

G A I L R O T H S C H I L D

The Codex Project:

Seven paintings inspired by a 12th. c. Syriac codex. Chapin library,
Williams College

*I collaborate
with museums internationally
to breathe new life into ancient
artifacts...*

Codicology: the archaeology of the book. While we normally think of the book in terms of its content, this project teases that notion.

Project: paint seven portraits, seven explorations inspired by a single Syriac codex.

One dark February, Williams Special Collections Librarian Anne Peale laid this ancient book in a cradle and peeled apart the crackling parchment pages while Art Historian Thelma Thomas aimed a flashlight between the pages, illuminating.

Studio Thoughts: Why is a book “bound” and not “clothed”? Perhaps the content—the text—wants to explode beyond its protective cover. It must be restrained. Bondage. Time is unraveling the binding and undressing the book. Burlesque.

I begin the first portrait of the codex in autumn when the annual cyclical reading of the Torah scroll is begun anew. A scroll is linear, cyclical. You open at the beginning and continue unrolling until you come to the end. The library of Alexandria held scrolls, not codices.

Unlike a scroll, a book or codex can be entered anywhere. The binding of the codex is a liminal space between the ordinary world and the world of the text.

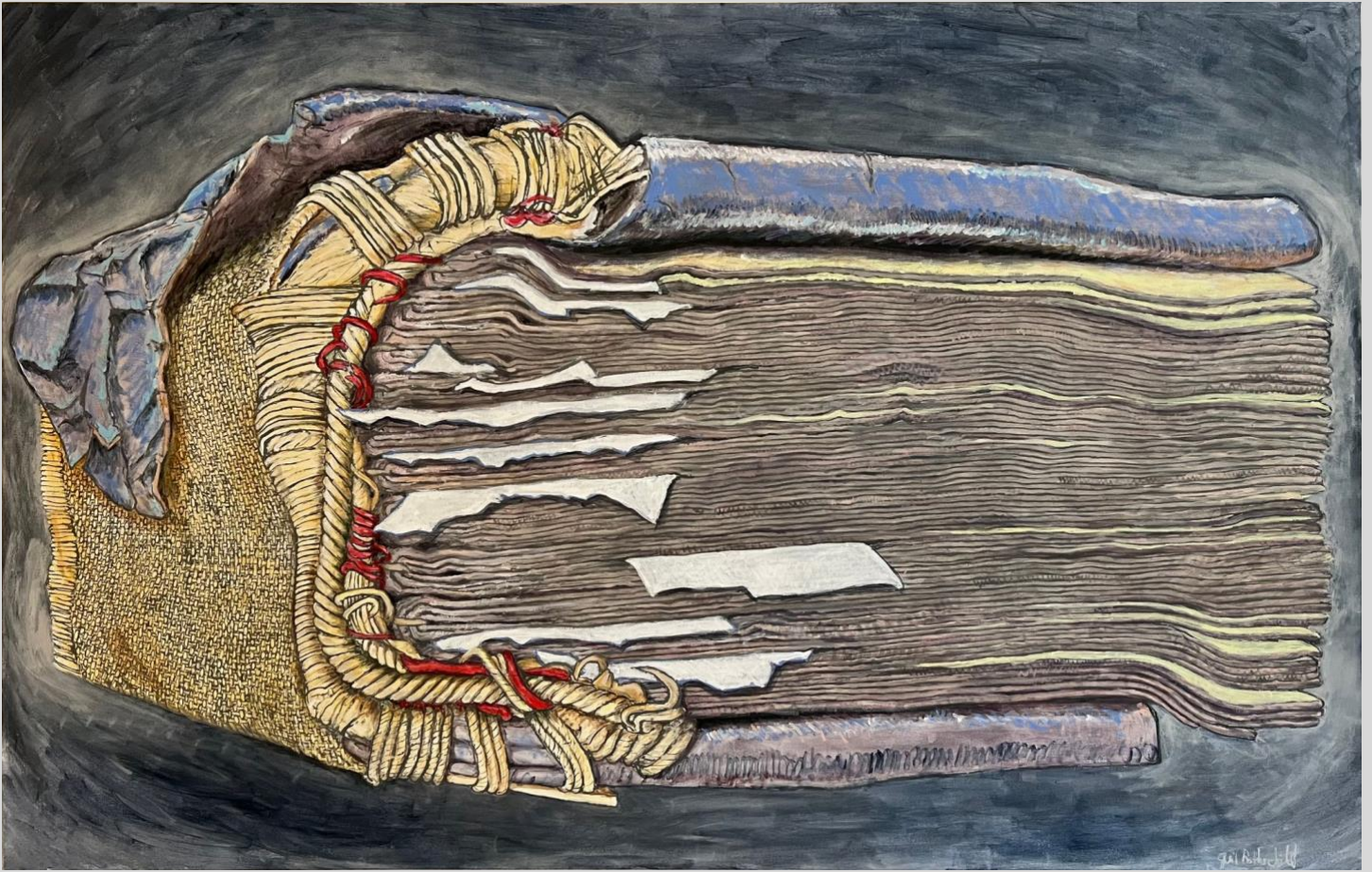
You open the binding, turn to a page, and dive in. You may leave behind a white paper bookmark to signal that you were there.

