

# It's All In The Layers

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## Gallery

BY PHILIP LEDERER SRQ DAILY FRESHLY SQUEEZED CONTENT EVERY MORNING WEDNESDAY NOV 2, 2016



It's hard to put a box around the art of Kathryn Hunter. A Louisiana-based, mixed-media artist working with everything from laser-cut steel and paper to fine silk and vintage maps, much of the work defies even a frame, the great installations sprawling across the wall in intricate paper-cut scenes populated by stitched and carved animal figures and silhouettes like characters from a modern day fable. Hunter's latest exhibition opens November 3 in the Basch Gallery at Ringling College of Art and Design with an opening reception followed by a presentation from the artist and runs through November 19.

Sewing since birth—a skill passed down from the family matriarchs—and a trained printmaker with her own business, Blackbird Letterpress, it seems only natural that Hunter's work would reflect such disparate influences, combining the two for a mixed-media presentation highlighting the strengths of both. Complicated backdrops and foregrounds of cut steel or paper, all hard lines and geometric rigidity, play against the soft and pillowy subjects—often bears and canines—stitched and embroidered by hand, their wholeness at odds with their seemingly delicate worlds.

"A lot of this work is about people and animals and their connection to each other and how we affect each other,"

says Hunter. And an environmentally conscious vein runs through the majority of her work, even if discreetly. A three-piece installation on one wall—two canines peering up at a fruitbat enshrined in a red fractal—makes an impression based on pure composition and color, but realizing that both the Ethiopian wolf and Tasmanian wolf depicted are extinct adds another layer.

And layers are what Hunter's latest exhibition is all about, from the obvious stratified construction of the installations themselves to the invitation each brings to an open-ended exploration by the viewer through a manipulation of symbols and textures so deft as to be nearly invisible.

On the opposite wall, an endangered polar bear made of fine silk with floral embroidery running down its limbs like veins stands on its hind legs alone in space. The backdrop—a massive hunk of laser-cut, powder-coated metal set to represent the melting polar icecaps—was too difficult to ship. "So I brought my raindrops," says Hunter, producing a plastic bag full of teardrop-shaped, palm-sized cutouts—some drawn, some sewn—to be arranged around the animal. "It'll still have the idea of water and melting," she says.