

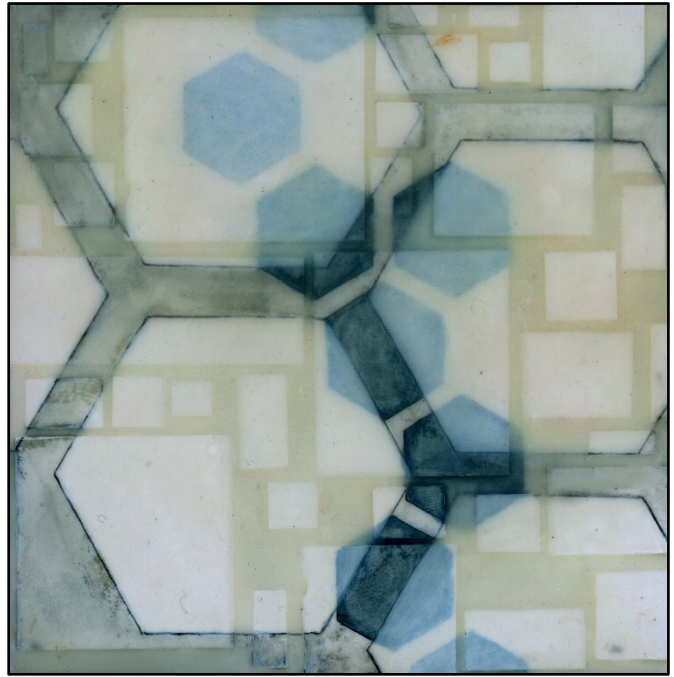
August 25 through October 20, 2019

# *Variable Threads*

mixed-media works by  
**Roberta Eichenberg**  
of Emporia, Kansas

## Statement

The creative process is oxygen for my soul. The method of working out how to realize specific ideas is fuel. Driven by rumination of current and personal events to realize through the work and understand where I belong in the world, I value the inquiry embedded in that process. The environment around me, and the forces that affect that environment, directly influences my work. Serious and personal topics addressed in the projects are sometimes approached and presented using humor. Humor allows the viewer to more easily consider and review the work with less apprehension. Nature is the aggregate that bonds the work together.



*Variable One (detail)*

Roberta Eichenberg

## Variable Threads

Everything is connected. However, at this time I don't feel like much is connected. With this exhibit, I am attempting to organize seemingly disparate elements trying to bring ideas together and provide order to my chaotic world.

95% of the materials used to make the work for this exhibition are recycled or repurposed. I search for and collect what some might consider the dross of our environment. The wood for the boxes and panels was gathered from scrap bins. The paint for the "Variables" was purchased from a yard sale. Unused wedding invitations were cut up and incorporated into the changeable panels. And the origami paper boxes encased in the plaster are from a student's senior BFA show. Collecting seemingly incongruous objects and materials is an obsession of mine ever since I was very young. Fascinated by the structures of the physical world I have amassed a collection of objects that some might consider morbid or gruesome; road kills, cicada bodies, mummified frogs, snake skins, seeds, mouse skulls excavated from owl pellets. Holding and examining them provided the opportunity to study something before it is absorbed back into the environment. These objects are all around us you only have to look to discover these beautiful specimens.

Inspired by artists like Edward Kienholtz and Joseph Cornell for their use of materials and compartmentalizing their collections as well as the more formal eye of Eve Hesse, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and other minimalists for their approach to creating. In this exhibit, there are two very different bodies of work, "Variables" and "Threads".

The "Threads" installation exposes the longing to be an amateur archeologist, collecting objects and finding homes for these specimens available for examination. To address the

concept of connection in the “Threads” installation I decided to physically join the pieces to each other using wicker cane to emphasize that sense of connectedness. I used the hexagon pattern in both bodies of work to not only visually connect these two groups but also as a symbol of industry, community, construction and sacred geometry found in nature.

With the “Variables” pieces I am working with the formal components of art making; line, shape, color, texture, form, composition. This is an unusual approach to making for me. I am a realist by nature and prefer the recognizable to the abstract. But lately, I have found refuge in the accidental. Viewer participation is another aspect that I wanted to address. I have always been frustrated when I go to museums or galleries that the viewer is denied the very thing that the maker is most engrossed in, manipulating, touching and arranging the work to their level of approval. I decided to make the arrangement of the components for each “Variables” scheme an optional interactive element. The “Variables” panels are mounted with magnets and can be rearranged to create alternative compositions. Donald Judd stated: “It isn’t necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear, and powerful.” While my own work is far from the minimalists’ anthem of concealing the hand of the artist during the making process, I love the freedom that the minimalist approach provides.

## Biography

Born in San Bernardino, California, Roberta Eichenberg was inspired by her mother from an early age to appreciate the importance of the creative process. After obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University at Chico, with an emphasis in glass, she worked for the Chico company, Orient & Flume, which specialized in the Art Nouveau style of glass design. Roberta worked on the production team and designed for their commercial product line. She received her Master of Arts from CSU at Chico, which served as a launching pad for her continued creative research. She then received a Graduate Assistantship at The Ohio State University where she studied under Professor Richard Harned and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree. After graduating, Roberta accepted a position at the internationally renowned Pilchuck Glass School in the Pacific Northwest, where the educational focus is on the material and processes of glass. She worked as the Studio Coordinator and Educational Coordinator at Pilchuck and in 1991 was selected for the Emerging Artist in Residence program. Moving to New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1991 she taught art courses at Isaac Delgado Community College and established her own studio.

In 2000, she relocated to Emporia, Kansas, and has taught in the Department of Art at Emporia State University. During the summers she has guided and assisted with courses and workshops at Pilchuck Glass School, Pittsburg Glass Center, Penland School of Crafts, and was awarded artist residencies in Danville, Kentucky; Tacoma, Washington; and Carbondale, Illinois. Roberta Eichenberg is currently serving as the Chair of the Art Department at ESU, Galleries Director, and teaches upper-level sculpture courses.



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