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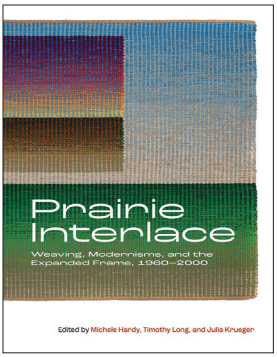

PRAIRIE INTERLACE: WEAVING, MODERNISMS, AND THE EXPANDED FRAME, 1960-2000

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Brenda Campbell, *Woodlands Undercover*, 1975 (cat. 8)

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Weaving in an Expanded Frame

by Timothy Long

What is the frame appropriate to weaving and other interlace practices?[1] The answer, more often than not, is none. Framing as a physical device is an unnecessary addition. An interlace of woven fibre, which we consider here to include hooked rugs, macramé, and knitting, among other practices, is strong and supple. It holds its own place without the need for an external support. More than that, the frame has an energy which seems foreign to weaving, an edge that is hard rather than softly looped or tied. Take, for example, Brenda Campbell's *Woodlands Undercover*, 1975, one of the expansive architectural tapestries in *Prairie Interlace* (cat. 8). Its dialogue with the edge is a masterclass in complexity and nuance: borders reflect off its perimeter like ridgelines in a rearview mirror, coil in hanging cords that divide scrolls of charcoal and cream, and fray in rya knots that frustrate the clean ascent of its earthside boundary. Ridges punctuate its surface and ripple across a landscape of natural wool and cotton. Shaped canvases of the 1960s and 1970s look contrived by comparison

And yet, whenever weaving is shown in an art gallery or museum, the frame of art is there, in the architecture, the institution, the conventions of display and ways of appropriating images that go back to the origins of modernity. A frame is unavoidable if we are to call a weaving a work of art. The question of frames and their role in the production of aesthetic presence has been a central concern of my curatorial practice and writing over the past two decades. In my engagement with practices ranging from painting, to ceramics, to lens-based installation, to dance, I have been spurred by the cultural anthropology of René Girard to reconsider the source of the frame's power and its role in mediating viewers' interactions with the art object. *Prairie Interlace*, with its proliferation of practices that revel in an independence from the frame of high art even as they appropriate it, provides an unexpectedly rich opportunity to consider afresh the specificities of the frame of weaving, a generally overlooked and underestimated medium.

This exploration joins a growing body of textile theory that, since the 1990s, has articulated what an expanded frame might look like—one that allows weaving to breathe, to operate

on its own terms, without the confining edge of frame or plinth. Recent surveys such as *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, 2017, demonstrate the extraordinary versatility of weaving within the wider field of textiles to engage a host of cultural, social, political, historical, and aesthetic concerns and their intersections.[2] Writing about the renewed interest among international curators in contemporary textile art, Christine Checinska and Grant Watson list some of the current directions: "Towards formal concerns with abstract or soft sculpture, to the serial process of textile construction, to feminism, woman's work and artisanal labour, to the hierarchies between art and craft, applied and fine art and on to architecture and design, to trade, industry and globalization."[3] As we shall see, this list could have been written about the works in *Prairie Interlace*. While the language of debates may have shifted, the material lineages established by artists working in the latter half of the 20th century have continued relevance today. This essay takes up the challenge of articulating the frame of their production, both as an overdue historical assessment and as a theoretical foray with contemporary application.

The Umbilical Frame

> *Imagine a studio by a river where an artist sits on a box working at her loom. Looking out the window, she sees bits of the world bobbing in the water. One day a wooden prosthetic leg floats by. She thinks of her past, of her home in South Africa, of the colonial battle that took her grandfather's life. On another day, she receives dried flowers from friends far away. She thinks of her new home by a prairie river in Saskatchewan, of Métis leader Louis Riel, and of another life lost to a colonial war. She has made a drawing, a collage, of quickly recorded impressions. She picks up her shuttle and begins to weave. She is rethinking the nature of tapestry. She is making a new prosthetic, a phantom limb of recollections whose ache is held in woven tapestry.* [4]

The artist is Ann Newdigate, who for many years has been one of weaving's most articulate and clearsighted critics. With tapestries such as *National Identity, Borders and the Time Factor, or, Wee Mannie*, created at Dovecot by the Water of Leith while studying at the Edinburgh College of Art in 1982, Newdigate began a decades-long reconsideration of weaving's potential for critical inquiry (cat. 38). In 1995, she addressed the theoretical uncertainties facing weavers on the Prairies with a succinct and pointed summary that was included in the collection *New Feminist Art Criticism* edited by Katy Deepwell. The title for her essay states

Ann Newdigate, *National Identity, Borders and the Time Factor, or, Wee Mannie* (detail), 1982 (cat. 38). At the centre of this detail is the silhouette of Louis Riel, a reference to the historic photograph of the Métis leader taken after his capture at Batoche in 1885.

the situation with wry candour: "Kinda art, sorta tapestry: tapestry as shorthand access to the definitions, languages, institutions, attitudes, hierarchies, ideologies, constructions, classifications, histories, prejudices and other bad habits of the West."[5] Newdigate situates tapestry in an undefined territory between art and craft, between centre and region, between privileged white male hegemony and marginalized communities based in class, gender, and race. While acknowledging tapestry's subaltern status in the art world, she does not despair. Rather she values its location on the edges as a uniquely productive position from which to erode cultural oppositions:

> I work in tapestry primarily for its materiality and its capacity to shift within traditions, to shuttle between theoretical positions, to hover around borders, to challenge hierarchies and to connect with many different resonating imperatives. The medium, belonging everywhere and nowhere, is everything and nothing. It is what you think, and it conjures what you don't know and can't remember—it has no certainty.[6]

Newdigate's statement captures the creative and critical conundrum experienced by many of the artists working in this medium, of the freedom as well as the challenges of operating outside and against established theoretical frameworks and value systems. Although written over twenty-five years ago, it describes a situation which continues to resonate today. After viewing *Prairie Interlace*, Calgary artist Mary Scott, who is represented in the exhibition by a work which itself traverses material and conceptual boundaries (cat. 52), commented on the curatorial challenge of delving into "a discipline whose edges and limitations are hard to capture (firm up), one that reveals a level and quality of invention quite astounding."[7] Scott's reaction would seem to bear out Newdigate's assertion that tapestry, and by extension weaving, has "no certainty." As curators seeking to articulate the theoretical horizons which opened up for weavers on the Prairies post-1960, as well as the edges they confronted, the task remains exhilarating, if at times vexingly elusive.

Uncertainty about edges, however, points back to the question of frames. Newdigate's assessment of the situation comes from her own hard-won experience of engaging with the frame of modernist painting through the medium of tapestry. After finding her initial bid for critical acceptance rebuffed, she entered the lengthy process of coming to terms with a medium which did not fit this aesthetic frame. Tapestry, she eventually concluded, provides "shorthand access to institutionalized European attitudes."[8] Her studio practice makes use of this theoretical understanding in a thoroughgoing rejection of the frameworks of authority that underpin modernist art: her work is postmodern in its dissolution of hierarchies of genre and of centre and margin, postcolonial in its understanding of her own privilege as a middle class white Canadian woman from South Africa, and feminist in its embrace of an art form practiced primarily by women that fits neither the definitions of high art (painting) or low art (craft).

The question remains, though, what is the frame appropriate to weaving if not

the frame of painting and sculpture? What may be proposed in its place other than a frameless uncertainty? If Newdigate is to be believed, to attempt a theory of weaving would be to assemble its fragmentary edges into an illusory and necessarily coercive whole. Interestingly, her position aligns with the proposition made by textile theorist and fellow South African émigré Sarat Maharaj just a few years earlier: that the larger category of textile art is, to borrow Derrida's term, "undecidable": "something that seems to belong to one genre but overshoots its border and seems no less at home in another. Belongs to both, we might say, by not belonging to either."[9] However, rather than settle for this description of weaving as a perpetual nomad, we will press deeper to understand how the borders of both art and weaving were established, what they mean on a socio-anthropological level, and, ultimately, how they intersect in the work under consideration. What we will propose is that weaving, as an art form, is connected to the world via a thread *and* a frame, a simple yet profound insight that explains its astounding capacity for shifts of form and intention along its spun shaft. In this I hope to expand the frame of weaving and discover the key to the medium's extraordinary proliferation at a critical juncture in art history both on the Prairies and elsewhere.

