



warp & weft

Woven Textiles in Fashion,
Art and Interiors

Jessica Hemmings

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B L O O M S B U R Y
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COVER IMAGE: Anne Wilson, *Wind-
Up: Walking the Warp*, 2008.
Performance and sculpture.
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Hoffman Gallery, Chicago,
USA, 20–25 January 2008.

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Duarte, Annie Egleson, Surabhi
Ghosh, Jongock Kim, Rosemary
Lee, Christy Matson, Rachel
Moore, Jeroen Nelemans,
Sara Rabinowitz, Rana Siegel,
Mike Slattery and Anne Wilson.

PHOTOGRAPHER: SURABHI GHOSH. IMAGE
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND RHONA
HOFFMAN GALLERY, CHICAGO

FRONTISPIECE: Ball-Nogues
Studio, *Gravity's Loom* (detail),
2010. Ink-dyed nylon twine
installation, Indianapolis
Museum of Art, USA.

PHOTOGRAPHER: HADLEY FRUITS. IMAGE
COURTESY OF THE INDIANAPOLIS MUSEUM
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Introduction

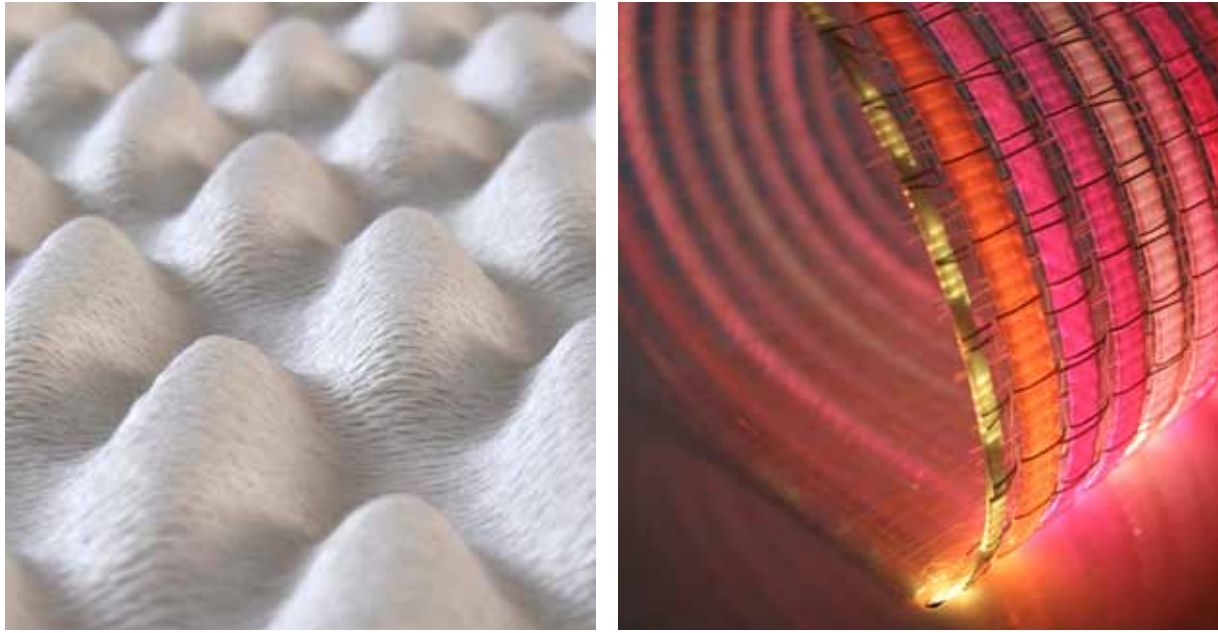
THE INTENTION OF THIS BOOK IS TO REVEAL THE VAST RANGE of interdisciplinary connections that inspire and inspiration that informs recent woven textile art and design. While weaving is, in many ways, technical, content here is organised thematically into sections that I hope readers will find both familiar and, at times – such as the wealth of projects that explore weaving and sound – unexpected. A number of recurring areas of investigation appear across the thematic chapters. The binary system that underpins the weave structure and its relationship to our digital communication age is a rich area of inquiry. The pros and cons of hand and industrial production are apparent throughout, often with designers moving back and forth between the two in an increasing acceptance of the potential of digital tools coupled with acknowledgement of the vital importance of the weaver's hand. The tools of weaving are also a point of debate, from the adaptation of existing tools to the adoption of equipment from other disciplines, and even the invention of new tools to aid design and production. The impact new materials have on woven textile innovation is a further area of inquiry.

Weaving faces the curious challenge of besting the remarkable technical feats of previous centuries. It is something of a legacy and a burden. If we pause to look back, the celebrated weaver and educator Anni Albers, writing in 1946, noted:

It is easy to visualize how intrigued, as much as mystified, a weaver of ancient Peru would be in looking over the textiles of our day. Having been exposed to the greatest culture in the history of textiles and having been himself a contributor to it, he can be considered a fair judge of our achievements. He would marvel, we can imagine, at the speed of mass production, at the uniformity of threads, the accuracy of weaving and the low price. He would enjoy the new yarns used ... But strangely enough, he may find that neither one would serve him in his specific interest: the intricate interlocking of two sets of threads at right angles – weaving.¹

OPPOSITE: Astrid Krogh, *Ikat I*, 2011. Fibre optic and paper weft and paper warp, plain weave hand-woven on ARM loom, 250 x 150 cm (99 x 59 in.).

