

Gail Rothschild

Portraits of Ancient Linen

Artist Statement

Sept 6th - Oct 12th

**STANDARD
SPACE**

I am not a weaver. My paintings of archaeological textile fragments are the result of collaborations with museum collections. This textile I study teases me with stories of its makers, but also of thieves and merchants, collectors, curators and conservators. I paint as a response to the textile's illusiveness, honoring its history.

Whether a garment or a protective covering for a sacred text, this aged fragment has become something else. My subject is that transformation. I even paint the fine stitches with which the conservator binds the unruly threads to stiff muslin.

Re-presented as a monumental abstraction, each mark of paint both makes and unmakes an image of fabric. Over millennia the architectural grid of cloth returns to its biological origins, what looks like a coastline decays and transforms with time. Each painting is testament to the paradox—what is interwoven will ultimately unravel, and that which grows will inevitably decay.

Each painted thread must be invented and spun, each painted fabric must be simultaneously structured and then pulled apart. By magnifying the scale and taking up multiple perspectives, I invite the viewer to take a journey across expanses that are simultaneously minute and vast. I honor the long life of the artifact, its ever-changing three-dimensional sculptural presence. My work 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.

Recent projects can be seen at: gailrothschild.com

(Pictured on right)

Gail Rothschild
Lady Lilith
acrylic on canvas
48x36
2024

Created in Collaboration with Met Cloisters. Exhibited at Met Cloisters with artists talk, April, 2025.

Subject Note: Wool tapestry, from the
Heroes Tapestries, 1400-1410 France. Met Cloisters.



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