



# Woven By Hand

Contemporary Canadian Tapestries

Moon Rain Centre  
[moonrain.ca](http://moonrain.ca)

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Contemporary Canadian Tapestries

Curated by Thoma Ewen

**Mississippi Valley Textile Museum**  
**July 20 to September 28, 2024**

*Mississippi Valley Textile Museum*  
*National Historic Site*  
*PO Box 784*  
*3 Rosamond Street East*  
*Almonte, Ontario KOA 1A0*  
*[www.mvtm.ca](http://www.mvtm.ca)*



## **Woven By Hand: Contemporary Canadian Tapestries**

presents recent works designed and woven by nine outstanding Canadian tapestry artists. Each artist is recognized internationally for their woven artistry, achievements, and commitment to the medium of tapestry. Each has dedicated many decades to professional practice in this medium. Among the participating artists are winners of Canada's most prestigious arts awards. Participating in this exhibition are: Line Dufour, Thoma Ewen, Murray Gibson, Peter Harris, Barbara Heller, Jane Kidd, Paulette Marie Sauvé, Suzanne Paquette and Ixchel Suarez.

Woven By Hand is curated by Thoma Ewen of Moon Rain Centre, an artist-run textile arts centre located in the Gatineau Hills north of Ottawa. Moon Rain is dedicated to integrating textile art and community, and to sharing the ancient indigenous weaving wisdom that illustrates how weaving transmits the energy of peace. The name Moon Rain refers to the mystic connection between the moon, weaving and the cosmos.

## **A Changed and Changing World**

Michael Rikley-Lancaster

**We acknowledge that the land on which the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum is located has been a site of human activity for time immemorial and is rich in Indigenous history. This land is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. We are grateful to the Algonquin ancestors who cared for the land and water in order that we might meet here today.**

**Before settlers arrived, this territory was subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Nations to peaceably share and care for resources. After settlers arrived, it became subject to the Three Figure Wampum Belt, last carried by Algonquin Elder William Commanda, which commemorates the sharing of the land with Indigenous, English, and French Nations under the government of Natural Law.**

**With gratitude, we recognize the knowledge and contributions that the Algonquin Peoples bring to Mississippi Mills. Today, Mississippi Mills is also home to other Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We extend our respect to all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples for their valuable past and present contributions.**

**We are mindful of broken covenants and the need to reconcile with all our relations. Together, may we care for this land and each other. Being mindful of generations to come, may we draw on the strength of our mutual history of nation building through peace and friendship.**

The Museum's land has inspired artists and industrialists alike. The site of many industrial mills, the Mississippi River in Almonte, Ontario boasts a series of impressive falls, and it was the power of these falls that early industrialists sought to harness. In 1867, construction of the Rosamond Woolen Company No. 1 Mill complex was completed. The original mill complex had multiple structures. The main building was a six-storey stone mill. Noted for manufacturing high-quality tweeds and dyed wool, it was the largest woolen mill in Canada at its peak at the turn of the twentieth century. Following many years of success, market competition forced the closure of the mill and its buildings eventually fell into disrepair. In the early 1980s, a committed group of local citizens began to investigate the possibility of developing a museum related to the area's rich textile heritage, and hard work made their vision a reality. The former Rosamond Company's office/warehouse annex is now home to the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum (MVTM), a National Historic Site of Canada.

Throughout the past 39 years, the MVTM has presented permanent and temporary exhibitions that have embraced a wide variety of approaches to understanding both historical and contemporary textiles and their production. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to present impactful, diverse work by contemporary textile artists.

As I contemplate this series of tapestries by extraordinary Canadian artists, I cannot help but consider “Woven by Hand” within the context of our changing world. From Indigenous truths to lockdowns, and from the growth of social media hatred to loud and unashamed racism, the MVTM, is proud to learn and grow so that we may work with equity-deserving communities in empowering them to tell their stories.

As visitors to “Woven by Hand” enter the MVTM’s Norah Rosamond Hughes Gallery, with its hand-cut stone walls and warm timber structure, they will be pulled into a world of beautiful tapestries. This handwoven art reflects on the comfort/discomfort of COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing. This period brought to light challenging truths that showcased abandoned narratives and intentional, harmful, and everyday inequities. Humanity’s propensity for violence, racism, hatred, and greed took centre stage, yet continues to grow, even in the face of mounting environmental disasters and social crises. These works encourage us to reflect with intention and hope for the future. These artists are at the forefront of opening dialogue to make change. If we do not open ourselves to humility, listening, and learning truths from marginalized communities, we cannot move forward as a society.

I would like to thank the incredible artists – Guest Curator and artist Thoma Ewen (QC), Line Dufour (QC), Murray Gibson (NS), Peter Harris (ON), Barbara Heller (BC), Jane Kidd (BC), Marcel Marois (QC), Paulette Marie Sauve (QC), Suzanne Paquette (QC), and Ixchel Suarez (ON)., and the MVTM’s team – Laila Hack, Maybe McInnis, and Ryan Milton for their roles in this special exhibition.

*Michael Rikley-Lancaster is the Executive Director/Curator of the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum.*

## Thoughts on tapestry and its makers

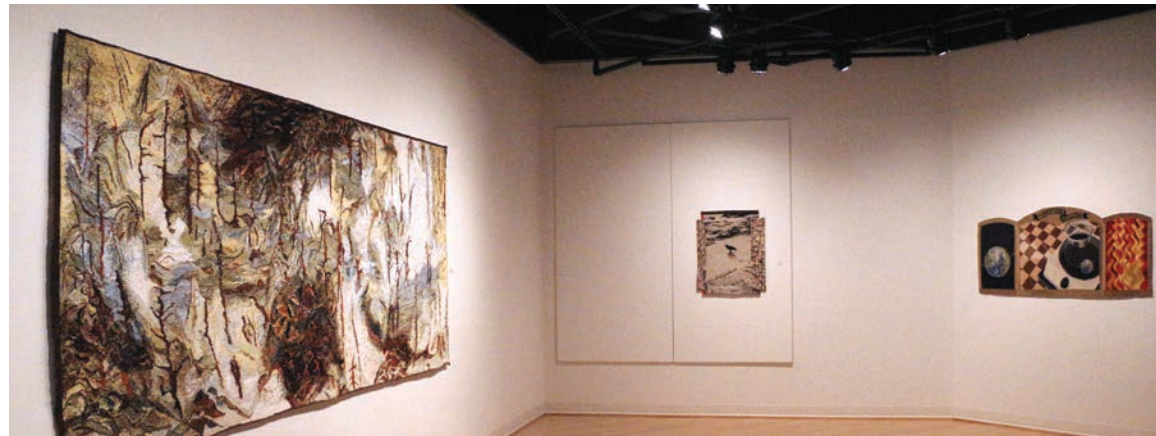
Thoma Ewen

“Makers in most societies are considered to be practicing mysteries, and engaging in secrets. Artists have always had to find unusual ways of defending and maintaining themselves.”- Stephen Inglis<sup>1</sup>.

Weaving tapestry is creative activism. It is an art form that combines profound artistic beauty with time-honoured craftsmanship. Over time, weaving tapestry becomes a ritual. It is the antithesis of today’s instant-everything, mass-production pace. Tapestry requires calm, dedication, time and most of all, love. The artists in this collective share the heart-felt vision of peace in the world; each is passionate about protecting nature and the environment; and each is dedicated to bringing more beauty into the world. Renowned French tapestry artist Jean Lurçat said, “Tapestry is the dream you hang on the wall”. To create in this medium, over decades, brings the weaver into closer alignment with the harmonies of the natural world. Weaving tapestry creates harmony. American tapestry artist, Sylvia Heyden, spoke of the art of tapestry as “the highest form of hope”.

The late Archie Brennan, who is said to have democratized tapestry weaving, called tapestry both a journey and a language: “I love tapestry as does Susan (Martin Maffei) as a hanging cloth. We think of weaving as a creative journey. We do not any more design our tapestries and then weave them. We put up the warp. We know the width, we have a rough idea of the height. And we love weaving from bottom to top. If you weave from the bottom upwards, all these steps that you see, arrive as slits, it’s the language. And if you think of music, if you think of piano, a violin, a guitar, musician’s instruments don’t conceal themselves, a piano doesn’t try to play like a violin, and tapestry weaving has its own potential language, its medium. And that’s what both Susan and I we are obsessed with. Weaving from bottom to top, developing the design as it grows, responding to the weaving, like a jazz musician, Miles Davis would respond to the phrase, the group would respond to the phrase, the piano, the guitar, whenever, if you’re a composer as well as a player. What gives yourself an open journey is what enralls us.”<sup>2</sup>.

