

WEAVER'S WORDS

Weavers contributing to the collective cloth woven during the Local Industry project (part of the Knoxville Museum of Art exhibition Anne Wilson: Wind, Rewind, Weave) during the months of January to April 2010) were invited to contribute their thoughts and histories on weaving. Weavers were asked how and why did you begin weaving and why do you continue to weave today? Weaver's responses are organized alphabetically by first name. Dialogue was initiated and compiled by Libby O'Bryan.

Andrea Donnelly

Then:

I was introduced to the loom in my first textiles class at NC State University. At the time I had no particular interest in weaving: it was a choice among many and I thought I would give it a try. The first few weeks were rather torturous as I learned how to plan out a warp and dress the loom. Every step seemed to require me to count at least 500 of something...I wondered if I would ever get to the weaving part. But even after I sat down at the loom and began to cycle through my set of 6" wide pattern samples, I was pretty sure I would never weave again. After all that work, I'm weaving diamonds and zigzags? I couldn't see the appeal. But after samples came an open-ended project. Though I was much more ambitious in my warp, the set up process seemed smoother. A few days later I sat running my fingers across a wide expanse of taut vertical lines, lines in three dimensions. As I wove I followed no particular pattern but watched these lines rise and bow, rise and bow, lost in the poetry of slow-building cloth. I became a collaborator with the material, an investigator of the limitless possibilities I saw hiding within the structure. I learned a new sensory language there at my loom: the shimmer of metal heddles, the soft shifting of threads, a rhythm internalized between passes of the shuttle. This was my introduction to the sacred space of weaving, and as I think back upon that moment when things clicked into place, I can see that I was always meant to be a weaver.

Now:

I am a weaver, and I am an artist: today these two most vital elements of my being are inseparable.

The weaving process itself is a catalyst for making: I am constantly exploring the capabilities of structure and pigment, of loom, hand, and mind... Each exploration leaves me with new questions, and a deeper certainty that this language I am forever learning will continue to surprise and delight me for the rest of my creative life.

Weaving teaches me patience, and respect for material. Sometimes I think I can understand the world through the behavior of a thread. As I hold an angry and impossible-looking knot in my hand, I can still recognize the single line in, and the single line out, of the tangle.

Weaving connects me with myself. I understand and appreciate my body through its fascinating memory of process, observing the development of my sensitivity as it is recorded in years of woven cloth. My body is a graceful and imperfectly lovely machine.

Beyond the self-awareness and real visceral satisfaction gained from the actions of weaving, I also use weaving as a conceptual tool. I imbed images in my woven structures. I lay still and silent stories down in the passes of my shuttle through the warp.

With yards and yards of cloth in each work, I trigger the memory of our bodies: the subliminal understanding of cloth as shelter, comfort, and veil. The cloth I weave is not the kind of cloth that people know in their everyday lives. It is first familiar, then upon closer inspection, strange.

I work within this shift between understanding and disorientation, within the space of disappearance and materialization, within the slow passage of time and a blurred and frozen moment. I work from within the cloth I weave, and the image I imbed: the action, the history...all woven up and distilled into the poetry of simplest structures and complex messages.

Location:

Richmond, VA

Anne Larsen

Then:

I began weaving September 2007 in my introduction to fibers class at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). It was the first assignment we had and we wove 6 inches each on a sample weaving. It was my first week at this school and when I wove my six inches I thought it was just the coolest thing.

Now:

I don't weave often but when I do I think is a really cool way of making. The slow process, the structure and the fact that you creating something from relatively nothing is like magic. I also was able to get to know my step-father better once I started weaving and spinning. I never knew him well and we didn't have much in common but it turned out that in the 70's he was really into fibers art. it was how I started really getting to know him.

Location:

Chicago, IL

Anne Wilson

Then:

I first became interested in weaving as an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan School of Art, although a formal fiber program had not yet been established. After my second year at U-M, I took some time away from school to study with Kathryn Edgerton in Northville, Michigan. Kathryn was a production weaver of functional textiles and from her I learned incredible techniques, often working with 40 epi linen warps in a diversity of traditional weave structures. With this sample weaving portfolio and a background in art school, I transferred to Cranbrook Academy of Art to finish my undergraduate degree. Working with Gerhardt Knodel as my teacher at Cranbrook, my love of textiles grew with his knowledge and enthusiasm for process, textile history, and art theory. The sculptural woven work I made at Cranbrook was of its time -- large and textural, influenced by the work of Ritzi and Peter Jacobi and Magdalena Abakanowicz. After Cranbrook, I spent one summer at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts as an assistant to the Jacobis and this experience was also of great influence to my development as an artist.

Among my many wonderful teachers, artist/weaver Trude Geurmonprez was a key advisor in graduate school at the California College of the Arts (formerly CCAC). She along with sculpture professor Bella Feldman and textile art history professor Ruth Boyer were of great influence. This was an exciting time in the San Francisco Bay Area when multiple histories were converging: the international 'art fabric' movement, feminism, the contemporary art use of fiber/fabric (Morris, Hesse, Christo, Rauschenberg), and multiculturalism (the opening of the 'art canon' to non-Western forms, formats, and histories including textiles).

As a recent graduate of CCA, I was first hired by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1979 as a 'Visiting Artist' to teach weaving. I had learned to draft on computers when living in California and brought this knowledge to SAIC, petitioning a local corporation to give us the early Atari computers to use for student drafting. The school owned a sea of handlooms and we were able to buy an early computer assisted Macomber loom. I was also asked by art history professor Robert Loescher to teach textile art history through the Department of Art History, Theory and Criticism, a background I had gained through graduate studies in art

history at CCA, augmented by post-graduate guest curating of historical textile exhibitions for the De Young Museum Downtown Center in San Francisco.

Now:

I am now part of an incredible team of artist teachers who have collectively developed the Department of Fiber and Material Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Weaving (both hand loom and digital jacquard) continues to be a vital part of our curriculum. Teaching colleagues Joan Livingstone and Christy Matson are among the 'Chicago to Knoxville' weaver participants within this exhibition.

My own artwork has taken many turns, yet I feel that my skill-based knowledge of weaving has been foundational to understanding material process. I have been doing a lot of reading in research for this exhibition at the Knoxville Museum of Art and find the following passage of great interest:

"Weavers are, by nature, organizers; the craft demands attention to detail, an ability to see patterns, and deferment of gratification until a rigidly defined series of small actions add up to a whole greater than the sum of its parts."
From Phyllis Alvic's book "Weavers of the Southern Highlands," p. 146.

It is a great pleasure to work with so many weavers in the *Local Industry* project at the Museum, and to collectively weave a bolt of cloth in consideration of the complex position of textile production at this time in the world.

Location:
Chicago, IL

Amy Putansu

Then:

I discovered textile design quite by accident in 1992 while studying at Rhode Island School of Design. My public high school education in a rural location offered a very limited art program, not including fiber arts. Heading to RISD to study painting, I stumbled upon a textile course elective, and I was completely hooked. I also assumed it would make better sense as a major program of study, potentially offering more job opportunities. And so it was that I majored in textile design, and for the next three years was engrossed in comprehensive textile study. Seventeen years later, I have not stopped weaving in one way or another.

Now:

Today, I am an educator in the field of fiber and weaving is the foundation of our program (Haywood Community College Professional Crafts Division). However, I have continued weaving continuously in many forms, such as for cottage industry, for my own small business as a studio artist, as a gallery manager and more. I continue because it is my calling- it is what I offer to the world. The profession of educator seems to sum up and complete my purpose as it relates to fiber. It is invaluable to be a part of the seed of inspiration when new weavers and textile artists find their voice.

I have recently arrived at a place in my artistic journey where I can be more experimental, and dig more deeply into certain concepts and techniques. My most recent textile work explores human relationship dynamics while employing a rare technique called *ondulé* weaving. I find it to be a suitable vehicle because unlike traditional woven cloth, the

interlacing system is not the result of perfect grid-like construction. Instead, ondulé creates vibrating, sometimes irregular curving lines. The viewer senses there is something unusual at hand, but may not be able to put a finger on it. True to my own aesthetic, the style is minimalist in an attempt to pare down to the bare bones of expression.

My approach to textile creation has always been primarily material driven and supported by woven structure. The ondulé work is a continuation of this approach. With 16 years of weaving experience built along the natural paths of life development I am discovering more enhanced methods of expression. It is wonderful to be in a community that supports craft so strongly.

