



Oxford Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers

Newsletter

March 2019

Slow spinning

Whilst most of us are way too young to remember the earliest televisions, I'm sure that most, like me, will remember the media frenzy generated when the BBC announced a second channel, not to mention the start of Channel 4 and then 5. Television nowadays has moved into an almost unrecognisable entity. The modern internet based subscription services have done away with 'channels' altogether and now have a seemingly non stop diet of international programmes and movies. They have so much 'space' to fill that even what counts as a programme has changed. Did you succumb to the fascination of watching the non stop streaming of the log fire at Xmas? Personally I loved the sound but missed the smell!

As a new viewer of Netflix I was still surprised when my daughter contacted me to ask if we had found the International Knitting Challenge?!? This turned out to be one of the new breed of slow television streams. 8.5 hours, (yes really) of a team of



Norwegian ladies attempting a world record for making a jumper from scratch. It starts with Rolf hand shearing the calmest, happiest sheep you will ever see. Then the 4 spinners grab the fibre and start to spin. It needs to be plied for the knitters to use it, but there are 4 knitters with needles at hand waiting for their chance to shine. Add in a presenter to keep it interesting and you have 8.5 hours of compelling tv.

At one point the presenter says to one of the ladies 'you are so calm!', the answer was 'because I spin'. I'm pretty sure my face was just as smug as hers. The presenter gives a long list of possible records they might break, but they are aiming to beat the Australian record of 4.5 hours. Spoiler alert... the programme is 8.5 hours long.... they don't do it. In fact, as the presenter keeps pointing out each record they fail to beat, it is testament to the therapeutic benefits of spinning and knitting that she ends the programme with her pretty face intact!

Whilst admittedly it is all in Norwegian, they have sub titles. The spinners and knitters chat about their wheels and about knitting and spinning in general, both historically and now. The presenter keeps the conversation flowing with interesting questions and observations. Rolf the shearer talks about the quality of the fleece at one point saying that the one they are using has only 8 months growth on it and if they were to try again he would suggest a sheep fleece that had 12 months growth on it would be easier to spin, mmm interesting. If you are a lover of Norwegian knitwear,

as I am, the presenter seems to change her jumper every couple of hours, beautiful to see.

Finally, if you are an adrenaline junky then race to the end of the programme to watch 3 ladies attempting to sew the jumper together as the 4th finishes knitting, all whilst the time ticks away, it was tense stuff. My son-in-law expressed his disappointment with the finished jumper, but taking into account that 4 spinners and 4 knitters, all with their own version of tension, worked on the garment it was actually not bad. At the end the male verifier puts the garment on to test if it is wearable. To be fair if he had a 40DD back bust it might have fitted better, but all in all it was a speed test not a design test.

My husband and I watched about 2 hours all told, making judicious use of the fast forward button, but we both agreed that we thoroughly enjoyed it. So if you have a Netflix subscription and a couple of hours to spare give it a go. If you do watch it, let me know, with such a long programme I'm sure we will have watched different bits.

It was way more interesting than the log fire!

Chris MacLean

Anni Albers

A twelve-shaft countermarch loom backed by an over-life-sized photograph of eleven young ladies smiling through the 'rigging' of a loom - not the sort of thing with which you are usually greeted at a Tate Modern exhibition, but this is about Anni Albers [1899 - 1941], textile producer.

When you read this it will be too late to go [1] - a pity because it was not only a good survey of Albers' work but also a well presented exhibition. It had room, room to look closely at quite small textile samples without being jostled [2], and room to appreciate the larger architectural-scale pieces.

Annelise Fleischmann, as she was then, became a student at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1922 studying weaving. Here she met the artist Josef Albers. They married in 1925 and moved to the US after the Nazis forced the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933. They both became teachers at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina. In 1950 they moved to New Haven, following Josef's appointment to Yale.

The exhibition follows each step of Anni's textile career and her branches into printmaking and 'jewellery'. It also reinforces my view of the importance of the Bauhaus [3] in influencing the



development of design in the mid twentieth century, an influence which is still very much with us.

David Nutt

[1] It closed on 27 Jan 2019. However, there are extensive illustrated articles about Anni Albers on the web.

[2] 'How did she manage to do that?' - when I was there, there were little huddles of knowledgeable ladies [for the most part] poring over specimens trying to work things out. The threading diagrams were some help. However:

I have heard criticism of the exhibition suggesting that there was not enough technical information about the samples. It is very easy to slate an exhibition for not being the exhibition you would have put on. This was an exhibition about Anni's life and work, and a mass of technical detail would have cluttered it up. That would be for another, very different, exhibition. However, in this case, a leaflet giving more technical information would have been useful where the aesthetics are so closely tied to the means of production - or, perhaps, an exhibition on techniques within the main display.