Glenn Adamson in his illuminating study *Thinking Through Craft* provides a constructive starting point for considering the frame of weaving, a point of entry embedded within his more general consideration of the frame of craft.[10] In setting up his argument, he begins by addressing a fundamental tension within the modernist artwork: between its claim to autonomy as described by Theodor Adorno and its contextual dependencies as articulated by Jacques Derrida. Pointing to Derrida's concept of the *parergon* or frame (literally "that which is next to the work"), Adamson notes that the autonomy of the artwork is always contingent on a frame. "The *parergon*, if functioning properly, seems to cut the work clean off from the world. Like a freshly cut flower, Derrida writes, when art is severed from its surroundings it does not bleed."[11] However, this cut is performed by an object, a frame, which is itself a work of craft. Craft, Adamson goes on to argue, is a supplement which is necessary to the art object's claim to autonomy. If this conceptualization of craft would seem to reinforce its subordinate status, Adamson, like Newdigate, views it differently. He argues that art and craft are bound together in a relationship of mutual dependence, and that craft's so-called inferiority constitutes its strength. For if the art object's autonomy is dependent on the contingency of the frame, only through craft can art's unacknowledged relationship to its context be understood and critiqued. Using the concept of the supplement, Adamson provides a host of examples of what "thinking through craft" might mean for a diverse array of practices, from ceramics, to jewelry, to furniture, to glass, to weaving and fibre art.[12]

In elucidating the host of contextual relationships in which art is implicated, Adamson deftly dismantles the hierarchies

Ann Hamilton, *Untitled* (detail), 1979 (cat. 19)

that have disadvantaged weaving and other craft media. Those contextual relationships include its materiality, haptic intelligence (skill), relationship to time and land (pastoral), and connection to the disadvantaged poles of social hierarchies (amateur, feminist, and BIPOC). However, while articulating craft's supplementary relationship to art, his explanation for the existence of this dynamic remains incomplete. In support of his argument, Adamson quotes Derrida's memorable line from *The Truth in Painting*: "the *parergon* is a form which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment when it deploys its greatest energy."[13] Adamson uses this insight to underline how craft must disappear so that the work of art may come into view. Simply put, the frame must die so that art may live. While this is no doubt true, what is unaccounted for by both Adamson and Derrida is the socio-anthropological location of the power by which the frame operates.

As I have argued elsewhere, to account fully for the frame's energy we must look to its sacrificial origins.[14] According to the theory of the scapegoat elaborated by cultural anthropologist René Girard, the supplement (frame/craft) and the victim of violence (scapegoat) are one in the same.[15] Viewed through a Girardian lens, the frame operates in a way that replicates the pattern of scapegoating violence. Just as the violent mob encircles its victim, expelling it from the social body, so a frame excises a small parcel of reality and expels it from our mundane existence. The motivations for these expulsions are linked. Both the scapegoat and the artwork are the objects of collective, rivalrous desires—desires which are not original but rather rooted in the mimetic contagion of "I want what they want." When expulsion is achieved, those conflicting desires are suddenly unified. For the scapegoating mob, the result is a collective recognition of a miraculous peace. The victim, which was once the source of all evil, now returns as the divine presence of the god, the source of all good for the newly reconciled social body. Similarly, the artwork, initially held at a distance by the frame, returns its excised section of the world with the quasi-divine aura of aesthetic presence. As Andrew McKenna argues in his comparative study of Girard and Derrida, every cultural form, language and art included, is a surrogate of the original victim and is in turn dependent on another stand in, writing or craft, as the case may be.[16] According to this substitutionary logic, the frame is a supplement of a supplement of the scapegoat. Viewed from this perspective, the cut that separates the art object from the world is yet another expression of the sacred violence by which the social order is maintained—hardly a bunch of freshly cut flowers placed in a vase!

How the sacred presence which formerly pertained to the god, and later to the idol or icon, came to inhabit the artwork as aesthetic aura is the result of a historical transformation that has been described in detail by art historian Hans Belting in his magisterial study *Likeness and Presence*.[17] By applying Girard's anthropology of violence to Belting's account, we may see that frames, beyond their role as generators of aesthetic presence, mediate between the art object and the world, reconciling the competing and

Aganetha Dyck, *Rope Dance*, c. 1974 (cat. 12)

Susan Barton-Tait, *Nepenthe*,
c. 1977 (cat. 5)

Susan Barton-Tait, *Nepenthe* (detail), c. 1977 (cat. 5)

Crafts Guild of Manitoba, *Prairie Barnacles*, 1979 (cat. 32)

Crafts Guild of Manitoba, *Prairie Barnacles* (detail), 1979 (cat. 32)

mimetic desires of the viewers' intersubjective gazes. The frame also stands in for the hand of the artist, whose priest-like genius is responsible for the transformation of artisanal craft into the inspired work of art. Thus, the frame unites in its form artist, artwork, and viewer in a recreation of the sacrificial scene. Of course, the history of Western art, from early modern times to today, has involved a progressive questioning of the frame that has exposed the sacrificial contract between artist, artwork, and viewer. As I have argued elsewhere, the effect of this questioning has produced not iconoclasm, but rather "theatroclasm," or the breaking of the place of the viewer.[18] From Giotto to Rembrandt, from Manet to Warhol, the viewer has become increasingly aware of their privileged position, of their implication in the exclusions which the artwork either tacitly or overtly sustains. At the same time, the artwork has activated through its questioning of the frame an identification with the victim of violence, the hidden subject of the work of art.[19]

If painting and sculpture's relationship to the sacred is missing from Adamson's account, so also is craft's. Whereas art gestures to the original victim through a chain of substitutions, craft attends the scene, holding the robes, metaphorically speaking, like Paul at the stoning of Stephen. Cloth covers the body; ceramic and glass contain the libation; furniture holds the offering. Rather than serve as the object of the cult, craft embellishes religious rituals through the ministrations of food, drink, and clothing, and thus maintains a contextual adjacency which carries over into the era of art. Thus, both art and craft have a relationship to the victim of violence. However, while the frame which excises art from the world is "bloodless", to borrow Derrida's term, the frame of craft is never far from the flesh. From the perspective of Girard's theory of the scapegoat, the question of contact is significant. The collective must not touch the scapegoat if the transference of social ills is to be successful; if contact is made, the social body may be contaminated by violence and the desired peace never attained.[20] This fact explains why the art object, with its disappearing frame, has a particular efficacy in producing presence, and why the craft object remains supplemental. What distinguishes craft from art is whether it touches the victim or not.

Desacralization, the long process initiated by the recognition of the innocence of the victim, makes these relationships visible. When craft meets the theatroclastic energies of the modernist avant-garde and its concern for identification with the victim of violence, it meets the viewer with an embrace quite different from the mirror strategies of visual art. It creates a point of contact between viewer and victim, not through a mediating frame, but rather as a "servant object."[21] However, this distinction also explains the significance of craft's distinguishing features: its character as an object bound inextricably to the conditions of its production—material, corporeal, temporal, geographical, and social. These are the locations where craft meets suffering flesh. At the same time, the critical frame of art helps craft to see its own relationship to the sacred and participation in the production of violent unanimity. Craft's role then is not so much to critique high art through a

shadowy rivalry, but rather to join forces in a multi-dimensional critique of scapegoating violence through and against a diverse range of cultural forms.

What, then, is weaving's particular relationship to the sacred? Unlike painting, weaving attains its autonomy when it leaves the frame, at the moment when it is removed from the loom. Weaving's primary separation, then, is not from a reality which it represents, but from the material which is its means of production. Its cut is umbilical, rather than excisional. Touch a weaving's edge and you will feel knots, not the heads of nails. Turn a weaving over and you will see its technique of production, not how it was stretched over a cross-braced wooden frame. Turning to mythology, the Moirai or Fates of ancient Greece provide an illustration of the violence inherent in the umbilical cut.[22] In performing their daily tasks of spinning and weaving, they determine the fate of humanity: Klotho, who spins the thread of mortal life; Lachesis, who measures its length; and Atropos, whose final cut determines the moment of death. The umbilical cut is thus ambivalent, signifying both the beginning and end of life. Even the gods of Olympus are subject to the Fates, who represent the underlying forces of order and hierarchy,[23] an order that is established at a cost. The etymology of "moirai" is "to apportion",[24] a description that locates the actions of the goddesses within the sacrificial realm; their cut determines inclusion and exclusion, who receives life and who does not.[25] This message is woven into every piece of cloth and carried on the body from cradle to grave.

