Where I Work: Artist Ethan Cook

05.24.22 | By Caroline Williamson

Photo: Jeremy Liebman

Ethan Cook is a Texas-born, New York-based artist known for his minimalist works and woven art. The abstract woven pieces feature color block compositions in bold colorways on self-made canvases. The geometric "paintings" are made from sewn pieces of canvas that Cook has woven on a four-harness floor loom. Once the various pieces are sewn together, they make up the canvas that's then stretched on bars for hanging. Shaking things up, Cook has recently translated his signature aesthetic to woven Flat Works rugs designed for HAY. Made of New Zealand wood and organic cotton, the throw rugs bring art directly to the floor in a more attainable way. In this Deconstruction, we head to Cook's studio to get a better idea as to how and where he works, making these new rug designs and his regular work.

Photo: Jeremy Liebman

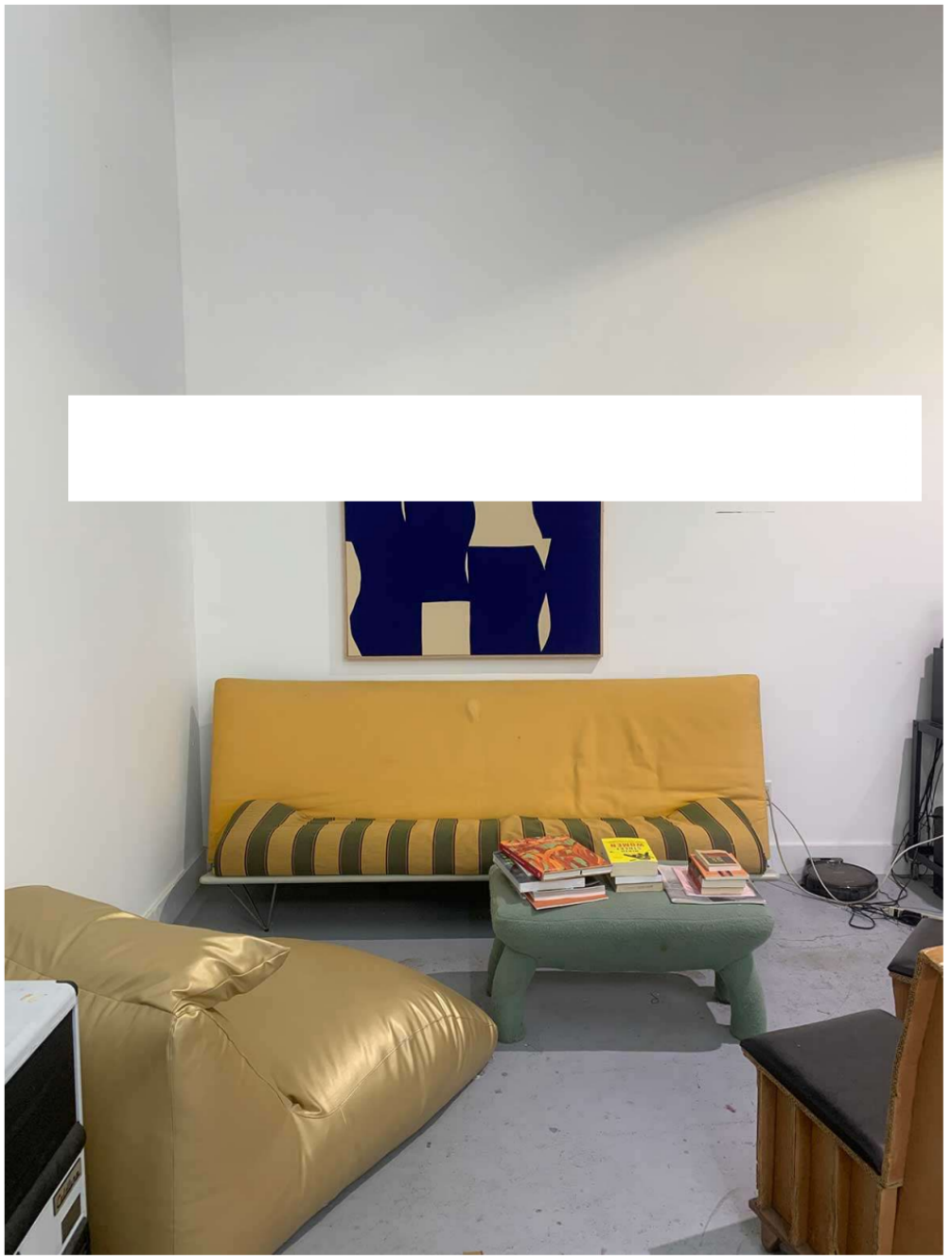
What's your studio/work environment like?