Location:
Waynesville, NC

Arturo Alonzo Sandoval

Then:

My first encounter was in my senior year of college where I observed a graduate student weaving a large red cloth. My first thought was, "I want to do that". <The artist who was weaving the red cloth in 1965, Ms. Evangeline Montgomery (who worked for the NEA in the 1990's), seemed very happy and I thought to myself, "I want to do that". I never saw the finished product after that initial visit.> (later addition) So, I took a beginning class from Dr. Virginia Hoffman in 1965 during my first year of graduate school at Cal-State Los Angeles.

Now:

While weaving one evening during my first year in graduate school I heard a spiritual voice tell me "weaving will be very important to you". That same year I was ushered into the U.S. Naval Reserve. That voice's message stuck with me throughout my Vietnam tours, and when I returned to complete my M.A. degree at Cal-State I wanted to honor that voice and continued weaving as my focus. Was that voice an ancestor? All I know is that when I turned forty I returned to my birthplace in New Mexico and discovered that my paternal grandmother's male relatives were all weavers! In every artwork I create I try to include an interlaced element to continue my belief in that voice. My current Pattern Fusion series uses interlacing as the foundation structure and design for fabricating the entire surface after my machine stitching and embroidery is completed.

Location:
Lexington, KY

Bhakti Ziek

Then:

I learned to weave in NYC in 1969 at the Crafts Students League. I wanted to go to a commune and thought my BA in psychology was useless knowledge, so I decided to learn ceramics and weaving so I would have skills that would make me a valuable commune member. When the teacher asked what I wanted to learn, I didn't know anything, so I said, everything. She ran me through a series of samplers--twills, double cloth, leno, knots,

tapestry--and I made sampler after sampler. Afraid to go to a commune alone, I ended up finding a program in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico that would grant me an MFA in 9 months--so I went there. That turned out to be silly (I knew enough to realize I wanted an MFA that meant something) but led me to Guatemala and brocading--which really grounded me as a weaver. Eventually I went back to school (University of Kansas) to get a BFA in textiles, and then years later to Cranbrook Academy of Art for an MFA in textiles.

Now:

I weave because I still find weaving mysterious and miraculous. There is so much to learn, so no matter how much I know, I always feel like a beginner. (Have you read Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind by Suzuki-roshi? He says "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few.")

I usually call lectures about my own work "From Backstrap to Digital Jacquard." 40 years of weaving has shown me that all looms function as a tensioning device, holding one of the elements (the warp) under tension so they can be split easily forming a space (the shed) for the other element (the weft) to be inserted. Of course different looms make certain types of cloth weaving easier than others. I can do imagery through hand-picking of motifs on a backstrap loom--satisfying but quite time consuming. Or I can do imagery on a hand jacquard loom with each lift of the warp (forming the path for the weft) controlled by the loom (lift information created first in Photoshop, then sent to the loom through a loom-driver software)--satisfying and quite fast. As I have aged, I find I don't have the patience to do some of the slower processes in weaving, like brocade, that I used to enjoy. I guess it is the sense of my mortality, and that I had better use my time wisely. If I didn't have a TC-1 loom (Thread Controller 1, invented by Vibeke Vestby and sold through Digital Weaving Norway) and I wanted imagery in my cloth, I would have to consider brocade, or painted warps/wefts, or even embroidery on top of finished cloth--but since I have a TC-1, I can play with imagery freely within the restrictions of the loom (i.e., I only have 880 threads to use--whether set up at 30 ends per inch, which yields a cloth approximately 29 inches wide, or set up at 60 ends per inch, which yields a cloth approximately 14.5 inches wide). The TC-1 has enabled me to experiment with fine threads, and complex weave structures that were used in historical cloths. I am particularly interested in Safavid and Ottomon textiles created on drawlooms (precursor to the jacquard), and right now I am doing research in Indonesian textiles created on backstrap looms but thinking about translating my findings into jacquard fabric. I feel fortunate that I have had so many years to study weaving, have been able to delve into the many small worlds or ways of working within the larger umbrella of weaving, and that it continues to yield new areas for exploration, so it continues to be a mystery for me to unravel. I have co-authored two books on weaving, one on backstrap technology and one on digital jacquard--again, the two ends of the spectrum. They are Weaving on a Backstrap Loom by Nona Ziek and Judith Ziek de Rodriguez (Nona was my mother and Ziek de Rodriguez was me in 1978) and The Woven Pixel: Designing for Jacquard and Dobby Looms Using Photoshop by Alice Schlein and Bhakti Ziek. The latter can be ordered at www.wovenpixelorders.com.

Location:

Randolph, VT

<http://www.bhaktiziek.blogspot.com>

Bobbi Shortlidge

Then:

When I was 6 years old, I was given a potholder loom kit with a metal loom and loopers. I really loved weaving those potholders! I went one step further than most children would ever

dream of doing. I took my potholders that I had woven and went door to door selling them to my neighbors for 5c apiece! I was always artistic growing up and when I went off to Kansas University, I majored in Commercial Art (Graphic Design and Advertising). Most of my classes were in the Design Department. A very WIDE hallway ran down the center of the Design Department, with classes on both sides. I was fascinated to see that there were about 20 looms lined up down the middle of the hallway. I was fascinated by this "sea of looms" and found out this was the Weaving Department. Looms were in the middle of the hall, utilizing the only space available for them. I had to take prerequisite classes my first 2 years and when I was finally given the chance to choose an elective, I choose Weaving I, and I was "hooked." Luckily I was exposed to those looms in the hall for my first 2 years, because if they weren't there in the hall, I might never have signed up for that first Weaving class! During the summer before my Junior year, all the looms were moved to a building behind the Art Department. My first class was in the new space with lots of windows and plenty of light. I signed up for Weaving II, III and IV. I graduated with the Commercial Art degree, married, moved to Chicago, got a job and saved my money and bought my first loom a year later, a Macomber Loom like those looms down the hall in the Design Department at KU. Little did I know back then that I would later take more weaving classes at The School of the Art Institute, weave on computerized looms and later help teach on those looms. Ten years later I moved to Rhode Island to go to graduate school at RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) to earn my MFA in Textiles. Before I began my Thesis work, I had a 6 week internship at Malden Mills, a weaving and knitting mill in Massachusetts. I was hired during the internship, and 2 days after I graduated, I began working full-time creating weaves and designs for their huge Jacquard velvet looms. A year later, I helped the company create the Jacquard flat loom woven division. But the future of weaving mills in the USA was not to last long. It was sad when the Woven Division was closed down and Malden Mills went Chapter 11 three years later. Luckily they are one of the few operating mills left running in the United States today, still producing the Polar Tech and Polar Fleece knits that they had invented before I began working for them. I feel blessed that I had the opportunity having the job as a weaver and designer for those wonderful years at Malden Mills!

Now:

Now that I look back on my life, I do believe that weaving found me when I was 6 years old - that potholder kit offering me the beginnings of my weaving career. It was there for me in the hall at KU's "sea of looms" telling me to take a class, more classes at SAIC and on to RISD grad school and finally my internship at Malden Mills wanting me to take the job and stay in New England. Weaving found me, offered me the experience of a lifetime of opportunities. I feel I have been led in the directions where I have traveled, and my path to come full circle back to Chicago. I guess that's why I believe that I have weaving in my blood. And to think, it all started with selling those 5c potholders!

I enjoy creating cloth from start to finish. I enjoy the entire "process".... that choosing yarn, colors and then creating the weaves and using the weaves to create a design. I enjoy the challenge of how a weave is made. When I see a new weave, I enjoy figuring out the interconnections of warp and weft, and I enjoy creating new weaves from old weaves and discovering the interlacing of the structure. After the weaves are created, I enjoy the design process by choosing some of these various weaves to create a design. I go to the loom and after I weave a bit on the loom, I look at what I have just woven and say to myself, "How can I change this or that weave, or how can I change the design to make it different?" Then I weave my changes on the loom. My creative process at the loom, is to make changes to the various weave structures and/or the design as I weave. Each warp design becomes a transition on the loom. As I create each transition on the woven cloth, each of my "experiments" become a visual record of my continuous thought process as to how I create each of my ideas. This cloth records my thought process as it transends throughout the woven cloth, from experiment to experiment, from start to finish. I can then use my many woven experimental transition cloths (sometimes called "samplers" or "blankets") to design my larger woven art pieces for the wall or for creating yardage for cloth for making a garment or for creating upholstery cloth for furniture.

So I guess you can say, I enjoy my own creative process how I design cloth from start to finish. When I choose from my weaves and designs to create a final project, I hope that I have created something new and not copied a cloth that already exists. Having worked in industry, I saw a lot of mills copy other mills's fabrics. Many times my boss gave me fabrics to "copy," but I created my own weaves, chose my own yarns, chose the colors and then I created new designs.. My resulting fabrics that I created were new fabrics, totally unlike what was woven by other mills. Many of the fabrics were new and not like anything ever done before.