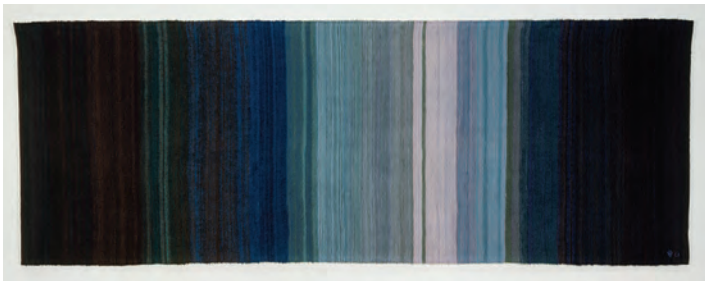
As we shall see, the works in *Prairie Interlace* make contact with viewers within the expanded frame of modernist weaving through their materiality, temporality, corporeality, and alterity. When touched by the desacralizing energy of the modernist avant-garde, weaving, which had been largely static since its flowering as Renaissance tapestry, released an umbilical energy that moved in a multitude of destabilizing directions—exposing the many deterministic threads on which our civilization hangs.[26] That energy was ambivalent, pointing both toward the established order, but also to its dismantling. This understanding is useful not only for articulating weaving's engagement with the frame of art, but with frames outside of Western culture. In this, perhaps, we may find the elusive "edges and limitations" of a discipline.

Contexts: Material and Temporal

> *Imagine a hall full of tapestries. The scale is large, impressive. Here the pictorial inventions of cubism are warmed on the great looms of Gobelin and Aubusson. The cutout birds of Henri Matisse take wing in one, the architectural traceries of Le Corbusier cavort in another. Then you encounter a work with no image, no designer-painter passing his cartoon to translator-weaver. Over human height and*

nearly four arm-spans-wide, it is a panorama of colour sensation, cool yet vibrantly alive. It moves in vertical chords from deep browns of forest humus, to chill bands of marine blue, through intermediaries of ice and sky, to the frozen reaches of outer space. It is a cross-section of winter on its side. Only the textural inventions of the wild Polish looms come close to its woven intentions.

Animated by a cut that is umbilical rather than excisional, weavers of the 1960s opened up new material and formal possibilities along the contingent edges of the medium. Taking as their point of departure the structural logic of weaving, they advanced an exploration of embodied colour, knotted edge, pendent form, and measured time. Already, at the initial Lausanne International Tapestry Biennial in 1962, artist-weavers such as Mariette Rousseau-Vermette from Canada stood out from better known French names such as Le Corbusier, Henri Matisse, and Henri Lurçat, who as cartoon-painters remained at one remove from the actual process of weaving. In *Hiver canadien*, 1962, Rousseau-Vermette uses the underlying structure of warp and weft and the naturally variable intensities of dyed wool to order and animate fields of colour, rather than translating designs produced on paper. Its pictorial energy, its presence, is contained



Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, *Hiver canadien*, 1961, tapestry low-warp, 213.3 x 540.7 cm. Collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Purchase (1963.70). © Succession Mariette Rousseau-Vermette et Claude Vermette. Photo by MNBAQ, Jean-Guy Kérouac.

within the very fibres from which it is made. Unlike painting, colour in weaving is not additive but rather derives from chemical bonds with thread and yarn. Dyes themselves are often made from the extracts of plants and animals; like living tissues, fibres take into their matrix the liquid substance of the land.[27] Rousseau-Vermette's tapestry speaks to the potential of weaving to expand its frame beyond the opticality of painting by exploring its own structural possibilities and material lineages.

For Charlotte Lindgren, who got her start as a weaver in Winnipeg and was another early Canadian participant at Lausanne, it was structure rather than colour that took precedence: "I use colour and texture only to strengthen the image and to clarify the structure."[28] Suspension is inherent in wall tapestry, which hangs without a frame, resulting in a gravitational pull that is distributed thread-to-thread across the textile. When it moves into three-dimensional space, tapestry's pendent quality contrasts to the gravity denying thrust of plinth-based works. In *Winter Tree*, 1967,

Charlotte Lindgren, *Aedicule*, 1967, 245 x 245 x 180 cm. Photo by Gilles Alonso and courtesy of © Fondation Toms Pauli, Lausanne.

created for the craft exhibition at Expo 67, Lindgren exploits textile's dialogue with gravity by creating a flat, single-piece weaving that only takes spatial form when hung (cat. 28). That same year at the Lausanne Biennial, Lindgren's *Aedicule*, 1967, was one of the first tapestries to extend from the wall. Shown in a separate section reserved for three-dimensional entries,[29] the work uses the language of draped canopies and backdrops to create an architectural structure, as suggested by its title. Lindgren builds on the logic of internal slits and openings, first seen at the 1965 Biennial, to articulate a fully realized portal and throne. Furthermore, fringes, a decorative edge that marks the knotted boundary of tapestry, are lengthened into soft and penetrable columns. By 1969 three-dimensional approaches, led by Magdalena Abakanowicz, proliferated at Lausanne, paralleling the gravitational orientation of minimalist sculpture represented by Robert Morris and Eva Hesse and their experiments with hanging felt, thread, and latex.[30]

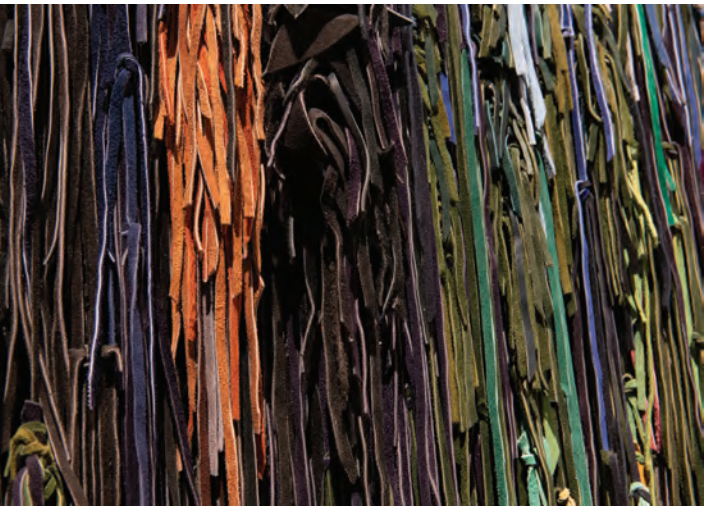
These seismic shifts within the material expression of weaving continued to be registered in works from the 1970s and 1980s. On the Prairies, designs were often oriented towards landscape. Eschewing pictorial tapestry, artists built on the umbilical materialism of Rousseau-Vermette, who transmitted her knowledge of international developments in her role as head of Fibre Arts at the Banff Centre. In responding to one of the most disturbed ecosystems on the planet, artists were able to draw on a range of techniques to conceptualize land as felt reality rather than colonial pictorial construct. If the harmonic resonance between the survey grid of the Prairies, the modernist grid of 20th-century art, and the ordered grid of the loom seemed destined to reinforce the work of the colonial "Fates" in apportioning the Prairies, then weaving retorted with tactile resistance. Rousseau-Vermette, along with Inese Birstins, Kaija Sanelma Harris, Eva Heller, Pirkko Karvonen, Jane Kidd, Gayle Platz, Ilse Ansyas-Šalkauskas, Margreet van Walsem, Whynona Yates, and others, brought a response to Prairie which probed deeply into the meaning of its folds and vegetation. Other weavers embraced the free-standing hang, such as Susan Barton-Tait, Katharine

Dickerson, Aganetha Dyck, and Carol Little, as artists across the Prairies experimented with interventions into three-dimensional space. Sensing the limitations of weaving's bound edge, a number of these artists abandoned weaving altogether by the end of the decade, finding more fruitful avenues for creation in felt (Birstins, Dyck) and paper (Barton-Tait, Miller).

The umbilical cut of spun fibre signals the creation of a weaving, but also the beginning of its eventual demise through fading or decay; birth and death are contained in this gesture. Time is always implicated. The significance of the cut derives, in no small part, from the time devoted to harvesting, cleaning, spinning, and dyeing fibre, all in preparation for the time-intensive process of weaving itself. During the 1960s and 1970s, many weavers invested themselves in processes such as sourcing local wool and plant fibres, creating dyes from native plants, and studying traditional and Indigenous weaving techniques. While these artisanal practices can be seen as part of the back-to-the-land movement, or the broader category of the "pastoral", as Adamson situates it,[31] the ultimate commitment is to time. This temporal investment stands in contrast to the ideal of progress which annihilates time through the application of "time-saving" technologies, as well as the aesthetic pursuit of the sublime, a quasi-eternal presentness that is the legacy of the sacred in Western art.[32] When comparing the large-scale abstractions of late Modernism with those produced by Mariette Rousseau-Vermette (cat. 47) and Ann Hamilton (cat. 19) at the Banff Centre in the late 1970s, for example, absorption in their colour fields is continually interrupted by the intrusion of knots and bound elements. Modernity, which is grounded in a sense of the new that is produced by the continual expulsion of the past, is deflected from its telos of progress by the rhythms of hand movements that are simultaneously ancient and continually renewed.

