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<http://kingstonhappenings.org/doers-and-dreamers-deborah-mills-thackrey/>

## Kingston Happenings Interview

kingstonhappenings.org

### Doers and Dreamers - Deborah Mills Thackrey

by Kevin Godbey

I never tire of tales of circuitous routes taken by people in their lives which have landed them here in our backyard. Of all the places that many have had an opportunity to settle in, they've gotten sucked in by the natural beauty of the Hudson Valley and Catskills as well as the vibe of the Kingston area, to join our community. Meet this week's Doer and Dreamer who has hopped, skipped, and jumped her way across the country and is now leveraging arts and technology to create products here that anyone can use. - KG

**Your name:** Deborah Mills Thackrey

**Business or organization:** Art for Living

**Occupation:** I am a photographic artist digitally printing throw pillows featuring my fine art.



#### What is your approach to your business or occupation that makes you unique?

I am taking the leap from putting my work on gallery walls and entering the home decor arena. There is a revolution in digital textile printing going on that is affecting both home goods and fashion. This technology allows more experimentation and creativity for designers plus less waste of ink and fabric as you can print short runs or one-offs to test your markets. I am also using recycled pre-consumer luxe upholstery fabric on the backs that provide a calm contrast to the bright, exciting art on the face of the pillow so you can flip to match your mood. I am employing local seamsters and keeping manufacturing local. It may cost more but it is more sustainable in the long run. As the name of my business implies, (Art for Living) I feel art doesn't only belong on the walls but should be integrated into every aspect of your life.

#### Where are you from originally?

I was born on old Route 66 in Amarillo, TX (Georgia O'Keefe taught at my high school when she was 18). I was heavily influenced by the desert vistas, dramatic skies, roadside snake shows, and rusting neon signs. I moved to San Francisco when I was 20. It was a great place and time to become and artist but Silicon Valley has taken over and pushed many artists and musicians out.

#### What brought you to the Kingston area and keeps you in this area?

My sister lives in the area and when visiting her I fell in love with Kingston and its vibrant arts scene, the stunning visuals of the Hudson River and the Catskills, the incredible history, and its proximity to New York City without having to live in its hustle and bustle. It's perfect. People think we are crazy moving from CA to NY but in spite of having to adjust to real seasons I find them invigorating.

#### What is your favorite hangout in this area and why?

Outdated Cafe has always been my perfect ideal of a Kingston hangout. You always see a diverse creative bunch of people passing through and I am obsessed, as an avid collector, by the wonderful quirky vintage pieces that surround you as you eat. One day someone nearby remarked that the place looked like an Apple ad. I looked around and almost everyone had an iPad, iPhone or laptop illuminating their faces. I worked at Apple art directing photo shoots so I found it quite amusing.

**When you're not in Kingston, what's your idea of a wonderful city to visit, and why?**

As a photographer I can discover something interesting even in the most boring places on earth. I make art out of tiny painterly details in graffiti, old cracking layers of paint on an abandoned train car, or capturing a moment between two people on the street. I travel quite a bit and I never run out of material. Of course if you are in Paris there is always better food and culture than in the Mid-West US but I find people interesting anywhere.

**Tell us something that we never would have guessed about you.**

I have a quirkily diverse background including working for one of the first pre-Starbucks coffee roasters on Haight St. in San Francisco. I was arguably one of the first baristas in CA. I was a costume and makeup designer in college and love making puppets. My first job at 17 was setting lead type and making Happy Face stickers. I started out as a freelance graphic designer by hand-lettering signs. I was a modern dancer for 30 years. I spent some time in high school on the Navajo reservation which deeply affected me.