Maker in Focus
Mission Gallery, Swansea
Alastair Duncan
Exhibits experimental interactive audio and tapestry weaving
Alastair will also be exhibiting in Mission Gallery’s […] Space programme
Funded by a Research and Development grant from Arts Council Wales
9th - 30th March, 2019
Concurrent with BTG Sound and Weave exhibition at UWTSD Swansea College of Art

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The articles in this publication do not represent the views of either the BTG or the BTG Committee.

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Ros Bryant, Janet Clark, Beryl Hammill (d. 2018), Shirley Ross and Nicola Wheeler

The Purpose and Vision of the BTG
The British Tapestry Group aims to promote woven tapestry as a contemporary art form in the UK, by raising public awareness through professional exhibitions, journal, networking, regional initiatives, training and development.

Cover Photo Credits:
Hello from the chair

It was a big decision to put myself forward for Chair. My main reason was that I totally believe in BTG and our vision and purpose. Also, the Committee are so focused in what they offer the membership that I wanted to support them wholeheartedly. They are dedicated, and, remember, a totally volunteer group of people with ideas, strategies and energy to drive us forward. We have a committed Committee.

After a successful showing of our ‘Sound and Weave’ exhibition in Dumfries, we have now also ended three months of exhibiting ‘Sound and Weave’ and ‘Rhythm of the Weave’ at Twickenham. Both well received and looked brilliant. The juxtaposition at The Stables made for a wonderfully creative whole and an excellent example of how diverse the world of hand-woven tapestry can be. Many thanks to everybody involved for all their hard work. ‘Sound and Weave’ will next move to Swansea in March, the final location for our first travelling exhibition.

So, what of the future? We have many ideas. One example is a more vigorous use of social media for expanding our platform with ‘What’s on my Loom’. Personally I love to see the practice and stages of weaving before the artwork is finished. The images of ‘Sound and Weave’ and ‘What’s on my Loom’ have been viewed and shared thousands of times. It is up to every one of us to send in items for us to post; images, dates, questions or even thoughts. All are valuable ways to get dialogue started. We are progressing with the formation of ideas for the ‘buddy system’. For many who cannot be part of a geographical group this would be very beneficial. We have re-opened the on-line shop and are looking at updating other areas of our organisation, not to mention future exhibition planning. It looks like we are in for some exciting times ahead!

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Hello from the editor

Editorship of this issue is shared with Deborah Leake. Deborah received and commissioned articles and reviews that I am carrying through into print following her retirement due to ill-health. I’ve complemented her choices by extending her commissions into two themes, both of which I shall return to in future issues.

First, how do we encourage younger people to explore tapestry as an active fibre art? It’s no longer on any art school curriculum, there is now only one apprenticeship in Britain, and many professional weavers are professional due to teaching tapestry for a living rather than being commissioned to weave. Hand-woven tapestry is not perceived as a viable art form by younger people. These concerns are being discussed in a symposium by the Cordis Trust on 16 March in Edinburgh: “While it is important to reflect on the past it is the future of tapestry the symposium wishes to explore. Bringing together artist, curators, critics and academics to consider ‘What is tapestry?’ and its future as a creative medium in contemporary art practice.”

Which brings me to my second theme: future directions. Many artists are pushing the boundaries of what tapestry is; they use classic techniques but in ways that challenge how we see the world around us. A growing number of tapestry weavers combine other materials in their work, work in 3D and collaborate with other artists. We can see this in exhibitions such as ‘Sound and Weave’, ARTAPESTRY5, and ‘Ctrl/Shift’, the latter an exhibition by members of the 62 Group of textile artists, a number of whom are tapestry weavers. Using the medium of tapestry to convey the impact on us of contemporary ideas, concerns, and evolving technologies opens up creative possibilities that can cross art boundaries. This gets our work exhibited and reviewed in the context of the wider art world and so seen by younger artists, encouraging them into the world of tapestry.

There are many weavers, ideas and techniques I and the editorial team will be exploring, and many of you will have your own ideas of what you would like to see in these pages. What questions would you like answers to? What tapestry topics and weavers’ profiles would you like to see? Let me know and have your say.

Sally Reckert
Tapestry Weaver Editor
tweditor@thebritishtapestrygroup.co.uk
All Photos © Sally Reckert
I was introduced to BTG back in 2013 through an old school friend - who many of you know, fellow weaver, Louise Martin. I recall seeing a copy of Tapestry Weaver back in the day when it was printed as a two-colour publication, usually black and its corporate color. By the time I came on-board, color print had advanced in leaps and bounds and become cheaper than two-tone print; ultimately a blessing for any artist working with color. I was excited to have the opportunity to present a publication that would accentuate the work I was seeing and to help get that to a platform where it can be admired by many others. In glorious full color.

