

Liz Collins: Motherlode, July 19, 2025 - January 11, 2026

I don't relate to drawing boundaries between art, craft, and design. I learned through persistence that I could keep doing what made sense to me.

–Liz Collins

Over her three decades of creative practice, Liz Collins (b. 1968) has explored the complexities of power, energy, intimacy, and mind-body sensations. Her radical experiments with fiber vibrate with animated shapes, zigzagging lines, tangled surfaces, and spinning orbs. Collins's drive to capture and express both the dynamism of interior emotions and the vitality of natural phenomena has led to a body of work that cannot be defined as any one thing, but rather encompasses it all—fashion, performance, textile design, and fine art.

Collins's restless creative output runs from the raw, adventurous, and personal to refined design collaborations to monumental fine-art installations. This exhibition, the first US survey of her work, brings together an unprecedented range of these materials, including large-scale sculptural work, fashion, needlework, drawings, performance documentation, and ephemera produced from the late 1980s until now.

Motherlode also celebrates some of Collins's many connections to RISD as an alum (BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles), an educator (faculty 2003–2013, Textiles), and a collaborator.

Kate Irvin

Curator of Costume and Textiles

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CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Introduction

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Red Lightning Wheel, 2024

Jacquard-woven Lurex, polyester, and silk

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York

In this woven work, three lightning wheels swirl, shatter, cave in, and realign to suggest speed, friction, and raw force. An important repeated symbol for Collins, the lightning wheel represents relentlessly moving energy that carries with it the possibility of regeneration and renewal. This piece resonates with the earthy *Fractured/Smoldering*, on view on the wall behind you, which similarly wrestles with the dangerous edge of vibrant, unbridled energy.



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Collaborative papermaker: Nicole Donnelly

Fractured / Smoldering, 2021

Handmade cotton paper with cotton-pulp painting, embedded rayon yarns, and pigmented cotton pulp; Unique edition published by the Brodsky Center at PAFA, Philadelphia

Courtesy of Federico Mingozzi and Joseph Kotarski

For Collins, this work is about the power of fire and the life force that burns within us all. On the wall to your right, look for *Cave* (2012), the work on paper that inspired *Fractured / Smoldering* and many others in this exhibition. This recurring image refers to a cave vibrating with the earth's potent, wild energy.



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Unreachable, 2022/2025

Jacquard-woven silk and polyester

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York

This 2025 installation, *Unreachable*, reimagines *Promised Land*, a 2022 work that presented a queer utopia in the distance. Due to current attempts to erase LGBTQIA+ identities, that hopeful vision has been



disrupted here, with the promised land made inaccessible in the folds
of the fabric.

I believe in energy as a myriad and multifaceted power possessed by and greater than us.

–Liz Collins

The works on paper clustered around the doorway represent a small fraction of Collins's drawings. A practice developed during childhood and reinforced during her time as a student at RISD, drawing is a ritual for Collins, providing the spark as well as the grounding from which her ideas ignite.

These drawings and paintings illustrate the ways Collins visualizes the energies around us: as gateways quivering with possibilities. She harnesses their power to express the spaces between chaos and order, tension and release, inner and outer, physical and emotional, pain and pleasure, agitation and seduction.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Epiphany, 2015
Pen, marker, and colored pencil on paper
Collection of Andrew Kohler and Michael Koch



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
The Wheel, 2019
Gouache on watercolor on paper
Courtesy of Lauren Faria



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Cave, 2012
Paint and tape on paper
Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Ecstasy, 2014-2016
 Colored pencil on paper
 Collection of The Estée Lauder Companies



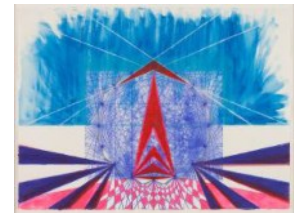
Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Zagreb Mountains, 2014
 Colored pencil and marker on paper
 Collection of The Estée Lauder Companies



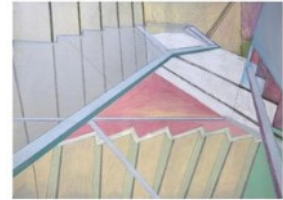
Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Tower 1, 2018
 Charcoal and colored pencil on paper
 Courtesy of Peter Hocking