The recent works in this presentation of Woven By Hand at the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum express the artists’ impressions and experiences of a world shaken by covid. The tapestries show a turning point, communicating individual responses to lockdowns and to the unprecedented changes we are witnessing in a global neoliberal reality. This presentation of Woven By Hand differs from the previous two presentations of this collective, which took place under the French title “La Magie des Fils: tapisseries contemporaines canadienne” at Galerie Montcalm in Gatineau, Quebec in 2019, and at Le Centre d’Art in La Sarre, Quebec in 2020. These two presentations also included tapestries by Marcel Marois and the late Linda Wallace. Marcel Marois wrote: “The first presentation at Galerie Montcalm in Gatineau was more than an exhibition for me – it was also an important meeting between committed Canadian artists who represent their artistic discipline. The esthetic diversity of the exhibited works reveal the true expressive potential of Canadian tapestry, and show how, by its tradition and uniqueness, tapestry can contribute to the development of contemporary art today.”



La Magie des Fils : tapisseries contemporaines canadienne, Galerie Montcalm, Gatineau, Québec photos©Jacques Paquette

The tapestries in these previous exhibitions presented each artist's unique aesthetics, as readily identifiable within the continuum of their personal creative evolution in tapestry. This present group of tapestries are like woven signposts, communicating a sense of urgency and signalling the changes and upheavals that humanity is collectively experiencing.

I have been weaving tapestry for fifty years. This medium has become a true mystery to me, my fascination only deepening with time. There are two concepts that nourish my practice of tapestry, and in fact urge me to continue to create, to exhibit and to share what I feel is a most extraordinary and unique art form. The first concept is that weaving is a global contemporary metaphor for the interactions, interconnections and inter-dependencies that naturally occur in every living system of our biosphere. Woven structure presents a schematic diagram for the interactive collaboration that creates community- a symbol for a co-creative future on our planet. The second concept is that weaving transmits the energy of peace. Ancient indigenous weavers understood this concept and therefore believed weaving to be a sacred path. This is actually easily explained by contemporary neuroscience: in weaving, over-under is followed by its opposite, under-over. This constant repetition of one movement followed by its opposite, while weaving with both left and right hands equally, actually creates a balancing effect on left-and-right-brain functioning. The effect on the weaver is harmonizing, and that calm, peaceful feeling that the weaver experiences is then transmitted to the viewer.

The Navajo's believe that beauty means harmony and peace. Throughout millennia Navajo weavers have chanted while they weave. Their chant translates: "With me there is beauty. In me there is beauty. From me radiates beauty".<sup>3</sup>

I continue to be inspired by hand-woven tapestry and by its artist-makers. In a world that so desperately seeks peace, health and sanity, tapestry creates beauty, calm and hope. In a world that is so rapidly changing, the technique of tapestry, which is actually the simplest of all weaving techniques called plain weave or tabby (over-under, followed by under-over) has remained unchanged since the Paleolithic. Tapestry is a cultural constant.

As curator of Woven By Hand, I have the enormous privilege of bringing together this collection of recent works designed and woven by my Canadian tapestry colleagues. I have infinite respect for their long-term creative commitment to this time-honoured and time-consuming art form. As curator, and once again as an exhibiting artist, I have the great pleasure of working with Michael Rickley Lancaster, whose leadership and dedication to the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum has established a national cultural landmark dedicated to the textile arts.

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1. Stephen Inglis, *Making a Place for Tapestry Symposium*, Vancouver, BC 1993
  2. Archie Brennan: *Artist's Talk*, Shenkman Arts Centre, Ottawa, ON, *La Triennale Internationale des Arts Textiles en Outaouais*, Moon Rain Centre 2013
  3. *Weaving a World: Textiles and the Navajo Way of Seeing* by Roseann S. Willink and Paul G. Zolbrod, Museum of New Mexico Press, 1996



**Line Dufour**  
**Cap Santé, Québec**  
**[www.linedufour.com](http://www.linedufour.com)**

Line Dufour has had numerous exhibitions, such as at the American Textile Museum in Lowell Massachusetts, the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft in Louisville, Kentucky and the Scarfone Gallery at the University of Tampa. She has received numerous awards, grants and scholarships and her work, including commissions, can be found in many collections. Numerous publications have spotlighted her tapestries, including *Tapestry* by Barty Phillips, published by Phaidon Press, as well as the recently released, *Art is the Cloth* by Micala Sidore. Her international installation, *Fate, Destiny and Self Determination* has been featured in *Artapestry 4 & 5* (European Tapestry Network), *Fiber Art Now*, *HandEye* magazine, *Fibre Focus*, *American Tapestry Alliance*, *fibreQuarterly*, the Danish textile art publication *Rapporter*, and the *British Tapestry Group* publications. This installation has been exhibited across Canada, the USA, in Uruguay, Germany, Ireland, and Spain. To date, 573 people from 43 countries have sent 966 submissions. In 2022, Dufour acquired a Master's Degree in Creative Writing and Critical Thinking from the University of Gloucestershire. Several publications have featured her creative non-fiction and poetry. She was longlisted for the CBC Nonfiction Short Story prize in 2023.

“For the last decade, my work has addressed social and environmental issues. Tapestry weaving remains at the foundation of all my artistic explorations because one can do things that cannot be done in painting. Though many of my tapestries continue to adhere to the traditional methods of tapestry weaving, I use it as a platform to push tapestry beyond prescribed boundaries and play with how the tapestry's image plane occupies space in various ways. In the *Plastic Oceans* tapestry project, an assortment of plastic materials introduced in the weft, some of them spun and woven in, others attached onto the tapestry by stitching. When we consider that 400 million tons of plastic are produced annually and that plastic accounts for eighty percent of marine debris, which translates to approximately 14 million tons ending up in the oceans annually. The prevalence and toxicity of these materials threatens marine species, our food supply, health, tourism, and contributes to climate change.”

***Plastic Oceans panel 1***

2024

112 cm x 23 cm

*repurposed wool, cotton, plastic, fluorescent thread and assorted synthetic threads*

*photo: Line Dufour*

***Plastic Ocean panel 2***

2024

140 cm x 61 cm

*repurposed wool, cotton, plastic, fluorescent thread and assorted synthetic threads*

*photo: Line Dufour*





**Thoma Ewen**  
**Val-des-Monts, Québec**  
**[www.moonrain.ca](http://www.moonrain.ca)**

Thoma Ewen has been designing and weaving radiant, light-filled tapestries for 50 years, working from her studio at Moon Rain Centre, the artist-run textile art centre she co-founded, located in the Gatineau Hills north of Ottawa. She received a BFA from the University of Victoria and then apprenticed tapestry in Finland. She has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions in Canada, United States, Mexico, England, France, Poland, Ireland, Guatemala, Venezuela and China. She has lectured, taught, and directed projects internationally. Moon Rain Centre is known for its dynamic and profoundly moving collective weaving projects such as *The Vision Weave Project*, and its textile arts events that have made textile arts visible and accepted as contemporary art. Thoma is the author of *The Living Tapestry Workbook* and *La Tapisserie Vivante*, beginner's guides to designing and weaving tapestry. She communicates the ancient indigenous belief that weaving is a sacred path, and illustrates how tapestry's vital contemporary role is to transmit the energy of peace.

"My work in tapestry is an intuitive investigation of what it means to be a human being influenced by the natural landscape and the beauty of the earth. It is a visual exploration of the energies or vibrations that move through everything on and beyond the planet. Light, both physical and metaphysical, is an important element in my work and a source of personal inspiration. I try to communicate a sense of harmony and movement in the universe. To me, weaving is a contemporary metaphor for the interconnections between all living systems of our biosphere. The basic structure of weave is a symbol for the collaboration that creates community. My studio is my oasis, and weaving tapestry nourishes my soul."