My 2 computerized looms are in storage. I have no room in my tiny apartment and they wouldn't condone the noise anyway, so I am looking for a studio space where I can weave and I might also teach and share my weaving experience with others. I can not wait to weave again! I find that when I have a period when I don't weave for a while, I have a burst of creativity and I can't wait to see where my weaving will take me from here. I am also arranging to give future lectures and workshops here in Illinois and Wisconsin and looking for many more opportunities to continue sharing my weaving with others outside of Chicago

Location:
Evanston, IL

Bonnie Manning

Then:

I moved to Norris, TN and drove by the Appalachian Arts Craft Center every day. I decided one day to stop at the center and was amazed at what I saw. I read in the Norris Bulletin, the local weekly paper, about weaving classes held every week on Tuesday. I called about the classes and decided to try it out.

Now:

I continue to weave because I really love it. It is a time for me to visit with a group of women, like me, that have a passion for doing something they love. We share this passion and comradery every week. It is also exciting to gather yarn of various colors and put them together to create something. Watching it form right before your eyes. Sometimes it is good, sometimes not so good. It is a continuing learning process.

Location:
Norris, TN

Carl Bretz

Then:

My introduction to the concept of weaving occurred when in grade school where we read "Silas Marner" by George Eliot. I was fascinated by the story and the description of the weaver of Raveloe. Later when I was employed in mental hospitals weaving was one of the prescribed activities of the Occupational Therapy Departments. I enjoyed watching the people weave.

Anne Wilson: Wind / Rewind / Weave. Knoxville Museum of Art

About 1970, while living in Massachusetts, I had the opportunity to take weaving lessons from a local weaver. I have been weaving as time allows ever since.

Now:

Weaving for me is a very satisfying , relaxing hobby. I enjoy working with yarns, patterns and colors. It is always fascinating to see how the interaction of the yarns can produce products of beauty and utility.

Location:

Oak Ridge, TN

Catharine Ellis

Then:

As a child I always worked with fabric and making things. I made clothes for a doll and sewed most of my own clothes since the age of 12 or so. I started working in a fabric store when I was 16 and continued a love affair with cloth. But it never occurred to me that I could make cloth until I was introduced to a weaving class in college. As soon as I threw the shuttle and made my first fabric I was in love and wanted to find some way to do this for the rest of my life. Isn't it amazing that I have!!

Now:

I still think in terms of how fabric is constructed. Each fabric that I make is stimulated by problem solving and searching for solutions, whether they are technical, aesthetic, or simply exploratory. I still find the process of weaving brings great satisfaction to me on many different levels.

Location:

Waynesville, NC

Christy Matson

Then:

I took my first weaving class as an undergraduate fiber major at the University of Washington. I thought I would love it but I didn't. In fact, I had even bought a Leclerc hand-loom before I took the class, because I was positive that I would LOVE weaving. I took a series of weaving classes as an undergrad, which were requirements for my BFA, and never developed a love for the process. It was not until I was out of school that I came to appreciate/love weaving. I took a class at the Jacquard Center in Hendersonville, NC with Bethanne Knudson in 2002 and it was as if a light went on. Through Jacquard weaving, I found the ability to marry structure and image (particularly digital imagery) in a way that I had always felt unable to do with the hand-loom. I have been using weaving as one of my primary art-making media ever since.

Now:

I continue to weave because I love it and I am continually challenged by it. I love the experience of transforming singular threads into a solid piece of cloth. I love the process of turning chaos into order. I love the feel of yarn. I love the feel of cloth. I love watching my tacit understanding of yarn and structure develop each year that I weave. I love knowing that it will take me a lifetime to learn how to do this and that even then, there will still be so much that I will not know.

Location:

Chicago, IL
www.cmatson.com

Coral Turner

Then:

I first learned to weave in elementary school when I would go to weekend art workshops, which were taught by Suzie Richter. These classes used a lap loom and at home I had a table loom that I used to make gifts. In high school art class I wove at least one more project on the lap loom that was included in the TVA Fair. In undergraduate school, at The Rhode Island School of Design, I spent one semester in textiles and took all surface design classes. I switched to sculpture because I didn't want to weave, which was the main focus of the textiles program. In graduate school, at Arizona State University, I took weaving to learn how to use a floor loom, but weaving never made sense for the concepts I was dealing with for my thesis. After graduating I taught weaving at ASU for a semester and once again tried to find ways to use weaving for my work. While I enjoy the process of weaving I haven't found a way to integrate it into my art.

Now:

I haven't woven since 2006 and that was in conjunction with teaching weaving at ASU. If I had access to a floor loom I might use it just for fun, but currently I knit in my free time and continue to screenprint and use needlepoint for my art.

Location:

Knoxville, TN

Cori Saraceni

Then:

I have a major in Science and Art and Crafts!..true,,love each. The loom itself attracted my sensibilities on lots of levels. IT'S FRIGGING INFINITE for one thing. I love detail, working with my hands (cleanly...never, ever be a potter) and the adventure of adding all types of materials on a loom is captivating. I knitted at 5 years old (my parents would not buy a TV, . . . now I'm thankful, but then, I just didn't want to sit around)...throwing one shuttle in a minute compared to 112 stitches with two needles made knitting seem archaic and sloooooow. :>)) I saw my first loom in college and it went from there.

Now:

Weaving is so soothing to every sense...it simply invites me over, open to me always with a smile. I love the whole thing...each tangle or loose thread or the incredible beauty it brings with structure or the color/weave effect. Once a weaver always one. . . even though one may not practice.

Location:

Barnardsville, NC

Dan Wittenberg

Then:

I began weaving during my high school years. I was originally taught by a local Artisan by the name of Irene Suyeoka; my aunt Lori Kosky, a weaver herself, led me to Irene's studio after my parents sent me in Lori's direction. They knew she wove, though I didn't, so when I expressed an interest in it during my Junior year, they encouraged me to find out more from her. My interest arose due to it's presence in some of the novels I enjoyed at the time.

Now:

I find great satisfaction in the ability to fabricate material. The literal, physical production of weaving, and a useable product, is something I enjoy. The actual exchange by which material is produced in woven textiles is very logical, which gives me comfort in a sometimes overwhelming world. It helps me center myself, in a time when I feel it's particularly easy to feel over-inundated with information.

Location:

Chicago, IL

Dana Decareaux

Then:

I started weaving as part of the curriculum at the Appalachian Center for Craft. As a beginning student, I was drawn in by the rhythm of the process and the infinite possibilities of pattern, color, and texture.

Now:

The things that interest me the most creatively are those that involve repetition and rhythm. I find weaving to be a meditative process and often return to it when I need to reset my mind. These days I am stimulated by experimenting with new materials in my weave structures, such as fiber optics and conductive fibers.

Location:

Smithville, TN

Darrel Morris

Then:

I learned to weave as an early undergraduate in a fiber class at the University of Kentucky (1983). I am not a weaver.

Coming from a painting background, in graduate school at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, I started to look back at the area I came from (south-eastern Kentucky) and it's arts and crafts. The textile traditions and their relation to feminism and economics were very important to my work.

Now:

I have worked in textile media professionally since 1985. My work with textiles reflects the relationship to the culture I grew up in and the visual and physical power of the structures that I found myself coming to in my college years.

Location:

Heidrick, KY

Dianne Simpson

Then:

My grandmother taught me to sew, crochet, and embroider, which evolved into weaving. I have been a full time weaver for 16 years. I make mainly functional art, baskets, rugs, and wall hangings; weaving is an avenue of personal artistic expression for me.

Now:

A child who was watching me weave said, "It's like magic." That is how I feel about weaving. I really don't know what or how a piece is going to look until I start weaving. It's like opening a present every time I weave. I love the way the fabric changes when put into the warp and the way the fibers bend and changes shapes.

Location:

Heidrick, KY

Edwina Bringle

Then:

Weaving began at Penland School of Crafts in the late 50's when Bill Brown was the 2nd director. My sister Cynthia had come to Penland to help Bill and I was in the car. My career, at the time was as a Radiologic Technologist in Memphis, TN. I was fascinated and through the next several years took vacations to Penland to study weaving. Lots more stories connected with it all.

Now:

Weaving is a subject one could study forever and not get to the bottom of any one subject as the processes seem to ask more questions. Have always worked with color in many ways and still continue to discover new ways of putting threads together to end up with a textile. Rugs, blankets, scarves, stoles, tapestry etc.

Contact:

Penland, NC

Faith Wilding

Then:

I learned as a child in South America, and then had a wonderful year of studying weaving and shaped soft sculpture with Walter Nottingham in Wisconsin in 1969. (Glen Adamson has a paragraph about me and that experience in his Thinking Through Craft book, and I also talk about working with Crochet in my essay "Monstrous Domesticity.")

