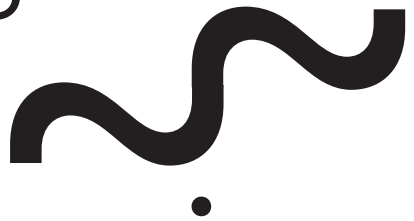


On Weaving  
& Finding Balance





There is a poem:

i sit on the loom  
and weave

Who sat on the loom  
and wove

all there is to weave  
is  
woven

Everything woven still  
to  
weave

bg 9.8.19 9.42

i let this poem set the parameters of a confounding paradox.

Weaving is an ancient yet timeless activity. Plato early on began to derive philosophical analogies utilising it; all aspects of society woven, meaning blending in harmony. He mentioned that this is justice and that is interesting as it is what comes about, he says somewhere else, when the 3 appetites of the soul are in balance. Though that's not the point yet, even though we are finding balance, the point is:

It is through the analogy of weaving we are able to combine opposites and complements, essentially unifying multiplicity; a possibility of bridging idea and material. Transcendence and immanence. That's how we are looking, on a universal scale and, as well, one of intimacy; a cloth, a shelter, a cloak. Keep your eye out for this as Blake is very good at these combinations.

To weave one must have a warp which is a series of 'vertical' threads fixed to the loom, and a weft, a 'horizontal' thread that passes between them. The distinction between the warp and the weft in the corpus of traditional writing is relevant here. The warp represents the 'immutable, principle elements' whereas the weft represents 'variable and contingent elements'; spirit and world. Or one could say 'the horizontal direction may be taken as depicting, for example, the human state, and the vertical direction that which is transcendent in relation to that state'<sup>1</sup>

So to put this into practice; the tension between these two, warp and weft, must be balanced. The warp must be pulled tight so it does not get influenced and distorted by the continual repetition of the weft thread passing backwards and forward, a necessary action in the building of a complete cloth. The weft thread must follow the guidance of the warp when making the return pass, so as not to pull the edge out of shape. This tension is released on the loom overnight, yet another opportunity for balance. backward forward up down tension release.

<sup>1</sup>sufi academic Rene Guenon 'On weaving' Symbolism of the cross, Perennial and Universal Wisdom, Ghent, NY 1996 (first published 1931, Paris) p.66

The intersection point of the warp and weft is also significant. This 'cross' that is formed many times over in some way represents the human in the state of Being, as Guenon mentions; 'the vertical line represents that which joins together all degrees of Existence by connecting their corresponding points to one another, the horizontal representing the development of one of these states'<sup>2</sup>. Of course, mention must also be made of 'the gap'; the point of great potentiality created by this interstice; the point of material absence, a state in between<sup>3</sup>.

Lessons of the warp, the weft, the intersection and the gap. These weaving analogies can be found in the artists approach to many of the objects in this exhibition, with the aim of investigating Balance -what it is and how it may be found. If we want to, we can find there is a lesson in each of these pieces; like proverbs, like material experiments.

*Weft Face*, a life size photograph of the artist, dissected into strips and rewoven, perfectly demonstrates what occurs when the weft has dominance over the warp, the image shuffles and distorts upon the horizontal plane- still readable, though 'woven out of shape'; the horizontal plane is where we interact with the pressure systems of expectation and projection.

Another example, *Art-world Rewoven*, sees an entire art almanac cut up and materially re-integrated. Unceasing cultural information becomes rewoven through the contrary faculties of patience, presence and continuity; what is required to undertake such a task. The warp thread creates a fine overlay in a beautiful synthesis of disparate and shifting memes.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p66

<sup>3</sup> the creative dialogues

There are a number of pieces where we see the weft 'rippling'. This may be analogous to those moments we can 'see through the veil' so to speak, or see the landscape as perhaps through a shimmering heat. In *Rippling Weft and the Ridgelines* we glimpse a unifying and transcendent aspect of the weft; a weaving, which the artist has used as a towel collecting the substances of the human in the world, now washed and illuminated.

The weft becomes a ridge line at these moments; a pathway at the highest point between valleys. Upon this tightrope, if we look closely, we see the walkers balancing upon this line of excellence.