***Coatlicue***  
2023  
165 cm x 180 cm  
wool and cotton weft, cotton warp, 8epi  
photo: Moon Rain Centre

*Coatlicue* is the name of the Aztec Goddess of Duality. She is the Mother of the Sun and the Moon, so mother of light and dark. I have been struggling to comprehend the dualities in our rapidly changing world, while searching for truth in these turbulent times. *Coatlicue* represents my ongoing meditations of learning to let light in and to stay with the light, while trying to transform fear into love.





**Murray Gibson**  
**Antigonish, Nova Scotia**  
**[www.murraygibsontapestry.com](http://www.murraygibsontapestry.com)**

Murray Gibson has been weaving tapestries for over 35 years. He studied at the Alberta College of Art in Calgary and received an MA in textiles from Goldsmith's College at the University of London, England.

Gibson's tapestries have been exhibited widely, including in the 8th International Triennale of Tapestry in Lodz, Poland, and his tapestries are in public art collections including the Canada Council Art Bank. In 2015 Gibson was named a Master Artisan by Craft Nova Scotia; in 2019, he was inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. He lectures, writes, and currently sits on the Board of The American Tapestry Alliance. Murray Gibson teaches in the Art Department of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish.

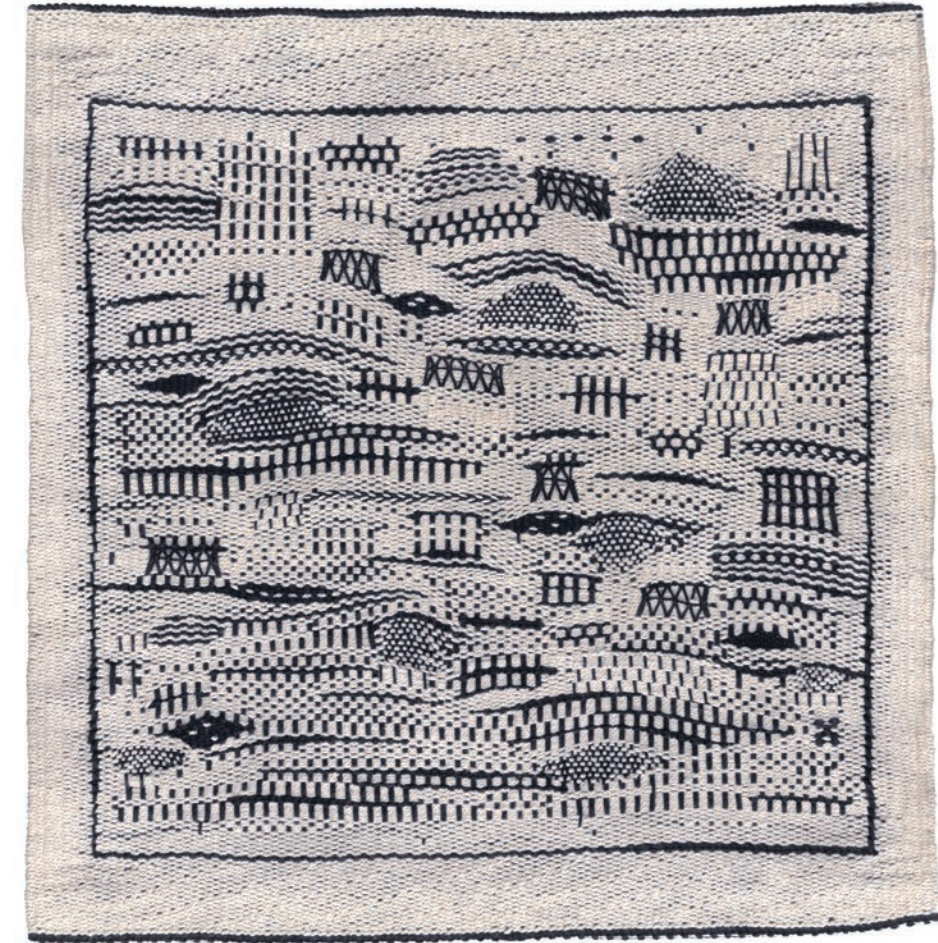
"Although my artistic concepts and tapestry imagery have changed over 35 years there has been one constant feature; it is that I have always tried to ensure that my imagery is best realized as woven cloth. I am not merely using the medium to reproduce the aesthetics of other art forms such as drawing, painting, or photography. I am, instead, using my tapestry-woven cloth to refer to "ideas" about cloth - woven structures and aesthetics - as intrinsic elements of my artist's vision. During my years of practice, I have been inspired by non-Western cultures' textile heritage, but also that of Western Europe: particularly medieval tapestries.

For many years, the concept of my tapestries has been the visual exploration of written narratives that feature a female protagonist who uses her textile practice to control life and death, and destiny and fate. One example is the Three Fates from ancient Greek mythology. The Fates are three sisters who first spin the thread of life, then measure out the spun thread to the length of a human life, then finally cut the thread and end the life.

Most recently I have been weaving small tapestries whose primary intent is to emphasize the woven structure of tapestry cloth and to abandon intentional narratives. All woven cloth consists of warp and weft threads. In traditional tapestry, the warp threads are completely hidden by rows of weft that create the image of the cloth; they are present only for their structural role. My new work highlights the warp of the cloth with the weft now playing a secondary role in the tapestry. Exposed warp threads create the sense of isolated marks and the action of drawing, rather than implying an aesthetic of painting and a continuum of single surface. These new tapestries, primarily about weaving itself, reaffirm my commitment to my artwork being best realized as woven cloth."

**Warp Mark 01**  
2023  
28 cm x 29 cm  
cotton  
photo: Murray Gibson

*Warp Mark 01* explores a new direction in my weaving practice. Previous work explored the traditions of European tapestry weaving of classic techniques and narrative imagery. My new work focuses primarily on the act of weaving itself, as warp threads and weft rows jump back and forth in relation to their traditional roles of structure and image. Any narrative in these woven drawings is now coincidental rather than intentional.





**Peter Harris**  
**Ayton, Ontario**  
**www.tapadesi.com**

I grew up following parallel tracks of handicraft activity and scholarship, completing an undergraduate degree in philosophy and English. Then craftwork and travel came to the fore, alternating years of candle making and leatherwork with long visits to Europe, India, and South America in the 1970's. In 1981 I enrolled at the Ontario College of Art, for training in art and design that I had last received in primary school. From that moment, tapestry weaving became a kaleidoscope of discovery and inspiration. Several years later, on another visit to India, I witnessed the tapestry technique of Kashmir shawl weaving, and my studio work regained a scholarly dimension, learning and writing about an interesting and historically important craft tradition. Tapestry continues to express my outlook on the world and the influences in my own life.

I have been a tapestry weaver since 1982, using tapestry and related weaves, hand-woven on a high warp frame loom. My main interests are: pictorial or narrative content; beauty, reality, and meaning; the effects of colour in mixing and juxtaposition; representations of three-dimensional space; and, comparisons between tapestry and modern digital. For me, tapestry is a metaphor for connecting the world meaningfully. I am wrapped like a fly in its spidery thralls.

Thoughts on my tapestry, "Trapped in a Bruegel Painting":

For Bruegel, whose work was collected during his lifetime, his surviving oeuvre is surprisingly small, and shows him turning to several popular genres - landscapes, Classical and Biblical stories, caricatures of everyday life. His painting "The Peasant Dance" that my tapestry project is taken from, is one of just two or three, from the last years of his life, with eye-level perspective and figures looming large.

I noticed that of the hundreds of faces that Bruegel has drawn, almost all are turned away from the viewer, engaged by whatever interaction in the painting, portrayed with unflattering satire. The young woman in my tapestry is one of only two or three full-face portraits I've found, where you might think the person was looking back innocently, if only accidentally, from the painting.

I have long felt that Bruegel's paintings made excellent tapestry cartoons because of their story-telling and space-filling detail. Compared with a photograph, I get the advantage of the painter having composed the scene of purposeful details, and I get the obligation to him that everything is important.