Now:

I haven't woven in a very long time.

Location:

Chicago, IL

Frances Fox Shambaugh

Then:

Both my grandmothers were weavers; my paternal grandmother was a skilled weaver primarily of coverlets. She died before I was born but I have a copy of a newspaper article about her, and have interviewed relatives about her. My maternal grandmother wove in her home for the Cottage weaving industry of the Pi Beta Phi's at the Arrowcraft Shop in the 1930's. For her it was just a way to earn extra money.

My mother wove a little as a teenager but had not put on a warp and basically did not remember how. But in 1980 when I was living in Atlanta and my children were grown and I had room for it, my mother brought me her mothers loom, handmade by my grandfather that had been stored in the attic for 50 years. Since neither of us could weave I came to Arrowmont for a 2 week weaving class, returned home, wound my first warp around 2 kitchen chairs, and wove a set of placemats, with selvages so bad I had to hem them.

I really just wanted to regain a skill that had been lost in the family, I expected that it would be like macramé and other crafts that I had enjoyed, I would weave a few items and that would be the end of it.

Now:

My husband died in 1981 and I returned to Gatlinburg, which has a heritage and economy based on tourism and crafts. I began to weave wall hangings, that were sold on consignment in Arrowcraft shop, and in 1983 they offered me the position of Assistant Designer Weaver for the Cottage weaving Industry that my grandmother had wove for 50 years earlier.

This unique weaving program was the only cottage weaving industry in the U.S All other handweaving centers, had the weavers come to the center and weave there, on looms belonging to the center.

At Arrowcraft the Designer Nella Hill, a Master Weaver had worked for the program for 30 years, 15 as Designer. Over the years She alone had designed and put into production hundreds of items of linens and clothing. Ordering the materials, designing the items, making complete directions for the weavers, distributing the necessary yarns to the women who would take the skeins and cones of thread and yarn home to their own looms where they would make the warps 50-125 yards long, weave the items, finish and press and return the finished product to be paid by the piece. Over the years 2 and 3 generations would be weaving for the program at one time. There were 80 women weaving at the time I worked there. During the 3 years that I worked there Nella shared all the work with me, the designing and production and supervising the weavers. That apprenticeship was equal or beyond any Masters program, and during that time I began to realize I would never be able to explore all the many avenues of weaving.

I live in Gatlinburg TN, where I own a Fine Art & Craft Gallery, I continue to weave in my home Studio Wall Hangings and a line of Wearable Art. I am also a historian and storyteller, focusing on the history of arts and crafts in this community.

Location:
Gatlinburg, TN
FoxhillGallery.com

Geri Forkner

Then:

I've always been interested in making things. I was introduced to knitting and crocheting as a young child by my grandmother. I continued to gravitate towards the fiber arts, determined to make one of everything. I taught myself to spin and weave as a young mother then, over many years, continued with a more formal education through guilds and university classes.

Now:

I weave today as a means of personal expression.

I finally got over trying to make one of everything and admitted that I needed to pick something and stick with it to master it. I've limited it down to two or three things by now, but that is still a better focus than "everything". I feel like I have a good "vocabulary" of techniques to use to get to the solution of what I am working on at the moment.

I've worked with young children for many years. Most are more interested in the making than the end result so a broad range of crafts works well for them. They are always so proud of what they make. It is especially gratifying to watch them look for then point out the section they made in a group project. The discipline aspect is difficult to nurture in the amount of time most kids get in art classes in school. Art is more about entertaining them than building skills.

Weaving connects all cultures and all times so it is a natural in the classroom where teachers

are always looking for curriculum connections.

Location:
Sweetwater, TN

Glen Kaufman

Then:

I began weaving in an adult education art center in Columbus, Ohio while serving as an officer in the US Air Force in a 9 to 5 office job. My wife and I first studied pottery for several terms and often heard the thumping that emanated from the second floor of the old firehouse where the center was located. When we inquired the response was, "Oh, that's the weavers." Eventually we climbed the stairs to see what all the noise was about. We encountered a room full of looms, busy students winding warps or bobbins, throwing shuttles and a dynamic teacher, Twila Alber. The next term I began weaving for reasons that are not clear now but certainly as a result of what I saw of the process of building a textile from many threads on a thing called a loom plus the overwhelming enthusiasm of Twila Alber, a sculptor who had also studied weaving at Cranbrook in the 1950's. The one project I recall from that experience was a pile rug that was intended to be rectangular but with the repeated unrolling of my proud teacher ended up quite oval in shape. With unending encouragement from Twila I reluctantly applied to Cranbrook, with no hope of being accepted considering my background with a BS degree in speech education. I was accepted and had the great privilege of having master weaver, Marianne Strengell, as teacher, role model and mentor during the years at Cranbrook and beyond. The rest, as they say, is history.

Now:

Actually, I have not been weaving much in recent years as my creative energies have focused on screen print with metal leaf application, sculptural forms, and installation and performance collaboration. But as a weaver I'm ready to get back on the bench and treadle away.

Location:
Athens, GA and Kyoto, Japan

Heather Allen-Swarttouw

Then:

I switched to textiles when attending graduate studies at the University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth. I wanted to punch a visual hole in the floor much like a painter creates a visual window on a wall. I did not want to use the floor cloth as a medium (a long history of floor cloth in New England) My paternal grandmother was Finnish and wove wool rag rugs. I had grown up with braided wool rugs and rag rugs from Grammy. I wanted a substantial rug as my ground as I was interested in creating functional art at that point. My grandmother had already passed away. They didn't teach rag weaving at the college so I took a weekend workshop on rag weaving. I have been weaving rag rugs and now rag woven wall pieces ever since. That also led to research and writing "Weaving Contemporary Rag Rugs".

Now:

I work in the rag weaving tradition of using recycled or reclaimed cloth so it is environmentally good, uses up cloth that may not be suitable for other applications and creates a wonderful ground for me to paint with thickened dyes and other surface design techniques. I love the process, meditative quality and the physicality of weaving. When I weave I am tied to weavers and weaving history around the world, the collective spiritual aspect of weaving cloth. Rag weaving is transformative of 'rags' or cast off to something new, a new cloth. I am not a production weaver but weave when I have the opportunity.

Location:

Asheville, NC

www.heatherallenswarttouw.com

Isaac Facio

Then:

I began weaving in my late teens as a college student. Born in Juarez, Mexico and raised in the United States, I was introduced to dress making and pattern drafting at a very young age. As most immigrant families in the region and at the time, this was a way of support. Understanding garment and pattern making well, experimenting with fabrics, felting, dyeing was an exciting transition. Weaving came as a natural curiosity to fabric making, initially, as a progression to making clothing; where-

garment: pattern: fabric: fiber, et cetera...

Now:

Through weaving, I explore the process to control shape, style and material. Having a practical grounding and a natural interest for art, dress and design, I continue to weave to investigate new ways of manipulating corporeal structures and cloth. More specifically, I am creating 3D structures as a solid interlacement of fiber; where-

fiber: garment

not as,

fiber: fabric: pattern: garment,

My fascination with the woven structure stems from a dressmaking tradition. An attraction to its geometry and mechanics is geared towards the advancement of textile technology and dress. This research directs my art and design practice that I continue, today.

Location:

Chicago, IL

Jane Lackey

Then:

In 1968, after two years at the University of Tennessee, I moved to California and transferred

to the California College of Arts and Crafts. I met Trude Guermonprez and through her work saw a relationship between weaving and drawing/painting. I was drawn to both disciplines so the potential of combining media suited my inclinations to touch materials and to embed drawing in a surface. Something new seemed to be present in this relatively unknown field of art. My first actual weaving class was with an older weaver from Europe named Leo who had a teaching studio on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley--I wanted to get a jump-start during the summer before entering art school. The majority of my training however was with Guermonprez at CCAC. The process of making a web of structure out of loose string plus her insistence on innovation was all encompassing. As I learned more about dyeing, drawing and painting, my focus shifted to combine dye processes with woven structure and I worked separately as well on drawings. I developed a body of woven work at Cranbrook during graduate study and during my early years of teaching at Kansas City Art Institute. During the mid to late 80's, I began to draw more directly on industrial felt, prepared cork fabric and other materials and stopped weaving.

Now:

Today weaving is not part of my usual art process. I paint on cloth or paper often stitching drawn lines or I use other materials such as stickers or tape for drawing as they are suitable to the subjects of my work. The surface qualities of materials, so observed in weaving cloth -- translucency, luster, pattern and texture are always critical considerations in my process of making.

