



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

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Introduction to *Prairie Interlace: Recovering “Lost Modernisms”*

by Julia Krueger, Michele Hardy, and Timothy Long

Prairie Interlace: Weaving, Modernisms, and the Expanded Frame, 1960–2000 looks back to the explosion of innovative textile-based art on the Canadian Prairies during the second half of the 20th century. With a focus on weaving and other interlace practices, such as rug hooking, macramé, knitting, and crochet, the project examines how artists of diverse backgrounds wove new histories of fibre during a period of intense energy and collective creativity. *Prairie Interlace* is set within the period 1960 to 2000, one of tremendous energy, opportunity, and experimentation across the Prairies and beyond. It was a period that, in Canada and particularly in Québec, developed out of a renewed interest in the textile crafts following the Second World War and the growing awareness and acceptance of tapestry weaving as a major art form rooted in Modernism.¹ As early as 1960, the National Gallery of Canada toured the works of two of Québec’s best-known painter-weavers, Micheline Beauchemin and Mariette Rousseau-Vermette, across the country with the aim of enhancing awareness of their work, raising standards of weaving, and breaking down barriers between art and craft.² For Moncrieff Williamson, organizer of the Expo 67 exhibition *Canadian Fine Crafts*, the best Canadian craft displayed “excellence, inventiveness, [and] variety.”³ In 1979, the first Biennial of Contemporary Tapestry was launched in Montréal, an event that would champion experimentation in materials, scale, and form. Beyond Canada, the well-publicized Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials (Lausanne, Switzerland, 1962–1995),⁴ The International Triennial of Tapestry (Łódź, Poland, 1975-),⁵ and the Museum of Modern Art’s *Wall Hangings* (New York, 1969),⁶ along with publications such as Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen’s *Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric* (1972) and *The Art Fabric: Mainstream* (1981), proved to be internationally influential. Prairie artists were very much engaged in these events and experiments: many participated in the international exhibitions in Lausanne and Łódź, the Montréal Tapestry Biennials or travelled regularly to witness them. Others were introduced to the international fibre art movement through exhibitions in Canada, such as the solo shows

of the renowned Magdalena Abakanowicz at the Walter Phillips Gallery and Glenbow Museum (Banff/Calgary, 1982) and Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (Montréal, 1983), as well as through the steady stream of international luminaries who led workshops at the Banff Centre, a major fibre hub. Like artists, craftspeople, and architects throughout Europe and North America, Prairie artists were drawn to the warmth, materiality, and experimental potential of innovative weaving processes.

Today little trace of the energy and activity of that period remains. The weavings which were once common in public buildings and corporate offices have all but disappeared. Records that may still be found in collections and archives are spotty at best. The looms at the Banff Centre sit idle in the basement, the result of changing program priorities. Despite the recent resurgence of interest in DIY crafts and fabric-based practices—a resurgence that makes the work of this earlier period look prescient—current activity falls well short of the scale and ambition of the modernist moment. *Prairie Interlace* represents an attempt to address this historical disappearance by discerning voices “silenced” by time and changing circumstances,⁷ and by assessing the impact of Modernism on Prairie artists working with weaving and other interlace practices. The underlying challenges of curating textiles—another factor in the de-valuing and under-representation of the work of this period—are also discussed in Krueger and Hardy’s “Curating *Prairie Interlace*: Encounters, Longings, and Challenges,” which complements this introductory text. Through multiple access points—touring exhibition,

symposium, website, and this edited publication—*Prairie Interlace* contributes fresh research and new perspectives to craft histories on the Canadian Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) and sets these regional histories within national and international contexts. It is the first such project in recent decades to spotlight these makers, create space for their works, and, to borrow the words of craft historian Tanya Harrod, recover and record “lost modernisms.”⁸

