Jo Barker – Tapestries
Solo Exhibition

Hand-woven tapestries exploring translation from drawing, painting & digital manipulation, into yarn. Investigations focus on colour intensity; capturing spontaneity of drawn and painted marks and fleeting qualities of light.

Submitted by Jo Barker
Output No. 1

Tapestry – ‘Resonance’ 2009
172 x 104cm
This output comprises:

• New body of work and production of exhibition catalogue as a result of receiving funding awards from Scottish Arts Council, Theo Moorman Trust for Weavers and Inches Carr Trust

• Invitation from Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh for solo exhibition

• Subsequent showings: exhibitions in 8 galleries in UK & USA

• 3 peer review articles
• 2 book sections
• 5 catalogues

Research questions asked:

• How does the use of digital tools at the design stage of the working process translate into the hand woven making stage?

• Is it possible to capture the spontaneity of a graphic drawn line & layered painted marks in the slow, traditional construction technique of Gobelin tapestry weaving?

Research for this exhibition involved:

• Study trip to Cairo to observe Coptic tapestries in Coptic Museum, plus traditional weaving workshop, Harrania, Egypt

• Learning & application of photoshop skills to assist design of tapestries


1. Resonance – 104x171cm
2. Drift – 103.125cm
3. Vermillion Glow – 82x80cm
4. New Green – 38x52cm
5. Rose Haze – 18x19cm
Resonance – 104x171cm
Drift – 103x125cm

New Green – 38x52cm
Vermilion Glow – 82x80cm

Rose Haze – 18x19cm
Current practice in the field of tapestry weaving finds itself falling into one of three major methods of design & manufacture.

1. Studio weaving
   Skilled craftspeople handweaving artists designs eg Tracey Emin at West Dean Studio, UK
   [Link to West Dean Studio, UK]

2. Machine manufacture
   Digital jacquard looms producing artists editions eg Chuck Close at Magnolia Editions, USA
   [Link to Magnolia Editions, USA]

3. Individual artist weavers
   Artists working from their own studios producing one-off hand woven tapestries from their designs.
   [Link to Jenniemoncur.com]
My work falls into category 3 (previous page).

It is important to me that the work is designed and made by the artist; for the work to have creative integrity. It is also important to exhibit alongside contemporaries whose professional practice aligns with my own and whose creative philosophy contain the intellectual rigour that I respect. For example, within the field of tapestry weaving:

**Sara Brennan.** The work is minimalist referencing artists such as Barnett Newman and Rothko. Often producing series of works which nudge subtle colour palettes of dark and light tonal areas, creating tensions between notional sections of land, sky and variously non specific

**Susan Mowatt** currently focuses particularly on the process of weaving itself. the importance of making, connectivity to materials and experiencing the ‘flow’. Working with fragments and lines of weaving she re-assembles them and creates large and small scale installations.

**Sue Lawty** explores the links between contemporary use of unconventional materials and traditional practice. Constructed pieces - tapestries, assemblages, and drawings in two and three dimensions - are abstract and minimal. They explore repetition and interval; investigating territories of expression in raphia, hemp, linen, lead, tiny stones or shadow.
Whilst my work remains 2 dimensional, textile artist colleagues whose work I respect, working in 3 dimensions, have also been co-exhibitors.

Anna Ray has a multidisciplinary textile approach, embracing traditional methods of making employing embroidery and drawing techniques in a wide range of materials whilst also using digital technology. Her work explores psychological and physical experiences.

Deirdre Nelson. Research, humour and a wide range of ‘craft’ techniques – including knitting, embroidery, lacemaking – contribute to projects dealing with social and environmental issues, whilst also engaging communities in the process.

Inspiration from sculptors working with perceptions & illusions of space & light.

James Turrell

Anish Kapoor
Traditionally, tapestry designs have taken the form of drawings, paintings or photographs which are translated into woven images. I was interested to incorporate digital skills into this stage of the process – an area under-explored at this time in the field – and further, to explore the potential of capturing the vibrancy of digital-screen colour luminosity in the subsequent translation into weaving with yarns.

The funding awards (p1) resulted in the body of work created for the solo exhibition “Jo Barker - Tapestries” at the Scottish Gallery Edinburgh in 2009, plus the production of a full colour catalogue.

Exhibition catalogue “Jo Barker – Tapestries”
http://issu.com/michaeldancer/docs/jobarker_14
Drawings, collages, paintings and photographs were developed from selected primary research which were manipulated & further refined in Photoshop.

In this case the starting point was a study visit to Cairo, in particular qualities of fleeting light filtered through wooden Mashrabiya screens. These were combined with gestural drawn marks; pools & hazes of watercolour paint.

All images: designs in progress, from sketchbooks, photos, paintings to digital manipulations. An intuitive response is employed at each stage of development until a suitable conclusion is reached.
METHODODOLOGY

Designs were scaled up to larger dimensions to suit a gallery setting and translated into woven tapestries using wool, cotton, linen and silk yarns.

In particular the method of weaving employs the use of fine gauge yarns to mix subtle combinations of tones & blends of colours in order to create the illusion of layers of painted or drawn marks.