It's usually pretty quiet in the mornings then chaotic in the afternoon. Or the other way around. It's different every day.

Blue Offset Flat Works woven rug for HAY \\\ Photo: Jeremy Liebman

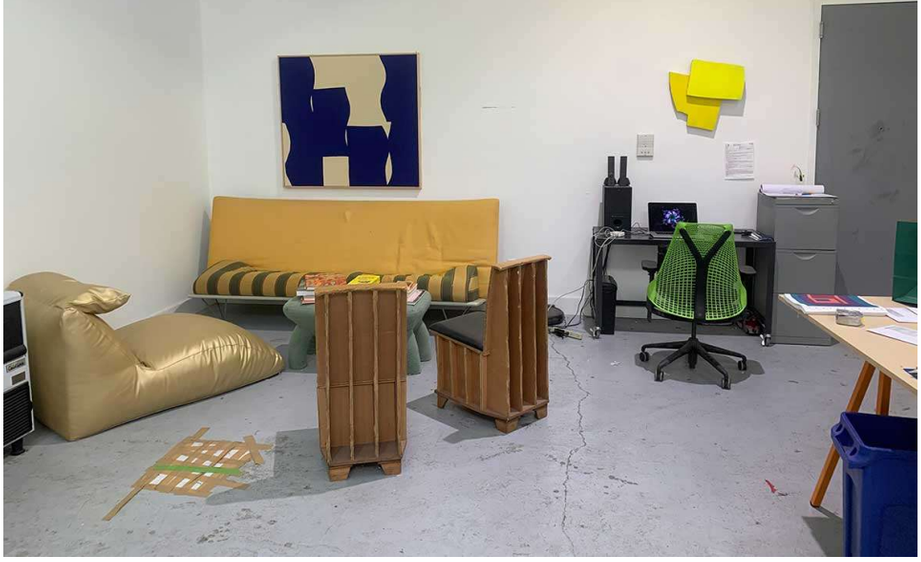
How is your space organized/arranged?

There are different areas for weaving, sewing, laying out the compositions, stretching, framing, and photography.



If you could change something about your workspace, what would it be?

It would be 100 times bigger.



How long have you been in this space? Where did you work before that?

I've had this space for a little over a year. Before this I was in Greenpoint, Brooklyn at another studio for 8 years.

Photo: Jeremy Liebman

Have you had to make any adjustments to how you work because of the pandemic?

I was at my house upstate for the first four months or so. Then I had to alternate with my assistants to make sure no one got sick.

That said, as an artist, I generally work alone so the pandemic hasn't changed my patterns much. I've been lucky enough to be able to go to my studio and continue on with work.

How do you see things changing in your workplace moving forward with COVID-19 now a part of our reality?

I'd like to get a larger space in Manhattan, closer to my apartment.

Is there an office pet?

There are two! They are sibling Japanese Chins: Fizzgig and Bishkin.

Do you require music in the background? If so, who are some favorites?