Reminders of time are also present in Ann Newdigate's Gobelin style tapestries in which she seeks to render the spontaneity of her small collage drawings in woven form. These somewhat perverse, if beautifully rendered, exercises have the effect of magnifying, rather than diminishing, the time involved in their making, and of freezing the flux of quotidian events. The speed which characterizes modernity is arrested in its tracks, not as a nostalgic return, but rather as a therapeutic relearning of how to move more deliberately in the present. Pat Adams sums up the feeling with tongue-in-cheek humour in *Remember That Sunset We Saw from Here One Time?* 1984 (cat. 2). The mise-en-abyme of a landscape within a landscape renders the ephemeral beauty of a Prairie sunset, the subject of untold paintings, as an even more ephemeral and ubiquitous snapshot. But the "snapshot" is itself a representation of a weaving, an earlier work titled *Prairie Sunset*, 1983 (cat. 1), now held within a weaving of the same landscape in the full light of day. At the end of the day (pardon the pun), the unhurried medium of weaving extracts its small revenge by snaring within its literal and temporal frame both painting and photography.

Ilse Anysas-Šalkauskas, *Rising from the Ashes*, 1988 (cat. 3)



Ilse Anysas-Šalkauskas, *Rising from the Ashes* (detail), 1988 (cat. 3)

Contexts: Corporeal and Social

Imagine the body of a dancer in an art gallery. She moves slowly, pressed against the wall, as if seeking the condition of a painting. At last, she arrives at a large canvas tondo roughly tacked to the wall. Her body slips behind the painting and disappears from sight, buried beneath the circular patchwork of exposed canvas and paint. Moments pass, and then in a sudden burst her head appears through a slit in the centre of the canvas. Her body pushes into space, tearing the canvas from the wall. The dancer begins to spin, the canvas flowing like a cape, as she recites with a loud voice a poem that speaks the uncontrollable forces of nature.

This was the scene in 1993 at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec in the debut of *Je parle*, choreographed by the Québec multi-disciplinary artist Françoise Sullivan and performed by Ginette Boutin.[33] While perhaps not its intended meaning, audiences may see in this extraordinary performative gesture the transformation of canvas from painting to garment, its life as cloth suddenly restored through the action of a human spindle.[34] The violence of the gesture, however, reveals the extreme exertion required for painting to be reborn as textile—even when the frame is reduced to its bare minimum as an unstretched, roughly cut canvas held loosely to the wall by a few staples. Given a frame any more robust and the transformation could not take place. But Sullivan's choreography not only reveals the textile nature of painting; it shows in dramatic fashion the hidden body of the art object. At the moment when the head of the dancer penetrates the canvas, it is optically severed from the world in what might be called a virtual amputation: the head is framed as a kind of phantom limb, a dismembered part of the social body whose absence is felt as

Ginette Boutin's performance of the Françoise Sullivan choreography *Je parle*, presented at the MacKenzie Art Gallery with New Dance Horizons on January 28, 2016. Photo courtesy of Daniel Paquet.

an ache that we call aesthetic presence.[35] At the same time, we are aware that in reality the head is in contact with the rough edge of canvas, held in a cloth embrace.

Sullivan's performance offers three revelations that are useful for thinking through the relationship of weaving to the body. First, whenever the reality of weaving meets the virtuality of the frame, two bodies appear: the phantom limb of art and the umbilical body of woven fibre. Second, if the artwork is a phantom limb, then weaving offers the potential to therapeutically touch and support that limb, to provide refuge to it, and restore it to the social fabric. In weaving, corporeality and social context are umbilically bound. Third, the contact of weaving with the phantom limb erodes the binary relationship of craft and art and allows the hidden body of the scapegoat not only to return but to break silence. In Sullivan's performance, it is the forces of nature and the land that are spoken: "I speak the pine, the fir, the poplar . . . I speak the path of dawn . . . I speak the hand of the wind . . . I speak the night made with the raven."[36] This is the voice of alterity which weaving, in its involvement with the social order, also speaks when it aligns with the position of the victim.

As Sullivan's performance demonstrates, separation from the wall, even at a minimal distance, enhances the potential of textiles to serve as a refuge for the phantom limb and to restore it to the social body. At the opening of *Prairie Interlace*, children of Ilse Ansyas-Šalkauskas recalled using the long leather strips of *Rising from the Ashes*, 1988, as a hiding place during games of hide-and-seek (cat. 3). Their playful actions belie more serious events in the family's history related to their escape from Nazi-occupied Lithuania during the Second World War, a history alluded to in the work's title. That same evening, Katharine Dickerson told the story of an Australian couple she had seen the night before the World Crafts Council General Assembly resting inside her *West Coast Tree Stump*, 1972, during the exhibition *Textiles into 3-D* at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1974 (cat. 11).[37] The idea of shelter was in Dickerson's mind from the outset when working on the piece, which she wove outdoors using Coast Salish techniques.[38] After attaching the warp to the top part of the structure, she gradually raised the work as she wove; if it rained, she took shelter inside and continue weaving around her. Dickerson's umbilical relationship to the *Tree Stump* was further strengthened by fact that she was pregnant at the time.

After it is turned into clothing, weaving holds the trace of the body in its shape and form, a characteristic which further enhances its ability to interact with the phantom limb of art. Aganetha Dyck uses these traces to hold family memories in her series of shrunken woolen clothes, *From Sizes 8–46*. In *Close Knit*, 1976, Dyck gives expression to a story she heard from her Mennonite grandmother of how she and her community fled war in Europe wearing all the clothes they could put on in order to stay warm;[39] the interwoven arms of the recycled shrunken sweaters are a reminder of the tight weave of mutual support which the community relied on to escape violence and oppression (cat. 13). Traces of the body are also held in several of the hooked rugs in the exhibition. Margaret Harrison's *Margaret's Rug*, c. 2005, is composed of strips of fabric taken from

secondhand clothes (cat. 22). This memory map of the Métis community where Harrison grew up unites body and place in every knot, a reminder of the intimate relationship of Métis people to their homeland. A clothing reference is also found in the latch-hooked rugs of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative. Called *Ta-hah-sheena*, the rugs were named after the ornamented robes traditionally worn by Dakota/Lakota/Nakota peoples.[40] Whenever their rugs are displayed, whether on the wall or on the floor, the sheltering space of a hide is invoked. One of the few works to reference the male body in the exhibition is found in a hooked rug made of blue and pink condoms (now degraded to brittle caramel shells) that spell the word "welcome" (cat. 9). *Threshold: No Laughing Matter*, 1991, was created by Nancy Crites at the height of the AIDS epidemic. In it she aligns the threshold of the frame, with its elusive proffer of welcome, with a hooked weave of condoms that signal the need for intimate protection.

Many second-wave feminist artists were attracted by the alignment of the phantom limb of art and the umbilical body of weaving to give expression to female embodied experience. Emblematic of this desire is Margreet van Walsem's gynocentric weaving *Birth*, 1971, which depicts the prostrate naked form of a mother in childbirth, with the baby's head crowning like the head of the dancer in Sullivan's performance (cat. 56). In this striking image, the umbilicus of women's power and agency is asserted through image and fibre. The womb itself is given a densely layered form in Jane Sartorelli's *Cerridwen*, c. 1975 (cat. 50), a free-form macramé wall hanging named after the Celtic goddess of rebirth, while Phyllis Green's *Boob Tree*, 1975 (cat. 18) asserts female presence in a many-breasted celebration of women's bodies. In the era of bra burning, Green's knit sculpture stands as a defiant act of resistance to patriarchy.

Moving from second to third-wave feminism, questions of embodiment are also probed in *Imago, (viii) "translatable" «Is That Which Denies»* 1988, by Mary Scott (cat. 52). Like Newdigate's tapestries, Scott's work is a meditation on the relationship of painting to weaving, though, in her case, she considers this subject from the perspective of a painter. For her floor-to-ceiling installation, Scott embroidered onto a length of blue silk fabric Leonardo da Vinci's cross-sectional drawing of a heterosexual couple engaged in intercourse. For Scott, the use of the language of fibre arts constitutes a kind of "thinking through craft"—just as in her early paintings she translated acrylic paint into a kind of thread that she applied to canvas in thin skeins using a hypodermic needle, here drawing is applied via an embroiderer's needle onto silk, a technique that echoes the sexual activity depicted in the drawing. Moving to the level of representation, Leonardo's removal of half a body to render visible the hidden coupling of sexual organs is subverted in Scott's uncoupling, thread by thread, of the horizontal weft below the image, and the vertical warp above it, thereby reframing the image within deconstructed fabric. Ironically, the sagging loops above and tangled locks below speak more to disruptive bodily pleasures than Leonardo's detached anatomical observations.[41] Through this intervention into the very fabric of painting, Scott shows the

Mary Scott, *Imago, (viii) "translatable" «Is That Which Denies»*, 1988 (cat. 52)

Image courtesy Art Gallery of Alberta, Photo: Charles Cousins.