You stand before a painting of a book large enough to crawl inside of. You could hold the subject of that painting in your hand, turning it over. Reading the book is temporal; upon entering, you leave this world of a thousand disparate images. Can you allow the act of viewing the painting to be as immersive?





Codex I, 2023
Acrylic on canvas
42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)



Codex II, 2023
Acrylic on canvas
42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)



Codex III, 2023
Acrylic on Linen
42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)



Codex IV, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)

Collection of the Hotchkiss Library, Sharon, CT



Codex V, 2023
Acrylic on linen
42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)



Codex VI, 2023
Acrylic on linen
42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)



Codex VII, 2023
Acrylic on linen
42 x 66. inches (106.68 x 167.64 cm)



Installation of the Codex project in Chapin library, Williams College.



Installation of the Codex project in Chapin library, Williams College.

ROTHSCHILD'S PORTRAITS OF ANCIENT LINEN: REVIEWED

"Rather than superseding its subject, Rothschild's painting urges the viewer to return to the textile with a keener eye and more open mind. Its large scale facilitates an immersive experience, drawing the viewer into the complex architecture of the textile's woven structure ... The comparison enhances appreciation of the early Byzantine fragment as both a resilient survivor of time's ravages and a fragile remnant of intricate beauty."

– Alicia Walker, PhD., Professor, Bryn Mawr College

"Skillfully executed with a strong technique and bold palette underscoring the linearity of the subject, the series stitches together time, art and archive. *Portraits of Ancient Linen* proves that textiles are closely intertwined with our collective history and understanding of the world around us."

– Cynthia Roznoy, PhD., Curator, Mattatuck Museum



Rothschild's *Portraits of Ancient Linen* at the Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury, CT

"By magnifying the scale and taking up multiple perspectives within her composition, Rothschild invites the viewer to take a journey across telling expanses that are simultaneously minute and vast. By such means, she addresses the long life of the artifact, its ever-changing three-dimensional sculptural presence, the dynamic relationships between these aspects of the things, and our visual impressions of it ... Rothschild's paintings seem to stop time like a snapshot to capture a moment in the textiles' ongoing deterioration."

– Thelma K. Thomas, PhD., Professor, New York University

"Like the delicate remnants of an ancient artifact, Rothschild's finely spun threads appear to conjoin and unravel simultaneously ... Rothschild's oeuvre invokes the digital coordinates of warp meeting weft, the matrix of yarn. And yet it also draws our attention to the insubordinate nature of this woven fragment, rebelling after centuries of wear."

– T'ai Smith, PhD., Professor, University of British Columbia

Gail Rothschild collaborates with museums internationally creating paintings that breathe new life into archaeological fragments. Over the course of a long career, Rothschild has become intimately familiar with the effects of time and decay on art. After graduating from Yale with a BA (cum laude), she embarked on a peripatetic career creating site-specific sculptural installations for colleges and museums. From Jeffrey Lord Amherst and Biological Warfare at the University of Massachusetts to Margaret Bourke White's clandestine steel mill photographs for Cleveland, each one addressed an under-recognized aspect of local history. A few public sculptures such as *Muted Belles* for the University of Memphis were permanent, while her finalist design for a Boston Women's Monument remains un-built. Most of these commissions, however, for institutions such as the Bronx Museum, and the Socrates Sculpture Park were impermanent, or even destroyed by the artist at the end of installation, simply due to the cost of transporting and storing their elements.