***Trapped in a Bruegel Painting***  
2022  
86 cm x 121 cm  
wool weft, linen warp, 6 epi  
photo: Peter Harris





**Barbara Heller**  
**Vancouver, British Columbia**  
**[www.barbaraheller.ca](http://www.barbaraheller.ca)**

Barbara Heller has exhibited widely over the past forty years, locally, nationally, and internationally. Her tapestries have been featured in several books, magazine and newspaper articles and as well she has 2 catalogues published in conjunction with touring solo shows, *Cover Ups and Revelations: the Tapestries of Barbara Heller and Falling from Grace*. She is a passionate proponent of the art of tapestry and its place in contemporary art. Her work in advocating for tapestry has been recognized by the Canadian Craft Federation which awarded her of the Jekyll Prize for Leadership in Craft in 2022. She has organized exhibitions and symposia, written articles, given lectures, edited publications and curated exhibitions. She has represented Canada overseas at symposia and conferences and has lectured on her own work and on the place of Canadian tapestry in the world. She currently sits on the Board of the American Tapestry Alliance as Director of Education. In 1993 she founded the B.C. Society of Tapestry Artists, a non-profit society for the promotion of tapestry and in 1995 she founded the Canadian Tapestry Network and began a tapestry newsletter which continues to this day.

“My work reflects my concerns about our world – one fraught with inequities and beset by senseless violence. People are in pain, the environment is degrading, and we are increasingly isolated from one another. My most recent work follows two paths. One deals with the racism and hatred expressed today in social media and in real life. The other thread deals with the consequences of yet another war fought for greed. I draw on personal travels and experiences, my Jewish heritage, my own and old family photos, and the mystical side of world religions to develop a personal iconography which will resonate with the viewer. I want to express what we are losing - our sense of who we are and how we fit into our world – and a hope for the future.

I try to process what bothers me deeply into images that reach people on a subconscious and emotional level. How do we effect actual change? In *Will It Never End*, the remains of a dead owl hover over a depiction of the aftermath of war. Three figures carry away a wrapped body while below are more dead bodies awaiting burial. The owl was killed by an eagle which needed food for sustenance. What excuse does man have for the senseless killings he perpetrates? Will it never end? “

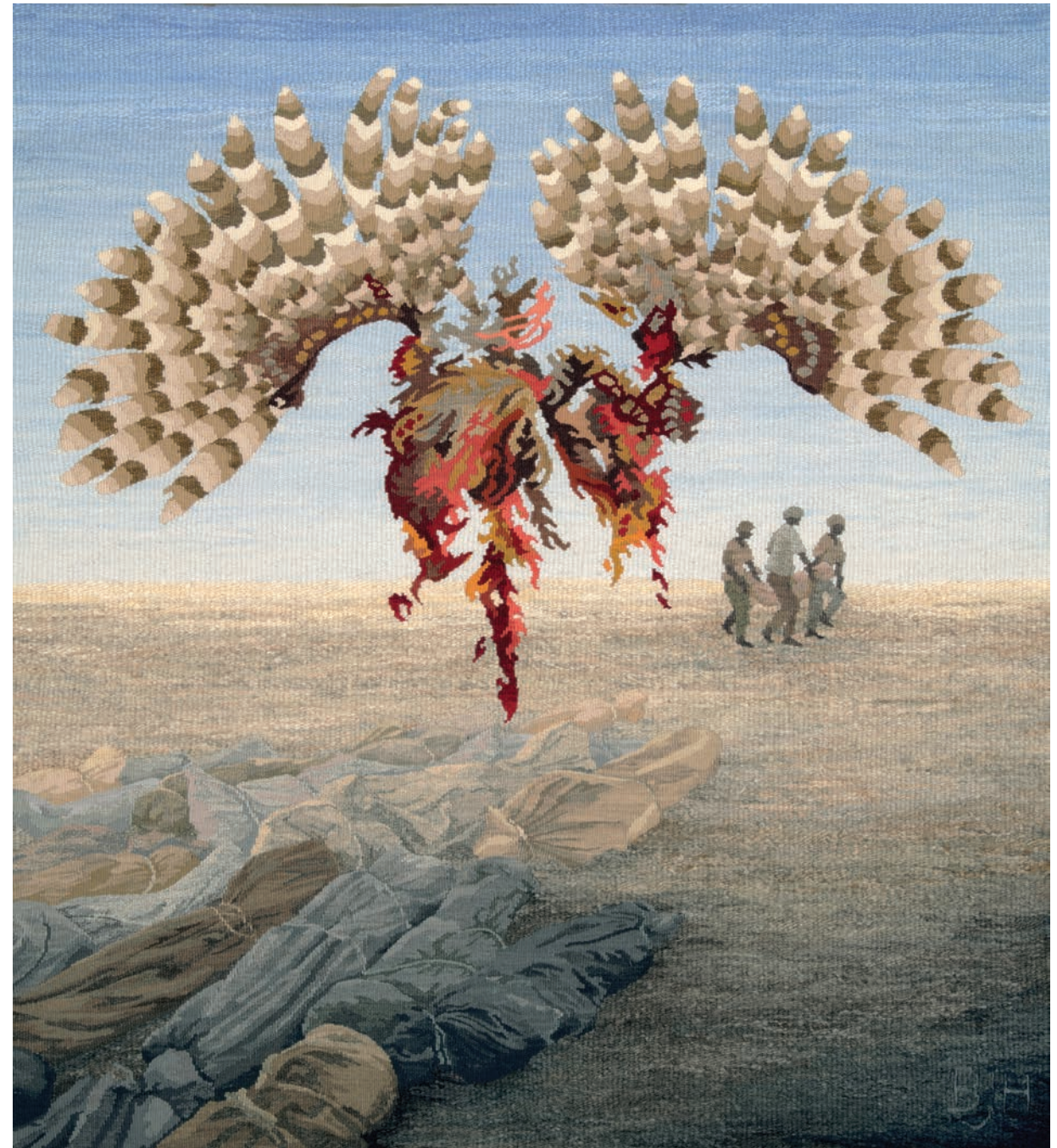
***Will It Never End***

2023

135 cm x 140 cm x 2 cm

linen warp; weft of hand-spun, hand-dyed and commercial wool, cotton, rayon and mixed fibres

photo: Ted Clarke, Image This





**Jane Kidd**  
**Salt Spring Island, British Columbia**  
**[www.janekidd.net](http://www.janekidd.net)**

Jane Kidd was born in Victoria. She studied art and design at the Vancouver School of Art and the University of Victoria. She taught at the Alberta University of the Arts (ACAD) in Calgary from 1980 to 2011. Currently she lives on Salt Spring Island where she maintains an active studio practice. Jane has exhibited in numerous solo and over sixty group exhibitions across Canada, United States, Japan, Poland, Hungary and Australia. Kidd's work can be found in private and public collections including, the Canada Council Art Bank, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Textile Museum of Canada and the Canadian Museum of History. She was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Art in 2001 and was awarded the Alberta Craft Council Award of Excellence in 2008. In 2016 she was awarded the Saidye Bronfman Award, one of the Governor General's Awards for Visual and Media Arts, Canada's foremost distinction for excellence in the visual arts.

"I explore ideas that reference my experience of the world. I work almost exclusively with woven tapestry, which I find to be a compelling medium as it provides a means to develop content through imagery. I am also drawn to the material identity of tapestry and committed to finding meaning and relevance in the process of handwork.

Through my work I am interested in creating a space to encourage consideration of our relationship to the natural world. I employ pattern, symbolic imagery, materiality and the labour intensive process of hand weaving as a means to explore human/nature relationships and our desire to possess and assimilate nature into material culture through its translation into decorative pattern, systems of notation and collections.

I see my recent works as a warning of environmental disaster and a call to pay attention and recognize our complicity in environment carelessness. I also offer the opportunity to celebrate the skill and value of the handmade object encouraging the viewer to look closely and pay attention: actions that have a parallel value in our relationship to the world around us. "

***Inheritance: Gown #1 and #2***  
2022  
*shaped woven tapestry mounted on metal stand*  
*each 93 cm x 47cm x 24 cm*  
*wool, cotton, rayon, linen*  
*photo credit: Janet Dwyer*



**Suzanne Paquette**  
**Québec, Québec**  
**[www.suzannepaquette.com](http://www.suzannepaquette.com)**

Suzanne Paquette has been designing and creating haute lisse tapestries for over 40 years. She holds a master's degree in Fine Arts from the Université du Québec à Montréal. In 1980, with 4 other artists, she founded the Conseil des arts textiles du Québec, where she was actively involved. She is the recipient of many grants, and in 2018 was awarded the Prix Distinction en métiers d'art.