In *Abacus for the Layers of Time*, it is no longer possible to differentiate the warp or weft. The looping of the rubber bands creates a surface of seeming chaos. This however is only a surface, masking one of the most ordered weave structures. Though what is the nature of this order, we ask, as the material used is something not designed to last; it is reactive to the environment and subject to entropy. The rate of decay of these materials somehow correlates to this: measuring a tipping point in what is perhaps a precarious order.

Like these rubber bands, many of the materials used are the products of this order, in both its positive and negative aspects; plastic refuse, the finest linen yarns and industrially made paper thread. This 'order' also lays waste to animals lives, a source of feathers and fur.

We come now to a meeting between the warp and the weft, where eternal realities clash with the temporal interests of the era (error). On the ground this can look ugly. I see these partly situated within the symbolism of water, it's ability to absorb impressions and also to purify itself when in balance. Much more can be said here, however, like many elements, one cannot literally weave it in.

The Barka/Darling river and Menindee lakes have suffered due to a process of imbalance; greed defying the laws of the land. This manifested in what came to be termed 'the fish kills', hundreds of fish dying simultaneously; some over a hundred years old. Out of this moment of Nature speaking unequivocally, comes *Wreath of the Darling Martyrs; a Crown of Eternal Life*. With dead fish brought to the artist by a Barkindji-maali for the purpose of somehow giving life to the moment, the artist scaled and preserved the leather. The circular wreath, normally horizontal, is made vertical to mark the majesty and life-force while simultaneously acknowledging the sacrifice of the 'Darling Martyrs'.

Another recent intervention, albeit with the stated beneficial aim of bringing water to the town of Broken Hill, was the building of the pipeline from Mildura. During the construction of this countless animals died, mostly due to the irony of not being able to circumnavigate the massive water pipes and trenches, to reach shelter/water. The vision of destruction was palpable, not to mention the line being imposed upon the language of a river.

In *A Prayer for Water*, prayer beads are meditatively formed out of Kangaroo carcass fur. The artist finds life in death through forming it into something pointing to the transcendent and the eternal. The prayer beads are modelled on the Islamic tasbeih/misbaha acknowledging, among other important things, the role of the afghans and camels as transporters of water in the region who, I might add, through their own sacred law, had been commanded to not withhold water, as doing so would be a crime. Interestingly the Arabic word for prayer bead is from the root meaning to swim. This is the state of Remembrance, of the one remembering the source of water.

I see this a lot in Griffiths' work, an elevation of materials. Sometimes to the extent that they are no longer recognisable, indeed completely transformed. This is a type of alchemy that requires an intimate awareness of both the internal and external attributes of material form and their potential connection.

The artist has brought to my attention that text and textile have the same etymology. I like this, the weft running like language. *Scroll* brings this into focus, the organic materials speak for themselves, even through transformation. This synthesis of form and meaning, of language and substance, is in a way what we are discussing and informs the following:

A series within this exhibition is *National Emblem Reconstructed*, and the pieces largely utilise feathers and fur from the animals of our National coat of arms, namely the kangaroo and emu. It in part responds to the above environmental concerns, perhaps asking how is it possible that these animals can be given pride of place on the emblem but not on the ground? Here it is taken further, addressing the notion of emblem and enters into an important contemplation at the crux of a divide; is an emblem merely an image or is it made from the substance that it purports to represent? Divides can be woven.

The pieces are material experiments; the task of learning how to weave with such a simultaneously light and stiff material as an emu feather. *Runway (towards vertical)* for example is one large warp, vertical and human size; with lights, it becomes an airstrip, a point for take off. *Portal, Mirror and Hide of Diminishing Resources (Emroo)* all have their stories. These are gestures for navigating; a search for access points to the warp, to the essential, through the contingencies of the cause and effect.

The material knowledge earned culminates in *Coat of Arms; Totem Status*. The coat is timeless, old and new. Nothing is wasted, offcuts become cuffs. It was built by a tribe (well a collaboration with his mum), it doesn't know categories of National agendas, it's image exactly matches it's substance. The inside form and outside form are in concert, without schism; the time taken to weave, in itself an investiture. A totem, of traditional societies, is perhaps something earned, is it on the same plane as an emblem?



In *Cloak of Places Travelled; Travelling* we again see a meeting; a mapping of the local area through eucalyptus dyes on silk, the colours of the land gather upon the one focussed within. The cloak appears heavy but is the lightest thing; not suffocating at all. It is stitched and overstitched with a weaving pattern, much like the weave of the armature of the person it encircles; pointing to a balance between the micro and macrocosms. Where does travelling occur?