I am excited about Anne's project and an opportunity to weave within limitations she establishes. The prospect of creating a woven textile in collaboration with many other participants and one that is of large scale and fine elements fulfills a desire to have a role in a production requiring many focused on a single effort. Because I grew up around some of the "local industry" of east Tennessee (Born Chattanooga, raised Cleveland, Tennessee), it is also the placement of this project within the context of its location that intrigues me.

Location:

Santa Fe, NM
www.janelackey.com

Jeanne Brady

Then:

I began weaving in graduate school as part of the fibers curriculum at East Carolina University. Weaving was part of the Graduate curriculum, so I had to take weaving. I had never woven prior to grad school. I did not enjoy it at first, but I learned that weaving and weave structures could better express some of my ideas.

Now:

Working with a medium that uses fiber for expression, there is the potential to see how weaving can be "useful" either as product(utility) or as concept (non-utilitarian). Weaving becomes my choice of medium/format when I wish to express an idea that needs the hand-woven. I rarely weave product (scarves, hand towels...). I almost always use weaving in conceptual work that deals with response to the environment; weaving's temporal qualities; the fact it is a process of taking individual strands and interlacing them (metaphor) and de-constructing them (further metaphor). Many ideas can be expressed with commercially woven cloth but I can get JUST what I need from a hand-woven = it expresses the idea better. And

many times, I have to weave what I want because no such thing exists. It is also fun to just play with using the medium of weaving purely conceptually. As a teacher I began to ask why I had seen so little weaving used in ways other than for rugs, clothing, or home furnishings. And began to explore its potential in my own work. I am now teaching these ideas in my class.

Location:
Smithville, TN

Jennifer Sargent

Then:

I began at art college in England as a graphic design major. I was following my parents desire that I have a job after college. I had never heard of textiles as a subject matter but in my first year shared a flat with a student studying textiles. I was fascinated and after a my first year I changed my major. The major was divided into printed and woven textiles and by the time I decided to change the only space left in the programme was in the weaving so by default I became a weaver.

Now:

It is a centering activity, one of the few where I am able to be in the present moment. I also love the process, the luxury of taking time, working with my hands, building work from disparate pieces. Add to all that the sense of continuity and the connection with other times and cultures.

Location:
Memphis, TN

Judi Gaston

Then:

I began weaving after working several years doing knotting techniques of my own designs and then attending a showing at the McClung Museum on the University of Tennessee Campus. It was a masters show by two women artists working in fiber, Judy McCarthy and Sue Ferguson. I thought the various textures were just beautiful and I knew then that I would not be happy until I could learn some of the many ways to manipulate fiber, weaving was at the top of the list.

Now:

In addition to weaving as my livelihood, I find it is a constant source of stimulation. It is rewarding to me to create harmony in color, texture, and design and produce timeless wearables. I find that unique clothing generates interest and thus communication between people. Today's world supports an additional need to me to reflect environmental concerns in the creative process and out of this need I have been weaving clothing made from recycled waste items - my heart is really in this.

Location:
Knoxville, TN

Kathrin Weber

Then:

I always loved fiber work - starting with making my own clothes in the late 60's early 70's. I started weaving as a student at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, NC. Warren Wilson did not have a weaving studio or teacher, but we had a visiting pottery teacher who sometimes dropped in in the evenings who knew how to string up a Navajo loom tapestry style. I played with yarn and made tapestries. During the winter of 1976 I worked with a weaver in her studio in Burlington, VT on floor looms and found that I loved the process and the woven fabric. I came back to the Asheville, NC area and took the few classes that UNCA offered in weaving. Then in the late 70's I found the Haywood Professional Crafts Fiber department. The program was just getting off the ground and had tremendous energy. For two years I was immersed deeply in weaving technique and design.

Now:

I have been a professional fiber craftsperson/artist since 1980. My life has revolved around dyeing, weaving, teaching and being a mom ever since. I have a fearless enjoyment in using color in my work and encourage others to dive in, too. A wonderful part of being a professional craftsperson was the time I could spend with my kids as they were growing up. Not only was I here everyday and involved with their lives and education, but I love that they grew up feeling like they could do anything. Make whatever they needed, design their own lives, make decisions about how to direct their time, energy and passion. They are self-directed and do not wait for life to carry them to the next place. They carry life!

Location:
Clyde, NC

Lauren Bryant

Then:

Firstly I will say that I have always had a creative urge. I began sewing at age 10, for the next decade I dabbled with quilts, clothes, and accessories. As a senior in high school I took a fiber and dyes class. Which of course fueled the fire and I was hooked to pursue a degree in something I enjoyed thoroughly. My art teacher heading up the fibers and dye class encouraged ACC as a possible option for me.

So having prior dye, surface application, and sewing experience weaving was a whole new realm of possibilities for me to explore. I began weaving as a part of my course curriculum at the Appalachian Center for Craft in 2006. The loom was a new tool in my fiber arts career and I immediately feel in love with the endless possibilities that weaving holds. I took both of my independent studies in weaving, exploring sculptural double weave one semester and production weaving for utilitarian purposes the next.

Now:

I feel an urge to explore both sculptural objects, thorough design, and functional craft. I definitely believe weaving lends a hand to all of these ambitions. It is the exploration of those possibilities that keeps me weaving; as well as the personal fulfillment I gain from weaving as a creative outlet. I reside in Tennessee and live here locally in Smithville while attending school.

I would also agree that it is a life long pursuit, and you have to be very passionate. The process of weaving is what keeps me satisfied, you plan: math, pattern, color, texture; you interact with threads of yarn: warping, sleying/threading, tying on/tensioning; you then use a machine to combine the planning with the interaction and you are rewarded by a piece of cloth. Weaving is also very rhythmic and meditative for me, so I think it is only natural that it serves as a creative outlet.

Being at the craft center has also thought me to be independent as an artist. Meaning that if you want something, you need to search out a way to make it happen.

Location:
Smithville, TN

Linda Weghorst

Then:

I was an art student for all four years of high school, basically I lived in the Art Room. For an independent study I made a simple frame loom and wove a very rough little tapestry. I entered Ball State University with the intent of being an Art Major, possibly focusing on printmaking and textile design. As an art student there was a core curriculum required of all art students.

It was well rounded and required experience in all forms of art and a solid grounding of art history and design. I entered Weaving 1 class and was not overly enthusiastic about the class. The teacher was not very inspiring, and was actually a former jewelry teacher. That being said from the first time I worked on the loom, Spring semester of my sophomore year, I found the materials, structures and the process amazing! It was also time where experts were claiming that "painting was dead", and a time textiles were coming very much alive as an art form. Being the early seventies I wanted to test whether it was the romantic notion of being a back to earth weaver, or a valid direction to follow. I went to Fletcher Farm Craft School in Ludlow, Vermont did nothing but weave all summer. I camped behind the school and wove each and every day, seven days a week. I learned to weave, spin and dye from a master weaver who provided a solid foundation which I would continue to build on all my life. And I passed my own test - there was not one day where I tired of weaving. I returned and completed my degree as a studio artist with emphasis on Weaving.

After completing my degree in 1975, I worked in my studio producing art for fairs and exhibitions. I also began teaching at various venues and locations. I established my business, Linda Weghorst Artist-Handweaver, which I have kept in business for over 35 years. I produced many types of textiles, decorative, functional, but my primary interest was in concept and imagery, so "wall hangings" were my preferred way of working. Tapestry was often the choice for my structures. I began to do large commissions, work which I really enjoyed!

It was always a dream of mine to go to the Art Institute of Chicago. So in the 80's I applied for the MFA program and was accepted. It was the most wonderful, expansive experience I have ever had as a weaver. I was exposed to many ideas, artists, and ways of working as an artist. I explore a myriad of paths, outside of the woven structure, but in the end returned to

the loom.

After graduation I continued to work as a weaver and teacher. Commissions, grants, exhibitions filled my days. I moved with my family many times over the years. Each location effected my work, all in good ways. Some areas had better teaching possibilities, others better galleries, or art communities, each changed expanded my work and my life.

Now:

A few time through the years I pondered a different art form. Something more spontaneous and responsive to rapid development of ideas. These varied paths enriched my textile work as I integrated other processes in my work. Marbling, beading, drawing, photography were processes that informed my work. But in the final result there is always the woven structure integrated.

I really see most of my life through weaving. I not sure if I choose it or it choose me! It is my goal to have my life as integrated and connected as possible, my activities, my family, my art.

One final story might illustrate the depth I feel towards my weaving. For the past 15 years I have studies, collected, taught about and been inspired by the Kente Cloth weavers of West Africa. Kente tell so much about the history and the social status if the Asante people. This summer my son was working in Ghana so I was able to travel there to Bonwire where a lot of the weavers are still working. I was welcomed to weave on their loom. It was weaving that connected us. Unforgettable moment!