The warp and weft of this history are held taut by several creative tensions. Prairie weavers and other textile-based artists, like their ceramist counterparts, challenged traditional craft definitions as they engaged with painting, sculpture, and architecture. Yet, the story cannot be reduced to a simple modernist narrative of a break with tradition leading to new liberatory possibilities that began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, or of regional artists uncritically responding to introduced *avant-garde* ideas—rather it is a nuanced tale of regional artists’ varied engagement with Modernism and the international fibre art movement, a tale requiring an expanded frame. K. L. H. Wells asserts in *Weaving Modernism: Postwar Tapestry Between Paris and New York*, “Modern art and tapestry both reach unprecedented critical, economic, and institutional success during the same historical moment, the twenty-five years following World War II.”⁹ *Prairie Interlace* seeks to understand the connection between weaving and this particular phase of Modernism on the Prairies. The persistence of techniques as taught in art schools and weaving guilds, the cultural knowledge brought to the Prairies by European immigrants, and the renewed interest in traditional Indigenous practices,

are entwined with the modernist storyline. Modernism prefaced a move away from realistic representation towards abstraction, “honestly” emphasized visible physical processes and the materials used in art and architecture, rejected academic traditions in favour of the avant-garde, embraced the machine age, and questioned the distinction between art and everyday life.¹⁰ With the early developments of Postmodernism in the 1970s, Feminist artists found in weaving, crochet, and other fibre arts a means to critique social and aesthetic hierarchies, expand the domestic frame, and insert narrative into their work. Postmodernism’s eclecticism, pastiche, and fragmentation also made its way into Prairie weaving with references to magic carpets and Leonardo da Vinci. Indigenous artists found opportunities through rug hooking (both hooked and latch-hooked rugs)¹¹ and weaving to pursue economic opportunities while celebrating aesthetic and cultural traditions. Interest was diffuse and diverse, encompassing both academic institutions in large cities and weaving guilds in smaller centres, monumental commissions for modernist towers and small-scale works produced on table looms. Across the region, hubs of teaching and exchange emerged—the Alberta College of Art (now AUArts) in Calgary, the Banff Centre, the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts (1967–1991) held in Fort San near Fort Qu’Appelle, and numerous local guilds and clubs—where skills were honed, and modernist ideas tested and translated. *Prairie Interlace* retells this distinctive history through the interlaced narratives of art, craft, feminism, immigration, Indigeneity, regionalism, and architectural interior design.



Evelyn Roth (second from left) with students attending her 1973 wearable art course at the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts, near Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan. Photo courtesy of SK Arts.



From its inception in 1928, the Crafts Guild of Manitoba has promoted the knowledge, interest and proficiency in crafts by offering a vast array of craft courses. In 1976 alone, they had 828 students. In this image from 1972, Shirley Tyderkie and Ruth Horner demonstrate weaving for the guild. Courtesy of the Manitoba Crafts Museum and Library.

Why Weaving?

Early in this project, it became apparent that research parameters were needed to deal with the immensity of the field of textiles. The decision was taken to narrow the curatorial focus to weaving along with the complementary interlace practices of macramé, rug hooking, crochet, and knitting. Aside from aligning with the curators' interests and institutional holdings, this decision took into account the specific histories of these practices on the Prairies, histories with roots going back to the first half of the 20th century, as Jennifer Salahub, Sherry Farrell Racette, and Cheryl Troupe reveal in their essays for this publication, and which continued to develop through a unique conjunction of grassroots and professional artistic activity during the period in question. The limited overlap between these textile methods and needle-based processes such as quilting and embroidery, and the interweave practices such as basketry, lay behind the decision to exclude them from the scope of this project. Their omission should be understood not as a value judgement but rather as an invitation for further curatorial exploration.

Even within these parameters, it became obvious that garments, yardage, and small-scale textiles for the home, such as napkins, placemats, and tablecloths, were something that could not be properly addressed in *Prairie Interlace*. Our curatorial curiosities were oriented toward artists who fell somewhere between a weaver-designer and a fibre artist.¹² For example, while we did not include the Expo 67 yardages by F. Douglas Motter or Whynona Yates, both currently in the collection of the Confederation Centre

Art Gallery, we did include Yates' *Hanging*, 1974 (cat. 59) and Carol Little's *Furrow*, 1976, (cat. 29) which for all intents and purposes is a twill woven, warp ikat yardage, but is also something more due to its suspended installation. *Hanging* and *Furrow* posed questions that demanded a deeper investigation through their engagement with sculptural installation.

