



WRITING *on the* WALL

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST FINDS INSPIRATION IN
THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WRITTEN WORD.

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Dianna Frid has a thing for words. For the textile artist, it's a curiosity built upon how letters and words can be interpreted—not just for their meaning, but also as material objects and drawings. This fascination manifests into an intersection of words and fiber. Be it through her “Text Textile” works, her “Words from Obituaries” series or her artist books, Frid communicates on multiple levels.

While the examination of words is a common thread throughout Frid's work, each project differs, as does her approach. “For the ‘Text Textile’ series, I start with a phrase that I want to transcribe through sewing,” she explains. “I create a structure around the words, drawing out certain geometric patterns. The larger ones require more improvisation, and they fulfill a desire to get into the messy space of not always having a plan.” The smaller pieces are not quite as improvisational but are still an emotional response to the letters.

For “Words from Obituaries,” Frid borrows a phrase from a *New York Times* obituary. “For a long time now I've been reading the *Times* obituaries, which are pretty formulaic,” she explains. “I try to find something I can extract that makes sense but isn't too familiar, or something that's puzzling. It's almost like excavating a text and seeing what I can find in it.” The phrases vary from humorous, like *Enjoy My Philanthropy*, to quirky, as in *The Shape of A Spoon*, and she eschews all spaces and punctuation. “For me these are drawings, in a sense, because I'm drawing each letter by hand,” she explains. “I'm making them fit within the parameters of a system.” Frid came up with the idea for the series while reflecting on a death in her family and concluding that it's impossible to sum up a life. “They rarely tell you how a person died,” she explains. “I think they are about life, and not all lives are lived equally.” And it's important, she adds, that the works aren't morbid.

In her artist books, Frid communicates with her audience on a deeply personal level. A bibliophile, her taste spans the novels of Mexican author Cristina Rivera Garza to the works of Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. The work of Anni Albers influences the process of her books, which often feature letters sewn onto canvas and diagrams sewn onto photos. “There's something about the tactility of them,” she says. “I touched every surface of them that people touch, so there's already an established intimacy. Each book does a different thing for the viewer.”

What Frid loves most is that her various works stretch her creative brain differently. “I like having an intention but not being owned by that intention, allowing for things to develop organically. The pieces that are less structured are much scarier to make,” she says, “and I need that.”



In her studio, textile artist Dianna Frid (opposite) stands in front of *Soledad* from her “Text Textile” series. *NYT*, March 8, 2016, *Raymond Tomlinson* (below) is from her ongoing “Words from Obituaries” series. *Unique Book* (bottom) consists of transferred photographs of marble on textiles and rocks of the same material.