I am amazed at the caliber of work presented to me with each issue. Tapestry weaving has definitely broken the mold, and the general consensus of opinion of what a tapestry actually is or ought to be. When I show my friends and tell them I work on the tapestry publication - they are equally amazed at the diversity and contemporary nature of some of the weaves - it is not what they had expected. I think many lay people only know of the Bayeux Tapestry when they hear the word tapestry (not actually knowing that it is embroidered!). So when they see the array of tapestries that is currently being woven all over the world, they begin to reassess what really should be hanging on their walls.

The work I am presenting on these pages is a far cry from tapestry weaving, but I wanted to share some of the work that I do. Outside of graphic and web design, I am an independent, published artist that works closely with DAZ3D - a company that specializes in 3D content and character design. Although I have been working in this field for some 15 years, I am still only skimming the vast knowledge that exists in this realm. There are many disciplines within the world of 3D: lighting, shading, texturing, modeling, composining, dynamic clothing, particle physics, rigging, animating, morphs, rendering, alpha maps, displacement maps, bump maps, normal maps ... the list goes on. Not to mention the whole array of 3D software that is now available: zBrush, Blender, 3ds Max, Modo, Cinema 4D, again the list goes on.

I originally studied fashion illustration and promotion at Epsom School of Art and Design, and have also and always had, a passion for photography and the human form. So the natural progression to take it further into the world of 3D was a great opportunity to learn more skills without having to forego what I have already learnt in previous disciplines. Rendering a piece of 3D art is very much like pushing a button on a camera - only creating the world in which you want to render it is where the time and creativity is spent. Animating your model, positioning lights and fine-tuning your camera. The possibilities are endless, and the worlds that can be created are as vast as your imagination can be. It's a place where fantasy can truly become a reality.

My next venture is Marvelous Designer - a cutting-edge software that creates virtual clothing from pattern cutting techniques. It drapes in real time and can simulate all sorts of fabrics from silk to leather. Fashion design has always been an interest of mine, so to be able to create that in 3D, and be able to include that in my work will be a huge plus.

Although the end product is totally different to tapestry weaving, I do see comparisons in the design and creative process. From inspiration to preliminary ideas to the repetitive crafting of a skill, to the final piece. Something of a journey that we as artists can all identify with.

I look forward to the continued efforts of The British Tapestry Group and hope that one day it takes precedence on a world stage for the recognition it deserves.

www.shimuzu.com
www.shimuzu3d.tumblr.com
www.marvelousdesigner.com
American Tapestry Alliance

Mary Lane

Many of you may be interested, as the American Tapestry Alliance (ATA) is, in offering young people the opportunity to learn to weave. In an increasingly virtual world, hand-woven tapestry offers a kinesthetic experience that is grounded in the physical actions of the body and in the thousands-of-years-old techniques that transform the raw material of yarn into an integrated fabric. As an object, woven tapestry communicates through color, through the abstraction or realism of the imagery and through the familiar warmth we associate with textiles. As an activity, it increases focus, patience and perseverance.

Workshop with middle school students at the public library. Photo © Liz Pulos

Since Weaving the Future was started in 2017, seven people have received grants. In some cases, the award recipient taught an adult who then went on to teach tapestry weaving to children in a variety of contexts. In other cases the grant funded a weaver who worked directly with children. I will share a few excerpts from the final reports that the grant awardees are required to submit to ATA.

Liz Pulos taught Christy West, a Boys and Girls Club leader, to weave tapestry. Christy now incorporates weaving into the organization’s activities. Liz also taught a Middle School teacher and her students through an after-school program in a public library. The students worked on cardboard looms and picked up weaving quickly. The teacher now offers weaving as an optional, free-time activity for her students.

Tamar Shadur worked with both Julie Muellejans and her students at Smith Academy. Julie reported: “The sample student work . . . demonstrates various levels of skill, design development and creative self-expression of personal identity. Each student achieved their own personal success working during our six-week tapestry unit. Goals were adapted for students with 504 (ADA) and Individual Educational Plans (learning disabilities). Each student was encouraged to challenge themselves and to re-frame what they perceived as ‘struggles’ or ‘mistakes’, transforming them into opportunities for growth and creative exploration of the medium. This proved to be freeing, as students realized that there are many ways to create a beautiful tapestry, that ‘good’ does not have to mean straight and even. Tapestry weaving is a very structured, technical art form. It was wonderful to work with students as they both met the technical challenges and explored their intuitive, creative response to the art form.”