During the 1960s and 1970s, various labels such as *woven forms*, *new tapestry*, *wall hangings*, *fibre art*, *fibre constructions*, *fibre sculpture*, and *Art Fabric* were invented to describe non-utilitarian woven and off-loom works.¹³ These labels and the fluid weaver-designer/fibre artist identities associated with them speak to the challenge of describing the large-scale convention-defying textile art of the period. An increase in scale was due in part to the economic boom of the 1970s, which saw record in-migration to oil-rich Alberta, spikes in the number of building permits, and broad opportunities for artists in all three Prairie provinces to create large textile works for corporate headquarters, office towers, banks, performance centres, and various government offices. It can also be argued that an increase in scale was a result of the minimum size requirements for the Lausanne Biennial: ten square metres for exhibited works.¹⁴ Conceptually, it is important to note how weavers harnessed scale to challenge fibre's stereotypical associations with utilitarian craft and domesticity,¹⁵ and to confound "the still-prevalent [at the time] stereotype of feminine modesty and passiveness,"¹⁶ as Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf point out. It also brought to the fore invisible histories of marginalized communities. Marge Yuzicappi's monumental *Tapestry*

(*Ta-hah-sheena*), c. 1970, (cat. 60) is a bold statement, claiming space for Indigenous women and their creative works.

Expanding the Horizon

The need to know more, to understand better the contributions that Prairie textile artists made to wider narratives remains. How did this phenomenon emerge? How are we to assess the extraordinarily diverse and compelling artistic forms which they produced? And, after decades of attention and new opportunities for artists working with textiles, why by the late 1990s did interest dwindle? Consequently, this volume describes, assesses, and expands a Prairie textile horizon. As Kelly-Frère notes in his essay, the horizon “is a useful metaphor as we consider the interwoven legacies of weavers on the Canadian Prairie” (p. 124). We engaged scholars and artists to consider Prairie textiles and some of the most critical themes shaping the field. Their contributions are divided into three thematic groups. The first section, “Recovering Histories,” brings together studies of specific developments. Historical narratives, many rescued from obscurity, are evaluated to show how the field of art textiles took form on the Prairies at both the high and low end of art spectrum: from the grassroots realities of Prairie farm women and Indigenous and Métis communities to the professional artistic enterprise of international fibre art and the incorporation of textiles within modernist architecture. In the second section, “Contextual Encounters,” writers consider the phenomenon of weaving on the Prairies from broader theoretical perspectives, considering how

the artists engaged with the wider narratives of Modernism, Postmodernism, feminism, craft theory, and regionalism on the Prairies, thereby expanding our understanding of textile art practices. The third section, “Expanding the Frame,” embeds a discussion of the works included in *Prairie Interlace* within critical theory, exploring how affect, art, and textiles function.

Jennifer Salahub leads off with a much-needed historical background in “Stand Back—Nothing to See—Move Along.” Professor emerita from the Alberta University of the Arts, Salahub is a widely published textile historian who excels at reconstructing narratives through extensive archival research. Her essay focusses “not upon legacy, but rather ancestry, for the fibre art movement was a child of modern art and an active player in Modernism’s grand narrative” (p. 18). Tracing that ancestry leads her to the period prior to 1960, an era of little interest at first glance. But like an episode of *Seinfeld*—a sitcom ostensibly about nothing—Salahub finds in the minutiae a rich and nuanced tale. She examines, for example, references to the influence of Modernism on textiles in Alberta newspapers of the 1910s and 1920s, craft revivals in the 1930s and 1940s, debates about Modernism during the formative years of weaving instruction at the Banff School of Fine Arts and Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary, and utopian weaving schemes for farm families propagated by the Roman Catholic Church and the Searle Grain Company. The narratives uncovered counter the simplistic characterization of modernist fibre art of the 1960s and 1970s emerging from a void. As Salahub argues, “the seeds for a robust,

regionally based, *modern* textile and textile art movement were being planted on the Prairies well before the fibre art movement took form,” a conclusion that reminds us that history is written, knowledge is constructed, and amnesia is not as innocent as it seems.