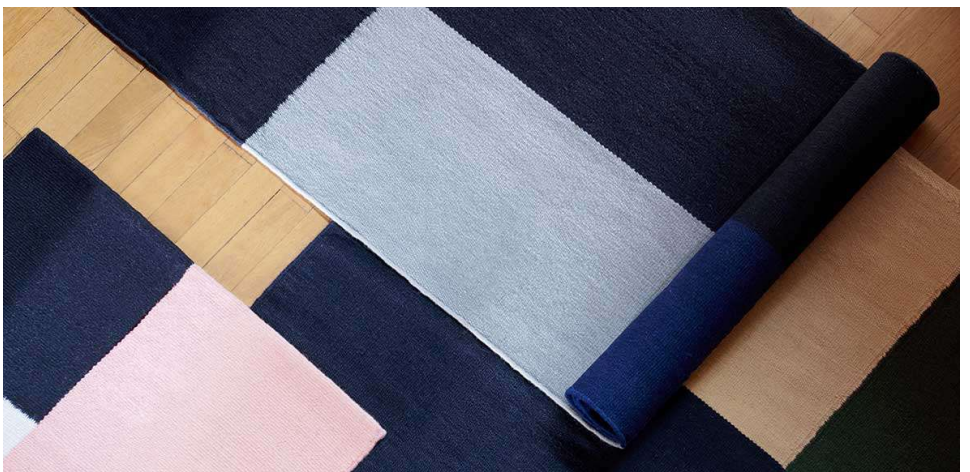
Oh yes, nonstop. It will range from Philip Glass and Moondog in the mornings to Kim Petras, pop, pop punk, country, you name it, we listen to it. One day my assistant asked if I like Chinese rap; we get around.

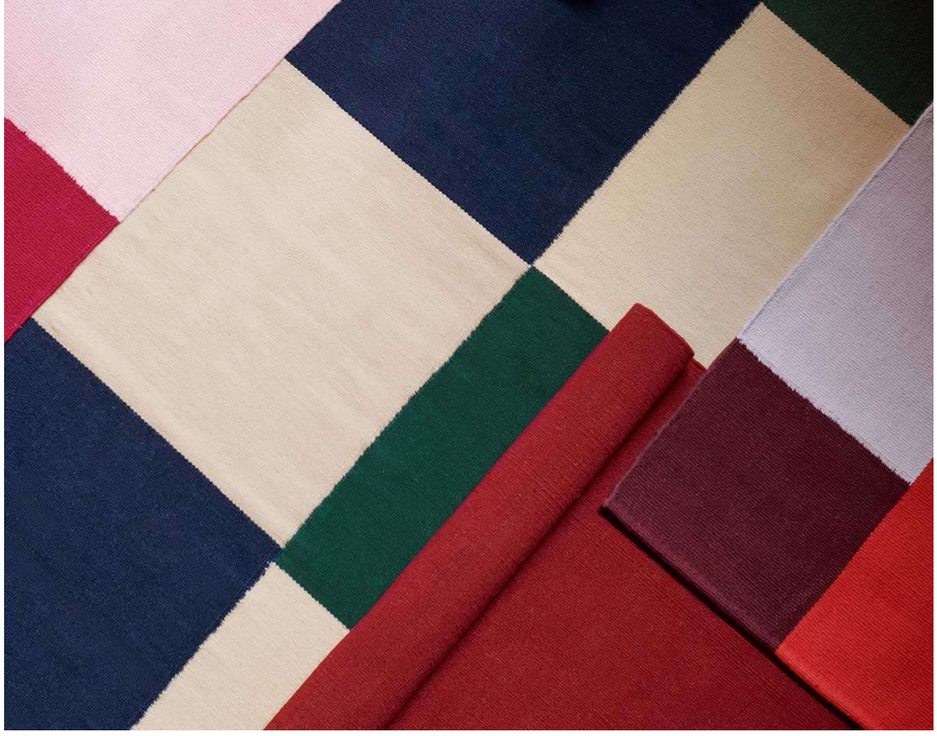
How do you record ideas?

I have a paper desk calendar like a mechanic and lists are jotted on sheets on my desk.

What is your typical work style?

