural resources and locate and create environments where we will be sustained, hence, Creative Hermitage.  I want to bring focus to creative aesthetic and apotropaic experience as a response to the anxiety of exposure. Creativity is a powerful response to uncertainty, a method by which we propitiate what we hope to understand better through a positive engagement of our internal chemical and neural networks. Spiritually, we surrender to inspiration and mediation as a form of survival and a means towards acceptance. These faces of devotion become faces of sacrifices as we give of what is precious to us: our attention, time and skill.  Art and mediation protect us from the feeling of uncertainty, if not the actual difficulties of life itself. The cloth and the narrative stories we weave become a manifestation of foundation and protection within a life of perpetual improvisation.  These inquiries and making of the textile work is about contemplation spaces/contemplation objects/contemplation behaviors/contemplation (con-temple) with the temple/within the temple. Remaining in the thoughtful.  I see a relationship between the basic rituals employed in daily life and their relation to ecstatic forms of being. Overall, I see ecstatic experience as amplifying and fortifying the capacity of life in addition to being a possible location of the rupture of paradigms. I see the woven narrative and textiles as supporting us as we accommodate ruptures, and accepting the difficulties that daily life brings us, while striving to retain meaning and purpose.  This semester, I want to explore the figures of the Wanderer, the Mendicant, the Pilgrim and the Refugee as figures of exposure. I see these archetypes as having powerful connections to many experiences that invoke creativity. The Wander, the Mendicant, the Pilgrim and the Refugee often have no other option but to move, meditate or reside at the outskirts of a settled home. These beings often have few possessions and little access to shelter or comfort.  One of their primary connections to security and protection is cloth.  The aforementioned figures bring attention and inspiration to our basic necessities, and also to the varied ways we bring ourselves comfort in times of limited resources. This limitation is a powerful place to invoke how narratives, poems, stories and the oral traditions relate to the transmission of knowledge when people cannot carry much else with them. This tradition comes from preliterate societies and has carried us to the present moment.  I am looking to mindfully connect to these conditional possibilities of survival and spirituality through the social fiber of the spoken word, and the tradition of textiles as portable, adaptable protective materials. Through the awareness of storytelling and textile materials as historic constants, I acknowledge the connection of the renewing greater continuum of the world.  **2. What creative projects will you undertake and what products do you envision emerging from your creative work this semester? Describe how this work will be documented and how it may contribute to the development and rigorous exploration of your interdisciplinary practice.**  1.) The Completion of The Life Death Wedding Coat. This includes the weaving of two additional panels for the front, reinforcement and sewing of the inner sleeves, the weaving of the narrow belts and ties that allow the coat to reconfigure in various shapes, and the fringing of the bottom. I estimate this work to take 20 hours.  I want to spend 5 hours reading and writing about this process and using the prompt: The Woolen Coat of Richly Given Trouble   2.) Completion of two hand spun hand woven prayer rug/meditation carpet. I have a repository of hand spun wool for about one rug awaiting to be woven. Of the first two carpets, one will be a child’s size and one will be slightly oversized. The work required to complete these two rugs will be about 45 hours  3.) Zazen daily meditation and Yoga 30 minutes each day minimum. 3.5 hour a week of movement and 3.5 hours a week of stillness./ 7 hours a week of body and mind care  4.) A daily practice of work in my illuminated journals, with editing and writing of existing text in progress, as it relates to this semester’s themes. 1 hour a day minimum. 7 hours a week  5.)  I am participating in the Collaborative Learning Opportunity organized by Albert Quesada. Within this group we are inquiring into aspects of more than human networks of interrelation, ecologically grounding this inquiry in mycelial collaboratives and energy exchanges  via the book Entanglement by Merlin Sheldrake. This is meeting 1.5 hours every other week for the session for a total of 10 hours for the semester.  6.) I am also a member of the CLO on Experimental Practices with Erica Eaton. We will be meeting 5 times for 1.5 hours each on Sundays. The schedule is still TBD.    **3. What critical discourses and theoretical concepts will you engage with this semester? Identify the artists; theorists; movements; fields of study; cultural, social and political frameworks; or other areas of knowledge that you plan to explore and describe how you see this work in conversation with your creative projects and/or contributing to your overall creative development. How will you document this activity; what written or other products-such as critical writing, essays, annotations, etc.