Another essay concerned with neglected histories is Sherry Farrell Racette’s “Marginalized Moderns: Co-operatives and Indigenous Textile Arts in Saskatchewan, 1960–1972.” Racette is of Métis ancestry, a member of the Timiskaming First Nation, and a professor with the University of Regina. As a scholar, curator, and artist, she has a particular interest in Indigenous women’s history, knowledge, and pedagogy. Her essay offers a parallel tale to Salahub’s, examining not just a forgotten or unwritten history, but one that was often actively repressed. She notes how cultural expression, particularly the creation of regalia and ceremonial items, “the very heart of artistic expression” (p. 38), was suppressed by government policies. Ironically, those same federal and provincial governments found a new enthusiasm for Indigenous culture in the 1960s, resulting in various development initiatives, including the production of small finger-looped rabbit fur rugs in northern Saskatchewan, as seen in the work of Cree artist Anne Ratt, (cat. 44 & 45) and the production of latch-hooked rugs, called Ta-hah-sheena by the artists of the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative of Standing Buffalo Dakota First Nation in southern Saskatchewan (cat. 7, 15, 16, 17, 24, 33, 34, 54, 60, 61).

She recounts in detail the story of the Co-operative, chronicling the challenges the group members faced working on the margins and within a limiting co-operative

structure. Despite notable successes—a National Film Board documentary, international exposure, and major commissions such as those produced for the library of the University of Regina—the project was short-lived in part because the textiles did not fit with received notions of Indigenous art, required expensive materials, and were labour intensive to produce. Critically, Racette demonstrates how the Co-operative functioned as a vehicle of knowledge transfer within the Dakota *tióšpaye*—“the complex network of extended families centered on women” (p. 45). Furthermore, she recovers from over-literal readings of the rugs’ symbolism, the “unlimited creativity” contained in their “bold geometric language” (p. 46). Her essay reminds us that abstraction is rooted in Dakota/Lakota visual vocabulary and experience—not an imported form introduced by Modernism.

Cheryl Troupe’s essay, “Métis Stories and Women’s Artistic Labour in Margaret Pelletier Harrison’s *Margaret’s Rug*” offers a Métis perspective on the relationship between place, women, and textiles. Troupe is a citizen of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan and a member of Gabriel Dumont Local #11 in Saskatoon. She is also an assistant professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan where her research focuses on Métis road allowance communities and the intersections of land, gender, and kinship. Troupe explains, “Agricultural settlement and Canadian government policy of the late 19th and early 20th century steadily displaced and dispossessed Prairie Métis, forcing them to relocate their families and re-establish themselves on land they didn’t own, forming communities on newly surveyed unoccupied

Crown land reserved for roads, next to First Nations reserves, or on the correction lines which were adjustments to the Dominion Land Survey to compensate for the convergence of lines of longitude. These spaces, unique to the Prairie provinces, became known as road allowance communities.”¹⁷ Drawing on her long-standing community-based research, she offers an intimate account of the textile history of Margaret Harrison, an artist who grew up in the Katepwa Lake road allowance community in southern Saskatchewan’s Qu’Appelle Valley. Troupe demonstrates how Modernism, in the form of settler colonialism and agrarian economy, marginalized Métis communities, particularly its men, and set the conditions for women’s artistic production to become an important means of providing economic “stability and cultural continuity during a period of increasingly rapid economic, social, and political transition” (p. 57). It is worth reflecting on Métis women’s limited choices for participation in Modernism, and how they did whatever was necessary to support their families. Furthermore, Troupe shows how hooked rugs continue to connect generations of family members to each other, their communities, and the land. For Harrison, in particular, rug hooking is a “mnemonic device” (p. 45) that encourages remembering and sharing details about place and kinship—a purpose beautifully realized in *Margaret’s Rug*, a contemporary memory portrait of her family’s community along the shores of Katepwa Lake (cat. 22).