PHOTOGRAPHER: TORBEN ESKEROD



LEFT: Aleksandra Gaca, *Tero* (detail), 2011, from Architextile collection. Cotton, wool, viscose, polyester and paper weft and cotton warp, various weave structures, Jacquard loom.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ALEKSANDRA GACA

RIGHT: Sarah Taylor, *Inner Light: Programmable Stripes*, material 2009, light design 2011. Polymer optical fibre weft activated by the use of LEDs, nylon monofilament warp, weft-faced weave structure hand-woven on Dobby loom with micro-controllers using a digital interface (DMX system), 15 x 40 cm (6 x 15¾ in.).

PHOTOGRAPHER: SARAH TAYLOR

The artists and designers selected for this book all embrace an expansive view of weaving. Some take the woven structure into new territory through their use of innovative materials, as Albers noted over half a century ago. Others challenge expected applications of the woven textile and introduce the structure to unfamiliar or unexpected settings. Still others draw heavily on interdisciplinary collaborations to invite new input to the purpose and potential of the woven textile.

Over the course of writing this book I have heard again and again of the weaver's sensibility, a way of approaching the visual and material world that guides thinking far beyond the construction of cloth. Arthur Danto has observed that 'the industrialization of the weaving process has set between most of us and the reality of weaving a cognitive barrier'.² He refers to this 'barrier' as 'opaque enough that it must come as a surprise that Plato should have found common to the arts of weaving and of statesmanship a quality of mind that is very central to the practice of an art, namely a certain kind of creative judgement – the ability to make decisions in the absence of rules or of laws'.³ I understand the weaver's vision to be just this, an ability to work within the discipline and logic of weaving, while remaining alert to serendipity and trusting creative intuition.

In September of 2010 I organised a one-day symposium about interdisciplinary approaches to weaving. The event was planned to coincide with a series of exhibitions supported by the Laura Ashley Foundation and curated by Laura Thomas for the Oriol Myrddin Gallery in Wales. Enthusiasm, and perhaps more tellingly, hunger for dialogue about woven textiles during this



Salt, *Alternate Longitude* (detail), 2009. Stainless-steel weft and cotton and viscose warp, hand-woven on a Dobby loom.

PHOTOGRAPHER: MATTHEW JUDD

event, prompted my work on this book. The title – *Warp and Weft* – is inherited from Laura Thomas's exhibition at the Oriol Myrddin Gallery. A number of individuals have been incredibly generous in their suggestions for artists and designers to consider for this book, in particular Philippa Brock, Anne Marie Commandeur, Lia Cook, Petter Hellsing, Beatrijs Sterk, Laura Thomas, Jereon Vinken and Anne Wilson. My sincere thanks to Dawn Youll and Cove Park, Scotland for an invaluable Creative Catalyst Residency funded by the Jerwood Foundation during August of 2011. My final thanks are reserved for the Rhode Island School of Design, where I spent four very happy years learning to weave as an undergraduate student. In the final event I did not become a weaver, but I am convinced that my time at the loom taught me how to write.



CHAPTER ONE

Threads

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR WEAVERS TO CITE THE CREATION OF ‘something out of nothing’ as one of the wonders of weaving. But long before cloth exists, there are individual threads and a number of artists and designers make these threads the focus of their work. Working with thread brings its own unique challenges. How do you keep it in place? In fact, in the case of large-scale installations, how do you even get it in place? Examples discussed in this chapter are made by artists who choose to work alone, preferring control over efficiency, as well as those who work with teams, either of studio assistants or volunteers. Some invite mistakes into their working process, while others plan for perfection. All have had to develop their own systems to map and plan the execution of work that often does not want to stay put. In many cases, it is human hands that wind countless threads back and forth in what have to be admired as feats of great patience. For others, purpose-built tools are imagined and constructed to aid in the creation process. Nothing more than a quick snip from a pair of scissors de-installs some of these works, but not before viewers have been shown how the most modest of materials can make us reconsider the foundation of woven cloth.

‘Take one step and it all changes’ warns Mexican artist **Gabriel Dawe** of the installations he makes from coloured polyester thread.¹ Thousands of threads, hooked around nails and held under tension, make up each of his optically illusive works. In early versions of the ‘Plexus’ series, this meant Dawe was ‘climbing up and down a ladder three hundred times a day’ to wind threads back and forth. It was an installation technique he concedes was ‘hard on the knees!’ and, over time, his production strategies have slowly gained efficiency. Dawe trained as a graphic designer and absorbed ‘the mindset that you have to produce commercial work. And if you want to be an artist, you have to sell “something”’. ‘I was torn. My work with thread takes so long [to create]. It is not practical’. After a decade’s work as a graphic designer left him decidedly burnt out, he returned to education as a postgraduate student at the University of Texas at Dallas. The experience ‘got rid of the mindset that I have to produce to sell’.

Prior to working with thread, Dawe explored embroidery and paint. ‘I used embroidery out of my childhood frustration. I grew up in a macho culture –

OPPOSITE: Gabriel Dawe, *Plexus 3*, 2010. Polyester thread installation, 3.65 x 1.82 x 4.88 m (12 x 6 x 16 ft), installed Guerilla Arts, USA.