[3] While, of course, not forgetting the work of the Russians, Liubov Popova etc

A Weaver's Day Out

A cold, cloudy day in January saw us climb onto the bus to London to visit the Tate Modern for the Anni Albers exhibition. Getting off the underground at the Embankment allowed us a brisk walk along the river and we crossed the millennium bridge (holding onto our hats) to get to the museum itself.

The vast hall is an expedition in itself to find where we wanted to go, but find it we did, had our tickets 'zapped' from the iPhone (what a sea change from the days when you had little cardboard tickets that got punched!), and we entered the series of rooms that held the displays.



Fig 1. Wall hanging.

From the start, my hubby (who was there slightly on sufferance) was pleased to see a loom and a loom bench with brass screws and escutcheons holding everything together - just like he did to my loom at home.... so his work and visit was validated! I don't think he stayed long to look at the textiles.....

As to the weaving - I loved it. I liked the clear lines, the use of texture, and the twists and turns of the warp used as part of the designs. To me the exhibits still had a vibrancy and resonance for today - though were created in 1930's-1960's for the most part.

I also enjoyed seeing the design process in Anni Albers' notebooks and drawing blocks - clearly colour and design were key to her explorations of form in the medium of weaving.



Fig 2. Cruciform

It was, I thought, a lovely historical collection of weaving from 50+ years ago. Images, techniques and concepts which seem well known today came from the avant garde thinking, vision and development of those years. All epitomised in this impressive and detailed display of Albers' creativity.

After the exhibition and a spot of lunch, we wandered off to the Portobello Road to mooch around and see what we could see.... (as you do)! I saw, and bought, a couple of lovely cashmere and silk scarves which I could not resist - ideal for my summer holiday. Needless to say no photo can do justice to the soft fine-ness of



Fig 3. Detail of piece

the material, nor the subtle shades and colours.....

After that - I lost my husband (as you do)..... Of course he didn't have his mobile phone with him. After a little bit of searching (interspersed with a cup of tea and a cake to rest my weary

feet) I gave up, and wandered off to find the restaurant we'd luckily agreed to meet at if we did lose each other (makes me think there was something deliberate about the 'disappearance') !! They were very kind and let me in, despite not really being open - and lo and behold another weavers' joy: some beautiful kilim cushions on the sofa. I settled in, examined them, and rested against them as I read my book and downed a lovely glass of wine. Bliss! Hubby turned up in due course and a delicious meal awaited us. Then the bus back to Oxford rounded the day. As every school-child writes - "We went to bed tired but happy after a wonderful day."

PS. I never did discover where he disappeared to..... Maybe that's another story.

Jenny Butler

My Project

This is the jumper I spun, dyed, wove and knitted. I dyed some of the Jacob fleece I got from Rosie, with indigo extract from Debbie Tomkies, blending this with other oddments of blue fleece from my stash and spun and plied this to get the variegated blue yarn.



More of the Jacob fleece was dyed with a mix of madder and coreopsis and blended with some of the natural brown Jacob fleece and some odd bits of red Finnsheep fleece. This was then spun and plied for the orange variegated yarn.

I used orange and yellow Wensleydale yarn from West Yorkshire spinners for the warp threads and wove front and back panels with the blue and orange handspun weft. A wavy shuttle stick was used when weaving with blue weft to try and get something that resembled movement in water with the warp threads showing through as reflections. The rest was woven with the orange yarn.

The two rib side panels were knitted with the blue and orange handspun and joined to the woven panels to form the body



section. I then picked up stitches to knit the front and back armhole to shoulder pieces with blue to depict sky. Then knitted the sleeves and neckband.

I was inspired by the autumn colours in Finnish Lapland.

Linda Whiter

Meeting Reports

October 2018: Needle Felting Workshop with Cath Smith and Caroline Goss. There was a full turn out for Cath and Caroline's excellent workshop on October 21st. They had provided a colourful array of landscapes and seascapes for inspiration as well as plenty of materials and examples of their work. Having covered the safety rules and demonstrated how to use the equipment, Cath showed us how some interesting effects could be achieved using materials such as small pieces of fabric and nepps as well as wool.

I had been introduced to needle felting at the Guild some years ago and have produced some simple pictures. I had tried using a holder for four needles with little success as the needles were easily bent and broken. I was very impressed with the Clover Multitool holder which holds 5 needles safely and allows background areas to be felted firmly and quickly. I was also impressed with using the felting brush as a base for these areas. For details we were encouraged to use bags containing rice with a single needle. (*I had previously used upholstery foam which does not last long. Cath also told me that it was also not advisable as the fire retardant which can be released is not good for one's health*). Caroline showed me how to blend colours together to effectively represent the sea in the photo of one of my favourite "Scilly" places which I used for my first piece. I was then a bit more adventurous and used nepps and pieces of fine fabric to represent a seascape with a stony shore. It was interesting and inspiring to see the wide variety of work produced by the group during the day.