Considering her role in the construction and destruction of her own work, and her interest in the ancient world led Rothschild to the *Odyssey* and Penelope's cycle of weaving and unweaving. By utilizing archaic textiles as the subjects of her *Portrait of Ancient Linen* series, Rothschild alludes to her affinity with Penelope's struggle.

In 2022, Rothschild presented *Think Big!* 10 monumental paintings at the Bode Museum in Berlin. The portraits celebrated Late Antique Textiles in the museum's collection and were exhibited alongside the tiny textiles they paid homage to. The catalog featured an essay documenting the three-year collaboration between the artist, curator, Căcilia Fluck and textile conservator, Kathrin Mälck. In 2023 she exhibited three paintings inspired by tapestries from Ancient Peru as part of the exhibition *Peru – ein Katzensperung* at the Deutsches Textilmuseum Krefeld, Germany. Two of the paintings represented part of an ongoing collaboration with the Huaca Malena Museum in Peru. Monumental portraits of a well-aged medieval codex in the collection of Williams College will be exhibited there together with the book that inspired them in 2023/24. Rothschild continues collaborations with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, the Museo Egizio in Torino and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Conference presentations include *Textiles of the Nile Valley* in Antwerp and *The Color Blue in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* in Copenhagen. Available works can be seen on her website: www.gailrothschild.com

GAIL ROTHSCHILD

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EXHIBITIONS, PUBLIC PROJECTS & COMMISSIONS

- 2023 Williams College. Williamstown, MA. *The Codex Project*
- 2022 German Textile Museum. Krefeld, Germany.
Bode Museum. Berlin, Germany.
- 2020 Centre for Textile Research, *The Colour Blue in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*. Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 2019 Village West Gallery, *Slow Art*. Jersey City, NJ.
Two Walls Gallery, *Gail Rothschild's Portraits of Ancient Linen*. Falls Village, CT.
Katoen Natie, *Textiles From the Nile Valley*. Antwerp, Belgium.
- 2018 Village West Gallery, *Ancien Régime: the pre-revolutionary world*. Jersey City, NJ.
Textile Society of America's 16th Biennial Symposium, *The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global*. Vancouver, BC, Canada.
Godwin-Ternbach Museum, *From the Desert to the City: The Journey of Late Ancient Textiles*. Queens College, Queens, NY.
- 2017 Site:Brooklyn, *Text & Image*. Brooklyn, NY.
Village West Gallery, *Four Seasons*. Jersey City, NJ.
- 2016 National Arts Club, *Contemporary Figures: Form Beyond Function*. New York, NY.
- 2015 Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery at John Jay College of Criminal Justice,
The Missing: Rebuilding the Past. New York, NY.
National Arts Club, *Portraits of Ancient Linen*. New York, NY.
- 2014 Westport Arts Center, *Perception Illusion MAGIC*. Westport, CT.
Chace-Randall Gallery, *Curator's Choice*. Andes, NY.
- 2013 Mattatuck Museum, *Weaving and Knitting: The Art of Gail Rothschild and Daina Taimina*. Waterbury, CT.
Westport Arts Center, *Home Sweet Home*. Westport, CT.
Joy Reed Belt Gallery, Solo show. Oklahoma City, OK.
Chace-Randall Gallery, Solo show. Andes, NY.
Pierogi Gallery, *Unhinged*. Brooklyn, NY.
Westport Arts Center, *SOLOS exhibition*. Westport, CT.
- 2012 Old Stone House, *Fabrications: An Exhibit by Artist Gail Rothschild*. Brooklyn, NY.
Eckert Fine Art, *Unexpressible Paradoxes*. Millerton, NY.
Joy Reed Belt Gallery, Solo show. Oklahoma City, OK.
- 2011 ArtHamptons, with Eckert Fine Art. Bridgehampton, NY.
- 2010 Littlefields. Brooklyn, NY.
Eckert Fine Art. Kent, CT.
- 2009 PS 122, *Yarn Theory: Knitting, Crochet, Math and Science*. New York, NY.
Kentler International Drawing Center. New York, NY.
Hewitt Gallery, *Viridis I*. New York, NY.
Pierogi Gallery. Brooklyn, NY.
Oxfam, *Human Countdown*. In collaboration with Christopher Caines. New York, NY.
- 2008 Susan Eley Gallery, *Summer Show*. New York, NY.
Freddy's Backroom, *Found in Brooklyn*. New York, NY.
- 2007 Kentler International Drawing Center, *Works From the Flat File*. New York, NY.
Artex, *Global Contemporary*. Kyrgyz Republic, Central Asia.
PS1/MOMA, *Emergency Room*. NYC/Berlin/Athens.
Stitch Therapy, *A Graphic Investigation of Knitted Plane Topology*. Solo. Brooklyn, NY.