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Atlas Matrix Variation 2, 2020
 Etching and gouache, colored pencil, wax crayon, and marker on paper
 Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
GAM/Turin Stairs, 2021
 Colored pencil on paper
 Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Bridge 1, 2018
 Charcoal, colored pencil, and wax crayon on paper
 Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



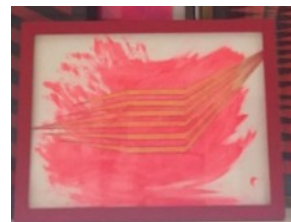
Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Mountain, 2018
 Colored pencil and wax pastel on paper
 Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Sawtooth, 2014/2018
 Screenprint, paint marker, and gouache on paper
 Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
 b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Firm Hand, 2014
 Marker and acrylic paint on paper
 Courtesy of Mr. and Mr. Sharkowiak



Every thought gives rise to a set of correlated vibrations . . . accompanied with a marvelous play of colour. . . . We have then a thought-form pure and simple, and it is a living entity of intense activity animated by the one idea that generated it.

–Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigation*

Collins has found an anchor in the artistic concepts outlined in *Thought-Forms*, a book connected with a spiritual and philosophical movement that emerged in the late 1800s.

The gallery through the doorway to your left is organized into themes outlined in *Thought-Forms*: Sacrifice and Devotion, Collapse and Fracture, Love and Connection, and Desire and Ambition. These categories highlight how Collins visualizes energetic forces and emotions in her use of pattern, material, and technique.

Sacrifice and Devotion

Across cultures, artists have always made devotional objects, or works that anchor or express spirituality. For Collins, the repetitive labor of making leads to a trance-like state that enters the realm of the spiritual.

Liz Collins, textile designer (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Ligne Roset, furniture designer
Montagnieu, France; 1860–present
Pollack, textile design studio
New York; 1988–present
Sunbrella / Glen Raven, fabric manufacturer
Burlington, North Carolina; 1880–present
Dynamic Expansion Sofa, 2020
Jacquard-woven acrylic and polyester textile
Museum Property



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Fat Curtain, 2003

Machine-knit rayon and silk

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Made on a hand-operated knitting machine, *Fat Curtain* marks a shift in Collins's practice, as she moved her experimental works off the body and into space. Combining slinky delicacy and sinewy strength, it expresses the physical and conceptual powers of the textile medium.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Snow Skin, 1991

Hand-woven wool, mohair, and Lurex with glass beads

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Up close, shiny red glass beads glint and dissolve into this hairy, densely woven foundation of wool, mohair, and glittering Lurex thread. From afar, the piece appears alive, shifting before our eyes like an animal in the process of camouflaging. Made as part of Collins's RISD BFA thesis collection, *Snow Skin* draws us in through seductive juxtapositions of hard and soft, reflective and opaque.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Circle Patchwork, 1991

Hand-woven and Jacquard-woven textiles (cotton, Lurex, silk, rayon, polyester, linen, and mohair); hand-stitched reverse appliqué

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



I still remember the first time I wound a warp on the warping board in the College Building at RISD. . . . This act felt so special and new and perfect for my body. A blend of precision and ease with both structure and fluidity. Color was moving through my hands. Weaving had architecture and engineering mixed with painting and collage; all that felt right.

–Liz Collins

Circle Patchwork combines textiles Collins wove as part of her undergraduate work at RISD with mill-woven silk scraps she obtained in Italy during her senior-year internship at Mantero, a family-run textile company. She then painstakingly hand-stitched the pieces into this archive.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Povera, 2020

Hand-stitched acrylic and cotton trim on linen

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Collins made this lush and tangly piece by stitching together leftover trim she had made for another project, infusing the scraps with dynamic energy. She finds creative nourishment in the work of many of her artistic predecessors. One of these is the late 1960s Italian art and design movement Arte Povera, meaning “poor art.” Like its namesake, Collins’s homage, *Povera*, challenges the hierarchies and limitations of traditional art materials and methods.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

ZigZagZurich, manufacturer

Zurich, Switzerland; 2014–present

Cave Rug, 2022

Wool and bamboo silk pile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

ZigZagZurich, manufacturer

Zurich, Switzerland; 2014–present

Daybreak Rug, 2022

Wool and bamboo silk pile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Crying, 2010

