



SOUND and WEAVE

Gracefield Arts Centre
Dumfries
11th August 2018

Opening address by Su Grierson

First of all I would like to thank The British Tapestry Group for inviting me here today, I feel very honoured and also delighted to be able to connect with this excellent exhibition.

Although my own work with textiles was some years ago now, more recently I have been working as an artist with video, sound and other media. I have also worked collaboratively with artists from other backgrounds. So you can see that I am naturally interested in what you have been doing within this project.

As artists we all spend a lot of time developing our skills, expanding our techniques, pushing the boundaries of what we can do with our own chosen media. These days that isn't so difficult with so many workshops, online tutorials, websites and explorations of other peoples work online. The most challenging part is usually finding the time to explore all that and then actually put it into practice.

But it is always much harder to push ourselves conceptually. It is one thing having ideas but another being able to put them into practice. So that proposing themes such as this one, weave and sound, bringing two seemingly quite opposite concepts together really does challenge both the imagination and the ability to make the idea happen.

Possibly, even more difficult than that, is to be able to articulate the ideas you have before the work is even made, I am talking about submitting your proposal. It's really hard to convince another person, using only words, as to what the idea you have might eventually look like. We all know that work can change in the making and building an allowance for that into your proposal is not easy either. But I always think this is the most important part of a work, the time when you really face up to the details of your intention and get it down on paper in an interesting and straightforward way.

So I would really like to commend the selectors who had the courage to go with these proposals and create such an exciting exhibition. What a great selection, from sculptural installation, to the personal use of the voice, to the quietness of human contact, the visual manifestation of a medical condition, the internalised soundscape of the mind, the language of the hands that is without voice, the integration of real sound into the works as well as considering the processing and perception of sound, the graphic representation of the sound waves and of their terminology, and the personal experience of natural rhythms. Who would imagine that such a spectrum of ideas could come together in one exhibition!

As an artist I also know that sometimes no matter how good your proposal is it might just not fit into the overall vision for the exhibition. Selectors do frequently have to exclude works not because of their merit but in order to get a balance within the exhibition. I'm afraid that's just something we have to live with as artists. For those whose work was not selected I can only suggest that this exhibition offers you a huge challenge and inspiration to take your ideas forward and let them lead you somewhere new. Don't put your proposals in the bin, keep working on them, let them be the starting point of another journey.

For me pushing against boxes, blurring boundaries, and finding new directions has always been what makes life interesting. I have to say that this exhibition has also expanded MY thinking. As I said I have worked collaboratively with other artists but never with anything as tactile as textile so maybe I should go back to my own roots and give it a go.

The aim of any collaboration whether it is between people or between ideas should be to produce work that neither would have created except for the presence of the other. I feel sure I am seeing a lot of that here today.

Finally I would like to commend and congratulate your members whose voluntary work has brought this exhibition to fruition, they are always the beating heart of any group or society. I love what you have achieved and am excited by what you've been doing, I hope you keep doing it, pushing your boundaries, and I wish the exhibition every success in its future locations.