If Salahub, Racette, and Troupe remind us of the complexity of received history—its blind spots and enduring legacies—the more recent story of the Banff School of Fine Arts

gives evidence of both the advancement and marginalization of textile art within the contemporary art scene. While traditional weaving had been taught at the school for decades, with the arrival of Mariette Rousseau-Vermette in 1977 the emphasis shifted towards experimental weavings on a grand scale. “The Gift of Time, The Gift of Freedom: Weaving and Fibre Art at the Banff Centre,” explores the history of textiles at the school. Based not far from Banff, Mary-Beth Laviolette has been a keen observer of the school in addition to working as an independent art curator, researcher, and writer particularly attuned to fine craft in Canada. She describes how the Fibre Studio at Banff, under the leadership of Rousseau-Vermette and Inese Birstins, attracted students, instructors, and visitors from around the globe including many fibre-world luminaries: Mildred Constantine, Sheila Hicks, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Jack Lenor Larsen, Neda Al-Hilali, Joyce Weiland, among others. As Laviolette notes, the studio provided “space, energy, and freedom to create some of the most advanced art of its time” (p. 66)—a rare moment of progressive textile action. However, just over a decade after Rousseau-Vermette’s arrival, the Banff School began to shift direction. It embraced a more interdisciplinary approach that tended to flatten—in the name of contemporary art—“anything related to craft-based skill or thinking” (p. 74). Laviolette’s account points not only to the vicissitudes of institutional policy, but also it underscores the ongoing vulnerability of textiles within artworld hierarchies.

The concluding essay of *Recovering Histories*, “Living and Liveable Spaces: Prairie

Textiles and Architecture,” by Susan Surette offers an examination of the potent relationships between Modernism, architecture, and textiles—a relationship which gave birth to the international phenomenon of textile art in the latter half of the 20th century. Surette is a ceramic artist, craft historian, and lecturer at Concordia University in Montréal who has written extensively on craft with a focus on the relationships between objects, makers, and consumers. A former weaver and basket maker, she continues to be passionate about all aspects of textiles. Her essay examines how Prairie artists translated “global perspectives into textile languages sensitive to regional concerns and interests” (p. 99)—perspectives that included those associated with modernist architecture. She notes that fibre works were needed to fill a deficiency in modernist buildings, making them liveable, infusing them with personal delight, and facilitating communication between people and between themselves and their spaces. That this project was enthusiastically taken up on the Prairies is due to the unique historical confluence of the oil boom, a dramatic increase in construction, and the alignment of “funders, developers, and architects” (p. 84) who created new opportunities for textile artists and their works. She notes further how Prairie artists took up the logistical and conceptual challenges of monumental architectural commissions, showing an adaptability that creators of utilitarian weaving often lacked. Many Prairie weavers maintained, for example, dual practices, producing both functional, utilitarian woven cloths as well as textiles that competed with other forms of modern art. Nearly every artist represented in *Prairie Interlace*

was involved with an architectural commission at some point in their career, and the list of national and international commissions which Surette examines is truly astounding: from office towers, to government buildings, to universities and arts centres, to embassies and consulates, to a Burger King in Medicine Hat. Wherever their work was located, it “performed complex roles within multiple social, cultural, political, and architectural contexts,” and in the process “built bridges between institutions, the public, and artists” (p. 99). Surette concludes by drawing attention to the need to safeguard these treasures in the face of their continued disappearance.

“Contextual Encounters,” the second section of *Prairie Interlace*, is introduced with the essay “Curating *Prairie Interlace*: Encounters, Longings, and Challenges” by Julia Krueger and Michele Hardy. Together, they examine the curatorial context of the project—one uniquely brought into focus by the COVID-19 pandemic. Researching a tactile medium during the closures and amidst complex restrictions was frustrating but highlighted critical and ongoing issues related to awareness of textiles, and issues surrounding access and preservation. For Krueger and Hardy, the dearth of archival records related to Prairie textiles and artists was particularly troubling.

