

## Know the Weaver # 10

Nov-Dec 2015



# Agnes

## Hauptli

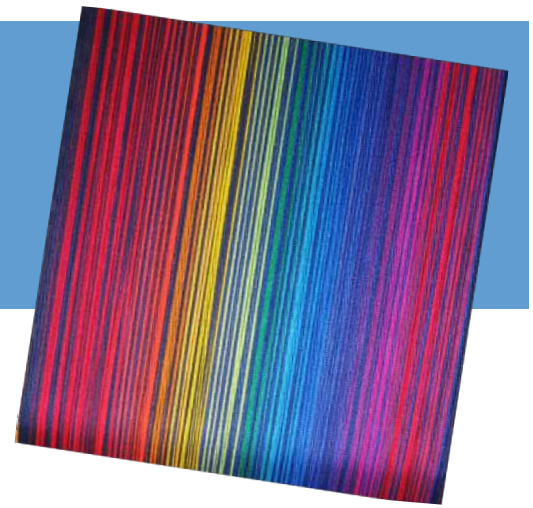
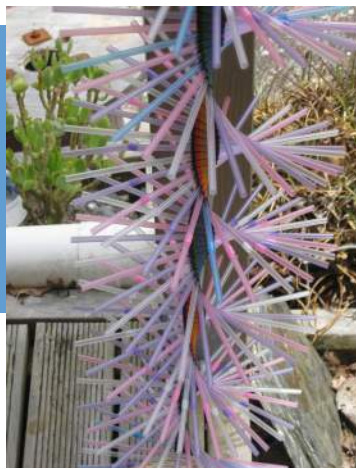
### Artist and TC1 owner

Agnes is a self-taught weaver. She says weaving was more of a "love at first sight" and that she is extremely passionate about this ancient craft. Today, she works from a purpose-built workshop that houses several looms - from a 8-shaft countermarch to 16 and 32 shaft compu dobby, a huge 16 shaft drawloom and a TC-1 Jacquard loom.

1. You call it "love at first sight" – please tell us more about how weaving happened? And also, what has kept you going all these years?

Textiles have always played a part in my life. When I was very young my grandmother taught me to knit, later I was fascinated with fine crochet work, embroidery took my fancy for quite some time too. As kids, we were not allowed to go into the shops to buy presents, all the birthday and Christmas presents we gave were

handmade. So it has kind of been instilled in me from a very young age to make things. All this moved into the background when I moved to Zurich and started my career in the travel industry. Travelling the world was at the very top of my priority list, to go and visit countries, get to know the people, learn about their traditions. My longest trip took 2 years when I was travelling in a VW Van to Asia and back. What an adventure! If anyone would have told me then that I would be



totally hooked on to weaving, I would have laughed at them ..... but .....one year, 1995 in fact - I emigrated to New Zealand in 1985 - whilst on a visit in Switzerland, I was given a rigid heddle loom to take home with me. A bag of bits of wood and a funny looking thing with slots and holes. Back home I gave it a go, was fascinated and couldn't stop playing with my new toy. Not having another weaver in my vicinity and also still working full time, Peter Collingwood's book on Rug Weaving became my bible and teacher. Over the next several years, it was a steady progression from Rigid Heddle to 4-shaft table loom, to 4-shaft countermarch floor loom that I changed to 8 shafts, then 16 shaft then adding a drawloom attachment to another 8 shaft countermarch, to 32-shaft Megado and the Rolls Royce of them all - the TC-1. With the change of looms, the threads changed as well. While I was using rough carpet wool on my very first trials on the rigid heddle loom, with each new acquisition of of a loom, I also seem to have changed the threads and very quickly ended up with very fine silks as my absolute favourite. To thread my 32 shaft Megado with 90 - 120 epi does not put

me off at all - on the contrary! I am fascinated by the absolutely endless possibilities in view of design and in view of materials used. From drinking straws to copper wire to flower stalks to aluminium strips, anything goes. But besides the different materials one can use, it is the design aspect and the choice of colours that attracts me the most.