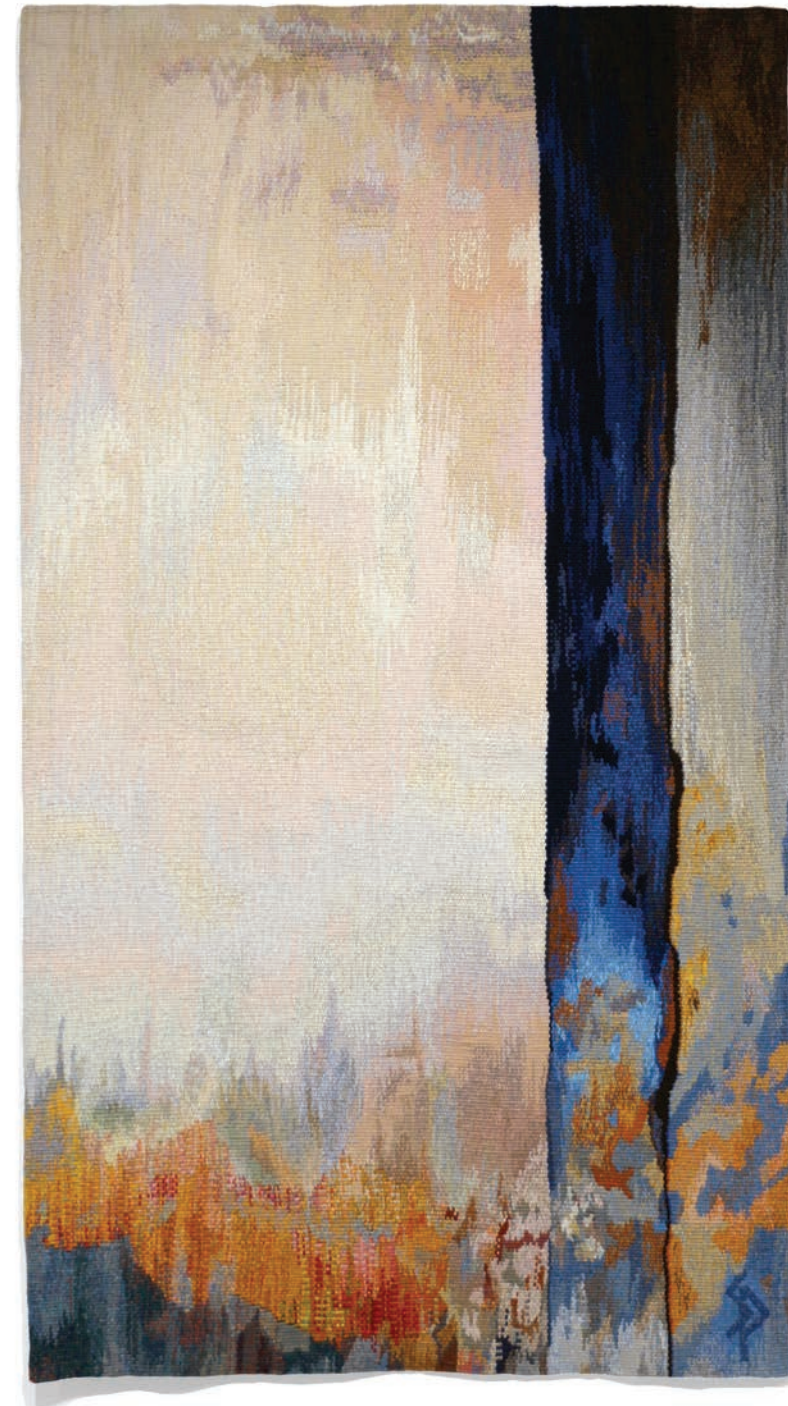
Suzanne exhibits her tapestries in Quebec, Canada and abroad. She has participated in numerous international exhibitions, and her work has also been published in several American textile art publications, including Fiber Art Now magazine, which devoted an article to her in 2019.

Suzanne Paquette taught at Cégep Limoilou for 27 years. In 2015, the Association québécoise de la pédagogie collégiale awarded her an honorary mention in recognition of the excellence of her work as a teacher. Her openness to the world led her to Morocco, where between 2006 and 2019, she collaborated in the development of the arts and crafts education program.

For Suzanne Paquette, textile is more than just a material; it's at the heart of her artistic universe. Among the many roles that textiles play in our lives, it is that of preserving and protecting intimacy that she has chosen to visually explore. While she develops her ideas using digital photography and drawing, it is by embracing the unchanging, meditative technique of weaving that she creates her haute-lisse tapestries.

In the course of the events that shape her life, Suzanne Paquette addresses the function of the boundary between the intimate and the public, using a variety of viewpoints and visual strategies. Using the countless thread crossings in tapestry, she visually represents the passages between private and public, inside and outside, known and unknown, as well as between the permitted and the forbidden.