- 2006 Eastern Parkway Associates, *Traymore Courtyard*. Solo. Brooklyn, NY.
Prospect Owners, *Oasis*. Solo show. Brooklyn, NY.
- 2004 New York Fringe Festival, *Operation Knockout*. New York, NY.
- 2001 Private Commission, *Design for a Horse Farm*. Solo. Hatfield, NA.
- 2000 Private Commission, *Piano Garden for a Composer*. Solo. Durham, NC.
- 1999 Private Commission, *Gillian's Garden*. Solo. Brooklyn, NY.
- 1998 City of Boston, *Women's Memorial*. One of 5 finalists invited to develop design.
Boston, MA.
- 1997 Mead Art Museum, Amherst College. Amherst, MA.
- 1996 Henry Street Settlement. New York, NY.
Chesterwood, *Monument*. Cur. Lisa Dennison. Stockbridge, MA.
- 1995 Operation GreenThumb, *The Nature of New York*. Solo. New York, NY.
New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, *Mackintosh Macbeth*. New Jersey.
- 1994 Memphis State University, *Muted Belles*. Solo. Memphis, TN.
University of New South Wales, *Medea Material*. Solo. Sydney, Australia.
- 1993-1996 ICA Traveling Exhibition, *Monumental Propaganda*. Curated by Komar & Melamid.
- 1993 Spaces Gallery, *Margaret Bourke-White Photographs the Flats*. Solo. Cleveland, OH.
The Painted Bride Art Center, *Earth Woman Room*. Solo. Philadelphia, PA.
City of Memphis, *Windows of the Dream*. Solo. Memphis, TN.
City Gallery of Contemporary Art, *Hot Spot*. Solo. Raleigh, NC.
- 1992 NICA Yokohama, *International Art Fair*. Yokohama, Japan.
deCordova Museum, *Woman in the 19th Century*. Solo. Lincoln, MA.
University of Arkansas, *People From Off*. Solo. Little Rock, AR.
University of Akron, *Rubber Union: Akron/Amazon*. Solo. Akron, OH.
University of Massachusetts, *Hot Spot*. Solo. Amherst, MA.
- 1991 Rotunda Gallery. Brooklyn, NY.
Hillwood Art Museum, *Original Sin*. Brookville, NY.
Socrates Sculpture Park, *Ploughshares into Swords*. Solo. New York, NY.
- 1990 Bronx Museum of the Arts. Bronx, NY.
Artists Space, *Artists Space Underground*. Solo. New York, NY.
Out of the Woods. Fairmount Park. *Acid Rain*. Philadelphia, PA.
Hudson River Museum, *Souvenirs of Nature*. Solo. Yonkers, NY.
- 1989 Long Island University, *Making Time in Steps*. Brooklyn, NY.
Art Awareness, *Shadow of the Last Beast*. Solo. Lexington, NY.
Henry Street Settlement, *The Hay People*. Solo. New York, NY.
Boston University Gallery, *Terra Firma?* Boston, MA.
- 1988-1990 Bread & Puppet Theater. Glover, VT.
- 1988 Museum of Art, Science & Industry, *Brick Triptych*. Solo. Bridgeport, CT.
Bronx Museum, *Burning the Jungle, the Rainforest Burns*. Bronx, NY.
Glady Run, *Four Views: Muskingum Valley*. Summerfield, OH.
NYC Dept of General Services: Operation GreenThumb, *Gaia/Mother Earth*. Solo.
New York, NY.
Clocktower Gallery, *Engaging Objects*. Cur. Tom Finkelpearl. New York, NY.
- 1987 Wexner Heritage Village, *Sculpture at Heritage Village*. Columbus, OH.
- 1986 The Albany Institute of History and Art. Albany, NY.
New York Capital Area Women's Caucus for Art, *Cycles*. Albany, NY.