-will emerge?**  Ecology and Spirituality  Mythology  Feminism  Apotropaic Practice  Cross Cultural Textile Meanings, Stories and Techniques  Cross Cultural Practices of Textile Adornment.  Critical focus on these two books:  Victoria Z River’s book The Shining Cloth. Dress and Adornment that Glitters  Enrico Mascelloni’s book War Rugs, The Nightmare of Modernism  I plan to write a paper that intersects the textiles and approaches in these two books   I am participating in the Collaborative Learning Opportunity organized by Albert Quesada. Within this group we inquiring into aspects of more than human networks of interrelation, ecologically grounding inquiry in mycelial collaboratives and energy exchanges  via the book Entanglement by Merlin Sheldrake.  I am participating in the Experimental practices CLO group with Erica Eaton and am still waiting for the final schedule but the group will be running on Sundays from 12-1:30 CST  I will provide a portfolio of images of the completed textile works, both in detail and as overviews with some supplement context in the from of short artist statements.  **4. What specific resources do you plan to use? Include a Bibliography, as well as other resources you plan to use. In addition, please describe how you envision co-learning with peers this semester.**  **Semester 1**   Art, Creativity, and the Sacred: An Anthology in Religion and Art. Ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. Continuum, 1995.  Back To the Sandbox: Art and Radical Pedagogy. Ed. Jaraslav Andel. Western Washington University, 2019.  Bascom, William. IFA Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa. Indiana University Press, 1991.  Bilbao, Tatiana. Landscape of Faith: Interventions Along the Mexican Pilgrimage Route. Lars Müller Publishers, 2018.  Campbell, C. Jean. The Commonwealth of Nature. The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.  Cixous, Hélène and Catherine Clément. The Newly Born Woman. Trans. Betsy Wing. University of Minnesota Press, 1986.  Han, Byung-Chul. The Scent of Time. Trans. Daniel Steuer. Polity, 2017.  In Such Hard Times: The Poetry of Wei Ying-wu. Trans. Red Pine. Copper Canyon Press, 2009.  McClintock, James I. Nature's Kindred Spirits: Aldo Leopold, Joseph Wood Krutch, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard, and Gary Snyder. University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.  Ross, Lisa, et al. Living Shrines of Uyghur China: Photographs by Lisa Ross. The Monacelli Press, 2013.  Yokoyama Taikan (1868- ). Ed. Seiroku Noma and trans. Meredith Weatherby. Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1960.  **5. If you are planning a practicum for this semester, include the complete Practicum Proposal (as outlined in the MFAIA Handbook Addendum) here, describing the project's aim in relationship to your learning goals and how you plan to document it.**  Does Not Apply thiis semester  **6. How will the work you are planning for this semester advance you toward fulfillment of the MFAIA degree criteria? How does this semester's study plan build upon previously identified areas for growth? (For students in the G4 semester, specifically identify any areas you need to address this semester to prepare you to enter the portfolio semester.)**  I plan to be creating 1/5th of my graduate work each semester to be fully involved in meanings and makings at all times.  Drawing upon my interest in the Paracas textiles, I extend the narrative of their methodology to symbolic and political applications: using a woven template as a master plane to improvise upon. I am advancing my considerations of of where “ruling systems” of lanes of thread or fiber, gives places for other practices (threads) to dive over and under. I am on the hunt for collaborations with other student and some of those have already been discussed.  I have selected robust involvement in 2 CLO groups to maximize my presence in the Goddard community to network with other creatives  and find some platforms for critical exchange.   At the end of G1 I will have two hand spun hand woven prayer rug/meditation carpet for the thesis project installation of a Creative Hermitage Sanctuary  My woven coat will be completed and act as a garment that I can actually be wearing while I am reading and thinking moving WITHIN the  idea of apotropaic textiles and daily use.I see some mediations in the coat being very fruitful.  I want to note that some of the readings I am doing can be accomplished via audio books which allows me to be spinning, sewing or weaving while taking in new information. I anticipate being able to puzzle pertain activities into one another.  This semester I need to determine how effective and viable that is as a way of working. I anticipate there may be certain times when it will be helpful to multi-task, and other times when I will need silence and focus, such as careful passages of tailor the handwoven coat….or hand sewing two irregular segments of handwoven textile.  **STUDENT SELF EVALUATION:**  **Areas of inquiry.** Mythopoetics Auto Ethnography of Art and Trauma Cosmology of Textiles of Wari Kayan Archetypes of Refuge/Withdrawal: Creative Hermitage  **1. Overall, how did your creative and intellectual work evolve this semester? What were your goals and how well did you meet them? How has your work this semester affected your art practice and how you see yourself as an artist?