Dorothy Thursby designed a tapestry weaving class for middle school students that started with a short introduction to the history of weaving and an overview of the work of contemporary weavers. This gave the students a grounding in the range of possibilities using the woven medium. “The students spent two class periods creating several images with pastel and watercolors that could be translated onto (4 squares per inch) graph paper. Each square on the grid represented one warp and three full weft passes . . . While it is a bit artificial to graph a tapestry design so literally, I wanted the students to understand that angles would appear jagged and curves only relatively smooth, becoming mostly stair-stepped like pixelated images when woven. As they worked on translating their images, and made adjustments, they began to see the possibilities and limits of the weaving process. . . . As part of this class the students also created ceramic pieces to hang their weavings on, wrapping the warp ends onto a bar at the base of the piece. Most of the students were very thoughtful about matching the ceramic pieces to their weavings. Over all, it was a very enjoyable and successful project.”

In order to create more opportunities for children to learn to weave tapestry, ATA initiated, in 2017, Weaving the Future Grants. We were inspired, in part, by the Handweavers Guild of America’s (HGA) Teach it Forward Grants, and in part, by our own members who were already engaged in teaching weaving to children. The HGA grants, in the first year, focused on teaching school teachers to weave so that they, in turn, could teach their students. In schools, learning to weave can be integrated into cultural studies and mathematics, as well as other classes. We found this ‘pay it forward’ approach particularly appealing, but decided to open the Weaving the Future grants to many different kinds of learning experiences.

These stories demonstrate the variety of learning opportunities that ATFs Weaving the Future Grants have made possible. Anyone who can teach tapestry weaving may apply for a grant. Membership in ATA is not mandatory, but strongly encouraged. We look forward to supporting many more teachers and others who will, in turn, teach weaving to children, and encourage you to apply!

References:
https://americantapestryalliance.org/awards/weaving-the-future-grants/

Young Enthusiasm: Teaching Tapestry in Schools’ Lynda Brothers and Thoma Ewen.
https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/educational-articles-on-tapestry-weaving/14408-2/

Encouraging children to weave’ Sally Reckert.
https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/educational-articles-on-tapestry-weaving/encouraging-children-weave/

Mary Lane is an artist and art historian. She was formerly the Executive Director of the American Tapestry Alliance.

Weaving the Future Grant
https://americantapestryalliance.org/awards/weaving-the-future-grants/
Artmap Argyll Open Studios

Louise Oppenheimer

In preparation my studio benefits from a vigorous tidy up. The cones of wool, which often go walkabout, are corralled into a confined space so nobody need trip over them. The balance of working studio with gallery is easily maintained as I have a long, high wall hung with work, and on the other side of the room a weaving in progress giving an idea of how I work and helping me explain and demonstrate how a piece is made.

Sketchbooks lie on the table but I make sure there's space for the tray, should people accept the offer of coffee or tea (home baking comes as a surprise extra), and a visitors' book waits in the hope of being filled. Having warped a spare frame, I think I've prepared but am never complacent, crossing my fingers for the sound of approaching feet!

Living on a quiet, single-track road makes listening for unusual activity almost instinctive but after the first few people have found their way here my ears stop straining; I forget my heart ever raced or that I doubted anyone would be interested! I am, at present, the only weaver on the Artmap trail; a novelty among painters, sculptors and photographers.

I find some visitors enjoy a foray into my tactile world, though I have only managed to encourage children to play with warp and weft. Adults are much warier of experimentation. They are inclined to ask technical questions or find out where I source my wool. If I sense they'd rather be left to look I can leave them to go and boil a kettle, allowing them a few minutes to absorb without distraction. If a number of people visit at one time, conversation may flow, families can mingle and strangers from far and wide might connect briefly.

I love the potential that Open Studios provides for unexpected pleasure in the meeting of minds or sharing of ideas. One visitor this year, a long-lost friend, not only greeted me with warm enthusiasm, but also everyone else in the room, creating a sudden burst of jollity and laughter even though they were all quite bemused initially!

The group of artists involved in Artmap Argyll changes from year to year as new members join while others drop out, but I have been a venue now for eleven years, since its inception, and hope to continue for many more. Open Studios brings artists together, boosting relationships which may be mutually beneficial while shedding light on each individual. For the visitor they make it possible to see what makes the artist tick, how ideas translate into tangible work - come and see!!

If you're interested, I welcome visitors at any time, just contact to arrange a time.

Artmap Argyll Open Studios, for 2019 dates www.artmapargyll.co.uk.
e: louiseoppenheimer@gmail.com
www.louiseoppenheimer.com
Weaving New Worlds
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow 2018

Aruna Reddy

It was a great pleasure to attend the private view of ‘Weaving New Worlds’, a contemporary tapestry exhibition by 16 international female artists, in the new East Wing of the William Morris Gallery, the former home of the master craftsman, designer, writer and social activist. He shared the concerns and issues raised by the artists, the human condition and how we live now, hence the exhibition’s subtext ‘Utopia / Dystopia: the choices we make’.