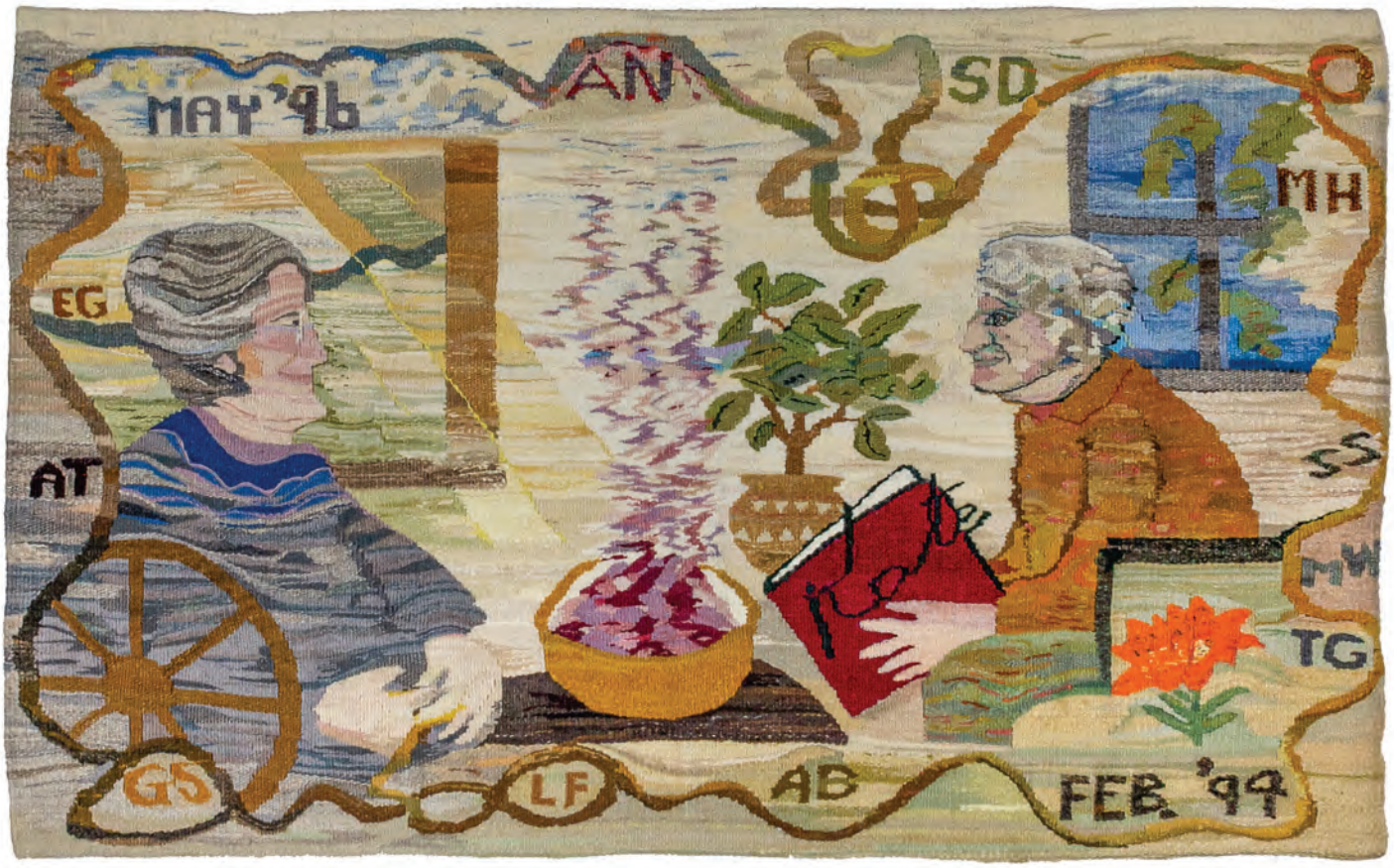
Mary Scott, *Imago, (viii) "translatable" «Is That Which Denies»*, 1988 (cat. 52).

excisional violence of the frame, the scopic violence of the cross-section, and the construction of gender binaries to be imbricated within the prior order of weaving. Whether her deconstructed fabric is viewed as a representation of the Semiotic (Kristeva) or the de-differentiation which precipitates the sacrificial crisis (Girard), thread is a means to think through a number of fundamental questions. If Sullivan restores to painting the condition of a textile by bodily removing it from the frame, Scott pushes one step further to question what painting's condition as textile means for our understanding of the relationship between representation and the social order. The answer to that question hovers between material lineages and the order of the image, between the umbilical body of weaving and the phantom limb of art. In this ambivalence, perhaps we can understand Newdigate's enigmatic statement that tapestry is located "everywhere and nowhere, is everything and nothing."

If Scott brings into question the binary construction of art and weaving, Julia Bryan-Wilson, using the metaphor of the "fray", dismantles it altogether. She has argued how non-professional artists, in particular women of colour, have dismantled false binaries and made "vital interventions regarding how textiles bring together corporeality, materiality, community building, history making, race, class, and gender."[42] In terms of this essay, the loose edges of the "fray" are none other than the multitude of umbilical connections which each new intervention brings into play. These umbilical points of reference help undo the hierarchies that have structured Western aesthetics while opening the possibility of explorations of alterity and creating new, more flexible, architectures of belonging.

Another Year, Another Party (cat. 40) offers a homespun Prairie example of those umbilical connections at work.[43] The project was the inspired idea of Ann Newdigate who received from her friend Kate Waterhouse, a pioneer in the development of Prairie plant dyes, her stock of dyed wool in 1992. In thinking about how to honour this gift, she conferred with Annabel Taylor, coordinator of the weaving program at the Woodlands Campus of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology in Prince Albert. Taylor herself had inherited yarn from artist Margreet van Walsem after her passing in 1979—an artist who had been a mentor to Dyck, Newdigate, Taylor, and Waterhouse. Together they invited the Prince Albert Weavers and Spinners Guild to create a tapestry using this special yarn to honour the many contributions of Waterhouse and van Walsem. The project had multiple umbilical dimensions that brought together material, social, and temporal strands. Produced collaboratively with locally sourced yarns dyed with Prairie plants, the tapestry was the product of threads that had been spun over the course of three decades, going back to a workshop in 1971 when van Walsem and Newdigate first encouraged Waterhouse to record her knowledge of native Saskatchewan dye plants in a book.[44] As Newdigate observes:

> *Another Year, Another Party* had begun, not simply when Kate Waterhouse gave me her yarn, or when Margreet van Walsem invited Annabel Taylor to her weekly investigations into the possibilities for



Ann Newdigate with members of the Prince Albert Spinners and Weavers Guild and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Weaving Program, *Another Year, Another Party*, 1994–1996 (cat. 40).

Image courtesy Mann Art Gallery.

> textile arts, nor perhaps at the potluck feast at Thérèse Gaudet's home, or even when we workshopped the cartoon in Prince Albert, but possibly at the beginning of time when the art of weaving was discovered to be an integral part of the fabric of society.[45]

Appropriately, what appears to be an umbilical cord unites the initials of all the participants along the outer edge of the tapestry, which was finished in 1996. The work is emblematic of Newdigate's concerns for the marginalization of tapestry practices connected with women's work and imagery—"the low end of the Low Art sphere"—as Newdigate wrote in her essay "Kinda Art, Sorta Tapestry" one year earlier. Newdigate concludes, "there was no institution, benefactor, patron, or funding to dictate the imagery. Instead, the imagery and construction developed compatibly, spontaneously, and pragmatically, out of a group collaborative negotiation."[46] Though not a tapestry, *Prairie Barnacles* (cat. 32) was similarly produced through a collaborative process by members of the Crafts Guild of Manitoba to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. This is the supplement of the amateur as described by Adamson, and the creation of an architecture of belonging.