**  This semester investigated ideas of death and sequester in relation to poetry and textiles. A great aspect of this inquiry examined the need for quietude and how it is illustrated in various mythopoetic themes, paintings, weavings and stories.**Moving forward, I will be continuing investigations of the inner ecstatic experience and how  it has historically fortified the capacity of all life, especially in women, in addition to being a possible location and incubation site for of the rupture of paradigms.**  I heavily tested concepts of solitude, and pushed myself into long extended weaving projects that required complete seclusion. In parallel to this woven work, I looked to various images of women in seclusions in at history. I found researching the archetypes of withdrawal all the more flavorful, by constructing some long withdrawal into my own research and applied work. I completed three hand spun, hand woven rugs, one hand spun handwoven coat, and made significant edits and improvements on a poetry manuscript.  Making and writing about woven narrative and textiles, while looking deep into my own familial themes allowed me to feel supported while accommodating creative and historic ruptures. I willing accepted the difficulties and darknesses while building and discovering new meaning and purpose.  Mindfully connecting to possibilities of survival and spirituality through the social fiber of the spoken word, and the tradition of textiles as adaptable, protective materials deeply reinforced for me the ancient wisdom in my woven and poetic work. Through the awareness of storytelling and textile materials as historic constants I was able to find the connection of the ever renewing greater continuum of the world.  **2. What creative projects did you undertake this semester and what did you discover as a result? In what ways was the work experimental; did you explore any new processes, materials, contexts or goals this semester? Describe both the intentions and the outcomes of this work. What learning, new possibilities, products or other results emerged from these activities?**  1.) I completed three hand spun, handwoven undyed long wool prayer rugs with elaborate braid work.  In their creation, I experimented further with strips weaving and the aesthetic of creating banded or striated works whose patterns misalign, expressing tensions and energies in their interplays. I give homage here to my lifelong interest and research into West African textiles, Japanese pieced boro textiles and Buddhist monks's robes which all that incorporate any and all materials and structures into their creation. I find their radical inclusivity and modulation highly vitalizing.  It was highly instructive to do concurrent auto-ethnographic work this semester, and to consider the three woven prayer rugs as a "family of carpets", or as three phases of life: infant, child and mother.  Another way in which these pieces were experimental was that I created the rugs in three piece strip sections, that can we laid out as discreet prayer rugs, made to fit one person, or, the nine pieces to be reassembled as one larger woven work. I am curious about the how works can be assembled, disassembled and reassembled for ongoing iterations. This also points to writing, editing and various ways of combining poetry collection, as poetry is part of my creative work.  From a sheep herding and biological perspective, I deepened my knowledge about various long hair breeds of sheep that I use. I find the temperaments of sheep and general presence to be a value added element of making fiber work. The ways of the shepherd and nomadic or pastoral people's has long influenced my woven works and poetic writings. The lifestyles and narratives of "a shepardess and her flock" is a form of common humanity that can be understood across the entire world.  2.) I edited on 50 pages manuscript of poetry and added 5 new poems. In my various readings on ideograms, I went far in the process of refinement and compression of the work, deeper into what felt like a fermentation of words and concepts. This mellowing into a softer but deeper form of expression felt like a maturing and refinement. It was especially tender to have Gale Jackson as a reader.  3.) I completed the finish work on a master project, of a hand spun hand woven coat. The results are sensational. Truly. It is one of my masterworks, and I was really excited to finish it in the program. I had put about 200 hours of work into the coat previous to this semester. The finish work exceeded 50 hours this semester. While the coat itself in done, I did not get to document it as well as I hoped. I am in the process of writing about the coat and doing a more incisive inquiry into the themes and discourses it belongs to. That will come next semester.  **3. What critical discourses and theoretical concepts did you engage with this semester? What artists; theorists; movements; fields of study; cultural, social and political frameworks; or other areas of knowledge did you explore? What products (including but not limited to critical writing, essays, annotations, etc.), new connections and learning outcomes emerged from this work? How does this learning contribute to your overall creative practice?