PHOTOGRAPHER: KEVIN TODORA



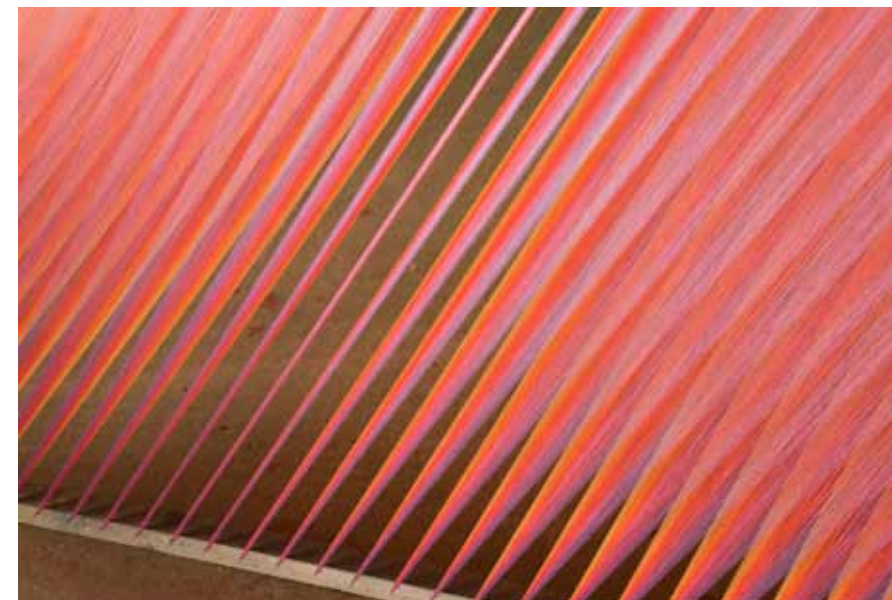
Gabriel Dawe, *Plexus 4*, 2010. Polyester thread installation, 3.35 x 7.62 x 7.62 m (11 x 25 x 25 ft), installed Dallas Contemporary, USA.
PHOTOGRAPHER: KEVIN TODORA

Mexico – and in the summers my grandmother taught my sister embroidery. I was not taught because I was a boy. It was so frustrating. I didn't dare ask, but I remember trying to steal thread to do it.' Today he has come to terms with his chosen materials and the hours their installation demands. Projects range from work that is planned prior to installation with a space in mind, to work Dawe refers to as more 'generic' in its relationship to site, often as part of group exhibitions.

Working on-site with such a vast volume of thread comes with its risks. Remarkably, with the exception of some recent large commissions, he tends to install work alone. 'I have to come to terms with mistakes', Dawe admits. 'Mistakes make it human and in a way I welcome them – just not too much! I do try to correct mistakes when I see them, but sometimes it is too late.' Recent projects have enjoyed a second life after the installations are taken down. Threads are disengaged from their nails or hooks, allowed to knot, and placed in a perspex box. 'I see them as relics of the piece', Dawe explains of these colourful tangles of what were once precisely ordered threads.



Gabriel Dawe *Plexus No. 2*, 2011. Polyester thread and plexiglass box from installation at Dallas Contemporary, USA, 21.6 x 21.6 x 22.9 cm (8½ x 8½ x 9 in.).
PHOTOGRAPHER: GARY STRUNK



Gabriel Dawe, *Plexus 5* (detail), 2011. Polyester thread installation, installed Pump Projects, Texas Biennial, USA.
PHOTOGRAPHER: MIKE METCALFE



Dawe's 'Plexus' series uses thread stretched taut and held under tension. In contrast, *Gravity's Loom*, by the Los Angeles-based **Ball-Nogues Studio**, works, as the name suggests, with gravity. Led by Benjamin Ball and Gaston Nogues, the studio's 'Suspension' series uses a range of materials in ceiling-mounted installations. *Gravity's Loom* was exhibited in the Indianapolis Museum of Art during late 2010 and early 2011 and was comprised of 1,900 pieces of cut twine in varying lengths. Each piece of twine was offset by 2 m (6 ft 6¾in.) and crossed another as they span the oval perimeter of one of the museum's entrance areas. The installation created a twisted and inverted dome shape, which Douglas Murphy observes as having 'porous spatial effects' that change as the viewer moves through the space.² Ball and Nogues, who both trained as architects, explain that the vibrant colours and patterns of the installation are inspired by the surface decoration of baroque domes that 'blur the distinction between what is architectural, sculptural, and pictorial'. 'The [painted] strings ... represent the imagined plan for a traditional baroque ceiling pattern – a three-dimensional volume that will blur into billows of color and then snap into a focused geometry, depending on the viewer's vantage point.'³



LEFT, RIGHT AND BELOW:
Ball-Nogues Studio,
Gravity's Loom, 2010.
Ink-dyed nylon twine
installation, Indianapolis
Museum of Art, USA.

PHOTOGRAPHER: HADLEY FRUITS
IMAGES COURTESY OF THE INDIANAPOLIS
MUSEUM OF ART





Susie MacMurray,
Promenade, 2010.
Cotton thread installation,
Kedleston Hall, Derby,
England.