A more current articulation of umbilical connections is signaled in Cindy Baker's latch-hooked rugs, which are represented in the exhibition by *I know people are stealing my things*, 1998 (cat. 4). Baker is a fat activist and queer rights advocate who frequently uses craft to skew ideals concerning beauty, gender and sexuality, art, and value. Her series *Welcome Mats*, 1997–2007, employs latch hooking—an artistic medium used primarily by amateurs—for its subversive potential. In her words, she creates "welcome mats for the not necessarily welcome. Just as actual welcome mats cannot be taken to mean that anyone standing upon the doorstep is welcome within, my welcome mats should not be taken to mean literally what they say."[47] Baker exploits the ambiguity of what artist and cultural theorist Allyson Mitchell has referred to as "abandoned craft" to express and explore alterity.[48] Baker sees the hastily scrawled handwritten messages that she translates into yarn as a revealing kind of "body language," an affective form of communication which she unites umbilically to the grid of the rug. For her and other artists of the new millennium, an architecture of belonging begins with a queering and cripping of discourse that registers the voices of alterity on their own terms.[49]

Beyond the Umbilical Frame

> *Imagine a house in a wide Prairie valley. On the table is a hooked rug too large for it to hold. A young woman, working by the light of a lamp, hooks a geometric design in pink, green, and orange. She has talked about the design with the Elders. They call the rugs Ta-hah-sheena for the decorated robes worn by Tatanka Oyate, the Buffalo People. She works with her family, her community.*

They are making tapestries for the great hall of a library in a new university. Their designs will welcome a community of learning with Dakota intelligence and beauty.

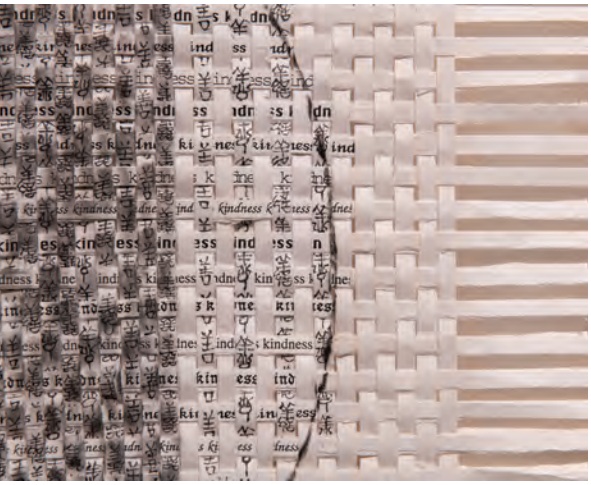
In 1970, the University of Regina commissioned three monumental hooked rugs for its new library, a graceful modernist edifice designed by World Trade Centre architect Minoru Yamasaki. It was a high-water point for the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative, a collective of women from Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation in the Qu'Appelle Valley of southern Saskatchewan. Between 1967 and 1972, they produced hundreds of hooked rugs based on new and traditional Dakota designs as part of a government-sponsored economic-development project. Marge Yuzicappi's tall vertical design of two intersecting pink triangles on a green and orange field (cat. 60), along with those produced by Martha Tawiyaka and Bernice Runns, are outstanding examples of the ongoing vitality of artmaking among the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota nations that make up the Sioux peoples of Saskatchewan.

The Ta-hah-sheena rugs, however, raise questions about works that do not neatly fit the categories of art and craft that we have discussed to this point. The Dakota word for the latch-hooked rugs, *Ta-hah-sheena*, signals this issue. The identification of the rugs with a type of ceremonial robe that could also be hung on the inside of tipis and other structures for decoration and warmth, places them firmly within a Sioux frame of reference.[50] The connection to a garment is significant here. Art historian Janet C. Berlo notes that among the Sioux "a handmade garment is never simply utilitarian. Its functionality extends into metaphysics. . . . In the Lakota language, *saiciye* is the term for adorning oneself in traditional fashion in a way that is pleasing to denizens of both the spirit world and the human world."[51] While the rugs were not made for ceremonial use, nor were the designs necessarily traditional, they point to a Sioux understanding of artistry that does not distinguish a separate class of objects called "art". Bea Medicine, in her seminal essay "Lakota Views of 'Art' and Artistic Expression," underlines this point, observing that "the integrative aspect of art in a Native perspective appears to negate segmentalized thinking in realms of arts and crafts."[52]

If the frames of art and craft represent an imposition on these tapestries, what frame is appropriate? One possible approach would be to consider how the original Ta-hah-sheena were made.[53] Could the cut which separated hide from animal be considered an aesthetic frame? Certainly, the act of skinning defines the surface and edges of the hide, which preserves in its form and substance the presence of the animal whether worn or displayed. If this cut is integral to the meaning of the Ta-hah-sheena, and at work within the remediated form of the latch-hooked rug, then the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative tapestries could be viewed within three distinct frames: as modernist abstractions created in the tradition of fine art tapestries for architectural spaces; as Indigenous craft produced according to a government economic development model; and as Ta-hah-sheena,

Marge Yuzicappi,
Tapestry (Ta-hah-sheena),
c. 1970 (cat. 60)

Amy Loewan, *A Mandala "The Circle and the Square,"* 1996
(cat. 30)



Amy Loewan, *A Mandala "The Circle and the Square"* (detail), 1996
(cat. 30)

a traditional Dakota art form. Those frames represent three distinct cuts: excisional, umbilical, and what might be called integumental, the broader term pertaining to the skin, hair, hooves, and feathers of animals. If this approach is valid, no one frame can be considered to the exclusion of the others; the work of theory is rather to uncover occluded frames, understand their interaction with the so-called dominant cultural forms, and ultimately come to terms with how the creators worked within or against these frames. In the case of the Ta-hah-sheena rugs, their integumental grounding—their identity as wrappings carrying the physical trace and memory of plains bison—reinforces the connection to the bodies, culture, language (oral and visual), and land of the Tatanka Oyate. As we have seen, these connections have a sympathetic resonance with the umbilical frame of weaving, which contains within its very fibres ties to animal, land, and body. Moreover, in their journey from a communal kitchen table in the Qu'Appelle Valley to an urban university campus, these works offer a quietly effective critique of the elitist frame of high art creation and transmission.

Another work that is useful for articulating the edges of the umbilical metaphor and which sheds light on the question of non-Western frames is the paper weaving of Amy Loewan. Born in Hong Kong, Loewan brought to her artmaking in Canada a perspective steeped in Chinese traditions of paper and ink rather than oil and canvas. Her forays as a graduate student at the University of Alberta in 1994 saw her translate Chinese calligraphy into the frame of modernist abstraction, using oversized brushes that required her entire body to inscribe characters on large sheets of paper laid on the floor. In subsequent works, calligraphy was applied to surfaces stained with a grid of dripped paint resembling weaving. In 1996, she began to integrate calligraphy with her own method of paper weaving,[54] creating works such as *A Mandala "The Circle and the Square,"* 1996 (cat. 30). As she describes it:

> This is an important piece of work in my artistic career. It is one of my very early rice paper weavings, a seminal work, which later on evolves into my major large rice paper weaving installations known collectively as "The Peace Projects." I begin this work with the tactile process of transforming sheets of large rice paper into long weaving strips. They are then delicately woven to form an integrated whole. In this work, the theme of "kindness" is the subject for exploration. Handwritten calligraphy of the word "kindness" in standard and ancient Chinese scripts are interwoven with computer-generated text of the English word "kindness" in a variety of fonts. The words and the calligraphy (English from left to right and Chinese from top to bottom, east and west intersecting naturally with the weaving of the paper) symbolize all languages. Circle and Square are universal symbols from many cultures and belief systems. According to the Chinese tradition (my personal heritage), Circle refers to the "sky" and Square refers to the "earth", together it signifies the universe. My art aims to evoke

> contemplation and to serve as a vehicle for personal transformation.[55]

While a full theory of the relationship of Eastern and Western art practices is impossible in this short space, it is instructive to note the conditions out of which Chinese painting evolved. In China, visual art develops out of a relationship to the written word, rather than the icon.[56] In fact, it was only when painting became allied with calligraphy in the Song Dynasty that it was considered a fine art rather than a craft. The relationship of the written word to the sacred is foundational to Chinese culture; the earliest pictograms and ideographs are found on objects associated with ritual, divination, and contracts. In Taoist ritual, sacred writings were sacrificed in place of live victims.[57] In art, the relationship to the sacred is located in the written character rather than the Western excisional frame. How, then, should we describe the frame of Chinese painting and calligraphy? One possible approach would be to consider the cut or break involved with each individual brushstroke, the basic unit of calligraphy. These "bones," which when combined into a character make up a "body," hold the expressive presence of ideas and concepts. Seen in this light, the underlying logic of the cut in Chinese art is segmental, rather than excisional, umbilical, or integumental. It is the relation of the part to the whole, of the individual to society, that is essential to the conceptualization of this frame.