2. When we look at your body of work, it appears that you maintain a fine balance between weaving imagery and typical dobbie designs. Would you agree? And is there a "common thread" in your works (in terms of style) or are each of the pieces more like stand alones?

Yes, I love the combination of weaving images and weaving on looms that are shaft controlled. That combination of total freedom on one side and restrictions on the other. Since most of the work I have done on the TC-1 is imagery, I often like to interpret that same image on a dobbie loom where colours and design lines play the main role. Or pick the two main colours of the image I wove on the TC-1 and use those in the warp on a dobbie design. The results can be quite





interesting as I then would often use colours that I would not normally choose for scarves or shawls. One exhibition I had in Wellington soon after I got the TC-1 was exactly that. I wove a series of images taken in my gardens or pictures I had stored on my computer and then used the two main colours in the image as my warp for fine silk scarves and hung them together.

To me, impressions come from what we see and what we feel. I often think that what I weave on the TC-1 is what I see and what I weave on shaft looms is what I feel so of course, both versions of that initial same idea expresses itself differently.

Pretty much all of my work done on the TC-1 is stand-alone pieces, or bodies of work for a specific reason or exhibition. It might be for a specific theme or for a specific event or person. I kind of like that because weaving for a specific person means while doing it, one - or maybe its just me - thinks of that person while working on it. I wove a "book" for my sister's 60th birthday, weaving an image of her from each decade. It was wonderful how many memories surfaced from each one of those decades while I was working on them.

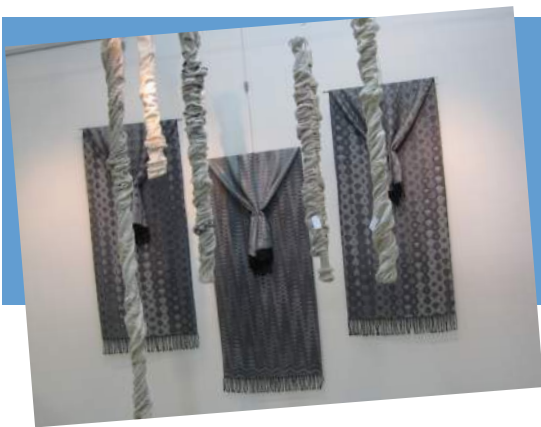


Most of my doobby designs have an initial theme like the elements or the seasons, flowers or birds, landscapes, ocean or desert that I use to choose my colours and then I work on the design. Usually my silk warps are 20 metres long, the first few scarves or shawls also represent vaguely the theme but as I go on with that warp, I usually more and more start to play and often come up with surprising effects.

3. Earlier this year, you collaborated with Stacey Harvey Brown, where you travelled extensively – tell us about the experience?

The collaboration with Stacey Harvey-Brown is our joint exhibition "Nature in the Making" which came about from our two road trips in the US after CW seminars. We are both very interested in geology and are both enthusiastic weavers so of course, what we saw in nature we could or tried to visualise in woven material.

The first opening for this internationally travelling exhibition happened to be in New Zealand. I organised it so that the opening coincided with the PWN (Professional Weavers Network of New Zealand) seminar that I was organising in that year. In order to make it financially interesting for Stacey who of course had to come to NZ for the opening, I booked her for a lecture and a 3-day workshop at the PWN seminar and then organised a travelling tutor tour for her so that she could teach and earn some money. Over a period of 6 or 7 weeks, we travelled the whole country, she was teaching in 6 or so different places. We were mostly hosted by fellow weavers in the different cities so that Stacey could meet some interesting people. We finished in the southern part of South Island from where Stacey flew home and I drove back home. I didn't teach on that trip but merely acted as the driver.



4. We understand that you teach weaving as well – could you share more? Also, how does your love for travelling influence your works?

My teaching is limited to teaching on a one-to-one basis in my own studio. I offer different options from 5-day intensive to weekend courses. These workshops are tailor made to the requirements and needs of the student. Am also teaching young people, at the moment I have got two teenagers and two 8-year olds that have been coming for almost a year now every week for a half day session where they are being taught weaving from scratch. To watch their learning experiences is wonderful, to see when the penny drops, to witness them cutting off their project from the looms is just so exciting. Am not sure who gets more pleasure out of this, the students or me!