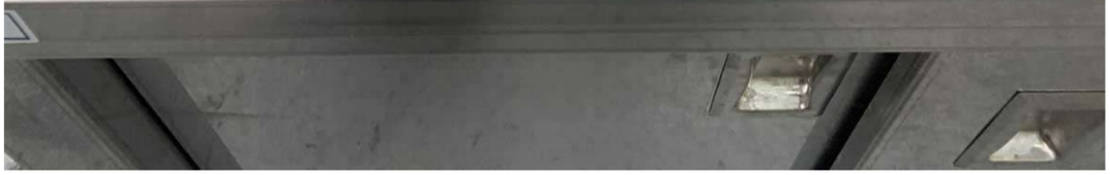
I generally work 10am-5pm, Monday through Friday. I also come in on weekends to check in on things and have some time alone in the studio. I'm more of a farmer than a hunter.





What is your creative process and/or creative workflow like? Does it change every project or do you keep it the same?

Every day I am doing something different depending on the exhibition/project. When designing my new Flat Works collection for HAY, my process was to take existing works and translate them into rugs using Photoshop. We played with dozens of designs and settled on the best ones.



What kind of art/design/objects might you have scattered about the space?

I have a Borek Sipek vase, a Campana Brothers bowl for fruit, some questionable Gehry chairs, a Bellini chaise, Starck chairs, a Sipek chair that was on a Jay Leno Doritos commercial haha, and a sofa by Paolo Deganello. Also a little foam stool Katie Stout gave me to upholster.

Photo: Jeremy Liebman

Are there tools and/or machinery in your space?

Yes, there are tons.

Photo: Jeremy Liebman

What tool(s) do you most enjoy using in the design process?

The loom!

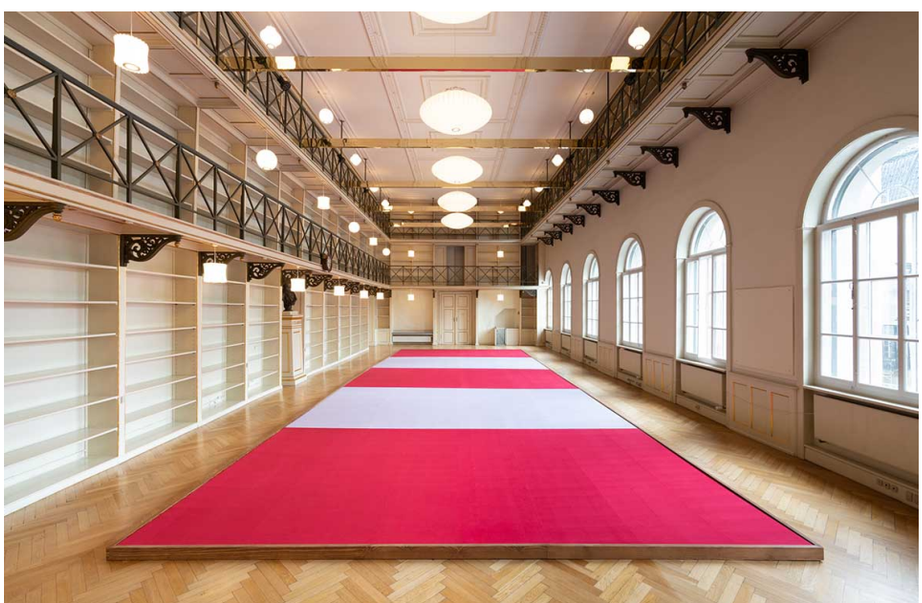
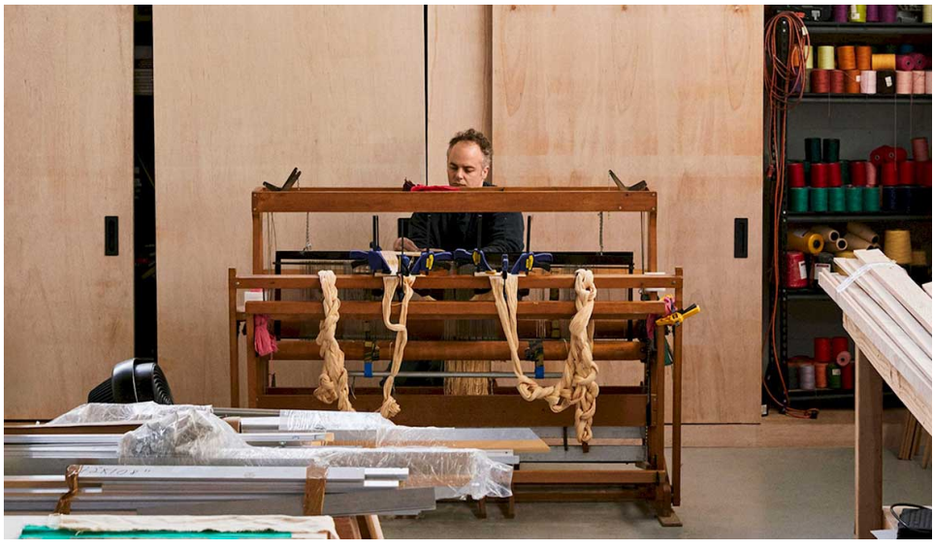