**  An overwhelming part of my work this semester engaged creative cultural responses to death through the lens of mythopoetics and burial practices. This inquiry was not so much concerned with the moment, or event of of death itself, but the various ways in which craftspeople, especially women are involved in creative preparation and anticipation of death, as well as the stewardship of the dead. My research uncovered the way that death also serves as an avatar for "a great pause" or opportunity for leave taking, even within the world of the living.  I was most interested in the ways that women need to "die to the world" of service in order to be born to their own creative practice and studio work.  I found the feminist discourse particularly valuable to contextualize the artwork and writing that female artists do, serves as a method of making themselves unreachable to the expectations of caring for others. We cannot care for others and for ourselves at the same time.  Creative practice in the from of writing and weaving becomes a form of private world making. This is incredible important when it considers who women have been responsible for the making of the home, and in order to be resourced they must first create a world of their own to resource themselves.  **4. What resources did you use this semester? Include a complete bibliography. In addition, please discuss your participation in peer-learning opportunities.**  1.) I participated in two CLO's:  - Experimental Practices with Erica Eaton in which we performed various inquiries and experiments based on collaboration in we we discussed and investigated the relationship between expectation and experimentation.  -The Secret Life of Fungi study group with Albert Quesada, read the book and discussed it. We did some creative experiments based on fungi related themes. I contributed specifically to some discussions about entheogenic practices as relates to women and spirituality. I also did further research into myco pigments and mushroom based dyes and created a few swatches of dyed wool using the Phaeolus Schweinitzii, "the dyer’s polypore" mushroom.    2.) I did a studio visit exchange with Andrew Fish who was in my cohort. We did a deep dive into peer review and investigations of one another's work. I offered several other students a the possibility of exchange. I have yet to complete one with Stephanie Riad.    3.) My Bibiolgraphy:  Art, Creativity, and the Sacred: An Anthology in Religion and Art. Ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. Continuum, 1995.  Back To the Sandbox: Art and Radical Pedagogy. Ed. Jaraslav Andel. Western Washington University, 2019.  Bascom, William. IFA Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa. Indiana University Press, 1991.  Bilbao, Tatiana. Landscape of Faith: Interventions Along the Mexican Pilgrimage Route. Lars Müller Publishers, 2018.  Campbell, C. Jean. The Commonwealth of Nature. The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.  Cixous, Hélène and Catherine Clément. The Newly Born Woman. Trans. Betsy Wing. University of Minnesota Press, 1986.  Han, Byung-Chul. The Scent of Time. Trans. Daniel Steuer. Polity, 2017.  In Such Hard Times: The Poetry of Wei Ying-wu. Trans. Red Pine. Copper Canyon Press, 2009.  McClintock, James I. Nature's Kindred Spirits: Aldo Leopold, Joseph Wood Krutch, Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard, and Gary Snyder. University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.  Ross, Lisa, et al. Living Shrines of Uyghur China: Photographs by Lisa Ross. The Monacelli Press, 2013.  Yokoyama Taikan (1868- ). Ed. Seiroku Noma and trans. Meredith Weatherby. Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1960.  Snow, Lalage. War Gardens. Quercus Publishing, 2019.  Solari, Paolo. The Sketchbooks of Paolo Solari. MIT Press, 1971.  Thompson, Evan. Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy. Columbia University Press, 2017.  Thompson, Michael Farris. Flash of the Spirit. Vintage, 1984.  Tsvetaeva, Marina. Earthly Signs: Moscow Diaries 1917-1922. Ed. and trans. Jamey Gambrell. New York Review of Books, 2002.  Wheel of Life. Painting.  **5. If you engaged in a Practicum this semester describe it briefly (where, when, what, who) and summarize your central learning outcomes and insights from this project. Address how the project may have expanded the contexts, sites and/or audiences for your creative practice. If the practicum will be continuing or there is more work to complete for it, please indicate.**    **6. How do you see yourself progressing towards fulfillment of the degree criteria, which includes building a sustained and documented personal practice, engagement with praxis, rigorous exploration, ethical engagement and thoughtful action, and understanding of interdisciplinary art? Please describe which areas you still need to address and how you intend to do this in coming semesters.**  This semester, I far exceeded the amount of research and critical writing that I planned to do this first semester. It was far and away a great joy. I produced over 200 pages of written text. I plan to hone it, return to it and expand on it in the coming semesters.  