PHOTOGRAPHER: SUSIE MACMURRAY

A team of studio assistants work to cut and colour each piece of twine using the *Insta-llator 1 with the Variable Information Atomising Module* machine. The device was invented and fabricated by the pair to aid in the design process, as well as coordinate the measurement, cutting and airbrushing of each string into ‘one continuous sequence of procedures that would be extremely time-consuming and tedious (impossible) for a human to accomplish’.⁴ The ‘machine eliminated the mind-boggling process of cutting by hand ... individual lengths of string, no two alike ... allowing us to precisely airbrush each string in discrete locations based on data input from a computer’.⁵ The vibrant colours of the work can be likened to ikat textiles, a system of space-dyeing the weft and/or warp yarn prior to weaving to create predetermined patterns. On reflection, Ball describes the structure of *Gravity’s Loom* as ‘something akin to weaving, albeit not tightly woven’. ‘We don’t set out to reference weaving’, he emphasises, although ‘Weaving is a fundamental way of ordering matter’.⁶

British artist **Susie MacMurray** shares with Ball-Nogues Studio the fact that she ‘was not thinking about weaving’ when she responded to a commission by the National Trust to create an installation for Kedleston Hall, England in 2010.⁷ But much like Ball-Nogues, a warp of kinds is the result. MacMurray

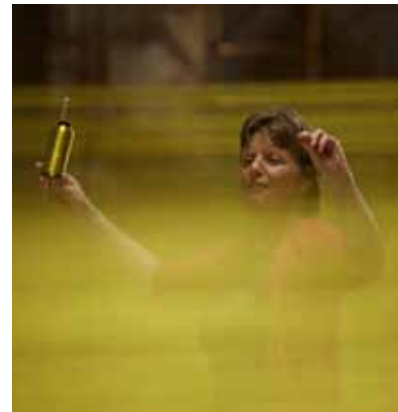


worked to a project brief that asked specifically for an installation that spoke to visitors about the original purpose of the house. Her response was to amplify the owner’s original intentions for the property. Kedleston Hall was inherited by Sir Nathaniel Curzon in 1758, who immediately knocked down the original building and began anew. The resulting Hall, designed by the architect Robert Adam, was intended to be a place where, in MacMurray’s words ‘you go to see and to be seen. It is about looking’.

Even when first built, the public were allowed to visit the Hall and admire the contents. In fact, the area where MacMurray installed her work was never lived in as a home and was always intended for the public gaze. With the busy foot traffic of curious National Trust visitors in mind, MacMurray constructed a work to highlight this original performance of looking. Over two weeks, several dozen volunteers helped to wind the 167 km (103¾ miles) of gold cotton ‘warp’ around the alabaster pillars of Kedleston’s Marble Hall. The pillars essentially acted as a giant warping board. Cotton was chosen in case polyester thread proved tougher than the soft alabaster pillars; the colour was a response to an elaborate dress of woven gold thread once owned by the Curzon family. But rather than creating cloth, the work is first and foremost about directing vision.

LEFT AND BELOW: Susie
MacMurray, *Promenade*,
2010. Cotton thread
installation, Kedleston Hall,
Derby, England.

PHOTOGRAPHER: SUSIE MACMURRAY



PHOTOGRAPHER: MATTHEW ANDREWS



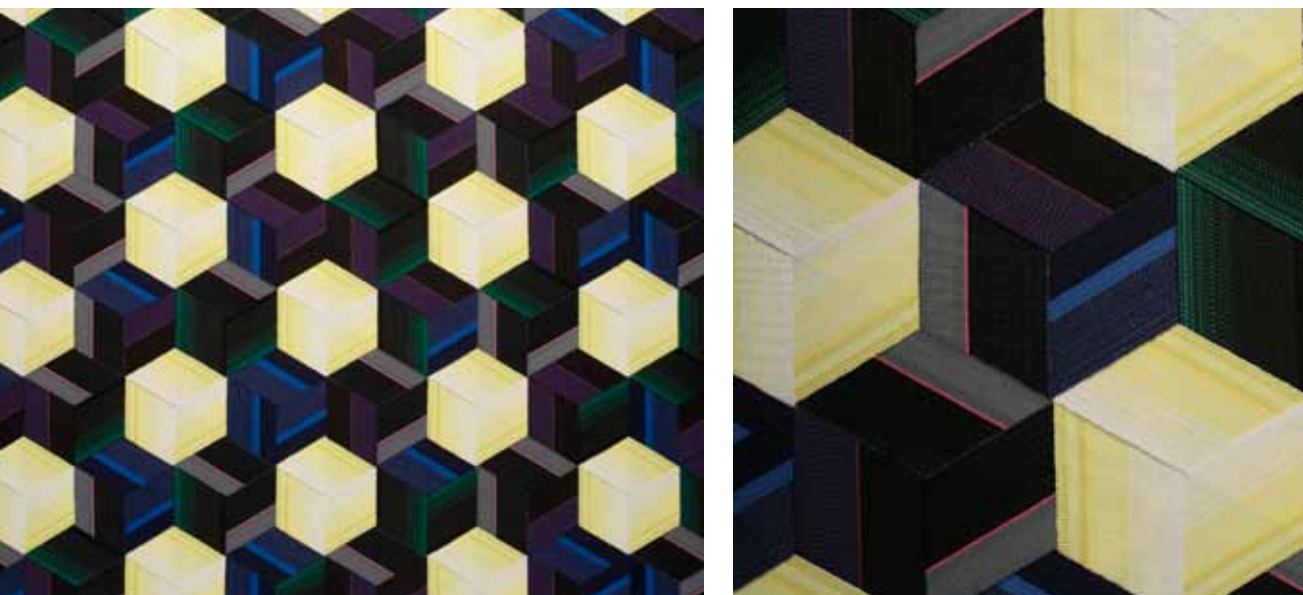
PHOTOGRAPHER: JULIAN HUGHES

The thread creates channels in space that are optically illusive, but also very real barriers and pathways that control each viewer's movement. 'I wanted visitors to be more intensely aware of their surroundings', MacMurray explains. Similar to the work of Dawe and Ball-Nogues Studio, the visibility of these routes is largely dependent on the vantage point of the viewer. Here the result encouraged a sense of scrutiny within the space, which highlighted the original preening and parading that was once the purpose of the site. Reflecting on this history, MacMurray explains, 'History is intangible, it never stops, you can never pin it down, never say *this is how it is*.' The shifting perspectives made material through the simple winding of thread help act as a reminder of this truth.

