

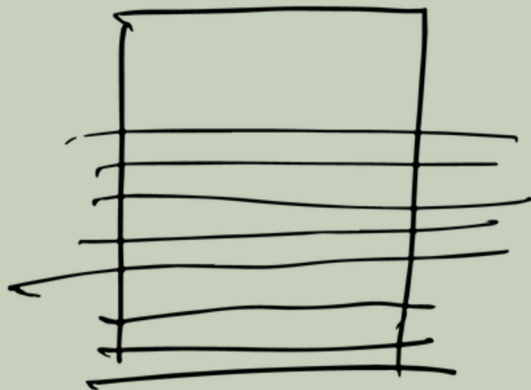
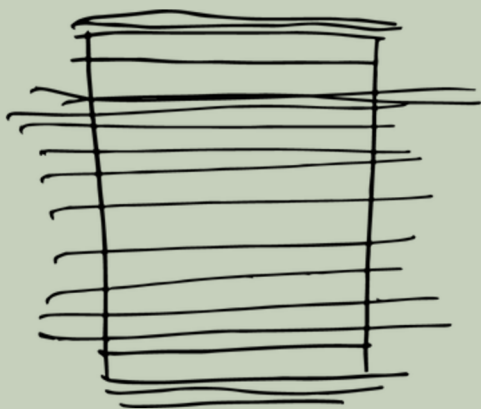


Weaving matter: material experimentation

12 October 2024 - 16 February 2025

Curator: Liz Williamson (1949-2024)

Artists: Christine Appleby, Hannah Cooper, Blake Griffiths, Amanda Ho, Lise Hobcroft, Kelly Leonard, Jennifer Robertson, Jacqueline Stojanović, Jane Théau, Ilka White, Monique van Nieuwland



A scrawled page of notes sits beside the loom where unfinished, a work of florist's wire, linen, and eucalyptus-stained silk waits patiently. Various gauges of wire spill across the table tangled around balls of silk meticulously stripped from excess cloth from dyeing workshops. A sacred scene in the work of a weaver; a moment where hand, eye, equipment, and material congregate to serve their role in the creation of cloth – and where until her final moments Liz Williamson was doing just that; *weaving matter: material experimentation*.

Liz envisioned an ongoing weaving exhibition that celebrated the woven form. This edition a focus on contemporary material exploration mediated by the writing of Anni Albers who suggested material can “take on the burden of

what has been brewing” in our lives¹. Albers was right – beyond ourselves, these materials have taken on the heaviness of grief. We have lost a mentor, a teacher, an advocate, and a friend.

Liz’s unfinished weaving is a poignant provocation and perfect introduction to this exhibition, now as much a tribute to her unwavering commitment to this craft as a celebration of woven potential. Challenging eleven makers to experiment and “change what they know they can do”² is a bold curatorial premise: a testament to Liz’s trust and care as a curator. Artists have developed, refined, and extended ideas first presented in *Weaving matter: materials and context* at Australian Design Centre, Sydney, in 2023. Our darling Liz reminded us all that weaving is not merely a craft, but a profound means of expression – an ethos holding her in esteem of the weaving greats. May she rest in eternal peace.



¹ Anni Albers, Material as metaphor, unpublished panel statement dated February 25, 1982 and later published in *Anni Albers: selected writings on design*, edited by Brenda Danilowitz, Wesleyan University Press, 2000. Page 73

² Liz Williamson, [video], *Obsessed: Compelled to Make*, Australian Design Centre, 2018.

Textile makers have long defaulted to the use of fibre for weaving. The diversity is huge, from plant fibres such as nettle, agave, flax, cotton, hemp and bast to organic fibres such as hair, wool and silk; and from modern industrially produced artificial fibres such as perlon, nylon and polyester to mineral fibres such as asbestos and carbon³. Today, an ever-increasing scrutiny on the art objects material integrity has pushed makers to adapt, modify, and critique their chosen materials beyond simply fibre. It is not uncommon to find a warp of wire, a weft of glass and a loom dressed in industrial waste. Artists here have made considered material choices and married them with a considered material structure, transforming the *matière* as Anni Albers would explain, that is, the surface quality of material. As weavers, the interlacing of *material choice* and *material structure* is the site where cloth ‘takes on’ meaning.