‘Portrait of a Father 5’, Erin Riley (USA), shows an articulated lorry on its side as a result of drunken driving. A single sentence is woven into the work “You don’t deserve my forgiveness”, a line from a letter written to her father; a very personal childhood memory and a disturbing comment on domestic abuse. The macho power of men, and victims of abuse.

‘Out of the Blue’, Christine Sawyer (UK), is a small monochrome triptych, the first part of which is a portrait of a child looking out at you with such sadness and despair that it compels you to engage with it. ‘The Challenge’, Caron Petney (UK), wove a monochrome, geometric design, with gold yarn. The work challenges us about the choices and decisions we make at the crossroads of our lives, and is a metaphor for change in uncertain times.

‘Cosmos’, Kanae Tsutsumi (Japan). This was a very different tapestry altogether. Hanging from the ceiling it was made up of several tapestry elements together representing decaying and regenerating cells. A heavy, chunky piece of work with multiple subtlety blended wefts.

‘Wounds’, Mari Meen Halsøy (Norway). This site-specific installation comprised a series of small, irregular-shaped weavings with one large, central piece in blended greys, blues and beiges. The work represented sniper-shot holes in the wall and the damage caused.

‘Regeneration’, Barbara Heller (Canada). Woven in three horizontal sections: the bottom depicting forest fires, a frequent phenomenon in Canada; the middle section showing bombed-out buildings in Syria; the top section is of pine cones. The pine cones release their seeds in the heat of a fire. While there is death and destruction all around us, there is also hope and regeneration.

After this rather dark, dystopian but thought-provoking section came tapestries of a different mood.

‘Hallaig 1’, Joan Baxter (UK). Inspired by a poem by the Gaelic poet Sorley Maclean, this work is rooted in the Scottish landscape of myths and legends. It is a deceptively simple vision of the land, trees and a cloudy grey sky, created using a limited amount of old yarns to influence the outcome of the work. ‘Forest with New Green’, Sara Brennan (UK). This work is also rooted in the Scottish landscape, and deceptively simple vision of the land, trees and a cloudy grey sky, created using a limited amount of old yarns to influence the outcome of the work. ‘Reflections on the Other side’, Miyuki Tatsumi (Japan). A monumental work wonderfully blending greys, blues and beiges. It tells of longing, and wanting to belong, drawing you into its story.

‘Cupid hangs onto the Earth’, Amanda Gizzi (UK). With Amanda’s piece the exhibition ends on an optimistic note of love and hope. Her tapestry is about the desire for the affection that we all want. After all, love is all we need!

These traditionally woven tapestries tell us stories of our time. They are varied in style, in subject matter and materials, from geometric to realistic; they are complex and metaphorical.

This exhibition challenges us in how we see our world and ourselves, and how we adapt to change or are forced to change. Its about the decisions and choices we make, the inequalities we experience, the haves and have-nots in society, the imbalance of power, and yet it is also a celebration of the human spirit and of the craft of woven tapestry and storytelling.

‘Weaving New Worlds’ was curated by Lesley Millar, Professor of Textile Culture and Director of the International Textile Research Centre at the University of the Creative Arts, in collaboration with the National Centre for Craft & Design and Rowan Bain, curator at the William Morris Gallery. Online catalogue Google issuu ‘Weaving New Worlds’ https://issuu.com/directdesign/docs/weaving_new_worlds_book_final/1?ff&e=1363289/62990826
Recently I had a solo show at the Zack Gallery in Vancouver and it was a wonderful feeling to see work that spanned a decade, woven between other projects, come together to make a single heartfelt statement about spirituality and our place in the world. This is a subject which has always been central to my art, but usually in a more subtle way. The show was called ‘Divine Sparks’ and consisted of three bodies of work referencing three religions and asked questions about how we worship today.

‘Future Reliquaries’ asks what we will worship in the future – not the bones of Christian saints encased in golden arms but rather the electronics and computers that rule our lives. A subtext is the link between three apparently separate but, in my mind, connected histories: weaving, computing, and religion. Weaving is a binary system of up/down, just as computing is a binary system of on/off. With the Jacquard loom, weaving was one step removed from the human hand. Today’s computers are merely very fast Jacquard looms programmed in binary code and thinking is now one step removed from the human mind.

Religion is not only a store of faith, it is a store of history and social values. Today, we are creating a new religion, worshipping the technology we have invented - the computer is an object of veneration, a concrete symbol of the birth of a new religion.