***Cœur en écho***  
2023  
178 cm x 94 cm  
cotton warp, wool weft, acrylics threads  
photo: Suzanne Paquette



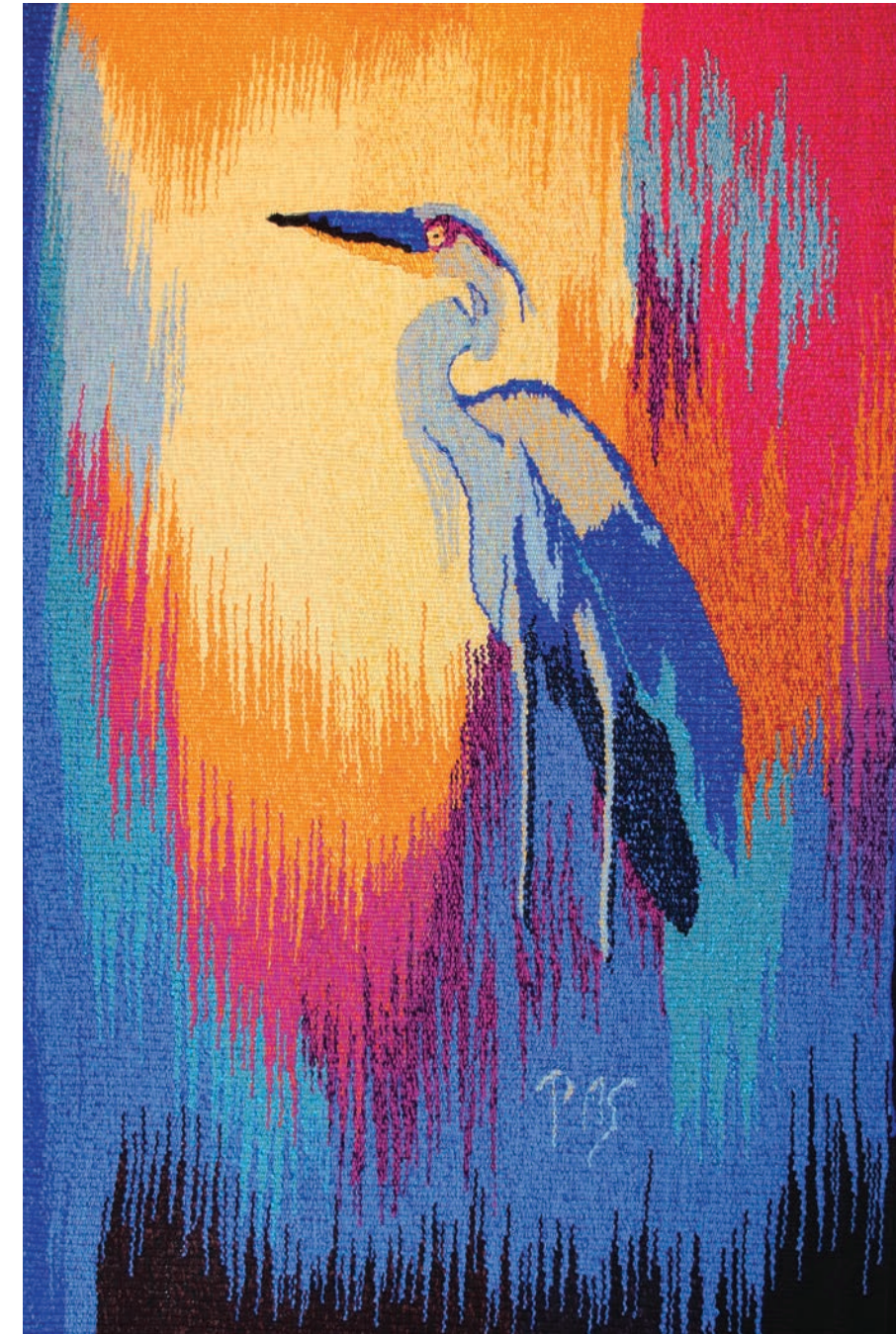


**Paulette-Marie Sauvé**  
**Verchères, Québec**  
**[www.paulettesauve.com](http://www.paulettesauve.com)**

Born in North Bay, Ontario, Sauvé received a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1992 from the Université du Québec in Montreal (UQAM). In the 1970s, she studied at the Institut des Arts appliqués in Montreal, and in 1974 was awarded a government sponsored trip to France that included visits to tapestry studios and meeting specialists in ancient dyes, notably at the Manufacture des Gobelins in Paris. This inspired her to weave on a high-warp Gobelins style loom, and to author *La Teinture Naturelle au Québec* on the art of creating with natural dyes. Sauvé has received grants from the Canada Council and from the Québec Ministère des Affaires Culturelles. In 1978, 1979 and 1984 her work was shown at the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art. She was a founding member of La Biennale de Tapisserie de Montreal, and has exhibited and lectured internationally and created large corporate commissions. In 2021 the Musée des Métiers d'Art du Québec in Montreal presented a retrospective exhibition of her work. In 2023, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Sherbrooke presented a solo exhibition celebrating 50 years of Sauvé's tapestries. Video documentation of both these exhibits is available at [www.paulettesauve.com](http://www.paulettesauve.com)

"I am thrilled with the tactile and textural elements of fibers. I am fascinated with the play of light on woven fabrics such as silk and wool. Since 1974 I have been studying ancient and contemporary textile techniques. My deep appreciation for the history of wool inspires me to explore it intensely: I moved my studio to a farm where I learned to breed sheep, spin wool, use natural dyes, weave fabric, and create textile art. I am deeply connected to tapestry which can tell a story that becomes the journal of my life. I create woven images with silk, wool and cotton yarns using dobby looms, high warp Gobelin looms as well as Jacquard looms. I am passionate about innovation in contemporary artistic expression, doing research in digital art. The inspiration for my tapestries began in the area where I was born - North Bay, Ontario, Canada, where I developed an interest in lakes and rivers. My studio is situated on the south-shore of Montreal, Quebec, where the Saint-Lawrence River reflects the lights and the architecture of the city."

**Great Blue Heron**  
2023  
122 cm x 81 cm  
silk, wool, cotton  
photo: Paulette-Marie Sauvé





**Ixchel Suarez**  
**Warkworth, Ontario**  
**[www.ixchelsuarez.com](http://www.ixchelsuarez.com)**

Ixchel Suarez has been a textile and fibre artist for almost 40 years, exploring material and concepts in non-conventional ways. She has presented many solo and group exhibitions, and her work is in private and public collections in Europe, Central, and North America. She has written articles for many textile publications. Ixchel holds a master's degree in Museum Studies (Iberoamericana University, Mexico City), a BA in Graphic Design & Art History (Anahuac University, MC), and Post-Graduate Studies in Contemporary Textiles in Lodz, Poland. She is the Founder and Director of the Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre. In 2021, she received the Award of Excellence at the Internationale Fibre Art Biennale, From Lausanne to Beijing.

**Time** is a triptych of hand-woven tapestries, crafted through the pandemic that tells a poignant tale.

The first, **March 10th, 2020** marks the announcement of unforeseen change. It heralds the impending transformation that would redefine the contours of our once-familiar existence.

In **The Lockdown - HOPE** - the threads embody the essence of death, symbolized by profound black absences that mirror the painful void left by the departure of three beloved family members and numerous friends. Yet, amidst this darkness, strands of hope interlace, weaving a narrative of resilience and the enduring spirit that persists even in the face of loss.

The final panel, **Social Distancing**, intricately captures the distanced interactions, using a mix of cotton, wool, silk, linen, bamboo fibers, and metallic threads. Together, these tapestries weave a narrative of transformation, loss, hope, and the delicate dance of human connection amidst challenging times.

**TIME-The Lockdown-HOPE**

2020

90 cm x 120 cm

*cotton, wool, silk, linen, bamboo fibre, metallic threads*

*photo: Ixchel Suarez*





## A Story About Tapestry Education In Canada

Joe Lewis

If you put pen to paper eventually you will tell a story. History is a story. While history is suspect, you have it there to use, and while you are looking into a story that has occurred within the living memory, you at least have the chance of connecting a series of occurrences, that if looked at in relationship to each other, a story, and a history will appear.

Let me tell you a story made up of bits and pieces from different sources that nail down a time sequence, and connects a string of names, locations and events from a number of third hand, secondary and primary sources along with contemporary first-hand accounts. I will tell it including the sources of the information because that is part of the story.

The story is set in Quebec and takes a glance at the beginnings of Mariette Rousseau-Vermette's education.<sup>1</sup> Having received a small loom from her father when she was 12, her interest began. By 1939 painters were looking at ways of having their works translated into textile formats. Anne Newlands writes: "The Quebec government's support for traditional textiles was sustained throughout the 1930s. In 1939, it established a centre for carpet and tapestry hooking in the Charlevoix region on the north shore of the St. Lawrence at Pointe-au-Pic, under the direction of artist Georges-Edouard Tremblay (1902–1987). About twenty women students boarded at Tremblay's school workshop, where they learned the skills of rug hooking and produced hooked tapestries. They worked directly from paintings by Tremblay that featured images of picturesque farms and a sentimental view of pre-industrial rural life in Quebec."<sup>2</sup>

In 1944, Rousseau enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts in Quebec City. The school offered a wide range of courses that included painting, sculpture, graphic arts, interior decoration, ceramics, enameling and weaving. Her studies with the painter Jean Dallaire (1916–1965), who began teaching there in 1946, were seminal.<sup>3</sup> Dallaire and his enthusiasm for tapestries designed by the French painter<sup>4</sup> Jean Lurcat, would certainly have struck a chord with Rousseau. Dallaire used his and the work of Jean Lurcat to inspire students to create in fibre.

In addition to her lessons in painting and drawing at the École des Beaux- Arts, Rousseau's exercise books with woven textile samples produced in the Atelier de Tissage between 1944 and 1948, confirm her early mastery of a wide range of pattern and weaving techniques. Rousseau studied with weaver Irene Beaudin, who she acknowledged as an excellent technician who helped students to appreciate the importance of woven structure.<sup>5</sup>

While many of Rousseau's fellow students would later travel to France to learn the art of tapestry, she looked to the United States, inspired by an issue of Life magazine in which an article titled "Top Weaver" introduced her to the innovative Dorothy Liebes studio in San Francisco. After which following her graduation from the École des Beaux-Arts in 1948, Rousseau, who at the time spoke little English, traveled to San Francisco hoping to find a job at the Dorothy Liebes studio.

At this point I will leave Mariette Rousseau-Vermette in Dorothy Liebes studio. I have gathered a few names of teachers and their locations: Irene Beaudin at the Atelier de Tissage and Jean Dallaire at École des Beaux-Arts in Quebec City inspiring students to go to France in search of a larger tapestry education, and look at what happens next in Quebec.

In May 1948, Jean-Marie Gauvreau (1903–1970), director of the École du Meuble arranged for an exhibition of historical and contemporary French tapestries at the Hotel de Ville in Montreal. It included seventeenth-century Gobelin tapestries as well as Jean Lurcat's Summer, produced in 1932 at L'Aubusson, France.<sup>6</sup>

Tracking down further information about this exhibition involved emailing the Musées d'Angers, and Nathalie Planson, their director of Public Relations, provided its actual name and enough information to track down a published review. The exhibition " French Tapestry from the Middle Ages to the Present " which was co-organized by Jean Lurcat, Jean Cas-sou and Georges Salles and presented first at the Museum Modern Art in Paris in 1946. This exhibition was reportedly a resounding success in Paris and subsequently travelled to Amsterdam, London, New York, and Montreal. The review in the The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs speaks about the historical pieces and brushes off the contemporary with these words:

"Here everyone is free to follow his taste and to decide whether he prefers the hallucinatory visions of Saint-Saens, the poetical compositions of Dom Robert, the great tapestries glass painting style by Gromaire or the admirable and fascinating creations of Lurcat which go back to the most fertile traditions of the Middle Ages while at the same time creating a new style."<sup>7</sup>

It is unfortunate that more about the contemporary work was not included. I was told about this exhibition by Beatrijck Sterk of the European Textile Network more than a decade ago, which was enough to make me start looking at the influence this exhibition had on Canadian weavers.