Wool and cotton textile with knit-grafted cotton and rayon

Courtesy of Michelle Handelman



Look closely at how this work wobbles between delicate stability and active unraveling. From each eye, black threads stream heavy tears. Tender and trembling, *Crying* expresses loss, sacrifice, and the universal experience of sorrow.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Daybreak 1, 2022

Hand-woven cotton

Courtesy of Megan Noh



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Spirit Spout, 2018

Acrylic on canvas with rayon yarn

Courtesy of Jennifer Tull Westberg



In *Spirit Spout*, silver and deep pink yarns gush from a black portal. This sculptural wall piece illustrates conduction, a term coined by Collins that merges the words conduit and intuition. The outpouring expresses Collins's vision of her art as a devotional offering and a point of connection to other worlds.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

ZigZagZurich, manufacturer

Zurich, Switzerland; 2014–present

Action Rug, 2022

Wool and bamboo silk pile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



On Needlework

It's important to me to be micro and macro. The small pieces are where I have my hands in the work every day. Turning this plain white grid into this intricate system is, for me, something way beyond the flat plane of drawing. The accumulation of materials means it becomes three-dimensional despite its flatness.

–Liz Collins

On Weaving

As I got deeper into weaving and learned about what are called complex structures, it felt as if a galaxy of possibilities opened up. Layers of constructed fabrics made through structured repetition became not just a system to follow, but also to break with or to transcend. For me, constructing textiles has always felt like alchemy—turning straw into gold.

–Liz Collins

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Smushed Skin, 1989
Hand-woven cotton, wool, and synthetic yarn
Courtesy of Glenn Adamson and Nicola Stephanie



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Refined Echo, 2022
Cashmere, rayon, silk, and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas
Courtesy of Debbie Nadolney



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Compass Rose, 2019
Mohair and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas
Courtesy of Marcia Collins



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

The First Explosion, 2011-2012

Lurex, rayon, and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Courtesy of Luis De Jesus and Jay Wingate, Los Angeles



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Circle Patches, 1990

Hand-woven cotton and wool

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Firenze, 1990

Hand-woven linen, rayon, silk, and wool

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Harlequin, 2021

Silk and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Static Plaid, 2024

Alpaca, cashmere, mohair, rayon, silk, and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Cracked, 2022

Mohair and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Heartbeat, 1990

Hand-woven silk, wool, and Lurex

Courtesy of Elissa Auther



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Shrunken Zigzag, 1990

Hand-woven rayon, mohair, and synthetic yarn

Courtesy of E. V. Day and Ted Lee



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Memphis 3, 2019

Cashmere, Lurex, mohair, rayon, and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Courtesy of Vincent Dilio and Andy Harman



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Rhythm, 1990

Hand-woven rayon and wool

Courtesy of Sherri Donghia



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Energy Field, 2020

Polyester and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Christoffel-Greene Collection



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Grid Play, 2017

Alpaca, mohair, polyester, rayon, silk, and wool needlepoint on cotton canvas

Courtesy of Nicole A. Ruggiero and Maximillian Katzman



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Crazy Cake, 2022
Wool needlepoint on cotton canvas
Courtesy of Joey Soloway



Collapse and Fracture

Throughout her career, Collins has mined the material and conceptual opportunities offered in themes of collapse and fracture. These include the charged energy of disturbances, the push-and-pull of changing emotions, and the drama of explosions and their aftermath: worlds cracked open and ripe for renewal.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)
b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York
Worst Year Ever, 2010 (stretched onto frame in 2017)
Silk textile with knit-grafted Lurex, silk, and wool
Gift of Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson **2025.20**



Made during a period of particularly painful experiences, *Worst Year Ever* bleeds with profound emotion. Here Collins employs her signature knit-grafting technique to combine delicate cotton and coarse red wool. These “tender clashes,” in Julia Bryan-Wilson’s words, evoke the rawness of new wounds while suggesting a path to healing.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Veins-Darkness, 2005/2011/2025

Cotton textile with knit-grafted cotton and wool

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Veins-Darkness underwent a series of metamorphoses that mark the ebb and flow of emotions. Collins made the first iteration of this piece in 2005 by fusing blue and black knit veins onto white cotton cheesecloth. She returned to it in 2011, dyeing it black as a reflection of her dark emotional state and exhibiting it draped, sagging under its own weight.

