

# WAGNER COLLEGE

## Past Exhibition: Orly Cogan, 'Go Your Own Way'

*Wagner College Union Gallery is pleased to present this selection of work from the fiber and multi-media artist Orly Cogan.*

*Through her tapestries, drawings and collages, Cogan explores feminism and the changing roles of women in our society through repurposing vintage fabrics (often previously embroidered by women). With humor, candor and a sophisticated sense of composition and movement, Cogan weaves together imagery of women doing mundane or private things (using a cell phone, sitting on the toilet, picking her nose and other unglamorous moments) with fantastical fairy tales where women become heroes.*

*Celebrating all aspects of what it means to be a woman today, with a rich exploration of where we came from, Cogan creates these gorgeous works that make us laugh and cringe, and with which we often feel a shared sense of experience.*



**“Afternoon Lovin’ ”**

*22 x 56 inches, hand-stitched embroidery and paint on vintage linen*

This work is featured in *New American Paintings*, Issue 146 (2020), “Introducing 60 Exceptional Artists,” selected by Jerry Saltz.

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### **“P.O.W. (Power of Women)”**

*106 x 92 inches, hand-stitched embroidery, applique and paint on vintage bed linen*

“Cogan’s feminist fairy tale interweaves fictional characters such as Cinderella, Snow White, Princess Leia and Wonder Woman with real-life activist superheroes Harriet Tubman, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Frida Kahlo, Stacey Abrams, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and Anita Hill, among others, who have resisted and confronted patriarchy and racism.

In the background, a faceless woman politely drinks her cup of tea, a young girl covers her eyes with her hands and another child, unabashed by her nakedness, defiantly extends her fist to the audience. These juxtaposed female archetypes highlight the mixed messages of who our female role models really are.” — *Liana Horovitz, U. of Hawaii, Maui College*

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**“Inner Child”**

*34 x 11 inches, hand-stitched embroidery on fabric*

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**“When Fish Fly”**

*80 x 60 inches, hand-stitched embroidery on fabric*

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**“Natural Habitat”**

*50 x 50 inches, hand-stitched embroidery on vintage fabric*

A play on the classic “Thinker” by Rodin, this woman is caught in a private moment: the call of nature. (Permanent collection of the Bergen Museum, Norway)

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**“Melting”**

*28 x 22 inches, paint on paper*

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**"Be All That You Can Be"**  
*28 x 22 inches, ink collage on paper*

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**"Bittersweet Obsessions"**  
*50 x 50 inches, hand-stitched embroidery on linen*  
(Permanent collection of Museum of Art and Design, NYC)

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**"Green Haze"**

*40 x 46 inches, hand-stitched embroidery and paint on fabric*



**"Rainbow's End"**

*28 x 22 inches, pencil on paper*



**"Kids"**

*48 x 55 inches, embroidery and paint on vintage table linen*

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**"Caged Beauty"**

*50 x 63 inches, hand-stitched embroidery, applique and paint on hand-printed table linen*





**"Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice"**

*95 x 80 inches, hand-stitched embroidery and paint on vintage bed linen*

“Orly Cogan turns the Mother Goose nursery rhyme, ‘What Folks Are Made Of,’ inside out by asking her audience to consider what we teach our children about the desire for girls to be ‘sugar and spice and everything nice.’ Contemplate the symbolism of Cogan’s chosen objects: Cupcakes and butterflies allude to young girls’ birthday party themes, but the clock on a woman’s vagina may signify time is running out on female reproductive rights. The assemblage of images offers multiple meanings: indulgence and gluttony, or sweet treats intentionally chosen? And the ‘pussy’ cats? A derogatory slang for vagina, or a term of endearment? Cogan’s women reclaim ‘pussy’ as their own. In her tapestry, men are on the periphery — not necessarily central to women’s experiences anymore, and yet in women’s centrality in the frame, are they boxed in? ... Cogan has taken a conventionally female medium — women’s handicrafts were traditionally used to beautify the home and represent respectable notions of femaleness — to provide a backdrop to explore sexuality and the human body.” — *Liana Horovitz, U. of Hawaii, Maui College*

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## Orly Cogan: Artist’s statement

The tableaux I create are inspired by relationships, pop culture and fairy tales.

I work with vintage fabrics and embroideries as a base — made by women of previous and more modest eras. I act as a collaborator, modernizing their traditional work and altering its original purpose by updating the content to incorporate the unladylike reality and wit of contemporary women: their struggles and stereotypes. These issues are different from those of the earlier generation of women who originally embroidered the textiles to “feminize” their homes.

I mix subversion with flirtation, humor with power, and intimacy with frivolity. My subject matter is frank and provocative, yet whimsical.

Many of the narratives deal with issues of fertility, sexuality, self-image, isolation, vulnerability, indulgence and beauty in the mundane. I challenge social stereotypes embedded within childhood fairy tales while appreciating the absurd and the humor in life.

My quest is to tell fantastical stories through symbols of cultural expression with today’s brand of American confessionalism, where many of my heroes linger between a public and private realm mixed with yesteryear’s kitschy conservatism.

This work explores the many flavors of feminism.

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## About Orly Cogan

Orly Cogan lives and works in New York City.

She was born in Israel, raised in New York and graduated from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and the Maryland Institute College of Art. She has been exhibiting her work throughout the U.S. and in Europe for over two decades and has been at the forefront of the fiber arts movement with an emphasis on feminism in contemporary art.

Cogan has been included in a number of notable national and international museum and university exhibitions including the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art (Conn.), the Museum of Arts & Design (N.Y.) (which holds her work in its permanent collection), the M.I.T. collection, Riverside (Cal.) Museum, the Hudson River Museum (N.Y.), the Textile Museum of Toronto, Canada (with Judy Chicago), the Brattleboro (Vt.) Museum, San Jose (Cal.) Museum of Quilts & Textiles, Woodson Art Museum (Wausau, Wisc.), Fresno (Cal.) Metropolitan Museum, the Musee International Des Arts Modeste (Sete, France), the Rijswijk Textile Biennial in the Museum Rijswijk (Netherlands) and the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (Oslo, Norway), as well as other prestigious institutions. Cogan's work is found in various public and private collections, and she has curated several acclaimed group exhibitions in New York City.

Cogan's work has been published in several books and museum catalogues. Her reviews are included in (partial list) the New York Times, New American Paintings, the Chicago Sun Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Reader, NY Press, Art Press Magazine, W Magazine, Elle, Fiber Arts, Textile Plus, Surface Design, Art In America, Tema Celeste, Interior Design, Art Press, Art News, Chronogram, Upstate House, Time Out Chicago, Time Out New York, the American Art Collector and Art Forum.

For more about the artist, visit her website at [orlycogan.com](http://orlycogan.com) or her Instagram [@orlycogan](https://www.instagram.com/orlycogan).



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