This process is slow. Larger works take 8-12 weeks to complete.

“...there is increasing awareness and appreciation that time spent on thinking through making creates something of particular value & quality in our contemporary world.”

Amanda Game
Curator: “Follow A Thread”
ISBN: 978-1-905865-20-8
DISSEMINATION : FURTHER SHOWINGS OF WORK

2009

10th Wave III: Art Textiles & Fiber Sculpture
Browngrotta Gallery, Connecticut, USA

Invited exhibitor
1 of 7 representing UK. Total 72 international exhibitors.
A comprehensive examination of contemporary international art textiles.

“The 10th Wave III will offer a comprehensive view of this medium, through the work of a large group of accomplished artists, at a time when the movement has achieved critical and popular acclaim.”
Tom Brown, Curator


Exhibition catalogue
2009

COLLECT – International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects

Saatchi Gallery, London

Represented by The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh

“Collect ” is the UK’s annual Art Fair for the Applied Arts, a partnership exhibition with the Crafts Council, London and attracts leading galleries from around the world exhibiting the work of international level makers.

Work exhibited: ‘Resonance’
2009

‘Follow A Thread – Six contemporary responses to the art of tapestry’

Ruthin Gallery, Wales
Touring to Harley Gallery, Welbeck & Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh

1 of 6 artists working within the field of tapestry.

Catalogue ISBN 978-1-905865-20-8

Work exhibited: ‘Resonance’, ‘Vermilion Glow’, ‘Rose Haze'
2010

Stroud International Textiles Exhibition
‘Visions into Colour’

Museum in the Park, Stroud
Exhibition opened by Sir Christopher Frayling
Invited as 1 of 11 exhibitors
Catalogue
Artists talk

Work exhibited:
‘Resonance’, ‘Vermilion Glow’,
‘Cobalt Haze’, ‘New Green’, ‘Rose Haze’
DISSEMINATION: FURTHER SHOWINGS OF WORK

2011

That was Then: This is Now

City Art Centre, Edinburgh

Retrospective exhibition
A survey of Scottish Tapestry spanning 50 years
including works from the City Art Centre’s
tapestry collection

1 of 16 exhibitors

Work exhibited: ‘Resonance’, ‘Blush’

Work featured on Gallery banner
2012

Retro-Prospective: 25 years of Art Textiles & Sculpture

Browngrotta Gallery, Connecticut, USA

Invited exhibitor. 1 of 8 representing UK. Total 63 international exhibitors

"The works included in "Retro/Prospective: 25+ Years of Art Textiles and Sculpture" will reflect the origins of the contemporary textile art and sculpture movement," says Tom Grotta, founder and co-curator at browngrotta arts. "There will also be current work by established and emerging artists, to explain where the movement is now and to predict what's ahead."


Work exhibited: 'Resonance'
1. “Five tapestries are on display, each providing a sense of spontaneity and looseness of mark that belies the realities of their construction.”

2. “...these works withstand & deserve considerable scrutiny. Close inspection revealed the quality & density of weaving, the painstaking combinations of threads & wools that in combination create Barker’s bold and spontaneous gestures”.

3. “…colour seems as though it seeps across the surface”.

Embroidery Magazine
Dr Jessica Hemmings. Mar/Apr 2009, p54

Modern Carpets & Textiles for Interiors
Dr Jessica Hemmings. Spring 2009, p13

Crafts Magazine
Dr Jessica Hemmings. Jan/Feb 2010, p60
“Tapestries were among the most prestigious of art forms, created for the mightiest in the land and valued for centuries. Despite its illustrious history, tapestry weaving is actually a simple technique that requires little equipment or expenditure, and can be done anywhere. Written by a prominent tapestry weaver, this lavishly illustrated book gently leads you through the whole process with detailed diagrams and exciting work by contemporary weavers. It will be useful to the absolute beginner, but experienced weavers will also find new ideas and techniques to tempt and inspire them.”
Textiles: The Art of Mankind

Author: Mary Schoeser
Publisher: Thames & Hudson
ISBN: 9780500516454

Textiles are the most ubiquitous and diverse creative art form on earth. This new book celebrates their spectacular and enduring appeal like no other.

Mary Schoeser's knowledge is gleaned from a lifetime in the textile arts to present a sweeping survey of the role textiles have played throughout history.

- Over 1,000 historical and contemporary images and highly informed texts illustrate the huge variety of materials, as well as their possible manipulations and treatments.
- Detailed descriptions include histories of private collections and underscore the importance of context for appreciating the detail of fabric and cloth.
- An extensive resource section provides information about museum and textile associations around the world, making this the one book that all lovers of textiles will want to own.

Mary Schoeser is a leading authority in the field of textiles and is Honorary President of the UK Textile Society. Her previous books include World Textiles: A Concise History, Silk and Sanderson, all published by Thames & Hudson.

Work featured: Vermilion Glow

A major new large-format, sumptuous publication that highlights the beauty and complexity of textiles around the world and down the ages.

Work featured on p49 – ‘Vermilion Glow’