Linda Rees, in the American Tapestry Alliance's Tapestry Topics, writes: "*Theresa Conley, nee La France, was born in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. She enrolled in the weaving program at the École des Beaux Arts in the mid-1940s. Her teacher, Irene Beaudin, went to Penland for summer classes to learn better lecturing skills. In 1947 she arranged for five students, including Theresa, to accompany her. During the 1948-49 school year Theresa decided to weave a tapestry for her senior project, even though she had never done any tapestry weaving before. In fact, she had only seen tapestries pictured in older books. She chose a cartoon that had received high marks in her design class, weaving it from the front, and guessing at how to accomplish the look she wanted. The school was so impressed with the resulting, "Le Coq" that they offered her a job weaving designs created by other students. The first year after being hired, she wove a second similar design of her own, "La Mer, La Terre, Le Ciel", since the other students were just beginning to create designs for tapestries.*"<sup>8</sup>

Helen Duffy wrote: "*The first tapestry weaving workshop was established at the École des Beaux-Arts de Quebec in 1949 in collaboration with young and prolific Quebec painters at the time when the term 'tapestry' suggested the image of antiquated pictorial adornment- the precursor of the mass-produced, imported Gobelin reproductions which became popular here in Canada at the turn of the 20th century*".<sup>9</sup>

"An artist, Jean Bastien, studied in 1949 at the École des Gobelins in France. Upon his return to Canada, he became the initiator of this form of art at the Quebec School of Fine Arts. The first loom for high-warp tapestry was built under his direction from plans of French looms. Thérèse Lafrance produced the first high-warp tapestry at this school. Jeanne-d'Arc Corriveau, a pupil of Bastien's, took his place as professor and succeeded him at the studio, which she directed from 1954 to 1970."<sup>10</sup>

Following this thread or possibly the loom Jean Bastien had built, I find that two of the artists in the Woven By Hand exhibition have connections to it. When I asked each of the artists in the Woven By Hand exhibition to tell me about their own tapestry education, I found these direct connections:

Marcel Marois wrote: “I studied at the Quebec School of Fine Arts in Quebec City from 1967 to 1971. From 1969 to 1971 I learned high warp tapestry design and technique under the direction of the artist and teacher Jeanne-D'arc Corriveau who was the first student of Jean Bastien, and who learned at the School of the Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins in Paris”.

Suzanne Paquette wrote: “The first time I heard about tapestry, it was at the Cégep in 1973 in an introductory crafts course. (I don't remember the name of my teacher) At the University of Quebec in Montreal where I studied in fine arts from 1974 to 1979, I choose the textile option which was more oriented to the dying techniques and painting on fabric, but in the class for the course of craft techniques, there was an upright loom that nobody was using. I began to explore the techniques of tapestry with the support of my teacher Jean-Jacques Giguère who was a generalist, not a specialist in upright loom tapestry. Nevertheless, I realized at that time my first tapestries.”

Thoma Ewen, the curator of Woven By Hand brings the story back around to the artist weaver I began with, Mariette Rousseau-Vermette.

Thoma writes: “I spent a year (1980-81) at the Banff Centre in Winter Cycle in the Fibre Studio, then under the direction of Mariette Rousseau-Vermette. She was creating large public fibre art works then- and brought people like Mildred Constantine to lecture us- it was very amazing. That experience, the international cross-currents of fibre art that were coming through the Fibre Studio, all invited by Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, was so inspiring.”

Thoma was not the only artist in the exhibition that brought up the Fibre Studio at Banff, which is a story of its own to tell. The short version from the Banff Centre's website reads as follows-

-1941: An applied arts and handicraft program is established, with courses in handweaving and design led by Mary Meigs Atwater, Head of the American Shuttlecraft Guild; instruction in modeling and pottery taught by J.B. McLellan from the Glasgow School of Art.

-1943: Ethel Henderson teaches weaving courses and continues until 1963.

-1980: Mariette Rousseau-Vermette becomes head of Banff Centre's fibre arts division.

-1981: Banff Centre hosts the third Fibre Art Interchange, a gathering of experts from the fibre arts world. Noted guests include: Parisian fibre artist Daniel Gaffin; The Museum of Modern Art's Mildred Constantine; The Whitney Museum's curator Patterson Sims, and acclaimed American fibre artist Sheila Hicks.<sup>11</sup>

Jean Dallaire also returns to the story in the location where the first presentation of the Woven By Hand/La Magie des Fils exhibition takes place. There is a large painted framed tapestry design/cartoon by Dallaire hanging in Maison du Citoyen of Gatineau.

I will drop the thread here. This is just one of the many threads I have been trying to follow and in truth the easiest and I believe that is because this is a Quebec Textile story. During the last 20 years I have found Textiles have a different place in both the cultural, public and even personal life of the province of Quebec. It is deeply woven into its history in a different way than elsewhere in Canada. The sources have been diverse and traceable. There is a larger story to tell about tapestry education in Canada but that is for another time.

Joe Lewis is a weaver, writer and publisher of *Fibre Quarterly* 2005-2015

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1. Anne Newlands, *Mariette Rousseau-Vermette: Journey of a Painter-weaver from the 1940s through the 1960s* Journal of Canadian Art History / ACAH Volume XXXII:2

2. Anne Newlands quoting from: “L'ecole d'artisanat de Pointe au Pic,” *Le Confident* (Quebec), 6 April, 1966

3. Luce Vermette, interview with Anne Newlands, Gatineau, QC, 24 Feb. 2010

4. Joe Lewis comments: “That Newl refers to Jean Lurcat as a painter, when his whole raison d'etre was to re-invigorate tapestry as an art form, I find a lack of respect and an assumption of painting being a greater art form with tapestry being the lesser, which rather misses the point.”

5. Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, hand-written notes for a talk delivered at the Musée du Québec, 23 October 1992. *The Estate of Mariette Rousseau-Vermette*

6. Cyril Simard, *Artisanat Québécois* (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'homme, 1975), p 427

7. Francis Salet, *The Exhibition of French Tapestry in Paris,*

*The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 88, No. 522 (Sep., 1946), pp. 223-225+227

*publisher: Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd.*

8. Linda Rees: “A Historical Vignette: Theresa Conley”, *American Tapestry Alliance, Tapestry Topics: Spring 2004 Vol 30 No 1*

9. Helen Duffy, *Canada Mikrokosma: an exhibition of Canadian Tapestries by twenty two Canadian artists* , “The Context” 1982 Organized by the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University Kingston ON, for the Department of External Affairs on the occasion of the official opening of the African Centre for Arts and Conferences, London, 3 March 1982 .

-Primary source Cyril Simard, *Artisanat Québécois*, Montreal: Les Éditions de l'homme, 1975, p 420

10. *Tapestry in Quebec City by Michèle Bernatchez and Jean Tourangeau Vie des arts Volume 21, Number 85, Winter 1976–1977*

accessed April 13 2019 <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/va/1976-v21-n85-v1186421/54958ac/>

11. *Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity website*, accessed June 28 2019 <https://www.banffcentre.ca/history-banff-centre-arts-and-creativity>



## Re-Weaving our Culture: a text for peace

Thoma Ewen

Weaving has been done by almost every culture on our planet, so it touches a place of deep knowing in us all. The Mayans say that when a woman ties herself into her backstrap loom, she ties herself to the cosmos. The universe, they say, was woven into being. Indigenous cultures have a traditional sacred connection to their weaving. Their textiles are their “texts.” Through colour, symbol and line, their textiles narrate the myths, legends and creation stories that belong to their culture. Tantra (Sanskrit for weave) defines a mystic or sacred union. In weaving, the union is between warp and weft. Many cultures believe that weaving is a sacred path. It transmits, as the Navajo believe, the energy of peace.

There is a Navajo creation myth that Spider Woman, the creator spirit, made the Earth and then made First Woman and First Man. She was so pleased with her creations that she gave the gift of weaving to First Woman. Weaving has remained unchanged over millennia. The basic structure of weave everywhere, often called tabby or plain weave, is the basic tapestry weaving technique. Tantra, or the union of warp and weft, creates the flow. . . over and under, under and over... from left to right... from right to left... the flow of weave...