Loewan deploys the framing power of the written word in *A Mandala "The Circle and the Square."* By inscribing the word "Kindness" multiple times, in different scripts, fonts, and languages, onto each individual strip of paper, she points to the need for widely distributed expressions of caring rather than centralized assertions of dominance to create a harmonious relationship between the individual and society. As in the Ta-hah-sheena hooked rugs, a third frame creates expressive energies that are amplified by the frames of craft and art. Weaving, with its metaphorical connection to the social order, echoes the tension between individual—symbolized by the fringe of loose strips along the edges—and the interwoven whole. In her subsequent "Peace Project" installations, the place of the viewer is triply engaged as a place of viewing, writing, and weaving, an example of the potential to be found in exploiting multiple aesthetic frames.[58]

This essay began with a call for an expanded frame of weaving, one that would allow it to breathe, to operate on its own terms, without the confining edge of frame or plinth. As we have seen, weaving's umbilical cut establishes a relationship to the sacred quite different from the excisional cut of painting and sculpture. While art invokes the sacrificial victim through the phantom limb of aesthetic presence, weaving carries the potential to touch and clothe that limb. When weaving becomes art, the touchless frame meets the frame of touch. This connection defines the expanded frame of weaving, a frame that allows for contacts to extend along the many deterministic threads upon which society hangs—the "bad habits of the West," as Newdigate trenchantly calls

them. Weaving's ties to its conditions of production—material, corporeal, temporal, geographical, and social—long held to be a hindrance in its search for elevated status, provide the means for an effective connection to be formed. In countless works, of which *Prairie Interlace* represents but a small sample, weaving embraces what is marginalized, dispossessed, and devalued and restores it to the social body.

Prairie Interlace is but one part of the much larger story of how the flexibility of thread met the conceptual power of the frame in the post-Second World War era and unleashed a worldwide phenomenon the effects of which are still being felt. Developments on the Canadian Prairies reflect movements in Europe and the United States, but always with a local inflection, an umbilical tie to regional geographies, histories, identities, and cultures. In the epochal transition that marked the breakup of Modernism over the past half century, weavers and other interlace practitioners proved extraordinarily resilient as they adapted themselves to shifting imperatives.

Post-colonial dialogues are increasingly oriented toward global aesthetic practices with origins in non-Western and Indigenous cultures. The analysis of the umbilical cut of weaving and its interaction with the excisional frame of art prepares the way for an understanding of interactions with these alternative frames. Kirsty Bell writing in *Tate etc*. magazine notes: "Textiles seems to be uniquely positioned to perform a subtle interfacing between culture and civilization: through an angle towards broader cultural and socio-historical hegemonies."[59] These "cross-cultural entanglements" (Checinska and Watson)[60] point to the urgent need for a critical apparatus that can account for the interface of cultural perspectives without subsuming one frame within another. The need is even more pressing given the migration of weaving into digital frames.[61] *Prairie Interlace* provides an extraordinary range of examples of what an expanded frame of weaving might look like: its potential for critical insights, its ability to traverse different material and cultural terrains, and its engagement with diverse communities. In these works, and the umbilical histories they reveal, lie the threads of new futures.

NOTES

1 Throughout this essay I will use the term "weaving" to refer to a constellation of interlace practices, including tapestry, woven sculpture, rug hooking, knitting, and macramé, in which woven and knotted filaments are integral to the object's structure. While overlaps in form and intention exist with needle-based practices, such as sewing, embroidery, and quilting, as well as with other textile and fibre arts, this approach allows for a concentrated analysis of the material and historical lineages that are specific to interlace practices. It also resists a premature assimilation of these practices into the frame of art.

2 Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark, eds., *The Handbook of Textile Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

3 Christine Checinska and Grant Watson, "Textiles, Art, Society and Politics," in *Handbook of Textile Culture*, 280.

4 This portrait of the artist in her studio is based on: "A Conversation with Ann Newdigate—Prairie Interlace," interview by Mireille Perron, Nickle Galleries, September 9, 2022, https://youtu.be/WTdrG0xKds4; and MacKenzie Art Gallery Artist's Questionnaire for *National Identity, Borders and the Time Factor, or, Wee Mannie*, 1982-015, undated.

5 Ann Newdigate, "Kinda art, sorta tapestry: tapestry as shorthand access to the definitions, languages, institutions, attitudes, hierarchies, ideologies, constructions, classifications, histories, prejudices and other bad habits of the West," in *New Feminist Art Criticism: Critical Strategies*, ed. Katy Deepwell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995): 174–181.

6 Newdigate, "Kinda art," 174.

7 Mary Scott, email correspondence to the curators, October 7, 2022.

8 Newdigate, "Kinda art," 174.

9 Sarat Maharaj, "Textile Art—Who Are You?" in *Distant Lives/Shared Voices*, ed. Sharon Marcus et al., trans. Marysia Lewandowska (Łódź , Poland: 1992); reprinted in *World Wide Weaving—Atlas: Weaving Globally, Metaphorically and Locally*, ed. Dorothee Albrecht (Oslo: Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 2017), 7. Derrida's concept of the "undecidable" is from Jacques Derrida, "Living on/borderlines" in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 75–176.

10 Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft* (Oxford: Berg, 2007). See in particular Chapter 5 "Amateur," 139–63, which includes a discussion of the work of Ann Newdigate.

11 Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft*, 12.

12 Adamson's references to fibre art in *Thinking Through Craft* consider the fabric collages of Miriam Shapiro and Faith Ringgold, the weaving of Magdalena Abakanowicz, Ann Newdigate, and Faith Wilding, and the more recent craft deployments of Mike Kelley and Tracey Emin. A fuller account of the critical potential of fibre art is provided in his contemporaneous article, "The Fiber Game," *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2007): 154–77.

13 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 61; cited in Adamson, 13.

14 The following argument is condensed from my essay in *Theatroclasm: Mirrors, Mimesis and the Place of the Viewer*, ed. Timothy Long (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2009). For more on René Girard's theory of the scapegoat, see: *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); and *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

15 Andrew J. McKenna, in his comparison of Girard and Derrida's theoretical frameworks, makes this equivalency explicit: "The victim occupies the place—within and without the community—in Girard's view of cultural origins that writing occupies in Derrida's critique of the origins of original presence, of which language is but the representation and writing the secondary representation, the forlorn and occluded trace. The victim, like writing, is a supplement of a supplement (speech), a stand in, an arbitrary substitute for any and all members of a community that does not exist prior to the victim's expulsion." Andrew J. McKenna, *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida, and Deconstruction* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 16.

16 McKenna, *Violence and Difference*, 16.

17 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

18 See Long, *Theatroclasm*.

19 See Timothy Long, *The Limits of Life: Arnulf Rainer and Georges Rouault* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2004).

20 Girard, *Scapegoat*, 176–77.

21 This is a term coined by Canadian artist Liz Magor to describe those works which incorporate everyday objects (tables, blankets, ashtrays, etc.) and generate an effect which hovers between objecthood and representation. See Timothy Long, *Double or Nothing: Problems of Presence in Contemporary Art* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2013), 40.

22 Aside from Greek deities, one might mention those found in the cosmologies of the Romans (Parcae), Norse (Norns), Egyptians (Isis), Japanese (Ameratsu), Indians (Draupadi), and Anasazi-Hopi and Navajo peoples (Spider Woman). The Greek conception of weaving as fundamental to the establishment of social order is an idea which finds parallels in many of these cultures. For more on the relationship of weaving to myth, see Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women Cloth and Society in Early Times* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 232ff. A sample of feminist and post-colonial readings of weaving in myth include: Ruth Scheuing, "Penelope and the Unravelling of History," in *New Feminist Art Criticism*, 188–196; "The Unravelling of History: Penelope and Other Stories," in *Material Matters: The Art and Culture of Contemporary Textiles*, ed. Ingrid Bachmann and Ruth Scheuing (Toronto: YYZ Books, 1998), 201–13; Sarat Maharaj, "Arachne's Genre: Towards Intercultural Studies in Textiles," *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1991), 75–96; and Kiku Hawkes, "Skanda," in *Material Matters*, 233–38.

23 "According to some authors Zeus is supreme and controls all, but others portray a universe in which even the great and powerful Zeus must bow to the inevitability of Fate's decrees. The depth of this feeling of the Greeks for the working of Moira or the Moirae cannot be overemphasized." Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1971), 162. For example, the final dialogue of Plato's *Republic* describes how the Moirai turn the great spindle of Necessity that holds heaven and earth together. See Morford and Lenardon, 247–48.