For this show, Collins reconfigured *Veins-Darkness* once again, this time to explore its vulnerabilities. Mounting the work taut on a metal frame in reference to stretched skins, she lays bare its areas of weakness while revealing the connections holding it together. The motif of veins remains, both as conduits for circulation and the means of new pathways.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Breaking Down, 2022

Jacquard-woven and deconstructed acrylic textile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Head, 2023

Jacquard-woven and deconstructed Lurex, polyester, and silk textile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Look carefully at this work. Beneath the mass of threads, the outlines of spinning lightning wheels are just barely visible. *Head* began as a textile precisely woven according to Collins's specifications. She then carefully deconstructed it by releasing some of the threads. Some strands pull into wide sweeping curves, while others fall freely in shifting rhythms of compression and release.

Inspired by natural forces such as black holes and sinkholes, *Head* offers us a space to think about how unraveling can lead to transformation.

Liz Collins, textile designer (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Ligne Roset, furniture designer

Montagnieu, France; 1860–present

Sunbrella / Glen Raven, textile manufacturer

Burlington, North Carolina; 1880–present

Dynamic Directional Sofa, 2019

Jacquard-woven acrylic textile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

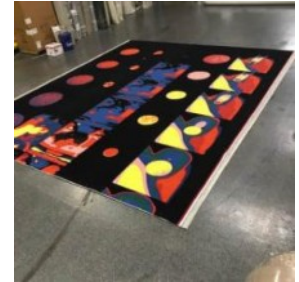
Mohawk Group, manufacturer

Calhoun, Georgia; 1878–present

Liquid Sky Rug, 2021 (remake of 2017 design)

Digitally printed polyester and nylon pile

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Collins designed the first iteration of this rug for her *Cave of Secrets* installation in a 2017 exhibition at the New Museum in New York. Its dark, lush pattern was inspired by *Liquid Sky*, a New Wave science-fiction film she saw when she was 13.

Love and Connection

Collins revels in expressing the tensions of love and connection, eroticism and pleasure. Cords are drawn taut and knotted together, joined objects stretch around corners, and linked chairs pull apart.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

ZigZagZurich, manufacturer

Zurich, Switzerland; 2014–present

Hazard Carpet, 2025

Wool, silk, and bamboo pile

Museum Property, Courtesy of ZigZagZurich



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Euphoria II, 2016

Jacquard-woven and deconstructed linen, polyester, and silk

Museum of Arts and Design, New York; purchase with funds provided by the Collections Committee, 2017



Creating works that stir up feelings of awe, joy, pleasure, and wonder as a reprieve from the horrors of life is something I care about and try to do.

–Liz Collins

Here Collins's use of vibrant color and strategic removal of threads manifests erotic love bursting with passion, exquisitely exposed. Threads dangle and foundational structures are visible—a continuation of her technical experimentation and desire to reveal the labor and emotional states involved in making.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Specimens, 1998

Machine-knit wool, mohair, rayon and elastic

Courtesy of Julia Bryan-Wilson



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Royal Embrace, 2019

Acrylic, canvas, PVC yarn

Courtesy of Joseph Kramm



Both the strains and pleasures of being alive and engaging with family, friends, and lovers are evident in sculptural paintings like this one and *Loose Bondage*, on far end of the wall to the left. These works highlight the knotty entanglements that come with meaningfully connecting with others.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Loose Bondage, 2018

Acrylic on canvas with rayon chenille

Courtesy of Carla Shen and Chris Schott



Both the strains and pleasures of being alive and engaging with family, friends, and lovers are evident in sculptural paintings like this one and *Loose Bondage*, on far end of the wall to the left. These works highlight the knotty entanglements that come with meaningfully connecting with others.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Conversation Chairs and Ottoman, 2015

Machine-knit cotton, polyester cord, and powder-coated steel

Made in collaboration with Harry Allen (RISD critic, Furniture Design)

Collection of the Tang Museum at Skidmore College, purchase, ED2017.2.1a-b



To create with other people in an open-ended way is to discover new things that neither person could ever come up with on their own.

–Liz Collins

Please have a seat! Woven from and connected by skeins of richly glowing red knit fabric, these chairs include you in their embrace. The chairs and ottoman were created in collaboration with designer Harry Allen for an installation at Skidmore College. As part of this project, Collins designed an interactive space for congregation, conversation, and study.

