ELLIE MURPHY

BORN
Urbana, Illinois

WORKS
Queens, New York

EDUCATION
MFA, Yale University School of Art
BFA, Washington University
School of Fine Art, St. Louis

MATERIALS
Acrylic yarn, found materials,
paper, encaustic

SUBJECT MATTER
The form and pattern of natural
and man-made objects, like hair
or fur, waterfalls and subway maps

INSPIRATION
She is inspired by the nostalgia,
narrative and history contained
in the materials and the idea of
elevating the ordinary to art. She
wants to celebrate the anonymous
and domestic and to attempt to
make it exceptional and heroic.

For more information:
ellie-murphy.com
www.stac.edu/amag

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE
Murphy has also worked as a lifeguard and swimming instructor, a maker of
wallpaper, a waitress, a teacher, a graphic designer, a renovator of homes and
a mother. How do these different experiences and skills inform her work?

TO TAKE AWAY
To make the fiber pieces, Murphy begins with two large wooden poles
attached to the floor and ceiling of her studio, then she unwinds the yarn
by walking around and around the poles. After cutting or removing the fiber
from the poles, it is ready to braid or arrange. Think about how that simple
action, on a large scale, is evident in the final sculptures. Murphy says, “the
grandest accomplishments of life arise from ordinary daily actions.”

HOW COULD THIS RELATE?

MATHEMATICS
Pattern is used frequently in Murphy’s
work, both in the yarn sculptures and
the encaustic paintings. Because of
this, she made some pieces based on
the Mandelbrot set and the patterns
of fractals.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE
Sometimes she turns to religious or
philosophical subject matter. She
once made a piece that combined
her interest in science and religion by
making “1”s and “0”s out of clay and
spelling out the first verse from the
Gospel of John in digital code.

HISTORY
Murphy is interested in history and has
based artworks about the presidents
and first ladies of the United States.