I do believe our textiles tell stories about our lives, our histories and the time we live in. In my life there are many stories yet to tell. I suspect it will take a lifetime to share them through my weaving.

Location:
Memphis, TN

Lisa Kriner

Then:

I began weaving as a textile technology and design major at North Carolina State University as part of a required class.

Now:

I love working in the structure of weaving, the rhythmic nature of the process, the smell, hand and look of the materials - both the fiber and the loom. I find that weaving gives me a finite but challenging problem, something that I seldom have in my job, a quiet place to sit, think and get away from my daily-ness, and in the end a sense of accomplishment.

Location:
Lexington, KY

Liz Spear

Then:

I learned to weave in college in the fall of 1974; it was one of several electives during my stint as a fine arts student. I loved it from the first - the yarn, the planning, working with the floor loom, designing functional stuff, for the most part. I continued taking weaving classes, every quarter, right up until the last one before graduation, when I was advised I'd best commit to a specific medium, as I needed only 11 credits in either clay or fiber to finish the BFA. I chose ceramics, because I had an obvious focus (I'm a thrower of functional pots); I hadn't found a specific technique or material or object in fiber that tripped my trigger enough to envision making a living doing it.

Fourteen years later, I left my throwing position in a pottery in the Midwest, with the idea of switching to weaving, full-time. I landed at Haywood Community College, in the Professional Crafts Program, and spent nearly three years developing the focus, the fabrics, the body of work. Part of the process was a fair amount of introspective thought, answering these same questions: why do I weave? I love the feel of the fiber, both warp and weft; I love the planning and the organizing of the threads and the fabrics and the garment patterns; I love the production of 2-D design (the fabrics) and turning this intermediate stuff into 3-D objects (the garments). I love coordinating all of these disparate skills I've acquired over the years, to have designed this life I live.

Now:

I continue to weave because I've committed to making a living, making this evolving body of work, selling the garments to businesswomen, fellow craftspolk, etc. I also still love doing this work. Every step is rote, at the scale I work, but there are so many tendrils to keep hold of, I'm never bored. Teaching and doing demonstrations are interruptions in the production, connected to the main gig. I have to work with my hands, as long as I am able.

Location:

Waynesville, NC
www.lizspearhandwoven.com

LouAnn Robinson

Then:

In the mid-1970's I was given my great-grandmother's loom, which had been stored in the attic of the family homeplace in Grainger County, TN, since the early 1940's. Ester Kidwell Schultz had raised sheep for wool, and flax for linen, which she spun and used for weaving on the handmade barn loom that I was given. My Grandmother Schultz gave me a coverlet that was woven by her mother-in-law, which is one of my most treasured possessions.

The loom has been stored, still in pieces, in attics and garages for over 30 years as I lived my life, raised my children, taught public school, and kept the thought of weaving on that loom on my list of "one day....." When I remarried in 2002 and moved to New Mexico, my new husband, Bruce, was fascinated by all the large pieces I had insisted on moving to the Land of Enchantment. After asking me what it should look like (I found some pictures on-line, and showed him the picture in Tomie dePaola's book, Charlie Needs A Cloak) he proceeded to put the loom back together in no time flat! Although the loom had been apart for over 60 years, it slid together perfectly. I had 5 reeds (which were real REEDS) but no harnesses. I now know that it probably had string heddles, which rotted in the hot attic. She was a real beauty! But,

Anne Wilson: Wind / Rewind / Weave. Knoxville Museum of Art

I still knew very little about weaving!!!

In September 2005 after I moved back to East Tennessee, I saw a small notice in the community newspaper that said I could learn to weave at the Appalachian Arts Craft Center in Norris, TN. Now was MY time!

I showed up on a Tuesday, which is the day the weavers meet, and talked to Carol Pritcher, who is the department chairperson. I made arrangements to start my lessons the next week. I became one of the Tuesday Weavers.

Now:

Besides my barn loom, which I call Ester, I now have an 8 harness Baby Wolf in my bedroom, a 4 harness Mighty Wolf in the guest room, a 4 harness Glimakra Ideal and a 4 harness ORCO-Model 74 in my living room. My 4 harness Wolf Pup is warped for demonstrating and is ready to go at a moment's notice. I am also the "foster mother" to an additional barn loom, rug loom, and tapestry loom that belong to the weaving department at the AACC. We are in the process of raising money to build a weaving annex at the Center, and those looms will be moved to their permanent home when that is completed.

I love the ordinary and the exotic aspects of weaving. I love the creative process of planning a project and the "Christmas morning" joy of seeing a project come to life as I throw the shuttle. I love the friendships that have developed with fellow weavers, who have enriched my life. And, I really love that look of "Ahhhh...you wove this for me!" when I give a hand woven gift.

Location:

Oak Ridge, TN

Meredith Dale

Then:

I signed up for a beginning weaving class as an elective in college. I ended up changing my major to Studio Art with a concentration in weaving.

Now:

I still weave because there is so much more I want to learn and experiment with. I am currently working on my senior art show weaving sheet metal. I love exploring different materials and weave structures.

Location:

Dahlonoga, GA

Merikay Waldvogel

Then:

Anne Wilson: Wind / Rewind / Weave. Knoxville Museum of Art

I signed up for a basic weaving class at The Weaving Workshop in Chicago in the early 1970s. At the time I lived near the store-front workshop and I was teaching English as a Second Language in the Chicago Public Schools. It was a hobby. I learned on a basic upright loom that we made with canvas stretchers, a block of wood, a wooden dowel and cloth-string heddles. I enjoyed the evening classes and the fact that I could transport my loom easily. I moved to a studio apartment that I furnished myself. I bought a LeClerc four-harness loom, but I never used it much.

In 1977, I moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. That summer I took a 2-week weaving class at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg taught by well-known weaving teachers from Chicago: Else Regensteiner and Jane Redman. The class warped all 50 four-harness looms according to the instructors' directives and made 25 projects based on weaving types as well as color and texture studies. I was in heaven. We could weave 24 hours a day if we could last that long.

Now:

I don't weave today because I don't have the time or space to practice. My four-harness loom and equipment are with a friend who planned to start weaving. I am looking forward to weaving in this project because the loom we will use will be warped (saving time) and installed in the KMA gallery (the space). The idea of weaving a web-faced piece with color stripes and bands being my only decision to make sounds meditative. Isn't that interesting? I wonder if textile mill weavers ever felt this way--meditation not boredom.

Location:

Knoxville, Tennessee

Nick DeFord

Then:

I became interested in fibers around my third year of undergraduate study. I was majoring in drawing, and my program at the time did not offer any fibers courses. I think that my interest in fiber arts came from having a desire to work, both two-dimensionally and three-dimensionally, not separately, but at the same time. Materiality was very important to me, and that need wasn't being met with traditional drawing media; at the same time, I had too much a love for mark making and surface to switch over to sculpture. Most of my early experiences in textiles came from taking classes at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, TN. From there, I pursued my MFA in Fibers at Arizona State University in Tempe. It was there that I took my first weaving class. Weaving, like most fiber processes, combines those interests that I had in undergrad: the building of a surface through a three-dimensional process, both in line and motion. It seemed then, and continues to prove, that fiber art is the perfect fit for the type of art and art making that I am interested in.

Now:

To be honest, I don't weave very often these days. I have found an outlet to explore those sensibilities that I love (repetition, surface, and mark making) with other fiber-related media. Because of my fondness for materiality, especially mass-produced and manufactured materials, I use office supplies often as a media to talk about the simultaneous tedium and meditative qualities of a repetitious task, such as weaving or office work.

Location:

Knoxville, TN
www.nickdeford.com

Olivia Valentine

Then:

My studio art practice has involved lace structures for quite some time. First knit and crochet lace, and later bobbin lace, which is closely linked to weaving, only with control over each individual thread. I first learned weaving in 2006 at a small workshop class in New York City with master weaver Linda Labelle, learning on portable rigid heddle loom. The small collapsible loom and simple weave structures did not win me over immediately, but my interest and understanding were piqued.

I am currently a graduate student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and started to become interested in weaving again in the winter of 2008. Thinking about the forces that make textiles, especially tension, I came to weaving with a new appreciation. Simultaneously learning the Jacquard loom and a multi harness floor loom changed my approach to weaving, being able to incorporate body rhythms into the making process.

Now:

I am currently interested in creating woven structures that are a reflection of and influenced by urbanity and city structures. Thinking about the creation of the urban fabric, I think that hand weaving can serve as a metaphor for this process.

