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And The Road Will Take You There: What the Cartographer Said

Cassandra Sharri Labairon
Minnesota State University - Mankato

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And The Road Will Take You There:
What the Cartographer Said

By

Cassandra Sharri Labairon

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Art

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

December 2014

And the Road Will Take You There: What the Cartographer Said

Cassandra Sharri Labairon

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

Graduate Advisor, Art Department Chair, Brian Frink

Drawing Instructor, Committee Member, Liz Miller

English Instructor, Committee Member, Richard Robbins

AND THE ROAD WILL TAKE YOU THERE:
WHAT THE CARTOGRAPHER SAID

Cassandra Sharri Labairon, MA

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, MN

December 2014

This thesis of mixed-media pieces, The Cartographer series, combines, with stitches and rough lace work, miniature acrylic paintings, weavings, and various other elements. The materials come from three different spheres: traditional fine art materials, such as canvas and paint; handiwork materials, such as cross-stitch or needlepoint; reclaimed materials, such as burlap, wire, or string. Thread is used to both draw and connect. Stitches not only lock each element in place, they create links and relationships between painted pieces, thread, and empty space.

The mixed-media pieces were made in conjunction with chapbook of poetry titled, *And the Road Will Take You There*. The art and the poetry in the collection consider the impact of context and relationship as well as the dynamic between resources, assumption and expectation. Each piece in The Cartographer series is a visual poem. Each element in the square is like a stanza in a poem with its own organic connections to the other elements, working to create a whole. The titles for the art work, come from the chapbook. The title poem in the chapbook also serves as an artist statement.

The exhibition was held at the Conkling Gallery in Nelson Hall from October 27 to November 5th, 2014. It consisted of 68 individual mixed media works which were produced the last year of my time at MSU, 2013-2014.

Postcards and a brochure advertised the exhibition. Two different postcards were used. Each included one full color detail image of a piece in the show, as well as information about the opening reception and Conkling Gallery. The brochure contained an artist statement, exhibition catalog, curriculum vitae, and images of pieces from the show. Photographs were also taken to document the exhibition. Since the art pieces were made in conjunction with a book of poetry, *And the Road Will Take You There* (Spoon River Poetry Press) that was also featured at the opening. The postcard, brochure, chapbook, and exhibition images were submitted to the Graduate School of Minnesota State University, Mankato in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Masters of Arts Degree.

The following is the title poem from the chapbook _ And the Road Will Take You There_

The Cartographer

The cartographer collects canvas,
corduroy, and lace. Finds a place
for felt, tarp and fragile fabrics that tear
when pulled. She saves every fiber;
even clipped string is stored in glass jars
once used for raspberry jam. Every piece
a potential territory, city or countryside.

Her needles—crewel, tapestry, tatting, sharps
and straw—transform thread into secret routes,
walking trails, and highways. Thread, the road
that keeps distinct regions connected. The cartographer
follows no mentor's instructions. She cares
nothing for map makers who came before.
She buried her compass in the back yard

and planted a lilac bush on its grave. She listens
only to lectures given by her solar plexus or lungs.
A telepathic raceway winds its way through
the hallways between her organs. Each map
patched with stitches like Morse code. As she works,
shapes emerge, the Milky Way, a cowboy boot,
clock face, corsage. Every line a signature of matter and air

punctuated by fingerprints. This is why she knows
the value of memory, when to cut away or cut apart,
when to overlap terrain or leave empty space. She understands
how to mark a boulevard, a steep ditch, a bridge
over a flooding river. The lay of the land is breathing,
kismet, love. She knows where she is going
and the road that will take her there.



Exhibition Catalogue

Quest: Minnesota spring, mother left the car on gravel road

Choose One of the Following and Play

Allegory: A road can trick the traveler

Philosopher Part One: She finds him in a cave

Migration: Yesterday, someone new to town

Village: Winter mornings farmers gathered

Choices: At the end, she asked this

Dormant: Farmers grow watermelons

Minnesota: Here we all walk on water

Lover: she tries to find him, sends out Morse code

Prairie Homecoming—The Storm (wall installation)

Redemption: In his next life

Conception: When the first garden began to breathe

Self-Actualization: She craves to expose her hip

And When You Nap: Tie a hammock to your front door

Phenomena: *Mama says, little one listen*

Or This: Inhale vocabulary and movement

Epistolary: Imagine, the woman at the post office

Restoration: I offer: box elder, open sky, milkweed

And the Road Will Take You There, Chapbook

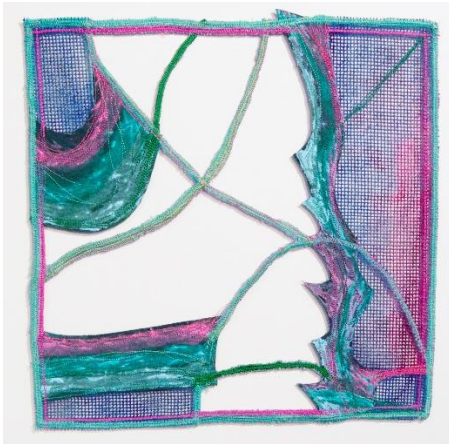
Quest: Minnesota spring, mother left the car on gravel road



