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GSURC Proposal

Throughout the history of the world, rugs, especially handmade ones are considered to be insatiably valuable and highly decorative. From the oriental rugs of China to the tapestry-woven fabrics of Europe, the craftsmanship and artistry was impeccable. They were more than mere pieces of fabric laid on the floor for decorative purposes. They were beacons of wealth and records of a region or religious history. In my practice, I am attracted to techniques that connect to my personal history. With these ideas in mind, my research lead me to the braided rug. Braids or plaiting, is a technique of a taking 3 strands of fiber and interlacing them together. The braided rug originated in America, typically made by women to keep the house warm during the winter. They would cut up old clothes, braid them and then stitch them together. The practice of rug making, was then passed onto their daughters. The personal connection I made was in the tradition. My mother taught me to braid, just as her mother taught her. I chose to use afro hair for the rug, because the strong identity to the African American community. Growing up as a Black woman in America, the natural texture (kinky curly) of our hair, has been buried beneath the images of the European standard of beauty. So, I created this rug with intentions of celebrating a part of who I am and black culture. My process consisted of me braiding the hair and then using an African basketry method of coiling to secure the hair. These two techniques allow me to bridge my American experience with my African roots. I am inspired to emulate the carpet makers of centuries past, who felt the need to keep their history intact with something as comforting and tactile as a rug.