The Hall at Forest Hall worked very well and we enjoyed lovely views on a fine Autumn Day. The only drawback is lack of parking space

Many thanks to Cath and Caroline for a lovely day.

Angela Pawlyn

November 2018: Have-a-Go-Day Tapestry Weaving with Jill Carey

Tapestry weaving was something I hadn't tried before, I love weaving but it always appeared a bit too precise for me. I was astonished to find how enjoyable it was. Thanks to Jill's well-thought out presentation of the craft, 12 of us were able to try it out. Jill provided frames, bobbins and a wonderful range of colourful yarns. She patiently showed us how to warp the frame looms, and how to tie off the beginning, then we were free to make our first attempts at picture making with yarn. Jill's exhibition of her own work was inspirational, I especially loved her monochrome birds. This was such a lovely last meeting at Stanton St John.



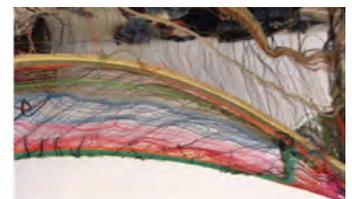
December 2019: Christmas meeting

This was our first meeting at Beckley and everyone was amazed at the amount of light and space, although we were inclined to scrunch up into one corner - obviously missing the cosiness of Stanton St John! However, this didn't last long as we laid out the wonderful array of members' work for the Chairman's challenge "Changes". These ranged from the fascinating boat made from an old piece of tree with woven sails and sculptural antlers enhanced by woven inserts by Linda, a superb poncho by Louise, an amazing needle felted bowl illustrating the changing seasons by Sandie and many more wonderful offerings. We had our usual shared Christmas lunch full of tasty offerings from everyone. It was a wonderful way to start out new existence in Beckley.



January 2018: Talk by Dr Dinah Eastop, The Board of Trade Design Register. Dinah's talk gave an insight into this enormous archive of textiles and patterns held at the National Archives. Between 1839 and 1991 nearly 3 million designs comprising text, images and artefacts, have been registered with the Board of Trade for copyright protection. The designs include a wide variety of materials, eg wall paper, carpets, and six classes of textiles including shawls and lace as well as metal, wood, glass etc. The register ranges from a small handkerchief depicting planes in 1914, through straw bonnets, to cloth designed for an African market, to gloves and embossed paper. Work is in progress for the register to be available as an on-line catalogue and ways to digitally present the sensory appeal of some items is currently being investigated. For example it would be good to be able to "feel" the texture of cloth and straw work or the embossed surface of some paper. Dinah told us about one of the more exciting methods being trialled : polynomial texture mapping which the inventors say will provide a hyper-real sensory experience of the artefact. The talk was an interesting insight into this amazing register and how accessible it is becoming to everyone. As Dinah reminded us - it belongs to us all and is there for us to use.

February 2018: Talk by Amanda Edney on Saori Weaving. Amanda explained the process in a very clear voice - what Saori was all about and a bit of history and how the family started. Saori was all about and a bit of history and how the family started. Saori meaning individual and ori meaning weaving, in this type of weaving there are no mistakes with importance on free expression, be bold and adventurous, how wonderful! You can do your own thing. Amanda went on to explain the good features about the small foldable loom including its own bobbin winder and lots lots more, they did look lovely and I may have been tempted if funds allowed.



One of Amanda's fabulous saori weaves

The two looms which Amanda brought in for members to have a go on was warped in black; what excitement, we could use anything: we had wool, ribbons and even small twigs, grasses, buttons, beads, threads thick or thin in fact anything you could attach to give texture and interest, we all wanted to have a go.

On the table there was a lovely display of woven items and books for everyone to pick up and look at.

I was impressed by it all and how lovely to be so free and creative, listening to all the chatter afterwards I think everyone enjoyed the talk as much as I did.

Meeting Reports cont.

February 2019 Saori Workshop

Seven of us were fortunate to take part in the Saori workshop with Amanda Edney. Our Saori looms were warped ready to go and there was a table groaning under the weight of beautiful yarns. Amanda suggested we limit ourselves to the cottons as this is easier to use initially. Saori looms are simple with 2 shafts and two treadles, straightforward plain weaving. Saori cloth is a mixture of plain weave and techniques requiring manipulation of the warp threads. It also often incorporates a variety of yarns and other items, eg beads and shells as embellishments. Amanda demonstrated several techniques which we were able to use in our own pieces. It is a very relaxing way of weaving as there are no rules. This was just as well as I was weaving on a loom without a reed to beat in the weft, so my piece is very open - a bit like a drunken spider's web. A thoroughly enjoyable workshop.