The curators—none of whom are weavers—recognized the importance of including a weaver’s perspective on the project and its varied goals. “Weaving at the Horizon: Encounters with Fibre Art on the Canadian Prairie” by Mackenzie Kelly-Frère offers a deeply personal account of learning to weave and how “contingent communities” of individuals approached weaving as an art

form. A weaver, educator, and scholar who teaches at the Alberta University of the Arts, Kelly-Frère in his essay builds on his extensive research into the social history of textiles, craft theory, and craft-based pedagogy. Following Glenn Adamson's idea that craft constitutes a "conceptual limit" for modernist art, Kelly-Frère demonstrates how the artists of *Prairie Interlace* "interrogated this conceptual limit both on and off their looms, weaving at the horizon where textile traditions are challenged by artistic innovations of form, materiality, and context" (p. 124). His detailed descriptions of the work of several artists in the exhibition—Pirkko Karvonen, Katharine Dickerson, Ann Newdigate, Jane Kidd, and Pat Adams—give valuable evidence of how their grounding in traditional textile knowledge and practices is coupled with an outward-looking, experimental attitude. The portraits of these weavers effectively dismantle what the writer describes as the typical narrative of artists "liberated from the restrictions of weaving traditions and even their looms" (p. 127) and replaces it with a nuanced story of reconnection, recontextualization, and the renegotiation of tradition and innovation. Kelly-Frère shows how the work of these artists, rooted in landscape, textile traditions, and lived experience, has helped us find our place within both *Prairie* and international horizons.

Concluding the section is Mireille Perron's feminist consideration of how *Prairie* textile artists "took up modernist key gestures . . . and intertwined activist, affective, poetic, and aesthetic purposes to suggest how textiles can be used to advance a political agenda as well as to make material engagement synonymous with community

participation" (p. 161). Perron is professor emerita at the Alberta University of the Arts and an artist, educator, and well-respected scholar of craft. Her essay, "Contextual Bodies: From the Cradle to the Barricade," explores a surprisingly diverse collection of objects that span three decades: crocheted goddesses (Jane Sartorelli, cat. 50) and canine companions (Maija Peeples-Bright, cat. 41), birth image tapestries (Margreet van Walsem, cat. 56), knitted boob trees (Phyllis Green, cat. 18), and hooked rugs made of condoms (Nancy Crites, cat. 9), or latch-hooked rugs based on scrawled handwritten messages (Cindy Baker, cat. 4). As Perron demonstrates, these textile provocations challenge art world authority and patriarchy, explore the relationship of the handmade to body politics, and re-imagine relationships between makers and viewers. Other works take up the theoretical imperatives to challenge imposed definitions and categorical boundaries by embracing "in-between" states, a direction exploited with particular effectiveness by Ann Newdigate and Mary Scott. Perron's essay traverses generations, theoretical positions, materials, and methodologies to reveal the "new interpretive devices" that emerged from *Prairie* engagements with an expanded field of feminist and craft practices.

Alison Calder's essay introduces an interdisciplinary approach that underlines the multiple perspectives shared by both textile artists and writers from the *Prairies*. A renowned poet and scholar of Canadian *Prairie* literature, Calder is a professor at the University of Manitoba whose work explores perception, regionalism, and ecocriticism. In "Six Ways of Looking at *Prairie Interlace*,"