Desire and Ambition

Driven by desire and ambition, Collins employs materiality and texture both intellectually and practically to create new paths of expression. Inspired by feminist vision, metaphysical wonder, cosmic energy, and alchemy, she seeks to crack open a world of warmth, joy, pleasure, connection, and queer resistance.

Liz Collins, textile designer (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Ligne Roset, furniture designer

Montagnieu, France; 1860–present

Pollack, textile design studio

New York; 1988–present

Sunbrella / Glen Raven, yarn manufacturer

Burlington, North Carolina; 1880–present

Drawers Sofa, 2020

Jacquard-woven acrylic and polyester textile

Museum Property



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Zagreb Mountain Rug, 2022

Hand-knotted wool and silk

Made in Nepal in collaboration with Emma Gardner Design

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Rainbow Mountains Weather, 2024

Jacquard-woven angora, linen, mohair, monofilament, nylon, polyester, and wool

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



In this woven hanging, a landscape of craggy snow-peaked mountains and otherworldly rainbows is threatened by a destructive weather wheel fueled by climate change.

The explosive maximalism of *Rainbow Mountains Weather* connects it to *Zagreb Mountain Rug* and *Unreachable*. All of these works link vivid colors and graphic patterns to acts of queer resistance. They envision and call for places of freedom and safety that currently feel out of reach.

Rainbow Mountains Weather made its public debut in the 2024 Venice Biennale exhibition *Foreigners Everywhere*.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Pressure, 2024

Sequins, glass beads, synthetic-yarn embroidery, and polyester-cotton fabric appliquéd on silk

Courtesy of Richard Gerrig and Timothy Peterson



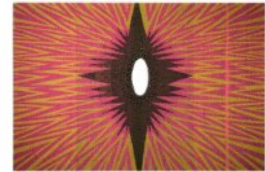
Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Cosmic Explosion, 2008/2018

Jacquard-knit acrylic, Lurex, and mohair with glass beads

Courtesy of Tyler and Stacey Smith



All-consuming and intertwined, desire and ambition materialize in this composition exploding with sensational and seductive energy. Contrasting colors and patterns radiate from a central opening ringed in black mohair and studded with glittering beads. Whether you read it as projecting outward, drawing in, or both, this piece trembles with infinite appetite.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Power Portal, 2023–2024

Jacquard-woven polyester and silk textile with acrylic, rayon, polyester, and wool yarn

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



I'm often thinking about what's underneath and behind things. . . . This sometimes drives me to create spouts that release energy and liquid from walls.

–Liz Collins

Take a moment to consider how thread gushes out from the bull's-eye anchored to the wall. What does this work suggest to you? Movement, release, transformation, or something else? Collins imagines this piece as a kind of spout—something that lets energy or feeling pour through. In the urgent context of *Desire and Ambition*, *Power Portal* can help us imagine what it looks like to want, to reach, or to let go.

Knitting Nation

In 2003, four years after receiving her MFA from RISD, Collins joined the Textiles Department as a full-time faculty member tasked with developing the knit program and teaching machine knitting. The chaotic noise of multiple knitters operating machines in the classroom harkened back to her recent fashion manufacturing experiences, reminding her of how repetitive manual labor taxes the body, especially in factory settings. It also underscored the power of collective labor, driving Collins to imagine what could be achieved by working in collaboration.

Between 2005 and 2016, Collins organized 15 Knitting Nation performances, each with a distinct theme, holding them everywhere from university campuses to museum galleries to theaters and public parks. In all of the Knitting Nation performances, Collins connects the labor of textile production with activism, collective emotion, and solidarity.

Collins on Knitting Nation (2005–2013)

Knitting machines are driven by hand, and when a group of them works together, loudly, you get a sense of collective toil. I wanted to show what textile manufacturing looks like—placing in public what people don't usually see. Each iteration carried other intentions as well, from talking about domestic manufacturing in relation to patriotism, as in the first iteration, to simultaneously celebrating and troubling the symbol of the rainbow flag.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Gary Graham (RISD Faculty, Textiles)

b. 1969 in Wilmington, Delaware; works in New York

Pride Dress, from the *Seven Deadly Sins Series*, 2003

Vintage cotton American flags and synthetic mesh textile with knit-grafted wool

Made in a collaboration known as GRIZ, with Gary Graham

Gift of Liz Collins and Gary Graham **2008.75.1**



Liz Collins and designer Gary Graham (now a RISD Textiles faculty member) embarked on their collaborative fashion and art project, GRIZ, to explore working together freely, outside of the commercial demands of the fashion industry. They created this dress as part of their *Seven Deadly Sins* collection in 2003. Two years later, art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson wore it during the Knitting Nation Phase 1: *Knitting During Wartime* performance on Governors Island, New York.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Knitting Nation Knit Top, 2005

