

Emily Vanderlinden – Fiber Artist:
Creating Beauty within the small things

Emily Vanderlinden is a Fiber Artist living in Crozet, VA and spends most of her time printing on fabric with the block printing technique. She has a passion for this type of art and does this same technique with people with disabilities at Innisfree Village, a therapeutic farm in the Shenandoah Valley.

1. For people who are unsure, what exactly is a fiber artist? And what does it entail? *There are probably many ways to say this, but I think of a fiber artist as any artist who chooses fabrics, textiles, yarns, etc. as their main medium. What they do with those materials also varies widely. I consider weavers fiber artists just as I consider those who dye fabric for their art to be fiber artists. Many fiber artists do what they do because they enjoy the tactile nature of fabric so much and they art is the art of fiber transformation- turning an ordinary spool of string into a work of art.*
2. Do you create the designs which go onto the handbags, sheets, etc.? *Yes. I go out into nature and sketch what I see, then I simplify those sketches into designs that I then stamp onto fabric. My process is pretty cyclical- hike, draw, carve, stamp, sew, repeat!*
3. What inspired you to pursue to become a fiber artist? *I first started using this medium with the groups I work with during the day at Innisfree Village. I work with adults with disabilities, and many artists there have a very unique way of drawing things they see in everyday life (like vegetables, animals, types of weather, etc.) I wanted to find a new way to represent their drawings, and we started carving those designs into stamps for block printing. After doing this for a while I took a trip to the Adirondacks and saw plants and shapes that truly inspired me, and that's when I started to create my own designs. I*

always knew that I wanted to make something functional with them, but wasn't sure what form they'd take until I started printing on fabric with them and made my first bag. The process was so satisfying I just never stopped.

4. Do you do this fiber artwork as a full-time job or do you do something else on the side?

No, mostly I work at Innisfree Village as their art workstation head (A "workstation" is our term for the activities our residents participate in during the day. I lead the art studio, but we have bakery, farm, kitchen, herb garden, fitness, woodshop, weaving, and vegetable garden workstations as well.) I do my own art on nights and weekends, so I guess I'd say my personal art is the "side job" not the other way around.

5. How long does it take to create a handbag or a sheet with the designs inlaid onto them? It

depends on the size and design of the bag. When I started, I think I overcomplicated things with pockets and zippers that took away from the original print which also, as you can imagine, draws out the time required to make the item significantly. From printing the fabric, to heat-setting so the fabric can be washed, to cutting and sewing, I'd say on average each bag takes 3-4 hours.

6. Do you do this artwork by yourself or do you have a team of people to help you out? I make everything myself. I would love to have a team someday though!

7. You also create designs, so what does that entail? Do you create business cards, graphic design logos, etc. for people? I have my BFA in Graphic Design from Appalachian State University so, academically speaking, that is my background. Occasionally friends will approach me for design work and we work together on what they want. However, I've gotten away from that a bit and spend most of my time on the printing/sewing process.

8. How long have been doing fiber artwork? *I've been working with the block printing process for about 2 and a half years.*
9. Would you consider yourself a freelance artist? *I suppose so! I like the idea of bouncing around from art form to art form, though I've been "stuck" on the same one for a few years now. But graphic design, block printing, and watercolor painting are my preferred art forms. I get approached often by someone looking for a specific print/color/design and I love doing special projects. I just finished a wedding registry for a friend where we designed curtains, tea towels, and pillowcases together.*
10. How do you market yourself? For example, do you set up a table for any events or what not? *I do most of my self-promotion in person. I recently set up a facebook page, so I'll be using that a bit but I have the best conversations with folks in-person at a craft fair. I also use Instagram for more daily updates.*