³Schmidt, H. (2019). A common thread: Warp and weft of thinking. RMIT Publishing.



Amanda Ho's *Studies in Shifu* magnify the role of kami-ito (hand-spun paper yarn), a Japanese tradition that transforms sheet paper into precious cloth. The woven quality of paper, and linear compositions evoke ancient texts where language is image, paper, code and cloth⁴. Similarly, Blake Griffiths' work draws on the tradition of Viking weavers. Panels of vaðmál hang coated in beeswax, revisiting the art of smörring or waterproofing cloth.



⁴Capone, F. (2020). *Weaving language: A lexicon*. Brill.



Taking direct inspiration from the natural world, Christine Appleby and Jane Théau's work redefine weavers as the architects of cloth⁵, creating three dimensional structures signalling strength and resilience in the face of environmental devastation and heavy resource extraction. Appleby's maquettes give life to old materials, including basalt, to reference the Bombo Headlands where now, nature is reclaiming its place without intervention. Théau continues a body of work in horsehair and copper wire; life affirming twists and turns shaping a testament to renewal. Horsehair in paradise green recalls the first shoots of new growth after fire.

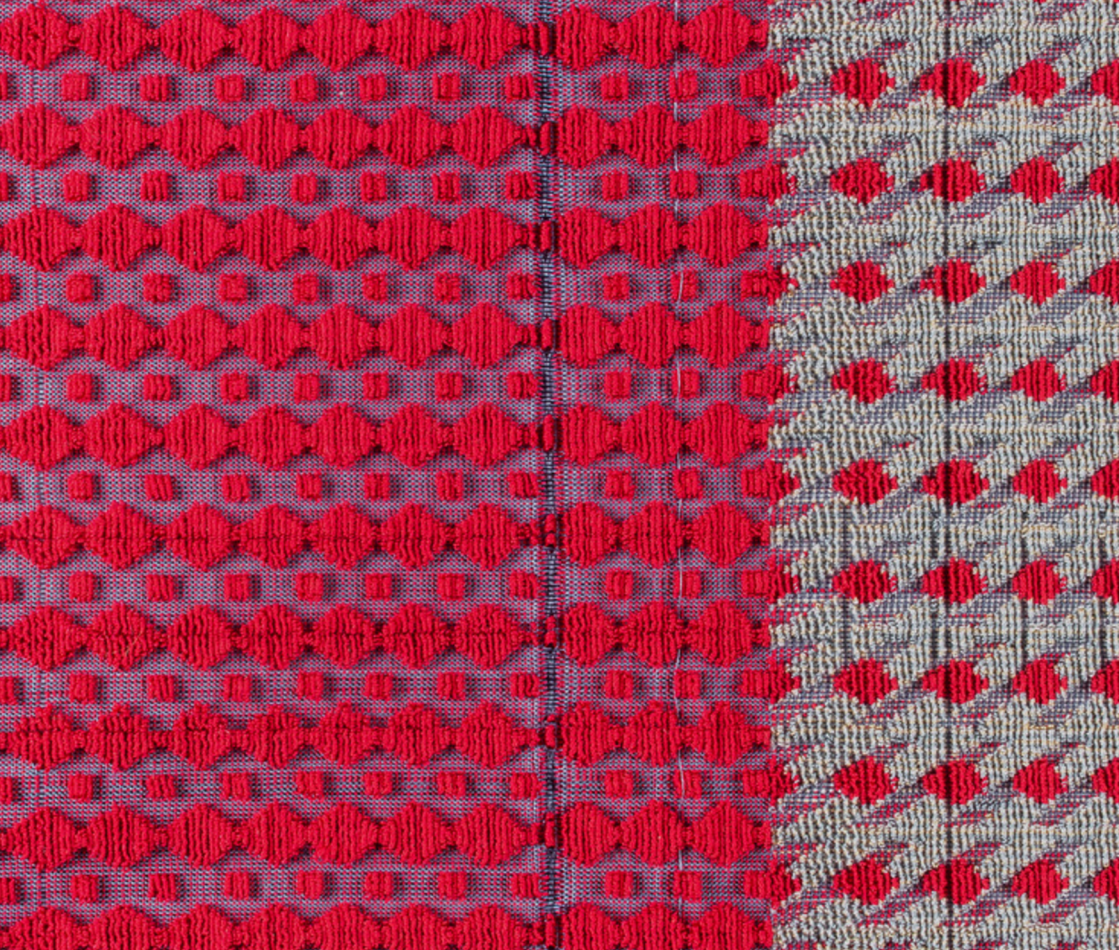
⁵Liz Williamson, [video], Architects of Cloth, University of New South Wales, 2009.