RECENT WRITING

The Guantánamo Artwork and Testimony of Moath al-Alwi: Deaf Walls Speak. Edited by Alexandra S. Moore and Elizabeth Swanson. 2023. Palgrave Macmillan, NY. Chapter 9. *Assemblage by Necessity: The Maritime Sculpture of Moath al-Alwi*. By Gail Rothschild

Archaeology Outside the Box. Edited by Hans Barnard. 2023. UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press. Chapter 6. *Portraits of Ancient Linen*. By Gail Rothschild

SELECTED REVIEWS, CATALOGUES & MEDIA

Think Big! Gail Rothschild: porträtiert spätantike Textilfunde aus Ägypten. Catalog Schnell & Steiner 2022
Deutsches Textilmuseum. *Peru – ein Katzensperung.* Catalog. Chapter *On painting Homages to Wari Weaving - Lessons from Anni and Josef Albers.* Essay by Isa Fleischmann-Heck. 2022
Studies in Late Antiquity, *From the Desert to the City: The Journey of Late Ancient Textiles.*
Essay by Alicia Walker, 2019.
Textile Society of America Blog, *Ancient Textiles at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum.* Essay by Ann Peters, 2018.
Godwin-Ternbach Museum, *From the Desert to the City: The Journey of Late Ancient Textiles.* (Exhibition catalog). Essay by Warren Woodfin, 2018.
New York Textile Month, *New York Textile Month 3.* Essay by T'ai Smith, 2018
Anya & Andrew Shiva Gallery, *The Missing: Rebuilding the Past.* (Exhibition catalog)
Essay by Erin Thompson, 2015
National Arts Club, *Portraits of Ancient Linen.* Essay by Cynthia Roznoy, 2015
Art in America. International Review, 2009
PS 122. *Yarn Theory: Knitting, Crochet, Math and Science,* (Exhibition catalog) 2009
deCordova Museum. (Exhibition catalog) Essay by Nick Capasso, 1997
Chesterwood Museum. (Exhibition catalog) Essay by Lisa Dennison, 1996
University of Memphis. *Muted Belles.* (Exhibition catalog) 1994
New Art Examiner. *'Hot Spot' at City Gallery of Contemporary Art.* 1993
Raleigh News and Observer. *The Art of Biological Warfare.* Chuck Twardy. August 13, 1993
City Gallery of Contemporary Art. *Hot Spot.* (Exhibition catalog) Essay by Eleanor Heartney, 1993
Painted Bride Art Center. *Earth Woman Room.* (Exhibition catalog) Essay by Ed Brown, 1993
Windows of the Dream. (Exhibition catalog) Essay by Leslie Luebbers, Memphis, TN, 1993
Boston Globe. *Sculpture Finds It's Place in Nature.* Elaine Senay. August 9, 1992
Art Papers. *Gail Rothschild: People From Off.* Mari B. Lee. July/August 1992
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. *Sculpture at UALR.* Susan Pierce. January 17, 1992
Little Rock Public Radio. Interview with Lloyd Benjamin. January, 1992
deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park (Exhibition catalog), 1992
Staviniger Aftenbled. *Natur og kultur I dialog.* Trond Borgen. Norway, July 23, 1991
Art New England. *Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood.* Marty Carlock. November, 1991
Art In America. Eleanor Heartney, May 1991
Daily Hampshire Gazette. *Sculpture That Moves Us.* Patricia Wright. 11.14.91
Union News. *Artwork Tailored to Amherst.* Anne-Gerard Flynn. 10.10.91
Amherst Bulletin. "Installing a Different View of Lord Jeff." Bruce Watson. 10.11.91
Mud. Hirsch Farm Project. (Exhibition catalog) Essay by Mitchell Kane, 1991
The Philadelphia Enquirer. "Sculpture in Fairmount Park." Marie McCullough. July 30, 1990
WNYC-TV. "Artists in the Gardens." November 1990
The New York Times. *Sculpture For Troubled Places.* Michael Bernson. October 15, 1989
Dallas Times Herald. "Connemara Airs Outdoor Sculpture." Ann Jarmusch. March 19, 1989
The Boston Phoenix. "Terra Firma?" at Boston U. Gallery." David Bonetti. March 16, 1989
Dialogue. *Earthworks...* Gary J. Schwindler. March-April 1989
Newsday. *Taking Part in Downtown Art.* Karin Lipson. May 9, 1986

EDUCATION

1981 Yale University. B.A., Cum Laude
1979 Yale in Norfolk Painting Program