24 M. L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 382.

25 The sacrificial nature of the work of the Moirai is evident in thinly veiled scapegoating narratives such as the tale of Admetus and Alcestis. When Apollo asked the Fates to extend the life of Admetus, King of Thessaly, the request was granted on the condition that someone else must die in his place. The only "volunteer" who could be found was the king's wife, Alcestis.

26 In ceramics, artists have responded by using the medium's historical forms to question the frame of art by bending, with a deft twist, optical appreciation via plinth and frame back to tactile appropriation as vessel and tile. See Timothy Long, "Which Way is Up? Jack Sures and the Art/Craft Debate," in *Tactile Desires: The Work of Jack Sures*, ed. Virginia Eichhorn (Regina, SK: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2012), 61–69.

27 Animal bodies are also materially invoked in several of the weavings, whether sheep's wool (Annabel Taylor), dog's hair (Susan Barton-Tait), or rabbit skin (Anne Ratt). Ethel Schwass' abstracted weavings are based on the form of a horse blanket. Ultimately, weaving contains the body of the land, whether through the intermediary of an animal, through plants fibres and dyes, or directly through mineral pigments.

28 *Charlotte Lindgren: Fibre Structures*, exhibition catalogue (Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1980), n.p.

29 "Mural and Spatial: How the Lausanne Biennials 1962–1969 Transformed the World of Tapestry," Centre Culturel et Artistique Jean Lurcat, Aubusson, France, 2019, https://www.cite-tapisserie.fr/sites/default/files/DP-ENGL-Mural-and_Spatial-v3_0.pdf.

30 See Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft*, 58–65.

31 See Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft*, 103–37.

32 Within the frame of modernist art production, time is a disputed term. Michael Fried's essays contrasting the gracelessness of "objecthood" to the transcendent presentness or absorption of "art" is one of the more hotly debated formulations of the debate. Objecthood implies the lack of a frame, to be left in ordinary (and thus boring) space and time, while art implies the activity of a frame which secures the quasi-divine state of presence/presentness. Weaving can be seen as one of the antidotes to this conundrum, by manifesting the time, registered in the trace of labour, that produces the final work.

33 See Anne Gérin, "Importance et question essentielles" in *Françoise Sullivan: sa vie et son œuvre*, Art Canada Institute/Institut de l'art canadien, https://www.aci-iac.ca/fr/livres-dart/francoise-sullivan/importance-et-questions-essentielles/. I had the opportunity to see this extraordinary performance in 2016 at the MacKenzie Art Gallery with Françoise Sullivan in attendance as part of *MAGDANCE: Art + Dance*, an exhibition-residency with New Dance Horizons.

34 The work of Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica performs a similar transformation and was one of the touchstones for the 2012 exhibition *Social Fabric* at the Institute of International Visual Art, London. See Checinska and Watson, "Textiles, Art, Society and Politics," 279.

35 This insight was sparked by Kader Attia's video installation *Reflecting Memory* (2016), which was presented at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in 2019 as part of the exhibition *Re: Celebrating the Body*.

36 Gérin, "Importance et question."

37 Additional details were provided by Dickerson in a telephone interview with the author, November 30, 2022.

38 For more on Dickerson's engagement with Coast Salish weaving see: Katharine Dickerson, "Classic Salish Twined Robes," *BC Studies*, no. 189 (Spring 2016): 101–27; and Sandra Alfoldy, "'Homage to Salish Weavers,'" in *The Allied Arts: Architecture and Craft in*

Postwar Canada (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2012), 155–57.

39 See "A Conversation with Aganetha Dyck—Prairie Interlace," interview by Alison Calder, Nickle Galleries, September 9, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etwp7l8e2gc.

40 See Sherry Farrell Racette's essay in this volume.

41 Scott has Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory in mind here, playing off the disruptive dynamism of Semiotic (*imago*) against the social constraints of the Symbolic. See Bruce Grenville's discussion of the *Imagos* series in the exhibition catalogue, *Mary Scott* (Lethbridge, AB: Southern Alberta Art Gallery, 1989), 8.

42 See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 14.

43 Other works in *Prairie Interlace* that might be mentioned here include *Prairie Barnacles*, a work produced collaboratively by sixteen members of the Crafts Guild of Manitoba to mark their 50th anniversary, and the hooked rugs of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative.

44 Kate Waterhouse, *Saskatchewan Dyes: A Personal Adventure with Plants and Colours* (Prince Albert, SK: Write Way Printing, 1977).

45 Ann Newdigate, "The Particular History of a Saskatchewan Community Tapestry," *The Craft Factor* (Saskatoon, SK) (Spring/Summer 1997): 8.

46 Newdigate, "Particular History," 8.

47 Cindy Baker, "'Welcome' Mats," artist's website, https://www.cindy-baker.ca/work-2013/welcome-mats-2f93t.

48 Baker, "'Welcome Mats.'" See also "Interview: Susanne Luhmann talks with Allyson Mitchell," *Atlantis* (Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax) 31, no. 2 (2007): 103–4.

49 Weaving metaphors have evolved in recent years as witnessed by the naming of the Toronto-based group Tangled Art + Disability. Eliza Chandler, the organization's first Disability-identified Artistic Director writes: "A tangle is not a knot—it can be undone or remain happily tangled. Tangles are messy and imperfect, but they are also complex, intricate, organic, even deliberate. Tangles represent what this organization does: we bring together all kinds of people and practices." https://tangledarts.org/about-us/our-history/.

50 See Susan Probe, *Ta-Ha-Sheena: Sioux Rugs from Standing Buffalo Reserve*, exhibition brochure (Regina: Dunlop Art Gallery, 1988), 8.

51 Janet Catherine Berlo, "Beauty, Abundance, Generosity, and Performance: Sioux Aesthetics in Historical Context," in *The Sioux Project—Tatanka Oyate*, ed. Dana Claxton (Regina, SK: MacKenzie Art Gallery and Information Office, 2020), 43

52 Bea Medicine, "Lakota Views of 'Art' and Artistic Expression," in *Sioux Project*, 55.

53 This insight came from a year-long encounter with Sitting Bull's decorated robe which was loaned to the MacKenzie Art Gallery from the North Dakota State Historical Society for the exhibition *Walking with Saskatchewan* in 2019–2020. I am indebted to conversations with artists Wayne Goodwill from Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation and Dana Claxton, a member of Wood Mountain Lakota First Nation, for a deeper understanding of its significance.

54 Although painting on woven paper is practiced in parts of China, Loewan's method of paper weaving is a personal innovation and does not refer to a tradition or genre in Chinese art. Amy Loewan, email communication to the author, December 12, 2022.

55 Amy Loewan, artist's statement for *Prairie Interlace* information form, 2021.

56 See Dawn Delbanco, "Chinese Calligraphy," Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Metropolitan Museum of Art, April 2008, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chcl/hd_chcl.htm; and Maxwell K. Hearn, *How to Read Chinese Paintings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008).

57 Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 90. Amy Loewan notes, "Practicing Chinese Calligraphy can be considered as a sacred act. Each stroke, each brush work, one puts down with ink on the absorbent Shuen paper with intention has power. An experienced calligrapher can notice if the writing is done with intention (also refer to as bones). I have been told that there is some instrument that can measure the energy and power of the brushwork. This explains why calligraphy, the written word, can be employed as healing device, as talisman in the Taoist tradition." Amy Loewan, email to the author, December 14, 2022.

58 See *Amy Loewan: Illuminating Peace*, ed. Robert Freeman and Linda Jansma (Mississauga: Art Gallery of Mississauga, 2009). Amy Loewan notes, "The *House Project* is inspired by Lao Tzu, the ancient Chinese sage, who wisely addressed the forming of a better society this way: 'If there is to be peace in the world, ultimately there must be peace in the home and peace in the heart.' Cultivation of individual character becomes the foundation for a better society. This quote is handwritten in English and posted across the inside of the House. These eight values: compassion, kindness, respect, understanding, patience, tolerance, gentleness, and forgiveness are repeatedly written in all my paper weave projects. Public participation component is an important aspect of my installation. For example, in the *House Project*, I provided viewers with colourful post-it

notes and invited them to write 'What would you do to make this world a better place.'" Loewan, email.

59 Cited in Janis Jefferies, "Introduction," in *From Tapestry to Fiber Art*, 19.

60 Checinska and Watson, "Textiles, Art, Society and Politics," 279.

61 For example, see Sara Diamond, "The Fabric of Memory: Towards the Ontology of Contemporary Textiles," in *Handbook of Textile Culture*, 367–85.