This basic weaving technique is virtually the same everywhere, in all cultures on our planet. It is universal—a common thread that connects all cultures and all humans.

The ancient symbol for both water and life is an undulating line, like a series of connected sine waves. In tapestry weaving, this undulating line is the path the weft follows through the warp threads. It flows. There is a subtle fluidity in woven structure that relates it to all of life in its very form.

The weft passes over and under the warp threads, moving from right to left, and returns, moving under and over from left to right. Every movement is followed by its opposite. This constant repetition of one movement followed by its opposite generates a balancing of left- and right-brain activities. It has a harmonizing effect on the weaver that is then transmitted to the viewer. This harmonizing, balancing effect is what the Navajo call being in “the beauty place” of weaving. It is a place of peace.

This harmonizing effect has been most amazingly visible when working with children during Moon Rain Centre’s artist-in-the schools projects. When given a brief demonstration of weaving, individual frame looms, and warp and weft, a class of energetic children is transformed into a group of intent and dedicated weavers. When we tell children that weaving puts more peace and beauty back into the world, they do not want to stop. They weave with purpose and integrity and a mission. Peace and harmony are real necessities, very real. Children understand this.

This gift of weaving is special. Certainly it gives beauty to viewers, but even more, it gives us a way to centre, to bring ourselves into balance or harmony. Weaving even connects us to all cultures, and to all humans throughout time who have woven, worn and used textiles. Weaving gives us warmth, the visual warmth in the richness of a tapestry filling a living room wall, or the warmth and protection of shawls, blankets and clothing.

This suggests to me that weaving is about to come into its own in a vital contemporary way. Peace and harmony are real necessities for everyone on the planet. The role that weaving has to play has never been so important and so necessary. The weaver, now replaced by mechanized looms and factories, has been given an important contemporary task. Once required to clothe humanity, the weaver is now addressing the very heart, soul and spirit of the individual, community and humanity. The new message is harmony, peace.

In these times of ecological precariousness and media reports of violence erupting on a daily basis, tapestry’s beauty and harmony provide an antidote to negativity. Throughout our country, in our cities, and in our schools, tapestry weaving is re-emerging as a vital contemporary vehicle for peace, and a tool for creating and reinforcing a sense of harmony in the community. Community tapestry projects are bringing people together to collectively collaborate in a dynamic positive way. People feel the energy of weave, they sense the flow of weave, and the energy of peace. The finished collective tapestry, installed in a public community location, continues to transmit and reinforce the feelings and messages of harmony, community, beauty and peace. It becomes an icon of the collaboration that creates community. Contemporary tapestry weavers are sharing the ancient wisdom of this timeless art and craft.

**The text of contemporary tapestry is the text of peace.**

## About the curator of Woven By Hand:

Thoma Ewen's connection to art began in the children's art classes at the Vancouver Art Gallery. When her family moved to Ottawa, she studied with Ottawa artist Eva Jaworska. Treasured memories are of digging clay on the banks of the lake at Eva's cottage near Wakefield, Quebec, and then making pottery in Eva's Ottawa studio, where there were weaving looms and baskets of yarns. Thus began a love of the crafts, and a heart connection to the Gatineau Hills.

Regular visits to the National Gallery of Canada familiarized her with Canadian Art and the Group of Seven, and inspired her creativity. In 1968, a touring exhibition of French tapestries, featuring works by renowned tapestry artist Jean Lurçat, was presented in the foyer of Ottawa City Hall. That exhibition had such a strong visual impact that Thoma knew immediately that she wanted to become a tapestry artist.

Following a BFA from the University of Victoria in 1971, Thoma received a graduate scholarship to apprentice with Finnish tapestry artist Oili Mäki, and to study drawing at Ateneum, the Graduate Institute of Fine Art in Helsinki. That experience provided the basis for a lifelong studio practice in the art and craft of tapestry weaving.

Thoma was invited to exhibit in Crossroads, the opening exhibition of the Ontario Crafts Council Gallery in 1976 in Toronto. In 1980-81 she attended the Banff Centre's Winter Cycle, in residence in the Fibre Studio under the direction of Quebec tapestry artist Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, where the dynamic textile artists and the ideas of the international fibre art community were converging. Deeply inspired, Thoma founded *Tapestry Makers* in Toronto in the mid-80's and coordinated tapestry exhibitions in the Toronto area. In collaboration with the Ontario Crafts Council and Convergence 86, the biennial conference of the Handweavers Guild of America, she coordinated *Tapestry Canada*, and *Homage to Lurcat*, the first USA/Canada tapestry exhibition, curated by the American Tapestry Alliance's Jim Brown. She has taught tapestry workshops and the art history of tapestry at the Ottawa School of Art, the University of Alberta, and for continuing studies at the University of Toronto and the University of Ottawa, and was Artist-in-Residence at South West Oklahoma State University.

In 1993, during its inaugural year, the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum invited Thoma to present a solo exhibition of her tapestries. Then in 2004, retiring MVTM curator Mary Lettner invited Thoma to present recent tapestries as Lettner's final exhibition. She has exhibited in Woven Bridges at MVTM, curated by Krystyna Sadej, and has collaborated with Michael Rickley Lancaster coordinating exhibitions as part of *La Triennale Internationale des Arts Textiles*.

In 1999, she co-founded Moon Rain Centre, an artist-run textile arts centre with textile artist and daughter Gabby Ewen. Moon Rain Centre is dedicated to interweaving textile art and community. Its profoundly moving community tapestry projects, like The Vision Weave Project, bring together members of the public to collaboratively co-create textile art that expresses a vision for the future of the Earth. Moon Rain Centre's artists-in-the-schools projects have literally put the word "weaving" back in the vocabulary of Outaouais school children. Moon Rain Centre organized *La Triennale Internationale des Arts Textiles en Outaouais*, an international textile arts event in the National Capital Region that made textile art visible and accepted as contemporary art in the region and beyond.

Over the past 50 years, Thoma has exhibited in solo and group tapestry exhibitions in Canada, United States, Mexico, England, Ireland, France, Poland, Guatemala, Venezuela and China. Her tapestries are in numerous public and private collections. She is the author of *The Living Tapestry Workbook* and *La Tapisserie Vivante*, beginner's guides to designing and weaving tapestry.

Inspired by ancient indigenous weaving wisdom, Thoma communicates the vital contemporary role of tapestry today: to transmit the energy of peace. She continues to design and weave tapestries, working from her studio at Moon Rain Centre, located in the Gatineau Hills, north of Ottawa.



**Woven By Hand: Contemporary Canadian Tapestries**  
**La Magie des Fils : tapisseries contemporaines canadienne**

List of venues to date:

**Galerie Montcalm, Maison du Citoyen, Gatineau, Québec**  
August 25 to October 6, 2019

**Centre d'Art, La Sarre, Québec**  
September 10 to October 25, 2020

**Mississippi Valley Textile Museum, Almonte, Ontario**  
July 20 to September 28, 2024

**MUMAQ**  
**Musée des Métiers d'Art du Québec, Montréal, Québec**  
December 20, 2025 to March 20, 2026

For further information, contact Moon Rain Centre, [info@moonrain.ca](mailto:info@moonrain.ca)

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Cover art: detail of **Starwatch**

Thoma Ewen

2020

147 cm x 165 cm

wool and cotton weft, cotton warp

**Starwatch** is about looking at the sky through a telescope to find meaning in the cosmos. It is also about discovering the complexities of life forms within the dimensions of nature, space and the “field”. In this tapestry the arms of the whirlpool galaxy are filled with tiny butterflies: in the dark arms the butterflies are being pulled into the centre of the galaxy, and in the light arms they are being released. Astronomers have noticed butterfly shapes appearing on the pressure waves of galaxy-formations. To me it seems as if the energy formations of newly-created cosmic life take the form of butterfly wings; as if energy materializes into form in the toroidal butterfly shape, as a primal materialization and manifestation of source energy.

The **Starwatch** tapestry was finished in 2020 during covid lockdowns. Weaving it, and being immersed in its energies, was like a gateway or portal beyond the extreme physical confinement that everyone, all over the world, was experiencing at exactly the same time. The tapestry provided a doorway to the cosmos, transcending isolation and confinement, finding mystery, beauty and inspiration in the open space beyond.





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