Weaving at Beckley

It is lovely to have enough space in our new hall to put out and use looms. In December, having been encouraged by Lyn Wymer, I experimented with the *clashed wefts* technique. It is an interesting alternative to the traditional *tapestry meet and separate* technique but also works well with balanced weave. I was surprised and concerned to find that *"The Weaver's Idea Book"*, which I had borrowed from the Guild Library states that

the two techniques are the same. Do ask for a demo if you want to see the difference between them!

If you have a loom which is small enough to transport, do bring it so we can see your work in progress and learn from each other. Alternatively, it would be good to see work you have completed.

If you have not woven before do have a go on a Guild Rigid Heddle loom. Members can borrow them at a small charge. We have three old ones and one modern one and it would be good to see them used more. The Guild also has a Four-shaft loom but the Rigid Heddle loom is a good choice for new weavers as it is simple to set up and relatively cheap to buy new. Although it has some limitations, there are many interesting things that can be woven. *"Inventive Weaving on a Little Loom"* by Syne Mitchell has some good descriptions of manipulated weaves. Having enjoyed Amanda Edney's lovely talk on Saori weaving, I have lots of ideas for a freer approach.

You may be wondering why the looms are called a "Rigid Heddle". A heddle is a strip of metal or plastic which raises and lowers warp threads whilst weaving. With the Rigid Heddle loom the heddles are fixed in the reed which also spaces the warp and is used put the weft in place. On looms with four (or more shafts) the heddles are on the shafts and are free to move sideways when setting up the loom. The reed which spaces the warp and puts the weft in place is held in a beater.

Angela Pawlyn

Dates for your diary:

OGWSD Programme 2018/2019

2019

March 16th AGM & Show of work

March 17th Workshop Free Style Weaving : Anne, Carole and Lyn

April 27th HAGD Tablet Weaving : Anne Hughes

May 18th Talk – details tbc : Katie Weston, Hilltop Cloud

May 19th Workshop Spinning Hand Dyed Fibres with Hilltop Cloud. How to get the most from hand dyed combed top.

June 15th Fleece Sale : Wychwood Spinners. Sarah and Chris will be supplying hand picked fleece for sale. **Plus** Talk 'All About the Angora Rabbit' : its wool, spinning and carding. Samples available
July 20th Guild day out at Diana's farm with Allan Brown. Harvesting, preparation and use of nettles, mini competition using nettles

August No meeting

Sept 21st Talk 'An Introduction to Natural Dyeing ' Judy Hardman

Sept 22nd Workshop Natural Dyeing : Judy Hardman

Oct 19th HAGD Fair Isle, Steeking and Cable Knitting : Linda Whiter/Chris Maclean

Nov 16th Talk 'The History and development of sewing machines' : Paul Verney.

Nov 17th Workshop tbc

Dec 21st Xmas Meeting

Jan 18th Talk on textile conservation : Alison Lister

Feb 15th HAGD Beyond a Granny Square : Louise Summer-Matthews

Other Events

- Wonderwool Wales: 27-28 April 2019, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, Powys, LD2 3SY. Website: wonderwoolwales.co.uk/en

- The Handmade Fair, Ragley: 10-12 May 2019, Ragley Hall, Alcester, Warwickshire, B49 5NJ. Website: thehandmadefair.com/ragley

- Wool @ Junction 13: 18-19 May 2019, Lower Drayton Farm, Penkridge, Staffordshire, ST19 5RE. Website: wool-j13.uk

- Shipston Wool Fair: May 2019 (date tbc), Sheep Street, Shipston on Stour, Warwickshire, CV36 4AB. Website: shiptonwoolfair.co.uk

- Woolfest: 28-29 June 2019, Mitchell's Lakeland Livestock Centre, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 0QQ. Website: woolfest.co.uk

- Fibre East: 27-28 July 2019, Redborne School and Community College, Ampthill, Bedford, MK45 2NU. Website: fibre-east.co.uk

Committee (until AGM)

Chairman	Helen Richardson
Treasurer	Kate Prinsep
Secretary	Jacqueline Smee
Membership Sec.	Jenny Butler/Linda Whiter
Members	Jane Rouse, Claire Blackburn, Janet Farnsworth

Other responsibilities

Sales Table	Kate Prinsep / Caroline Goss
Guild Equipment Librarian	Anne Hughes Linda Whiter
Newsletter Editor	Liz Mitchell
Website	Anne Hughes

Notes from the Editor: Thanks to everyone who has sent me items for inclusion. Please keep them coming.

To catch up on events between newsletters, check programme etc, visit our web site www.oxfordwsd.org.uk or Facebook. E-mail to newsletter@oxfordwsd.org.uk or give me your copy at a Guild meeting.