Machine-knit cotton

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Knitting Nation Shirt, 2005

Printed cotton shirt with nylon embroidered patches

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Knitting Nation Boots, 2005

Leather

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Accumulated Pride, 2008–2015

Machine-knit and stitched cotton

Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, Gift of the artist, 2016.44.1



This piece was produced during Knitting Nation Phase 4: *Pride*, which took place in downtown Providence during the summer 2008 Pride festival. As knitters churned out yardage in the eight colors of the original rainbow flag and other workers sewed it together, speakers read responses to an online poll Collins had conducted that asked “How do you feel about the rainbow flag as a symbol of pride, and why?” The performance documented the range of emotions the flag elicited amongst LGBTQIA+ people.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Flag produced during Knitting Nation Phase 1: Knitting During Wartime, 2005

Machine-knit and machine-stitched cotton

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Collins organized her first Knitting Nation performance, *Knitting During Wartime*, in response to artist Sunny A. Smith’s *The Muster*, a public art event held on Governors Island in New York. Collins gathered an army of knitters dressed in matching uniforms to produce this monumental version of the American flag. Over the course of the performance, the flag spilled out of the machines and onto the ground.

At the time of this Knitting Nation performance, many textile mills in the US were still in operation because of their contracts with the US military.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Knitting Nation Flags, 2005

Screenprinted silk and cotton textile; cotton clothesline; duct tape

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Knitting Nation Jumpsuit, 2005

Printed cotton

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Fashion

In 1999 Liz Collins presented her MFA thesis collection, “Second Skins & Dresses to Drown In,” on a runway in the RISD Museum’s Grand Gallery—just upstairs from where you are now. Created using Collins’s technical innovations, these works blended gothic decay and punk apocalyptic futurism.

That collection launched Collins into the stratosphere of the New York Fashion Week and the creation of her own fashion label. In the five years that followed, she presented eight runway collections and collaborated with numerous artists, craftspeople, and manufacturers. Her experimental designs pushed knitwear in new directions, prompting Lauren Ezersky, a pioneer of fashion television, to define Collins not as a knitwear designer but as “an incredible artist working with yarn.”

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Curtain Dress, 2005

Machine-knit cotton and elastic with knit-grafted and dyed cotton cheesecloth and found curtains

Gift of the Artist **2006.108.1**



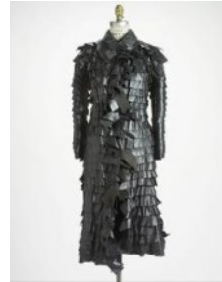
Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Samurai Coat, Fall 2001

Machine-knit angora, cashmere, and Merino wool, with knit-grafted cowhide

Gift of the Artist **2006.108.2**



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Slash Dress, 1999

Machine-knit and felted Merino wool and silk

Courtesy of Glenn Adamson and Nicola Stephanie



In this example of what she calls a “slash felt story,” Collins knitted and felted Merino wool to make a soft and strong fabric. The ruptures were built in through the insertion of contrasting yarns—in this case strands of superfine silk from the Scalamandré textile factory. RISD’s Textiles Department frequently receives material donations from companies, parts of which Collins incorporated into her early garments.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Knit experiments, 1997–2002

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Knit-grafting is a way to attach material onto knitting needles on the knitting machine while knitting another material. It's a technique to fuse materials together, to manipulate material, and to embellish material with other materials.

–Liz Collins

Early in her career, Collins described the domestic manual knitting machine as one of her “best friends and secret weapons.” This relatively small device produces a weft-knit fabric similar to hand-knits, but at a much faster rate. Its back-and-forth manual operation allows for stops and starts, tweaks, and manipulations.

