

Exhibition Review

William Jefferies: A Life in Tapestry

Morley Gallery, London

20 January to 7 February 2026



Review by Ngaire Thomson, January 2026

Diploma Piece 1975

As an ex-student of William Jefferies, I must firstly declare that I have a positive bias towards any work that William produces, I find his work inspirational and this exhibition does not disappoint.



Tomblet

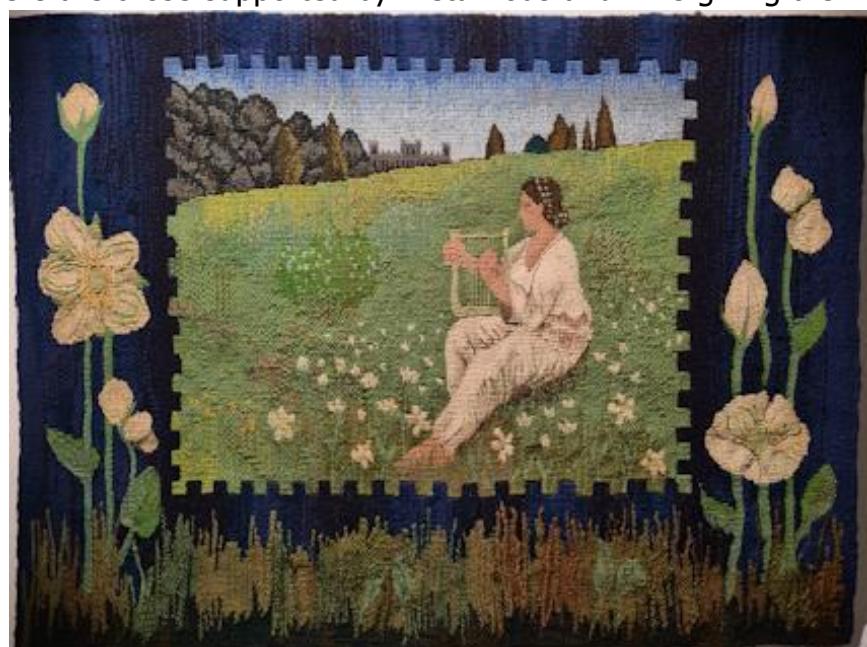
This is an exhibition of an artist's progress through an extensive career from the Diploma Piece of the early 1970's to more recent work and through it all you will observe his exploration of texture, technique and materials.

There are almost 100 works spanning five decades within the exhibition. As such there are figurative works but also many textural abstract pieces. However, the exhibition is not arranged chronologically; more by theme, preoccupation, technique or materials such as jute, fishing line, sisal and hemp woven with wool, silk, cotton.

Each piece expresses the possibilities of this art form to tell stories and excite the weaver's imagination such as *Grass of Parnassus*, *Dynasties* and *Tomblet* all completed in the 1970's but demonstrating an evolution of style and experimentation of materials and the capacity of tapestry to hold form. This continues into the more recent work exhibited through colour,

texture and shape. For instance, there are those supported by metal rods and wire giving a 3D effect, the undulating tapestries such as *Horizontal Tapestry*, *Vertical Tapestry*, and *Franco* along with those that are even more structural like *Cage*.

Each tapestry in the exhibition deserves to be examined and the weaving and construction considered. Other pieces where the viewer may wish to pause are *Jurassic* and *Ambage* due to the number of techniques and materials used along with the structure of these works. However, all the pieces in the exhibition offer something to the viewer regardless of whether they are familiar with tapestry.



Grass of Parnassus



Bobbing Boys

The Bobbing Boys tapestry is a very large tapestry at over 2 metres wide that was woven in the space of 3-4 months, inspired by a swimming instructional manual and took 6 people to hang in the exhibition due to its weight.

On the basement level of the Gallery there is a wall of pictures taken from William's scrapbooks and notebooks filled with his designs and sample materials. Along one of the walls in the basement pinned unceremoniously to display boards are samples that have been woven to experiment with materials and design before larger work is undertaken, these in themselves are also enthralling and intriguing. They are there so William can provide students of the

already booked out workshops accompanying the exhibition examples of the techniques he is teaching, but the visitor to the exhibition is also welcome to get up close and examine them.



Jurassic

The book that accompanies the exhibition offers an insight into William's life as an artist and a timeline of his career and accomplishments and includes images of many of the tapestries in the exhibition.