‘Integrated Circuits’ references spiritual practices of Indian religions and asks how we seek to enhance our bodily energies in this modern age. The traditional mudras or hand positions are engaged to help balance the energies of the yogi who sits within a sacred space of meditation. It is believed mudras guide corporeal energy up the spine to awaken the divine. At the centre there is a union between the consciousness of mundane reality and that of divine spirit. In the golden embroidery hoops I have woven golden hands in mudra positions melded to computer components and embedded in and connected to a motherboard. Who is in control of this program? Do we have any say in our lives anymore? We are becoming cyborgs, inseparable from our smart phones and other gadgets, losing touch with reality and the divine spark within.

And finally, the ‘Sephirot Series’, ten small feather tapestries surrounding ‘Tzimtzum - Transcendence’ on the gallery wall, asks how we can heal the physical and spiritual universe through our daily acts of Tikun Olam.

In Jewish Kabbalah, tzimtzum describes the first step God took to begin the process of creation by contracting his own essence to allow for enough room for our material reality. A single line of divine light flowed into the void and wrapped around itself the newly created spiritual qualities of understanding, wisdom, love, judgment, endurance, gratitude, foundation and presence, the sephirot. But these spiritual qualities were not robust enough to hold divine infinity, so they shattered and bits scattered here and there, becoming shells that trap and hide sparks of the divine light. Every day, by our good deeds, we seek to repair the darkness in this world (tikun olam), reuniting our spirit with this infinite light through the transcendence of the material universe.

For a review Divine Sparks please visit Rebecca Mezoff’s blog www.rebeccamezoff.com/blog/2018/9/27/the-tapestry-work-of-barbara-heller
The soundtrack had its own development cycle. The initial sounds were recorded by my husband Tudor in a public space, the music was written and performed by Andrew. Tudor mixed the components into a final version - a collaboration within a collaboration. For our piece we used a QR code so that we could have a soundtrack without having to put any technology into the final work.

I still don’t know how collaboration should work but I think we have now learnt a great deal on how to approach it. I do know that phone calls, emails and messaging can create in the minds of each collaborator an entirely different idea of what the joint work will be. Then it is possible to terrify your collaborator when you send in, to the proposal committee, an image of the intended finished work that bears no relation to what your fellow collaborator has in mind. At this point it is time to get hands-on.

We kept the original concept, meeting up when we could. We talked through and prototyped/sampled many versions, each bringing us a little closer to a shared understanding and a design which excited us both. We just had to keep going with developing it - changing tack, tweaking, trying different materials and being honest when something wasn’t working. Many iterations and months later, the final ‘put it all together’ day arrived. This was such a fun (and extremely long) day despite many aspects of the design and construction not having been worked-out in advance - because they could not have been. Ultimately it did all fit together and stayed true to our intention and, importantly, in a format that could be transported from home to venues.

Writing a proposal for a piece of work which does not yet exist is a challenge. During any design process ideas are likely to change considerably, so we did not know how the finished piece would look when we submitted the proposal. We focused on expressing the concept and defocused on the final execution hoping that would be enough for the jury. This approach was high-risk for us and an act of faith by the jury when they accepted it. If we had already been working in collaboration or had a design which could be fine-tuned for the theme ‘Sound and Weave’ it might have been easier and less challenging; I’d like to think the energy behind our high-risk approach comes through in the final piece - this is for you to judge.

Would we have created this piece without the unusual proposal? The process and the acceptance of the proposal did keep us working and refining for over a year. Perhaps that would not have been sustainable without the impetus of the proposal approach and acceptance.

I feel the process behind ‘Sound and Weave’ has resulted in an exhibition of great breadth and quality of work and a new edge for tapestry weaving, I am proud to be part of it. I wish though that there was a way of sharing with the visitors the background on what makes this exhibition different and how it came about because I think this is a dimension that is absent from the exhibition that visitors find interesting when they are aware of it.

The larger pieces of work do need space to breathe and be seen as individual works and this has been achieved so far with the hangings in Dundee and Twickenham.

With hindsight it has been a great opportunity to work differently, to collaborate with Andrew, a non-weaver, and has brought a new dimension to our creative practices. It is such a heartening experience to realise the commonality in the thinking and language with someone working in different media. We certainly have lots of ideas for further collaborations. For both Andrew and me it has been a springboard to further works and years to come of happy collaboration. It has been a journey well worth taking.

The link to the soundtrack accompanying ‘Perception 1’ is here: www.weaversbazaar.com/sound--weave

Or accessible via this QR code. Just point your tablet or mobile camera at the QR image and follow the instructions to hear the music.
As you make your way for the first time down an ordinary back lane towards an unassuming old brick workshop, nothing quite prepares you for what lies behind our green door. Walls of yarns, a sea of floor- and table-loom, spinning wheels, a hive of industry, a space devoted to woven textiles and the creation and use of yarns of all kinds. Weaver Becky Sunter oversees all this activity, teaching, encouraging and inspiring upwards of 50 weavers and spinners from absolute beginners to old hands.