Allegory: A road can trick the traveler



Choose One of the Following and Play



Philosopher Part One: She finds him in a cave



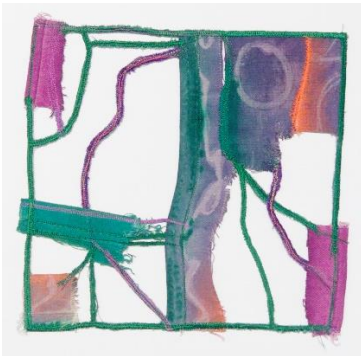
Migration: Yesterday, someone new to town



Dormant: Farmers grow watermelons



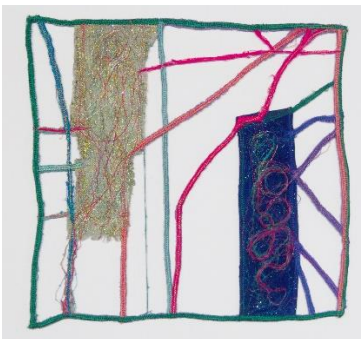
Village: Winter mornings farmers gathered



Minnesota: Here we all walk on water



Choices: At the end, she asked this



Lover: she tries to find him,
sends out Morse code

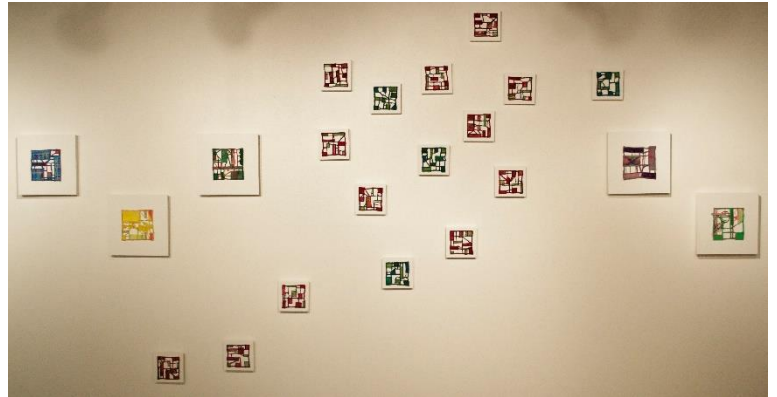


Prairie Homecoming—The Storm

16 six inch squares

26 twelve inch squares

(Images of wall and details)



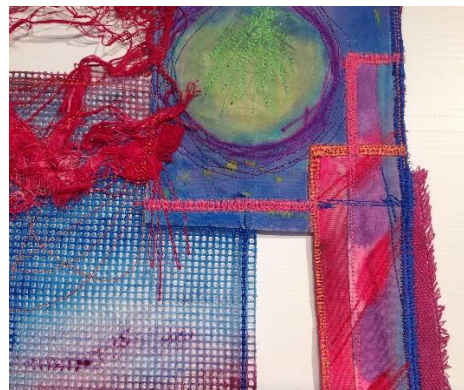
Redemption: In his next life



Self-Actualization: She craves to expose her hip

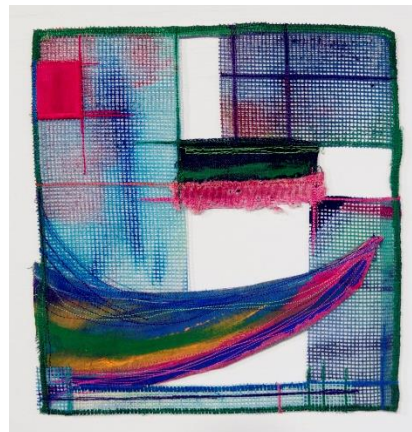


Conception: When the first garden began

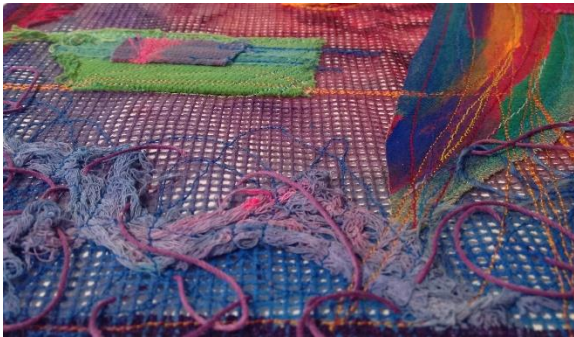


detail

Or This: Inhale vocabulary and movement



And When You Nap: Tie a hammock



detail

Phenomena: Mama says, *little one listen*



Epistolary: Imagine, the woman
at the post office knows your name.



Restoration: I offer: box elder, open sky,
milkweed

