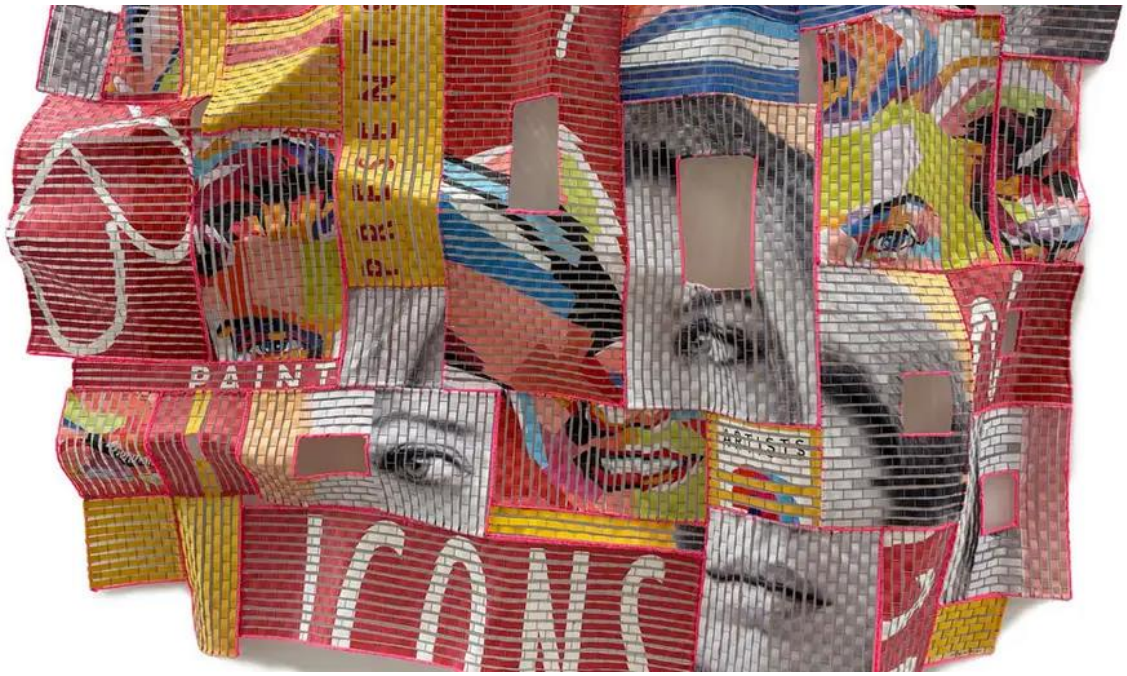
WOMEN'S CAUCUS for ART



Shelley Heffler: Reclaiming Urban Waste as Living Memory

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Written and edited by Karin Luner

Still from broadcast interview

Born and raised in the Bronx, **Shelley Heffler's** early life was steeped in the textures of New York City. She drew chalk patterns on sidewalks, rode subway lines mapped in her mind, and found her way to the Art Students League as a teenager, paying for Saturday classes so she could immerse herself in an atmosphere of drawing and paint. At home, she watched her mother knit, transforming simple strands of yarn into wearable forms, an act of making that quietly foreshadowed Heffler's own commitment to transformation and craft.

She went on to study interior design at the Fashion Institute of Technology, honing her skills in drafting, perspective, and color. Designing carpets for Edward Fields in New York further sharpened her eye, as she translated ideas into patterns under strict color and material constraints. After relocating to Los Angeles and later living in Barcelona, with overland travels to India, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, Heffler absorbed a global range of visual languages and architectures that continue to echo through her work. She eventually completed her BA and MFA at California State University, Northridge, and built a twenty-five-year career as an arts educator while maintaining a robust studio practice

www.shelleyheffler.com

The Women's Caucus for Art is proud to highlight Southern California Chapter member and past SCWCA president Shelley Heffler, an eco-conscious artist whose work models how creative practice and environmental stewardship can intersect.

***The Space Between Us*. 24 x 28 x 3", 2026. From "Reclaimed Spaces" Series.**

This spring, Heffler's commitment to environmental art and education was highlighted in the **KESQ "Eye on the Desert"** segment **"Shelley Heffler 'Earth Day Arts,'"** which spotlights her upcycled installations and their connection to Earth Day in the Coachella Valley. The feature underscores how her work not only diverts material from the waste stream but also opens conversations about resourcefulness, climate awareness, and the role artists play in modeling sustainable futures, while large-scale installations such as her ongoing **"Taking Flight"** works—stretching across architectural spaces in airy, suspended gestures—extend this language into public contexts, where light and air moving through the cut vinyl make the pieces appear to shift and breathe, turning once-static advertising into a dynamic encounter with time, environment, and shared space.

Urban Enigma #3 **from Series "Taking Flight"**

***Urban Enigma #2* from Series "Taking Flight"**

Based in California's desert region, Heffler salvages vinyl banners before they reach the landfill, slicing and weaving them into sculptural paintings and large-scale installations.

She uses the printed words, images, and colors as raw material, deliberately cutting through them until the original messages dissolve into abstract fragments. These fragments are then recomposed into gridded, undulating forms that suggest maps, city grids, and archaeological layers—what she describes as the stories and excess of the world we inhabit.

Her practice bridges painting, sculpture, and installation, turning materials designed to sell fleeting moments into enduring meditations on sustainability and community.

Her series **"Reclaimed Spaces"** embodies this approach, presenting quilt-like structures that evoke houses, apartments, and stacked façades. Woven from recycled banners, each work feels at once gritty and warm, echoing the resilience of communities who continually adapt and rebuild. The interplay of dense color and open gaps invites viewers to imagine what—and who—fills these spaces, asking us to consider how our built environments record histories of displacement, repair, and hope.

***Eyes On You*. 30 x 40 x 4", 2025 collection. From "Reclaimed Spaces" Series.**

Installations such as her ongoing **“Taking Flight”** works, which stretch across architectural spaces in airy, suspended gestures, extend this language into public contexts. As light and air move through the cut vinyl, the work appears to shift and breathe, turning once-static advertising into a dynamic encounter with time, environment, and shared space. In reconfiguring commercial refuse into visual poetry, Southern California Women’s Caucus for Art member Shelley Heffler offers more than an aesthetic transformation; she proposes a way of seeing in which waste becomes witness, and renewal becomes a conscious, collective act.

Check out her appearance at **KESQ**

https://kesq.com/lifestyle/eye-on-the-desert/2026/04/23/shelley-heffler-earth-day-arts/

Other Links

https://www.jaygrimm.com/bulletin/2024/3/8/shelley-heffler-at-375-hudson-street

https://www.elevatedmagazines.com/single-post/shelley-heffler-creating-eco-conscious-art-with-a-message

https://www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/s/shelley/about_artist_shelley_heffler.html

https://southerncaliforniaartists.org/archived/taking-flight/