Photo: David Stjernholm

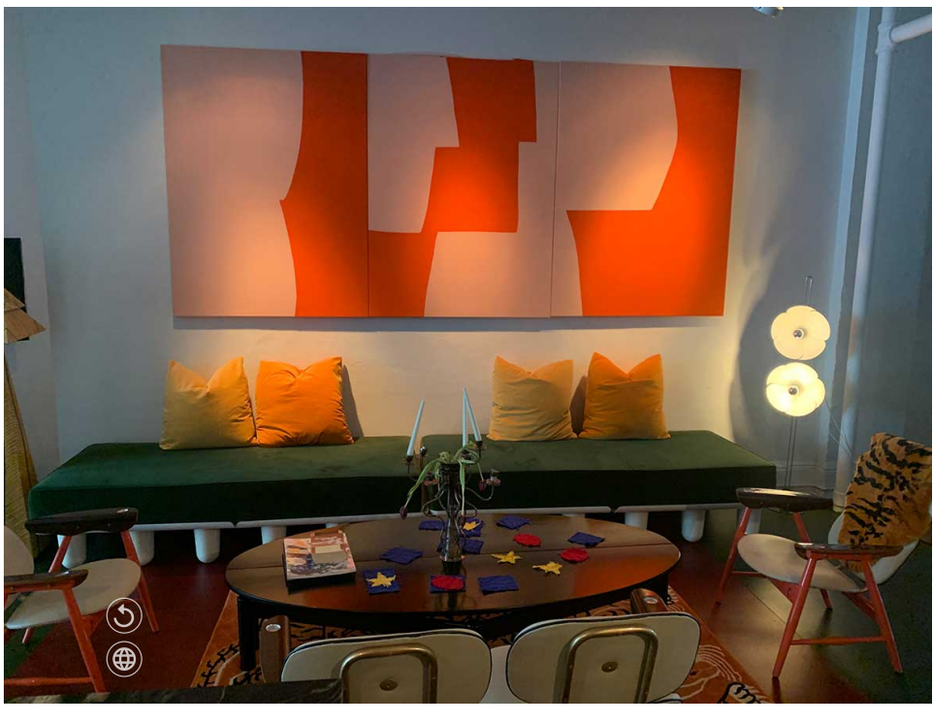
Is there a favorite project/piece you've worked on?

I worked on a 50-foot woven piece titled "Fields" that is now in the collection of the Schnitzer Family Foundation in Portland. It's so beautiful and peaceful in person, it soaks up all the sound in the room, creating an immersive experience.



Tell us about a current project you're working on. What was the inspiration behind it?

I'm currently doing the Albers Foundation Residency in Connecticut. The work is constantly changing, each day building off the last – I'm just there to keep up!



Do you have anything in your home that you've designed/created?

Yes, I have a woven work above my couch.

For more information on Ethan Cook's Flat Works rugs, visit, us.hay.com.

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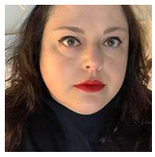

Caroline Williamson is Editorial Director of Design Milk. She has a BFA in photography from SCAD and can usually be found searching for vintage wares, doing New York Times crossword puzzles in pen, or reworking playlists on Spotify.

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