Upstairs more table-loom, yarns and fleece but in one corner are looms of a different kind, upright, simple. Every Thursday morning a group of tapestry weavers, all at different places along their tapestry journey, come together to weave, learn, share ideas and inspire one another in this small but much loved space. A seemingly disparate lot, we have made a small family, supportive of each other, keen to share our experiences and keen to have others visit and join us.

Over a short period of time we have now fully embraced all that is BTG. The Weaving Rooms hosted one of the first Northern BTG meetings, where Becky shared her work and considerable knowledge of plant and animal fibres, and in March 2019 will host guest weaver Chrissie Freeth. Together with other members of the Northern BTG Group we have begun to plan a first Northern BTG exhibition for 2020, ‘Fabric of the North’.

The structure of learning tapestry at The Weaving Rooms is based very much around the individual. During the initial weeks or months basic techniques are mastered using samplers. As ideas, sketchbooks and skills develop, these are covered in depth, and individual taste, style and direction start to come through.

One project bringing together two very different weavers is that of Leslie Fox and Sally Reckert, the first time either of them has woven on a large scale and alongside another person. Inspired by Archie Brennan’s love of weaving a textile within a tapestry, I took a photograph of part of the yarn library. From this image we created a cartoon and used the yarns in the photo themselves to produce a panel not only deeply personal and individual to our space, but one that can also be used to instruct young weavers.

After studying tapestry under Maureen Hodge and Fiona Mathison at Edinburgh College of Art, I wove for a number of years in the studios at the Cleveland Craft Centre but then life took over and I stepped away from it for a while. To be back weaving is tremendously exciting. Tapestry classes began because people came and asked, so I showed them all I had learnt and now Thursday morning is one of my favourite times of the week.

During quiet times Becky and I are hard at work at our own looms. Sometimes terms and techniques overlap but our work is ultimately very different and this gives both of us inspiration and fresh perspective. As tapestry weavers we look smugly at the painstaking laborious process of warping up a floor or table-loom but then look away in jealous disgust as their shuttles make short work of the centimetres.

Neither Becky nor I are the most organised, business-minded women but we are passionate about what we do and devoted to keeping skills and techniques alive, passing on all we know to others.

The Weaving Rooms, Darlington is open to visitors. https://en-gb.facebook.com/theweavingrooms/

Jane Riley
www.rookwoodandhoot.co.uk
I was particularly keen to feature Ramses Wissa Wassef’s legacy the Wissa Wassef Arts Centre because I know of their increasing struggle to remain a viable organisation and to keeping the current weavers in employment. Being based in Egypt, with all the turmoil that lovely country has suffered over the last few years, they have found the challenges tougher and tougher as time has gone on, especially as other parts of the world come to the forefront of international media attention. It is so easy for our awareness to be deflected and I personally feel that as a weaver privileged to be born in an affluent, peaceful, and stable part of the world I have a part to play in supporting the centre in whatever way I can.

Whilst, individually, we may or may not have the wherewithal to purchase their wonderful tapestries, what we do have is freedom and the ability to speak out and promote the activities of organisations such as the Arts Centre supporting and employing local people. Since its foundation in 1951 there has always been the belief that children have an innate ability to create art and to profit from the process of art-making, through tapestry and now printmaking. The Wissa Wassef tapestries have a palpable sense of wonder, delight, playfulness and exuberance that just leaps off the textile making you smile. No cartoons are used, weavers of all ages weave from what’s in their minds. I am not a tapestry weaver, so I am not au fait with the various techniques employed, but I love the vibrancy of the pieces, and the aims of the Centre.

My article at the end of the series of interviews for the Online Guild is not a major contribution to saving the Ramses Wissa Wassef Arts Centre at the front of people’s minds by promoting its tapestries wherever and whenever we can. For the Centre to founder would be a disaster for the weavers and all future weavers in Giza, not to mention the people they touch through their tapestries.

It was begun by a wonderful man and continues to be supported by his family. You can find out more about them at the Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre website www.wissawassef.com

Stacey Harvey-Brown weaves 3D art and garments. She has exhibited internationally, and runs weaving courses from her studio in SW France. www.theloomroom.co.uk
Third Russian Triennial of Contemporary Tapestry 2017

Katie Russell

In September, 2018, I visited Moscow to see the Third Russian Triennial of Contemporary Tapestry in the Museum of Tsaritsyno, once a palace of Catherine the Great, a huge museum in the south of Moscow. It is both imposing and incredibly beautiful. The exhibition comprised tapestry weavings from Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Estonia.