she evokes ways of knowing the Prairie landscapes and bodies and how Prairie artists resist or complicate those conventions. For example, she notes how settlers have viewed the Prairies as a taken-for-granted site of resource extraction—a conventional view that writers, such as Tim Lilburn, and weavers, such as Jane Kidd and Pirkko Karvonen, both seek to counter. She notes further how the Prairies, despite their inherent geometric abstraction, are neither empty nor waiting to be filled, but already living, full, and deep. Turning to concerns associated with female identity, she links feminist writers, such as Lorna Crozier, with the playfully transformative objects of Phyllis Green, Aganetha Dyck, and Nancy Crites, complementing and adding to the discourse outlined by Perron. Finally, following the lead of Lakota Oglala writer Layli Long Soldier, Calder suggests that the Sioux Handcraft Co-operative latch-hooked rugs are “acts” rather than simply objects—records of traditional knowledge and making that connects bodies and spaces, time and identity. Through her own act of comparative reading, Calder explores resistance and complexity, arguing that textiles’ potency, like writing’s, is connected with “multiplicity, ambiguity, deferral, and mobility” (p. 177).

Co-curator Timothy Long concludes the volume in the third section of *Prairie Interlace*, “Expanding the Frame” with an original theoretical contribution. He notes “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” (p. 211). Long considers

the relationship of weaving to art and the act of framing in an extended exercise of “thinking through craft” (Glenn Adamson). Textiles are (obviously) different from painting, but Long’s analysis focuses less on what they are so much as how they are. A textile “outsider” with decades of curatorial experience as Head Curator at the MacKenzie Art Gallery where he has explored interdisciplinary dialogues involving art, sound, ceramics, film, and contemporary dance, Long offers a critical reconsideration of weaving as an art form with its own distinct frame. Expanding on Girardian theory, he argues that while the frame of art is excisional, the frame of textiles is umbilical: the former severs from the world in order to produce aesthetic presence; the latter cuts from the means of production (yarn, the loom) in order to touch the world and its foundational social structures. The frame of craft, he asserts, “is never far from the flesh” (p. 193). He articulates an important distinction, one that textile makers and scholars have rarely made with such precision and grounding in regional practice. His essay reminds us of the potential of weaving to critique established hierarchies and nurture interlaced connections of makers and communities.

The Interlace Continues

The sense of creative adventure, discovery, and endless potential experienced by the artists in this exhibition was almost palpable in the interviews conducted by the curators and writers for this project—several of which have been posted on the exhibition website. That enthusiasm, the product of a more optimistic time, is often tempered, however, by

the sense of loss which has accompanied the declining interest and prospects for weavers and other interlace artists over the past two decades. As a result of this shift, many of the artists switched to other media or continued to produce weavings within more limited horizons of opportunity. In every case, though, the artists welcomed the chance to share their memories and reflections about what was uniformly acknowledged to be a period of extraordinary production and activity within their oeuvres. The goal of this project, then, was not only to recover these lost histories, but also to connect generations of artists, artists' groups, guilds, scholars, and collectors and provide them with a forum in which to share artworks and stories. As a curatorial team, it is our belief that the works in this exhibition contain a

generative power which will continue to inspire future production and research. The essays in this publication aid this effort with a long-overdue assessment of the theoretical and creative horizons opened by the artists during a period of intense creativity that engaged both new and historical forms. In filling this gap in Prairie art history, it is hoped that new light will also be shed on the many productive intersections of craft and art in Canada more generally. Together with the artworks in *Prairie Interlace*, which are but a small sample of a wide and diverse field of creative endeavour, this publication allows us to appreciate, once more, how artists of the period wove into every fibre of their extraordinary works what they valued about art, craft, history, culture, politics, and the land.