Because of the care taken in their making, textiles have the capacity to collect stories and transmit them across generations. This is like an invisible layer of weaving, that of sentiment and value. *War Blanket, Ghost Textile* begins with the woollen blanket of the artist's great Grandpa which, legend has it, he took to the war and, upon returning, sewn onto it his boyhood scout jamboree badges in a great array. We imagine it to be a heartfelt gesture, perhaps of a search for lost innocence. The twill weave structure of the blanket and has been exactly replicated, this time in white plastic, the badges carefully, in their exact positions, in black. As a textile, x-ray like, the personal narrative is somewhat rescinded. It is as if the sentimentality has been woven out of the textile in an attempt to understand how it has been woven in to the original; to understand its significance, to balance history, perhaps like memory woven into our DNA .

In *Dreamt into Existence* the grey warp line meanders through a looping and robust weft. It is a contemplation of this relationship in its actuality; what is the bridge from warp to weft? In metaphysical terms it is an imagining of a journey; perhaps the 'descent of creation', or how does a spiritual form come to be a physical form? A thought of the difference between the descent of the spirit into manifestation and the souls desire manifesting form.

The sentinel from *Traversing the Boundary* is mysterious. Woven from paper and plastic, we ask what boundary? We can see that it is balancing upon a vertical point, on the verge of overbalancing. We get the feeling it may be flipping from side to side, and we are viewing it momentarily frozen in time, the act of balancing and rebalancing creating a constant movement. This dimension of time becomes a material element.

Lastly, for the moment, *Net(work)*: built from emu feathers, the weft has been removed completely. A net is built from an intertwined warp, there are intersection points, however, it is now not from separate sources. There is a delicacy here and a freedom, structure becomes light.

As we enthusiastically approach Balance, through investigation, like on a see saw, these playful combinations of form and idea become a large tapestry, a textile, a poetic text; art and the traditions combine to teach us real life knowledge about Being, so refreshing.

Like the invisible made visible, the artist would like to thank his mother, father, \*nan\*, pa, grandma, grandpa, siblings, family and friends who contributed their skills and love in the making of these labour intensive works.

Asma d. Mather



works (as numbered); room one.

1.

*wreath of the darling martyrs; crown of eternal life*

egg yolk, olive oil and essential oil tanned bony bream fish skins, cotton, cane.

\$1,860

2.

*national emblem reconstructed; hide of diminishing resources (emroo)*

woven emu feathers, kangaroo fur, nylon.

\$1,400

3.

*sample for a categorical net*

woven papertwine, cotton.

\$600

4.

*art-world, woven*

woven art almanac, nylon.

\$1000

5.

*coat of arms; totem status*

woven emu feathers, linen.

\$POA

6.

*emu's (horizon)*

tufted wool, calico.

\$500

7.

*abacus for the layers of time*

woven rubber bands, wool, cotton.

\$850

8.

weft-face

woven digitally printed cotton, nylon.

\$POA

9.

*net(work); emu*

netted, twined emu feathers, cotton.

\$NFS

10.

*traversing the boundary*

woven papertwine, plastic bags, cane, wood.

\$550

11.

*metronome (hairball) [ongoing]*

felted human hair.

\$NFS

12.

*dreamt into existence*

woven nylon.

\$650



works (as numbered); room two.

13.

*future caparison*

copper plate etching.

\$170

14.

*rippling weft and the ridgelines*

woven linen, light.

\$POA

15.

*portal.*

ceramic, feathers, light

\$NFS

16.

*runway (toward vertical)*

woven emu feathers, cotton, light.

\$1600

17.

*national emblem reconstructed (self reflection & sun preservation)*

emu feathers, mirror, light.

\$POA

18.

*procrastiwaffle*

woven cotton/linen.

\$70 (made to order)

19.

*war blanket, ghost textile*

woven plastic bags, cotton, war issued blanket.

\$1500 (ghost textile only)

20.

scroll

woven emu feathers, linen.

\$950

21.

*prayer for water*

felted kangaroo fur, waxed cotton, quandong seeds, twined emu feathers,  
wood.

\$1400

22.

*cloak of places travelled; travelling*

eucalyptus dyed silk, cotton.

\$1000 (cloak only)



Finding Balance  
blake griffiths