During her graduate studies at RISD, Collins experimented with embedding woven textiles into the structures she was actively knitting on the machine. Feeding already-constructed fabrics onto the needles of the knitting machine allowed them to be fully integrated while still maintaining the stretch of the knit—hence her term *knit-grafting*.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Reflective Skeleton Dress, 1998

Machine-knit Merino wool, reflective slit film, and silk

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



This machine-knit piece is one of my first fully knit garments made during my RISD MFA years. I thought, Wouldn't it be cool if there were yarn made from that reflective material in athletic wear and the glowing stripes on roads? I was into the "deer in headlights" idea, and wanted to make reflective clothing that would illuminate people in certain situations.

I contacted 3M and they referred me to Metlon, a factory in Cranston, Rhode Island, that made reflective slit film. This was one of my earliest sponsorships.

–Liz Collins

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Sweater, 1994

Hand-knit wool and mohair

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



I wore this so much that all the hot pink fuzzy mohair wore off. Originally the pink area was as dense as the maroon.

–Liz Collins

This sweater is one of Collins's earliest garments, part of a series of color-blocked mohair and Persian wool hand-knits that she made long before learning how to machine-knit. Though her focus in the RISD Textiles BFA program was weaving, her experiments with hand-knitting after graduation allowed her to make fully fashioned garments without specialized knowledge in pattern-cutting. In the mid-1990s, Collins took this and several other hand-knit pieces to a *Paper* magazine event in New York, where she waited in line with other young designers hoping for their big break.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Selvedge Sweater, 1999

Hand-knit cotton and rayon selvedge from RISD Jacquard loom

Courtesy of the Artist and CANDICE MADEY, New York



Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in Brooklyn, New York

Illuminated Vein Dress, 2006

Silk textiles with knit-grafted cotton, silk, and reflective slit film

Courtesy of Mary Beth Heffernan



Collins made this double-layered gown for the *Radical Lace & Subversive Knitting* exhibition at the Museum of Art and Design. She used reflective yarn for the bondage-like cords so that in the right lighting conditions, these “veins” would shimmer and glow.

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Ribbon Top, Spring 2002

Machine-knit silk and rayon with knit-grafted rayon ribbons

From the collection of Kim Stoddard



Inspired by a Comme des Garçons jacket that had openings in the armpits, Collins incorporated references to antiquity, decay, skeletons, and lace in *Ribbon Top*. She made it in Japan at an artist residency that supported the development and presentation of her Spring 2002 collection.

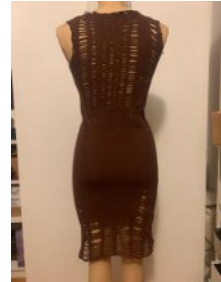
Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Felt Lace Dress, 1999

Machine-knit and felted Merino wool

From the collection of Kim Stoddard



This dress features one of Collins's earliest signature techniques: open floats, or ladders, which create a porous, shredded look. She could machine-knit a garment in Merino wool in an hour, then hand-wash it for a few minutes with soap and hot water, watching it shrink and felt, the fibers locking in her hands. This is just one example of what Collins describes as the "alchemy of this medium."

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Lumberjack Goddess Dress, 2003

Machine-knit cotton, wool, and elastic with knit-grafted deconstructed flannel shirts

Lent by the Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology, Gift of Liz Collins



This dress was inspired by my friend Manny offering me cast-offs from his flannel shirt collection. I wanted a lesbian butch reference—the iconic flannel shirt as a dyke signifier—yet with a femme treatment.

The knit core garment with attached non-knit layers and top was something that I worked with several times. Elastic yarn in the torso gives the feeling of wearing a stretchy snug corset, making it comfortable while being a fabulously wild garment.

–Liz Collins

Cafe Pearl

Liz Collins (RISD BFA 1991 | MFA 1999, Textiles; RISD faculty 2003–2013, Textiles)

b. 1968 in Alexandria, Virginia; works in New York

Sunbrella / Glen Raven, textile manufacturer

Burlington, North Carolina, 1880–present

Dynamic Directional Expanded, 2025

Jacquard-woven solution-dyed acrylic and polyester

Courtesy of the Artist and Sunbrella / Glen Raven



Artist Liz Collins uses the Jacquard loom as a tool to create large-scale patterns that transform space. This colossal wall hanging harnesses the electric buzz of intersecting lines and bands of color as they come together, clash, and move outward.

Over the three decades of her career, Collins has embraced collaborations with industry partners. She has developed an especially synergistic relationship with Sunbrella, a textile brand known for its distinctive solution-dyed yarns, engineered to retain color in conditions of constant sunlight.