This was my first visit to Russia. It was through Facebook that I found out about the Triennial. Over the years I have got to know weavers and artists in Russia, particularly following Andrew Madekin’s work. This was my opportunity to see his tapestries, and that of many other weavers in real life! I had made an effort to learn the Cyrillic alphabet so that I could read some words, my pronunciation was not great so having Muscovites showing me round the Triennial was a huge help.

I contacted Andrew and asked if we could meet up at the exhibition and if I could ask him questions about his work. He was very happy to do this and brought friends with him who were artists. Andrew spoke English really well, though there were a few words that we struggled with. We agreed on many tapestry aspects as we went round, particularly that it was better to see them in real life!

The exhibition was overwhelming in both the quantity of weavings and the scale of each tapestry. The smallest was equivalent to A2, and many were at least 1 x 2 or 4 x 2 metres. There were only a few 3D tapestries, some hung from ceilings and others that stood on plinths. Many had warps and wefts left hanging free, almost to the ground.

The themes were so varied it was difficult to arrange them into categories; the most popular were landscapes and abstracts, followed by figurative and domestic scenes; in many of them Soumak was used for texture. A lot of the tapestries had been woven on their sides and very few were framed. The majority were displayed on hanging rods or poles. I found it refreshing to see work that was not all framed, not all to the same size and not all on the same theme. It gave the individual weavers more freedom.

The exhibition was not just for professional weavers; novices could also enter, but the standard of all the work was very high. Catalogues from the previous Triennials were available, and over the years I could see changes in the exhibition.

Walking round the exhibition was both tiring and exhilarating, so much to be excited about, to be looking at a non-European exhibition was incredibly inspiring. Because the rooms were so large it was easy to display the weavings and there was a lot of natural light.

In one part of the museum away from the exhibition there were tapestry weavings in a section on Soviet Art. Not surprisingly the theme of space proved popular and the quality of the weavings was incredible. Triptychs proved popular in both the Triennial, and the Soviet Era exhibitions.

Andrew is a Moscow-based tapestry weaver and member of the Moscow Union of Artists. He has participated in exhibitions in various parts of Russia, Poland, South Korea, Holland and Italy. He studied painting and continues this interest by teaching workshops and writing books on art history.

Andrew Madekin’s weavings continue the tradition of classical tapestry. His work can be divided into two themes. He takes inspiration from Cubists such as Picasso and Braque as well as the Surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico. He also takes ideas from the architectural environment combining them with Biblical imagery. Andrew works large-scale and to commission. His tapestries are solely woven in wool, incredibly detailed, and technically very traditional.

I have to say thank you to Andrew Madekin, Professor Olga Petrova, Larissa Akulinina and Dimitri Nebogat for making me feel very welcome on the visit to the Triennial Exhibition and their assistance with the language!

To see more of Andrew Madekin’s work https://vsemart.com/tapestry-andrey-madekin/
Dovecot Studios launches new public programme

Kate Grenyer

Dovecot Tapestry Studio is celebrating 10 years in its converted public baths’ home in central Edinburgh. When the new building opened in 2008, for the first time the general public could visit the working tapestry studio and come face-to-face with our looms and creative output. From the Weaving Balcony and its displays, visitors can view tapestry being woven on the floor below so gaining, an in-depth understanding of the process. Before this the Studio worked behind closed doors in Corstorphine, on the west of Edinburgh. Dovecot was a ‘hidden gem’ admired throughout the world of weaving – but not a visitor destination.

Beginning with the exhibition Henry Moore Textiles in November 2008, Dovecot’s exhibition programme is now 10 years old.

In 2018 we embarked on a new series of exhibitions, expanding our ambition to look more widely at the core mission has always been to bring new audiences to Dovecot, many of whom knew nothing of tapestry before visiting, whilst giving regular museum and gallery visitors to the idea of tapestry; weaving, not least connections between Arthur Liberty and William Morris. Morris was a great evangelist for tapestry weaving seeing it as the finest of all art forms. William and May Morris will be the subject of Dovecot’s Winter Programme at the end of 2019. Before this, our Edinburgh Festival offering will be an exhibition of tapestries by the hugely popular artist Grayson Perry shown at Dovecot for the first time. I can hear the voices of many readers of Tapestry Weaver ringing in my ears, aghast at the materials alongside an investigation of what sound and texture. The starting point for my workshop ‘Sounding out Colour and Texture’ is to take a “sound walk” around the Maritime Quarter and sea front of Swansea and listen to all that we can hear, record different aspects of it, and then use the recordings back in the gallery as a starting point for design and selection of materials in a simple woven tapestry.