Location:
Chicago, IL

Pamela Feldman

Then:

My first experience with the woven form was when I was a young child, I traveling in Fiji. There I saw a woman sitting on the ground, in front of a hut, weaving baskets. We did not speak the same language, but there was a connection. With a stick, I drew a shape of a basket that I wanted her to weave in the dirt. I still have that basket today.

My first weaving class was at the University of California, Davis as part of my undergraduate Design curriculum. At this time period, 1981 to 1985, there was a strong fiberarts movement on the west coast. The philosophy of the UC Davis Design Department was to study ethnic textiles, not to copy the technique, but to inspire students to have the same experimental mind -- to be inventors of new ideas and approaches. The beginning class, taught by Gyöngy Laky, was approached very differently than classes today. We approached the loom as an experimental tool, with very little introductory instructions. With a few simple instructions, students were encouraged to create innovative ways to produce a textile on the loom. My first piece was a total weighted warp. Through trial and error, learning the physics of the loom, experimenting with the strength of the fibers and researching early textile techniques, I was able to produce a raised surface tapestry.

I continued with the experimental approach to weaving, working with color, pattern and texture, through my graduate studies at SAIC.

Anne Wilson: Wind / Rewind / Weave. Knoxville Museum of Art

After graduate school, my work changed. I had a need to make a textile that was functional and I wanted to learn more about the craftsmanship of what I was producing. This led to taking workshops in Navaho weaving and natural dyes. With the weaving, I wanted to master how to use a very simple frame loom. The simpler the loom, the more knowledge the weaver needs to have to be able to produce a structurally sound textile. The study in natural dyes allowed me to create colors that were individual, unlike any others.

I continued my research and experimentation with early-style weavings, trying to experience what early weavers might have been thinking when they created their work. I liked the idea of having a silent master, communicating with weavers who lived in the past and learning how they interpreted their landscape. I created work combining the mathematical rhythms of early textiles with natural colors of my own landscape.

Now:

I believe that the goal for all of us in life is to identify one's passion, to absorb yourself in learning the craft of the creative act and then to push to make it better. I have never stopped weaving since that first class at UC Davis, despite the trends in the field of fiber and textiles. It is part of who I am, my daily rhythm. I weave or dye most of every day, learning from what has been done and pushing the limits that can be done.

Location:

Chicago, IL
www.pamelafeldman.com
www.turkeyredjournal.com

Pat Bing

Then:

I was given an old hand made loom in 1999. The loom needed a home. It was offered for free on my church's internet list serve. I was the first to inquire about it and became the owner. I had always been interested in fiber arts & crafts, and weaving was a way to expand my skills and knowledge. In January of 2000 I took weaving lessons from the late Ellen Cain, head of the Appalachian Arts Craft Center's weaving department. AACC is located in Norris TN and the weaving group gathers every Tuesday to weave together in the Center's studio. I enjoyed learning and became very excited about the craft. I also joined the AACC weaving department after my six weeks of lessons ended.

Now:

I like all aspects of weaving, the mechanics of looms, the variety of pattern, techniques, colors, and textures. Weaving combines creativity with practicality providing a life long learning opportunity. There will always be something new and interesting to learn. I also enjoy the friendship and comradery of other weavers. I hope to do my small part to be a link to future generations, keeping hand weaving from becoming a relic of the past.

Location:

Knoxville, TN

Pat Delashmit

Then:

I have been involved with yarn and fiber my entire life. My mother once told me that my favorite toddler toy was a set of lacing cards. She said I would sit in my little rocker and sew each one carefully only for her to unlace them so that I could do it all again. A friend took weaving lessons and offered to share her knowledge with me. That was 25 years ago. I learned the basic principles of weaving, threading the loom, etc. Pattern weaving and yardage for garments or home items quickly became tedious for me. Another dear friend introduced me to tapestry weaving and I have pursued the technique since.

I think the attraction to yarn was the tactile quality. It is so much a warm, friendly medium to work. There is an endless range of color, texture, content, size, etc. Every project and design can be unique.

Now:

I find each warp a new challenge. Tapestry is a slow tedious process but each row of weaving reveals a little more of your image. It is exciting to watch your idea or sketch develop before you.

Location:

Maryville TN

Pat Mink

Then:

My mother is a weaver, and I learned to weave from her, when I was in high school, by taking her classes. I didn't pick it up again until just before returning to grad school, and then my focus shifted more towards surface design. I have never really thought of myself as a weaver, perhaps because my mother holds that role.

Now:

As the only instructor in the fibers area at ETSU, I teach weaving as part of the program. This has re-interested me in the structural aspect of cloth. At the same time, my printed work has focused more and more on integrating surface and structure- specifically working with jacquard woven damasks as a substrate for printing. The damasks commercially available are rather limited, and this has led me quite naturally to working with the industrial power looms at the Oriole mill in Hendersonville, NC, designing my own patterns, textures and imagery in damask to integrate with digital images printed using inkjet pigments. The possibilities presented by this integration of surface and structure are incredibly exciting.

Location:

Johnson City, TN

Philis Alvic

Then:

The year that I entered SAIC as a student, they had just restructured the course of study. Part of the restructuring was a class that introduced us to several weeks of an art subject that we might not have considered. Weaving was one of the topics. We all had little Structo looms and threaded a three yard warp in a straight draw. We were told to experiment. I discovered woven pattern.

As an Art Ed. student I 'needed' a craft and choose weaving. Soon friends were raving about my weaving and saying that my painting was 'interesting.' So, I went with my strengths and even received a scholarship from the North Shore Weavers Guild for my 4th year in school.

Like many women, I followed my husband as he followed a job. After all my looms were portable and I had accumulated three small boys. But when he landed in far western Kentucky, I found it very hard to build a reputation from such an isolated location -- without much in the way of financial resources. So, I began to write about my weaving. I wrote technical articles on weaving and used my work to illustrate the pieces. Several magazines asked me to write for them, so I was contributing articles to both weaving and crafts publications.

Then in 1988 I received an artists development grant that was used for a retreat at the Hambidge Center in the north Georgia mountains. I discovered that the founder, Mary Hambidge was a weaver. When I got back to Kentucky I went into the KY Humanities Council and asked if they would give me money to study a woman in Georgia. It was really my writing credentials that led to getting the grants that then funded my study of the many weaving centers in the mountains. Each summer during my research, I returned to the Hambidge Center to write and to weave.

My weaving has always drawn heavily on the world around me. I like to take relationship that I see and call attention to them. So, I have produced a series of work on my Hambidge experiences and also others that relate to places I have traveled as a consultant.

In 1994 I was asked to go to Peru as a technical advisor for an export project that was dealing with weavers. I soon realized that they only required minor weaving advice, but that they did need product development and marketing. So, I changed hats. I found that my historical research equipped me very well to understand the working of small craft businesses. And the parallels between a developing country and Appalachia at the beginning of the 20th century were remarkable. Also, over 25 years as a practicing craftsperson had prepared me to talk about design and marketing options.

Now:

Even though I do many other things, weaving is still the center for my other activities in researching craft history and international craft development.

Weaving has always been central to all of my other activities. I was able to talk to Appalachian weavers because I am a weaver and I related to craftspeople in other countries because I am a craftsperson, too.

All of my weaving is in the decorative class rather than functional. I have three multi-harness looms in my studio, two of which are hooked up to computers. I continue to investigate color and pattern. One of my continuing interests have been the creating illusionary space. My most recent work is exploring draping and textures produced by different weave structures.

Location:

Lexington, KY

<http://philisalvic.info>

Ray Snyder

Then:

I began weaving about 8 years ago. For many years I had thought that it would be interesting to learn how looms worked and the process to produce textiles. I like to figure out how mechanical things work and the processes used to get things done. About 20 years ago I saw a blueprint to construct a loom. Just looking at the blueprint didn't tell me much about how it worked. The curiosity about looms came back and at that point I found a place to get weaving lessons.

Now:

Right off the bat, my interest seemed to focus on making rag rugs. The idea that used material could be put to new use in a pleasing way has followed my progress all the way. My weaving is a kind of recycling project. Some new material is used, but other than cotton rug warp no new material is purchased specifically for a project. The recycling emphasis started as ecological. Now that I am trying to sell my work, the recycling aspect is now economic. Thanks to Walmart, the sale price of rag rugs is very low. Even though my rugs are much better than Walmart's rag rugs, the overall effect is to depress all rug prices. If I can use a high % of low/no cost material, most of my selling price pays my labor.

Location:

Knoxville, TN

Sara Rabinowitz

Then:

I began to weave in graduate school 2006-2007ish. Initially I was drawn to the tool (the loom) for its scale and presence around my body.

Now:

The process is new with every cloth. I like unlocking the code within a cloth that tells us of about the actions required to achieve a pattern. I also enjoy the process that my body has to perform to create a cloth, the counting, bending, tying, reaching, stepping.