On the topic of waste, Monique van Nieuwland, Lise Hobcroft and Kelly Leonard confront a darker side of our consumption. Hobcroft seamlessly transitions from paper and plant to plastic as an additional weft on linen panels - the playful series constructing a delicate tightrope between the natural and synthetic world. Van Nieuwland's *rubbish weavings* compress the debris of her neighbourhood within a jacquard warp. Almost disguised, the waste disappears into cloth and mirrors a global pattern of consumption that will leave our earth's surface permanently altered. Kelly Leonard weaves industrial waste from Broken Hill's mining industry. With a primary use as a detonator, the recycled copper-core bell wire finds a secondary function in her weaving as a transmitter to which Leonard attaches a field recorder to listen and observe the noise of rock.

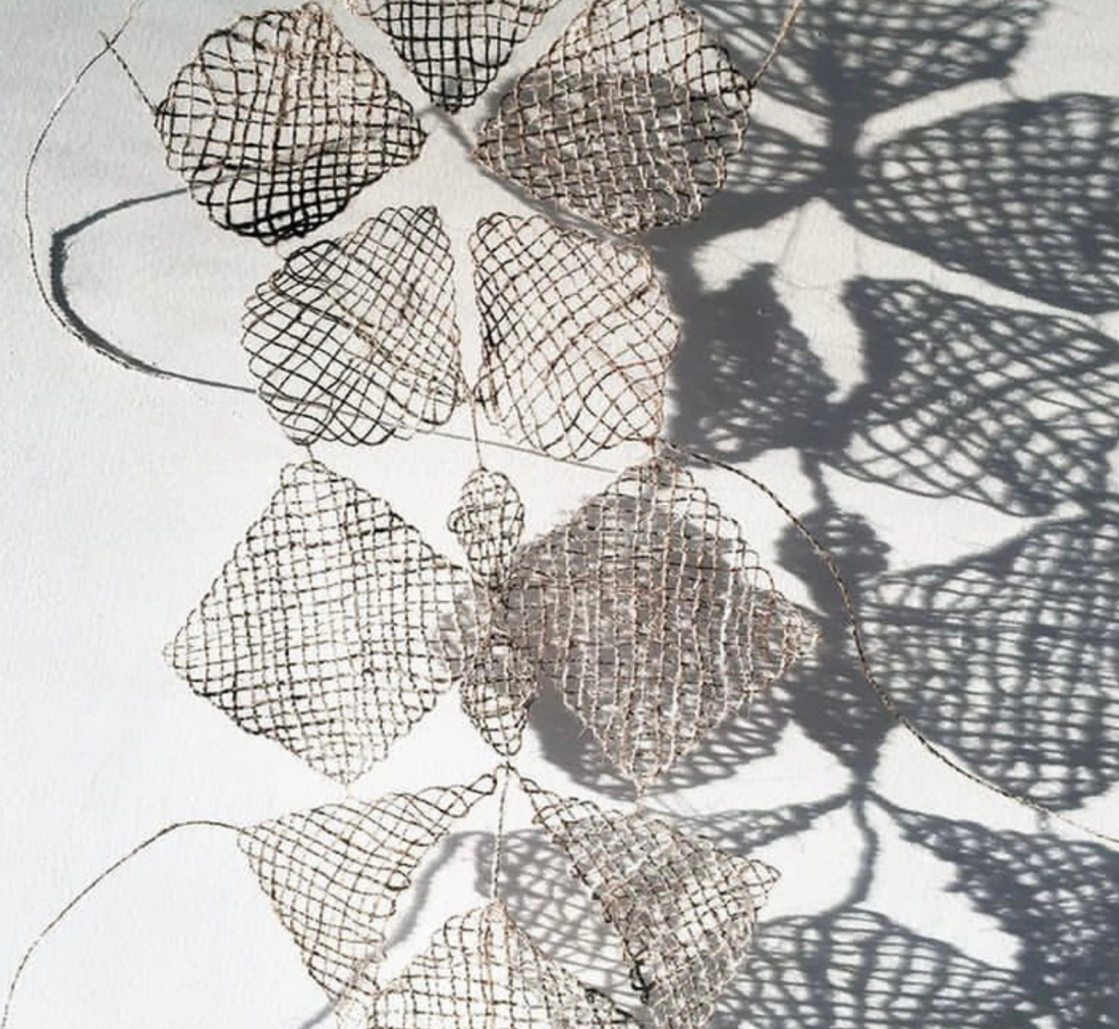




Hannah Cooper's work speaks directly to Albers' philosophy that explains the interplay of light and material as a site where ideas become tangible. Cooper has embodied Anni Albers's way of working by listening to her materials; weaving a weft of luminescent gold that has been 'warped' by hand as the material slips over a transparent monofilament. Jennifer Robertsons works also rely on the interplay of light. Transparent pockets woven with 14 tiny shuttles fashion a three-dimensional structure akin to patterns found in nature; giving form to a fractal; a never-ending complex pattern of movement and transition.



Jacqueline Stojanović confounds the idea of material structure by using crossword puzzles in lieu of a weaving draft. Stojanović ‘puzzles’ the loom with this structure in a process she describes as painting to find the limitations of the countermarch loom. *Diptych VI 2022* pokes fun at western modes of display; the handwoven cloth stretched in tension with industrial machine woven linen. But too, the work honours the simplicity and joy of a daily ritual – also considered deeply by Ilka White. Imbuing materials with daily thought - compassion, confusion, beauty, and burden - a ‘core-sample’ has been woven of collected materials, gifted, and grown, bringing forward the complexity, and interconnectedness of life, death, memory, and responsibility.