The research is/was as engaging as the hands on spinning, weaving and writing itself. I find that I am locating myself as much as a historian as I am as an artist. My lifelong learning and reading heavily informed this semester. I found myself returning again and again to the beautiful language and insights in Robert Ferris Thompson's book, "Flash of the Spirit" for the ways in which it animates history, most especially the physical experiences of making, walking and singing. It is important to note how the personal observations style of a historian augments and pays great homage to the work they witness. Thompson's narratives regarding how creations express various tensions and counterbalances within them resonates with my own ways of looking and noticing. Seemingly small details are not overlooked, and in fact, these details are often a major thrust of how we can interpret the total vibration of the artist's or poet's vision. This expression of care and of long looking at things carries a respect that I really value.  I am also pleased that a great book or resource is not ever depleted. The more we look into it and sit with it the more it reveals to us its resources.  I would say that the I am finding that rigor is not just depth or time, but a certain quality of kindness and care towards the creative process and the creations themselves. It is a manner of gentleness that is needed as much as the feeling of mining or revealing.  As to what still needs addressing in the coming semesters, I find myself looking at more specific works and mythopoetics from my Czech cultural heritage. I am seeing how well they puzzle into broader mythological and poetic themes, though they are far less globally known.  I am interested in Slavic folk costumes as well as the written works of Leoš Janáček, for how they interpret Slavic cosmovision and relationship to nature.  The war in Ukraine reminds me, urgently, to focus on Slavic themes as they are much hidden in plain view on the world stage. I am often struck by alignment in stories from the Slavic pantheon and how seamlessly they overlay with other better known mythologies.  More specifically, I have long been looking into trade beads and how beads produced in the Czech Republic at the Jablonec factory are one Slavic key to diasporic storytelling and history. Most importantly, how these beads feature in  the handwork and textiles of Indigenous peoples of many places. The narrative within trade beads is so complex a history, it seems altogether a project of its won. I am puzzling out ways to bring the historic research of Czech trade beads into the mix, without pulling too much focus away from the larger whole. The beads are part of the work that I make, and**I want to feature intersectional narratives more prominently.**  **Areas of Inquiry:** Mythopoetics Auto Ethnography of Art and Trauma Cosmology of Textiles of Wari Kayan Archetypes of Refuge/Withdrawal: Creative Hermitage  **ADVISOR EVALUATION:**  Accomplished spinner, weaver, and poet, deeply recognized social practitioner, Monika Neuland Thomas, has been engaged in a stellar constellation of expansive continuities, brilliant exploration, potent experimentation, radiantly wide ranging study, and composition, and literally and metaphorically transformative making, over this first season in the program, wonderfully interweaving “creative hermitage,” studies in mytho-poetics and poesis, the looming of textile art and sacred text/space, studies in epistemological flight, the epic, the poem, the song, studies in philosophy and art histories, ancient, mediaeval, modern, and contemporary, Meso-American, African, Asian, and European, as well as generative studies in auto-ethnographic and excavations in the personal narrative.  Over the course of this season, powerfully braiding threads of fiber, word, story, memory, inscription, and embodied learning in text and textile, Monika Neuland Thomas engaged in the cultivation of a substantial body of intensively hand made and crafted large and small scale fiber art works; sourcing, spinning, weaving, beading, sewing, quilting, and elaborating; while simultaneously engaged in the revision, editing, and hand made publication conception, of a book of poetry and in the creation of shining body of new poetic works. She has “nested” this work in the nexus of deep and wide study, across discipline and genre, and loomed it in ritual hybrid chronicling of creative process writing, muse, meditation, annotation, essay, exegesis, exposition, memoir and reader/viewer response reflection.  Monika Neuland Thomas generatively documented this work, while creating sites for the ongoing expansion of her inquiry, voice, and vision, in multiple sites of composition including in the radiant tapestry of her extensive expositional chronicling, in generous assemblage in her dialog and work exchange with advisor and co-learners, in work in group studies, collaborative studio visits, and the curatation of group presentations, as well as in her “cosmic” dj transmissions.  Over this prodigious, prolific, and potent season, Monika Neuland Thomas has wonderecd and wandered across fertile and fecund existential/artistic/intellectual terrain, following the threads of inquiry in a rich web of quest, and questions, making profoundly crafted objects, texts, and songs, and wisely creating sites for epiphany along the way. It has been an honor, and a great delight, to walk, work, witness, sing, danc, and learn in kinship and communion with this profoundly gifted and generous artist. |