While Dawe and MacMurray stretch threads under tension and Ball-Nogues Studio allows gravity to determine shape, Welsh artist and designer **Laura Thomas** casts unwoven threads in resin. Resin eliminates the need for tension or gravity to hold the thread in place, instead allowing threads to float in space. Thomas trained as a weaver and these works are informed by her fascination with the potential, and limitations, of the woven structure. She refers to the work as a 'celebration of unwoven threads', but more recently wanted to return to the tactile qualities of weaving.⁸ A residency at the Ruthin Craft Centre in Wales from 2009–11 allowed time for Thomas to engage in a making strategy that would otherwise have easily been deemed too time-intensive for her typical commercial work. Six solid weeks of weaving time on a dense warp of 60 ends per inch generated 80 m (87½ yd) of warp-faced plain weave. The fabric was then cut and re-woven by hand in a triaxial structure to create *Three x Five*.

Laura Thomas, *Three x Five*, (detail right), 2010. Triaxial hand weaving of woven strips of warp-faced plain weave, cotton, silk and linen 130 x 100 cm (51 x 39½ in.).

PHOTOGRAPHER: DEWI TANNATT LLOYD



ABOVE: Laura Thomas, *Horizon I-V*, 2010. Threads encapsulated in acrylic resin; linen, cotton, silk and acrylic resin; each measures 29 x 17.5 x 9 cm (11½ x 6¾ x 3½ in.).

PHOTOGRAPHER: DEWI TANNATT LLOYD

RIGHT: Laura Thomas, *Horizon II*, 2010. Threads encapsulated in acrylic resin; linen, cotton, silk and acrylic resin; each measures 29 x 17.5 x 9 cm, (11½ x 6¾ x 3½ in.).

PHOTOGRAPHER: DEWI TANNATT LLOYD

Triaxial weaving, as the name suggests, does not place the warp and weft at right angles, but instead interweaves in three directions. The technique allowed Thomas to 'subvert the rules of cloth and the horizontal and vertical of warp and weft'.

The palette of *Three x Five* is 'loosely inspired by Welsh landscape colours' and the hand interweaving of the woven strips ordered only the yellow strips, leaving the remaining dark background to be random in what Thomas describes as 'ordered disorder'. Each of the woven strips that becomes the warp and weft of the finished work uses a strié effect of irregularly ordered different coloured threads. Yellow moves from mustard to near white, a black band gradually builds to forest green, a mottled blue turns to purple-black with a strip of brighter blue separating the two and brown sits besides purple, separated by one fine pick of coral. The result is an intricate weaving within a weaving that both respects and questions the logic of the woven structure.

British artist **Sue Lawty** is celebrated for her work as a tapestry weaver. But in recent years, materials such as stones and lead have found an increasingly prominent place in her work. 'I need to *not* know what I am doing', Lawty explains of her desire to continually challenge established ways of working.⁹ 'It is not that I actively seek to do this, but I know that I am drawn to asking questions constantly.' In 2004, a chance encounter with a fellow artist working with lead showed Lawty 'the most beautiful pure line' and she instinctively recognised that the line 'wasn't thread, it was metal – lead – with a plumb bob on the bottom. This made the quality of that line in space so different'.

Lawty's work and the preliminary research that inspires it often have strong connections with the land, 'specifically with rock and increasingly with geology', she observes. 'The direct association of taking stuff from deep under the ground and weaving with it has an immediacy that is very exciting', she explains. 'I love the fact that lead is almost rock, but also soft, ductile, malleable – you can beat it with a hammer.' But for all these connections, lead hardly lends itself to weaving. Recalling her early samples, she concedes, 'Lead is awkward. It is not that pleasant to work with. It's when you start to feel the weight and the character of the lead fabric that things get interesting. The real thrill and control comes in the hammering process – sensing how much pressure [to apply] and when to stop. A crude structure pressed flat immediately starts to transform, to look like it has always been there.'

This 'been there' quality has long captured Lawty's eye. As artist in residence at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London during 2005–6, she noticed herself 'going back to the basics of cloth: plain-weave fabric. The things [in the V&A archive] I was drawn to most were simple little fragments and humble interlacement ... hand-spun linens from Egypt; rhythmic marks from the hand of the maker and nuances of thread'. Lawty continues, 'I've always been fascinated by the way artefacts in museums are imbued with a sense of time – the strong visual metre of their construction worn and fragmented over the years. With the lead, the repetitive pattern of the structure is obvious, but through beating becomes indistinct and homogenous.'