Location:

Cleveland, OH

Sarah J. Weeks

Then:

I learned to weave while in college (mid-1970s). I was a Crafts major at the University of

Tennessee. While in grad. school in the mid-80s I worked as a production handweaver for a woman who makes wearable clothing and I have not woven since.

Now:

I don't weave today because I don't have the space and time. I do still have my loom and dream of retirement and all the projects I want to tackle.

Location:

Knoxville, TN

Syniva Whitney

Then:

The first time I ever wove was during a Navajo weaving workshop (a tapestry weaving technique) that I tried because of an interest in the geometry of Navajo rugs and textiles and the repetitive nature of the process. I studied many printmaking techniques during my undergraduate studies at the Evergreen State College and find the potential for reproduction and multiples in weaving to be what initially drew me in (wondering, is a true reproduction possible? Is the presence of the hand always evident? Why attempt accuracy and perfection? Where is gesture in this kind of process?)

I began studying weaving seriously during my graduate studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago after deciding to take the digital Jacquard loom class with Christy Matson. I tried this class because after studying printmaking and theories about reproduction and the photographic process I wanted to explore the potential weaving has as a form of repetitive material output. The digital loom has the potential to incorporate the photographic image and also contains the allure of being inspired by an industrial process, part human, part machine. Weaving uses a sort of binary system (warp, weft/up, down) to create. Weave structures can be created for the digital Jacquard loom by translating photographic imagery into a binary system or by messing with the process during production. Decisions can be premeditated or messy. Binary systems depend on a grid as a way to organize information. This grid idea became very important to me considering the grid's role in art history and the interest artist's and historians (Anni Albers, Agnes Martin, Rosalind Krauss...) have had in the past and now with the role of the grid and the matrix in contemporary art (Christy Matson, Julius Popp, Ruth Laskey...). Conceptually, I have considered the grid as an effort to define the indefinable, to categorize and compartmentalize information. I have considered it as a tool that works at a microscopic and intimate level (down to zeroes and ones, down to warp and weft, down to atoms) and I have considered the grid at a macroscopic level (mapping our galaxy, measuring the luminosity and temperature of our own sun and any other stars we care to insist upon).

Now:

I find myself fascinated by how complex and how simple weaving can be. The ways it can be used to explore ideas and materials is limitless as well as steeped in a deep and complicated history that I very much still need to explore. I'm still new enough to the process that it definitely retains the magical appeal of being able to make cloth appear using a bit of string!

Location:

Chicago IL

Tara Hills

Then:

I remember a family friend had a loom in their dining room and it was absolutely fascinating to me. At the time I can remember thinking how humongous and complicated it was. Now I realize that it was really not that big but my 4 year old self was ah-stuck. This experience or awareness of weaving came back to me in college when I started to think about group dynamics and the saying "the webs we weave". I started making videos about how people "weave" with each other. Eventually I borrowed a table loom. The loom came with an instructional video and a book and I taught myself to weave. A couple years later I took a class at a local artisan school and discovered floor looms and the Handweavers' Guild of Connecticut of which I am still a member even though I live in Chicago.

Now:

I love the process, the rhythm, the sound – the combined complexity and the simplicity. I still have so much to explore.

Location:

Chicago, IL

Teena Tuenge

Then:

I like making things and I began weaving after seeing a small loom in a local craft shop in 1970. I became fascinated with the process and the variety of weaves I could do and items I could make. It seemed much more interesting than knitting or sewing, for example, that I also did.

Now:

I have kept up the interest since then because of the endless possibilities and because I enjoyed the design, a process combining art and mathematics.

I also, sell some of what I weave, and have been a member of weaver's guilds for learning, inspiration and socializing and continue to be amazed at what everyone does - all different. That keeps me going as well.

I have a commission from the Carl Sandburg home in Flat Rock, NC to reproduce some of the Navajo rugs in the home. And am looking forward to beginning that in the fall, after the grandchildren are back home.

Location:

Candler, NC

Tommye McClure Scanlin

Then:

I began weaving in the early 1970s when I was hired to teach at North Georgia College in Dahlonega, GA. The fine arts department was in its formation years with a faculty of only six

people, two in the visual arts. The department head envisioned the course offerings to include several craft areas, including weaving. At the time I was teaching art at a nearby high school, had learned a few things about setting up and weaving with frame looms as an activity for my classes, and was becoming quite excited about the weaving process. The department head took a leap of faith that I could rapidly develop both my own knowledge of weaving and begin to build a weaving program in the department at the college--along with the many other classes I'd be teaching there. It was a dream come true for me, as a young person who was eager to find a medium to passionately embrace for my artistic work.

I had a Masters of Art Education from the University of Georgia when hired at NGC and I soon began working on an Master of Fine Arts. I studied at East Tennessee State University, taking summer courses for four years and a few directed studies while I taught at NGC. I was granted a leave of absence from the college during 1979-80 to complete my residency and course requirements at ETSU, finishing the MFA in 1980. My studio courses while at ETSU were in both weaving and drawing.

My weaving skills have been enhanced through the years by many workshops and short courses that I've taken at Arrowmont School of Crafts, John C. Campbell Folk School, Penland School of Crafts, Convergence, Southeast Fiber Forum, and from those sponsored by fiber guilds in the Southeast. My weaving focus turned to tapestry in 1988 and since then I've had opportunities to study with several master tapestry makers in many location.

Now:

I am passionate about both the process and the product of weaving. The making of images through the use of yarn continues to keep me interested, involved, fascinated, puzzled, excited. My choice of tapestry as my primary medium combines my desire to create pictorial works with the skill of the weaving process more so than other means of weaving. Tapestry is weft faced and so the choices I make of weft colors become my equivalent of selecting and mixing paint. But as I consider this I think it compares more to using colored pencil than paint because the individual strands of weft remain distinctively their own hue yet visually blend as the piece is seen from a distance. I develop ideas for tapestry with other media, like drawing and painting, and in those I sensitize my eye to color nuances as I work. The observations that help me render on paper or canvas are important to the constant decisions about color and shape that I make as I weave.

I still like to do fabric weaving--I consider that kind of weaving as my "hobby" -- for instance, ever so often I put a warp on the loom to make new rag rugs for the house, weave sauna towels for a friend, or maybe a scarf or two for Christmas gifts. But those fabrics are not my "serious" work of weaving. That energy goes into the tapestries I make. I also love to see students become excited about weaving and that keeps me involved with teaching.

Location:
Dahlonoga, GA
<http://web.me.com/tmscanlin>
<http://tapestry13.blogspot.com>

Vickie Vipperman

Then:

I started on the loom as a college student. I was majoring in clay and transferred as a junior from a small school in Augusta GA to the University of Georgia. My first semester there the clay classes were full and so I signed up for an intro fibers course since the class would

"count" towards a general craft degree. (back then clay, fiber and jewelry/metalwork were considered a craft major) plus there was a room full of looms that looked mighty interesting. I had the most wonderful teacher, Glen Kaufman, who was head of the fiber dept, but we didn't get to use the floor looms in that first class. Everything was off-loom techniques until the end of the semester when we built a small frame loom, so..... I had to sign up for the next class to get to use the floor loom then I signed up for the next class to try more techniques I never went back to clay and ended up getting my BFA in fabric design.

This was back in the early days when craft shows were just beginning, so we students were steered mostly toward further education and teaching, or industry and design. Fiber art for galleries might be a sideline, but there were no business classes or any direction toward what we know today as the craft show circuit. Not being so inclined, I spent a few years waitressing and bartending to support my weaving habit until I got "practical and responsible" and went back to school for a MEd in Recreation Therapy thinking that I could get a dependable job and still weave in the evenings. That led to six years of working full-time for Special Olympics in Tennessee and realizing that, although I loved the organization and its people, what I really wanted to be doing was weaving. I got that chance in 1989 and have been weaving full-time ever since (with a few part-time jobs through the years to keep the lights on.)

Years later in recounting my "how I got started" story I realized that I had begun weaving much, much earlier. First, I began very crude self-taught sewing around age 8. Meanwhile my parents were running a boys' club (now know as boys' and girls' clubs) where I was introduced to potholder weaving with access to an endless supply of "loopers" from the craft room. I made so many potholders I started selling them in the neighborhood. When everyone I knew had enough I began sewing them together to make placemats and other items. Who know I'd be doing a variation on that theme still today!

Now:

Why do you continue to weave today? Let's see..... I can't stop. (I've tried.) Somebody's got to do it. And after all these years it's still magic. I'm blessed everyday to be doing what I love.

Location:

Kingston Springs, TN

www.vickievippermanweavingstudio.com