NOTES

- 1 Anne Newlands, “Mariette Rousseau-Vermette: Journey of a Painter-weaver from the 1940s through the 1960s,” *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d’histoire de l’art Canadien* 32, no. 2 (2011): 74–107.
 - 2 Newlands, “Rousseau-Vermette,” 87.
 - 3 Williamson cited in Sandra Alfody, “Excellence, Inventiveness, and Variety: Canadian Fine Crafts at Expo 67,” in *Made in Canada: Craft and Design in the Sixties*, ed. Alan Elder (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 55.
 - 4 The International Lausanne Tapestry Biennials were held in Lausanne, Switzerland between 1962 and 1995. Founded by the artist Jean Lurçat, Pierre Pauli, Paul-Henri Jaccard, Georges-André Chevallaz, and René Berger, they aimed to “record, document and above all display the vitality and creativity of contemporary tapestry art.” Fondation Toms Pauli, <http://www.toms-pauli.ch/en/documentation/history/>, accessed April 2, 2023.
 - 5 The International Triennial of Tapestry at Łódź, Poland, began in response to the success of the Lausanne Biennials. Launched in 1972, the aim of the Triennial was to “promote artistic textiles and to strengthen its position in the world of modern art.” The 17th International Triennial was held in 2022. Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa w Łódź, <https://cmwl.pl/public/wydarzenie/wybrane/1-ogolnopolskie-triennale-tkaniny-przemyslowej-i-unikatowej-lodz-1972,89>, accessed April 2, 2023.
 - 6 *Wall Hangings* (February 25–May 4, 1969) was a ground-breaking exhibition (and publication) held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Curated by Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, they aimed to explore new developments in weaving and explore its relationship to art. “The weavers . . . are in no way concerned with the pictorial aspects of weaving, but are involved with extending the formal possibilities of the craft. They frequently use conventional weaves, but more and more often they work free of the loom, in complex and unusual techniques . . . their primary concern to extend the aesthetic qualities inherent in texture.” The Museum of Modern Art, “Press Release,” February 25, 1969, https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_326605.pdf, accessed April 2, 2023.
 - 7 This project explores a constellation of practices, including weaving, tapestry, woven sculpture, rug hooking, knitting, and macramé, in which interlaced constructions of thread, yarn, and other materials are integral to the object’s structure. While the curators acknowledge the many wonderful textiles made through other processes on the Prairies (especially quilting and embroidery), interlaced textiles produced between 1960 and 2000 were particularly experimental, bold, and aligned with Modernism.
 - 8 Tanya Harrod, “House-trained Objects: Notes Toward Writing an Alternative History of Modern Art,” in *Contemporary Art and the Home*, ed. Colin Painter (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 64.
 - 9 K. L. H. Wells, *Weaving Modernism: Postwar Tapestry Between Paris and New York* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 9.
 - 10 Marilyn Stokstad and Michael W. Cothren, *Art History: A Brief History*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2016), 513.
 - 11 In this publication, hooked rugs refer to rugs produced with a hook which have a looped surface. Whereas latch-hooked rugs are those made with a latch hook where individual strands of wool are separately knotted to the base fabric.
 - 12 Glenn Adamson states: “The questions that preoccupied artists in the 1960s and 1970s centered on the fiber artist’s identity—craftsman or sculptor.” Glenn Adamson, “The Fiber Game,” *The Journal of Cloth and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2015): 171. Elissa Auther discusses the two identities in Elissa Auther, “From Design for Production to Off-Loom Sculpture,” in *Crafting Modernism: Midcentury American Art and Design*, ed. Jeannine Falino (New York: Abrams, 2012), 145.
 - 13 Elissa Auther, *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 7.
 - 14 Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf, *Makers: A History of American Studio Craft* (Hendersonville, NC: The Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, 2010), 259.
 - 15 We are indebted to Elissa Auther’s writing in *String, Felt, Thread* as it highlights the importance of scale in relation to the division of art and craft.
 - 16 Koplos and Metcalf, *Makers*, 259.
 - 17 Cheryl Troupe, email message to Michele Hardy, June 21, 2023.
- Installation view of *Prairie Interlace: Weaving, Modernisms, and the Expanded Frame, 1960–2000*, Nickle Galleries, 2022.
- Clockwise from left: Marge Yuzicappi, *Tapestry (Ta-hah-sheena)*, c. 1970 (cat. 60), Florence Maple, *Rug*, 1969 (cat. 33), Yvonne Yuzicappi, *Rug*, 1968 (cat. 61), Florence Maple, *Tipi Mat*, 1967 (cat. 34), Florence Ryder, *Untitled (lilac ground)*, no date (cat. 48).