Lawty explains, 'I have always been interested in the intrinsic visual language that emerges from working with the specific qualities of a material and structure. There is something about the unfinished, the broken-up, that is intriguing.' She cites the American poet Louise Glück, who writes, 'The unsaid, for me, exerts great power: often I wish an entire poem could be made in this vocabulary. It is analogous to the unseen for example, to the power of ruins, to works of art either damaged or incomplete. Such works inevitably allude to larger contexts; they haunt because they are not whole, though wholeness is implied: another time, a world in which they were whole, or were to have been whole, is implied. There is no moment in which their first home is felt to be the museum.'¹⁰ Reflecting

Sue Lawty, *Lead Weave 1* (detail), 2006. Lead warp and weft, hand interlacing.

PHOTOGRAPHER: PETER KELLEHER
COURTESY OF V&A IMAGES, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON





Sue Lawty, *Lead Weave* (detail), 2008. Lead warp and weft, vertical tapestry loom.

PHOTOGRAPHER: JERRY HARDMAN-JONES

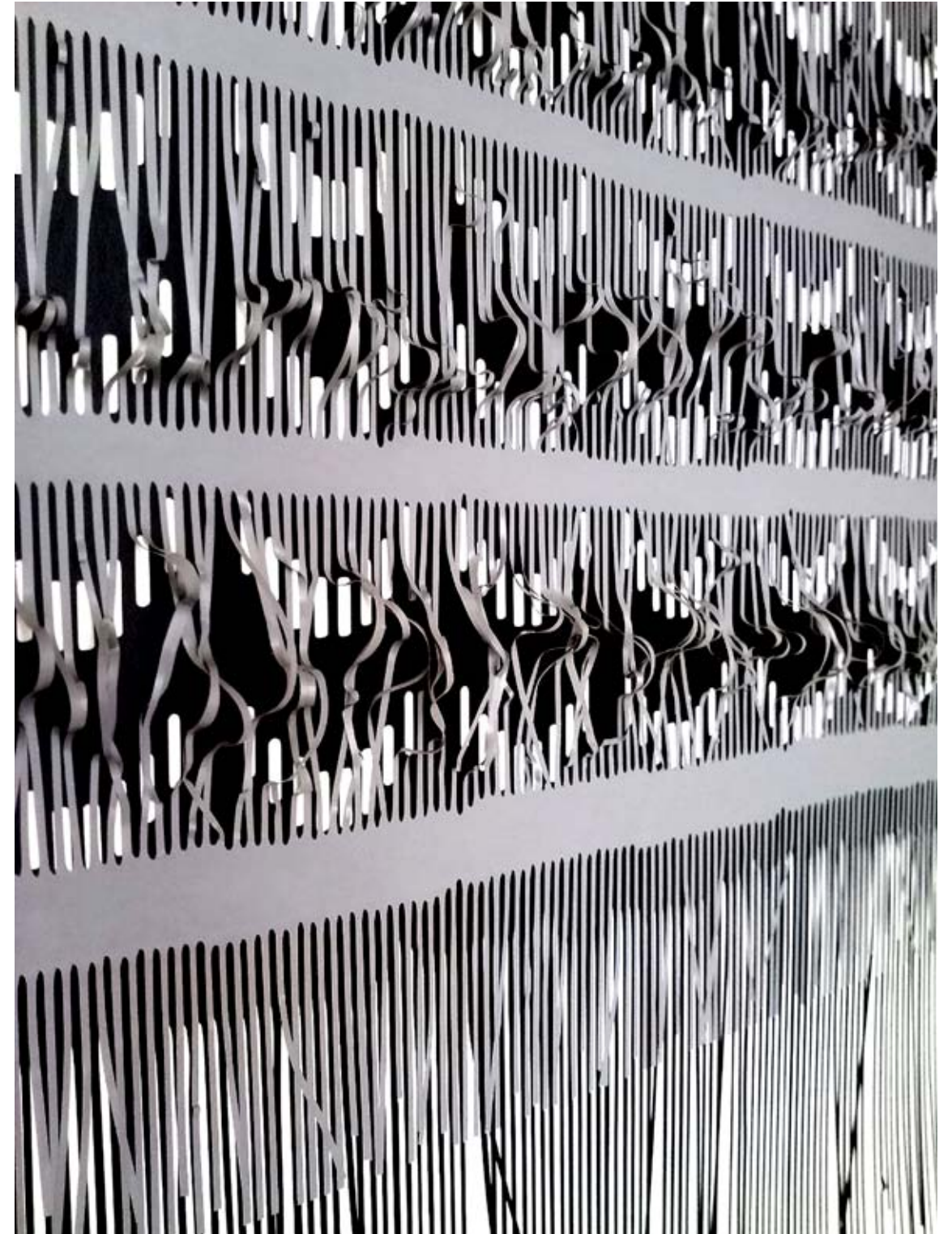
on her own work, Lawty concludes, 'I really like honesty. I work with few materials and techniques. Weaving is such a fantastic, basic structure. I don't have preconceived notions of what I am going to do. The ambiguity of a corrupted structure is a real link with time, but there is a tension here between the stable longevity of lead and the vulnerable qualities of the woven fabric.'

Lawty builds up dimension when weaving lead and then beats the material away, constructing and then breaking down structure. Working with vastly different materials, British product designer **Lauren Moriarty** takes the structure of the woven textile and reduces three dimensions back into two dimensions in a different design cycle of deconstruction and reconstruction. In early work, Moriarty often took line drawings and close-up images of woven or stitched textiles as her starting point. These drawings were then scanned and overlaid in CAD to create new three-dimensional objects. In her more recent explorations, this design process has become more complex. Her deconstruction of existing woven structures and reconstruction of new repeating patterns continues to use the woven structure as the foundation. But she now uses a variety of combined processes from plotter-cut pieces (for cutting vector drawings) to laser-cutting and hand-cutting to make the woven structure material again.