The language used to describe music and/or sound is very similar to that used to describe other media - media that involves colour, texture, pattern, shape, form, and rhythm. We use these words in tapestry weaving to describe what we are doing, how and why we are doing it, what it is about - and we ‘feel’ these words as we handle the materials, structures and techniques we work with.

The 2019 programme is accompanied by an exciting series of events, including the opportunity to meet the Dovecot weavers and to hear from the artists we are working with.

Liberty: Art, Fabrics & Fashion
ended 14 Jan 2019

Orla Kiely: A Life in Pattern
opens 7 Feb 2019

Grayson Perry: Julie Cope’s Grand Tour Expanded
opens 25 July 2019

May Morris: Art & Life
opens 29 Nov 2019

To keep up to date visit www.dovecotstudios.com and join our mailing list.

Kate Grenyer curates Dovecot Gallery’s exhibition programme KateGrenyer@dovecotstudios.com (0131 550 3660)

From 6 February 2019, we will be working with Orla Kiely to present her exhibition ‘A Life in Pattern’, which offers a privileged insight into Kiely’s love of pattern and her influence on contemporary taste, in particular the design revival for mid-century interiors, fashion and colour palettes.

The starting point for my workshop ‘Sounding out Colour and Texture’ is to take a “sound walk” around the Maritime Quarter and sea front of Swansea and listen to all that we can hear, record different aspects of it, and then use the recordings back in the gallery as a starting point for design and selection of materials in a simple woven tapestry.

Other sound clips will be available as well as selected music or that of your own choice (if you bring it).

The focus is on experimentation with different materials alongside an investigation of what sound is and the ways in which it is described - primarily colour and texture.

If you listen to critics and others working in the world of music, you will often hear them using language that could, if you came in on the middle of a conversation, lead you to think that they were talking about something quite different - something more visual and tactile.

Sound as a starting point for Tapestry Design and Weaving
Alastair Duncan

Sounding out Colour and Texture Workshop
at Mission Gallery, Swansea.
16 - 17 March 2019.
For more information contact Alastair Duncan alastair@acmd.co.uk

Alastair Duncan is an artist working in fibre, photography, sound and graphic design. He has a strong interest in texture - tactile, visual and aural. www.alastair-duncan.com

All photos © Alastair Duncan

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Tapestry Weaver

Free to BTG members
£7.50 to non-members

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UK Associate £25
UK Associate Group £45
EU/Rest of the World £40

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Issue 26
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Text: Please supply text in WORD document or other plain text format. Do not use any formatting other than standard punctuation.

Content: Provide an informative account that is easily read. All articles will be subject to editing for length and clarity.

Images: Please do not add images to your document. Image specifications: 300 dpi. Save image as a .jpg with the highest quality and label the file with the artist's last name, the title of work, e.g. Smith, Summer.jpg and photographer's name. If sending images by iPhone or mobile please select Actual size before sending.

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Welcome to our new members
UK: Rhoda Daniels, Lois Gardner, Sonia Heywood, Helen Kipling, Sarah Lee, Gill Lightfoot, Mary Low, Elizabeth Russell, Helen Smith, Nicola Winkley, Marion Woolcott.


British Tapestry Group Exhibitions 2019 - 2020

National Group hosting
Sound and Weave
Swansea College of Art, UWTSD, Swansea.
A curated exhibition of work exploring the boundaries and language of traditional tapestry weaving.
For more information, see BTG website.

South East Group hosting
7th - 11th May, 2019.
A Riot of Small Woven Tapestries
Brighton Library, Jubilee Street, Brighton
Taking place during the Brighton Festival, a small format exhibition from members of BTG South East.
For more information, contact Sarah McLean, 01273 724713 or sarah.s.mclean@gmail.com

South East/London Group hosting
14th April - 2nd May 2020
Windows on Weaving
Haslemere Museum, Haslemere, Hampshire
Following the widely acclaimed ‘Inner Sounds’ exhibition at the same venue in 2018. The theme selected to allow for wide interpretation.
For more information and timetable, contact Mike Wallace. 01730 233 718 or mikewallaceuk@yahoo.co.uk

Northern Group hosting
Call for submissions. ‘Fabric of the North’ a travelling exhibition themed on Northern landscapes, industrial archaeology and social history, as expressed in tapestry. BTG’s North of England Group will host the exhibition at two venues:
May 7th - 26th, 2020.
Kirkleatham Museum, Redcar.
The exhibition is open and non-juried, but entries will be vetted for compliance with thematic and technical criteria. Works may be advertised for sale through artists’ websites.
For more information and entry form, contact Sally Reckert sally@reckert.com or 01748 822 640

For information about placing an advert and for current rates contact: advertising@thebritishtapestrygroup.co.uk

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