Between weaver and material, we will never know the intent of Liz's final weaving where three delicate shades of silk and wire have taken on life's greatest burden. Liz leaves us with a powerful reminder of weaving's vital role in record keeping, storytelling and poetry, but more importantly, has brought us together once more in material experimentation. Liz's legacy continues to inspire makers around the world; a world where weaving will continue to matter.

Essay written by Blake Griffiths



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Image Credits:

Cover: Jane Théau, *Annelida* (detail) 2024, horsehair weft, copper warp.

Page 2: Liz Williamson, *Sketch* 2024.

Page 3: Blake Griffiths, process image (ocean fulling vaðmál).

Image courtesy of Léa Ménard.

Page 4: Jennifer Robertson, *Viscoelasticity* 2024, carbon fibre/poly, lacquered paper, resin.

Page 5: Amanda Ho, *Script - Cursive* 2024, linen warp with hand spun paper, handmade paper waste.

Page 6: Monique van Nieuwland, *Fast Fashion Strata* (detail) 2024, linen warp, weft: recycled fast fashion rag strips weft, rust/compost/natural dyes, Discontinued weft, handwoven Jacquard.

Page 7: Kelly Leonard, *Transmission 2* 2024, Broken Hill Bell Wire, cotton, minerals.

Page 8: Hannah Cooper, *Warping the weft 2* (detail) 2023, fishing line and synthetic metallic embroidery thread.

Page 9: Jacqueline Stojanović, *Fontana* (detail) 2022, handwoven silk velvet on MDF.

Page 10: Ilka White, *From my selves* (detail) 2023, home grown Native Flax (*Linum Marginale*) and artist's own hair.

Page 11: Lise Hobcroft, *Paper II* (detail) 2024, paper string on linen.

Back: Christine Appleby, *Igneous Maquette I* 2024, hand-woven, basalt, stainless steel and cooper wire on Perspex. Photo Fiona Bowring.



All images courtesy of the artists.

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Ararat Rural City

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facility of Ararat Rural City Council

A. 82 Vincent St, Ararat, VIC 3377

T. +61 3 5355 0220

E. gallerat@ararat.vic.gov.au

W. araratgallerytama.com.au



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