'What I am interested in is an open-weave structure with holes and gaps in between', she explains of her ideal inspiration textile. Layers are then created, often taking several copies of one structure and exploring the effects of offsetting and overlaying. Her current experiments are modest in size and more

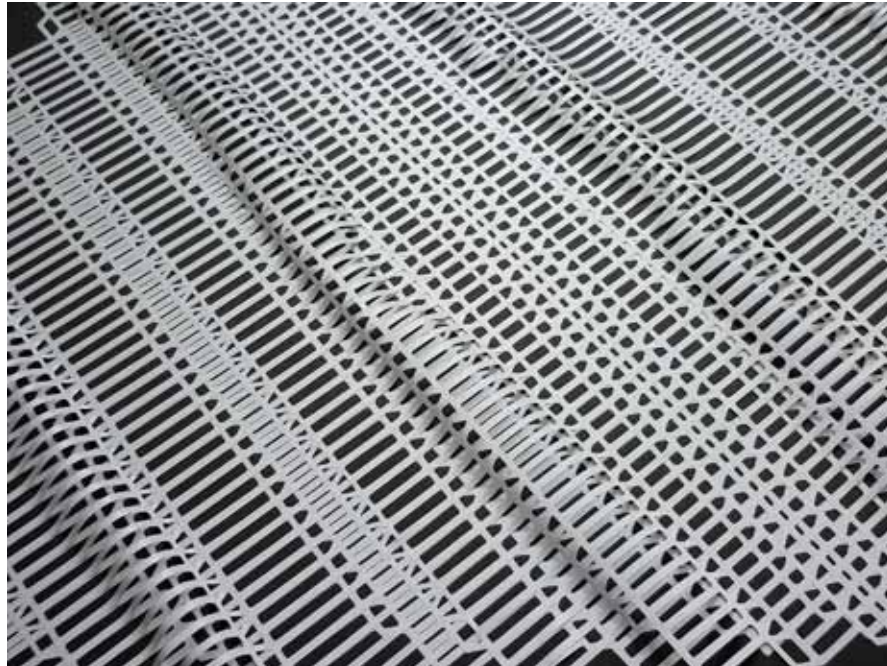
OPPOSITE: Lauren Moriarty, *Stitch Studies No. 1* (detail), 2010. Laser-cut plastics.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROB WARREN



Lauren Moriarty, *Stitch Studies No. 6 (detail)*, 2011. Laser-cut plastics.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROB WARREN



intricate than photographs might suggest. Even when digital tools are used as the first step in the process, hand finishing often completes the final work. ‘There is no other way. If there was, I would explore it!’ she exclaims.¹¹ In this recent experimental work, Moriarty has noticed that the balance between the contribution made by machine and what can be made by hand is ‘a different way for me to work. Textile and product designers are always designing for *something*’. While the Ball-Nogues Studio looks to the machine to assist in the design process and then expedite a hand process with precision, Moriarty’s experimental projects work closely with digital tools in the development of her designs, but benefit from hand finishing. Despite being undeniably labour-intensive, she welcomes the deviations that the hand brings. Each piece ‘comes out a different way’, she observes, in contrast to CAD, which ‘always gives one outcome’. Essentially, hand finishing allows for the moment when happy accidents emerge. It is these slips and deviations that provide inspiration for the next step to be fed back into her tools.

Like Moriarty, American artist **Elana Herzog** does not weave cloth. Instead, she deconstructs woven cloth. Herzog attaches textiles to the walls of her installation sites with industrial staples and then pulls these fabrics from their new foundations, allowing a random pattern of cloth to remain. She explains: ‘The late 1990s saw a gradual withering away of any independent structure in my pieces, until finally they became completely dependent upon their surroundings for support. I began working directly on the walls, embedding materials in

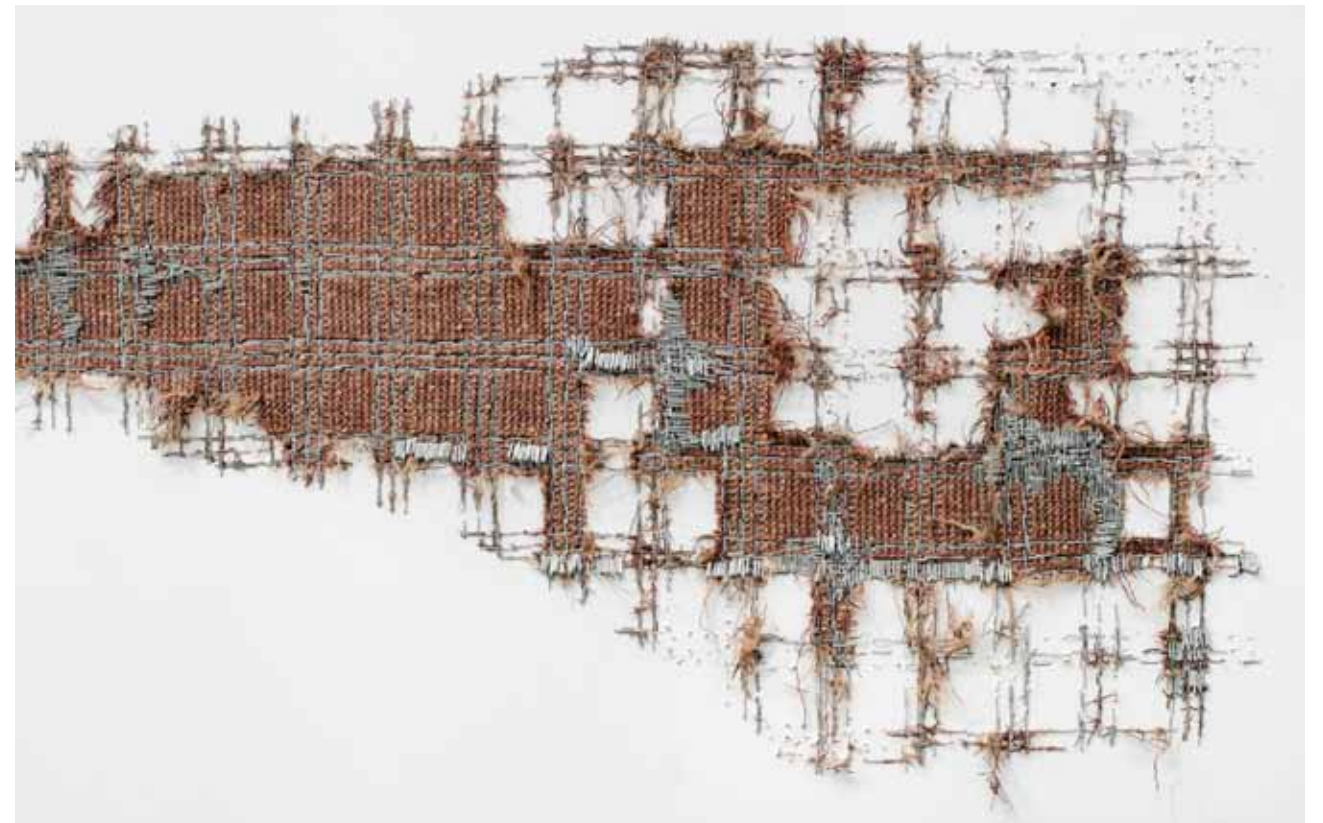
drywall by channelling into it with screwdrivers and hammers, and by stapling fabric to its surface. Suddenly I was drawing, and the wall was an integral part of my pieces.’¹²

What remains is largely the result of chance: fabric at its strongest points overlaid with a new ‘weave’ of metal staples that create an under-and-over weave of their own. In a departure from previous works, *Plaid*, made in 2007, was the first instance when Herzog worked with fabric from a bolt rather than from existing textiles, such as the chenille bedspreads that were the basis of a number of previous works. The bolt of cloth used in *Plaid* was bought at the closing sale of a fabric shop, the last sale indicative (it is difficult not to make the leap in associations) of a worldwide shift in textile manufacturing centres. Along with this unplanned commentary, working with fabric from a bolt provided Herzog with the opportunity to leave the rectangular frame of the bedspread and its formal associations with painting and instead use the textile across an entire interior space. For the installation of *Plaid* at the Smack Mellon Gallery in Brooklyn, Herzog fabricated a pillar and low walls that she terms ‘quasi-architectural forms’ and sees as suggestive of an office environment.

Textiles became a part of Herzog’s visual vocabulary in 1989 and took up

Elana Herzog, *Plaid (detail)*, 2007. Fabric and industrial staples, installation view at Smack Mellon Gallery, Brooklyn, USA.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ETIENNE FROSSARD



‘almost exclusive prominence a few years later’; stapled textiles emerged as a strategy in 1999. ‘I like the woven structure partly because of its relationship to the grid’, she explains. The fabric she chooses to work with tends to have an obvious weave. ‘When I became interested in the conspicuous weave [of certain textiles] it was partly because I was able to generate an image with staples that had both vertical and horizontal elements that overlapped – a different kind of drawing builds up. In some part of my mind I am using staples to reconstruct something that is woven – so the form is being generated and not just in a linear drawing way.’ In an interview with Regine Basha, Herzog explains, ‘The staple is, in fact, analogous to a stitch or a suture, so in some way I am re-imagining the structure of a textile and dramatizing its production. I often think of my pieces as replacing the existing binary language of warp and weft with a corresponding binary system whose two elements are metal staples and fabric.’¹³

Like many of the examples in this chapter, Herzog expresses uneasiness with the idea that the textile should offer the primary interpretation of her work. Instead, she situates her work within the history of fine art, while acknowledging her discomfort with many of the categories of identification this provides. ‘*Plaid* aspires to both austerity and excess. It is simultaneously garish and restrained. It has a relationship to modernism, both reverent and irreverent, as does much of my work. This is the language I grew up with, but have never felt ownership of. To the extent that I operate from a position of alienation, my relationship to both high and low culture remains vicarious. I’ve always thought of myself as a sculptor, and enjoy tinkering with that identity. My materials, often cheap, tacky, or discarded household items and fabric, challenge conventions of taste and beauty and draw attention to how art and design migrate throughout culture, from high to low and back again, reinterpreted by industry to meet the needs of different markets and trends ... I am fascinated by the way form is generated by growth and decay, construction and destruction.’¹⁴

Elana Herzog, *Plaid*, 2007.
Fabric and industrial staples,
installation view at Smack
Mellon Gallery, Brooklyn,
USA.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ETIENNE FROSSARD