The only teaching I do away from home is when I teach PCW Fiberworks and designing using weaving software. Then I only need to take my laptop and not oodles of samples of which probably some of them I would forget at home!!

The travel bug hit me when I was a kid hence my previous career in the travel industry but the bug is still with me today. Currently, at the top of my bucket list is Namibia! When I travel, I am free of any "duties" and can just let everything flow. I am open to any ideas that come my way, when I travel on my own which is what I mostly do, I am drifting without any fixed itinerary. I look and see things with a "weaverly" eye, my visual diary is a constant companion, a little laptop with PCW and PS on it is in my bags and instead of going out to dinner, I would buy some fruits and spend the evenings designing. Most of the time I come home with a huge selection of projects, designs, sketches and drawings, some of them become reality, some of them don't.

I love brainstorming with other weavers and would always try and seek some out never mind in which country am travelling. I love to see their looms, maybe even try them out, which I am lucky enough to have been able to do in several places like the US and Switzerland of course, but also in Thailand and Laos.





4. Could you share with us the details of some of your favourite and latest works?

The latest body of work that I have been playing with is for an exhibition that opens in a couple of days and consists of a series of portraits - 22 in total - to celebrate a specific group of people. So, quite personalised and because this is not going to be an exhibition where I sell work, I am going to gift each portrait to its respective owner. In order to make it a bit more interesting, I also created a collage where I took a "slice" from each portrait and created one image.

The most favourite work – that would be difficult. Looking at my images, each one of them is a favourite in its own way! After the samples that I wove while studying the book, "The woven pixel", I moved towards black and white images of which I did a lot. The first 4 colour-shaded satin-based weaving was very exciting and most of the work that I produced since then, is based on that structure. For my next project though, I am working with several different weave structures to create an image where one aspect stands out much more than the rest of it. Not quite sure yet how to proceed ..... doubleweave maybe, or Theo Moorman technique or even brocade ..... not quite sure yet.

Really enjoyable are the weavings that I make for presents like the book for my sister, a weaving I made for a very sick friend of mine, a series of weavings I made after my dad passed away that shows the "Journey of life". I love to weave to something that has a bit of a deeper

meaning. Unfortunately, I do not have an arts background and I must admit that I envy all those Jacquard weavers out there that come up with these amazing artistic designs.

The most exciting work that I have done so far was for the "Nature in the Making" Exhibition. Not only because of my vision of what I wanted to do but also because it was a project with two weavers - weaving on opposite sides of the globe not knowing how the impressions from these two individuals will work together. As it turned out they worked well.

I wanted to create weavings that show partially the imagery of what I saw during our visit to the canyons and partially of what I felt while meandering in those canyons. Again, the combination of TC-1 woven pieces with items woven on shaft looms. The vision changed a few times along the way, the concept stayed the same but with sampling, combining things, visually seeing them, I changed some of the projects several times. The difficulty that I found with work like that is that one does not know what the galleries are going to be like, if all the work can be hung, if the layout of the room will allow for certain ways of displaying the work. It certainly was a challenge.





5. And lastly, how has it been weaving on the Thread Controller?

The TC-1 is a dream come true for me. When I was at Convergence in Tampa, I think it was, both, the TC-1 and the AVL Jacq were on display in the Vendor Hall and I managed to have a few minutes on both of them. I was in awe and like fate happens sometimes, a few years later, I was able to get one but not before I was able to weave on one for several days. It was and still is a huge learning curve. Not to be restricted by shafts, basically having a blank canvas in front of you is exciting, exhilarating and intriguing but can also almost be frightening. I am not an artist but a weaver, if one wants to use the root of that word, then I would call myself an artisan. The TC-1 made me realise how little I know, how much more there is to learn, get to grips with designing in Photoshop, create presets and so much more. I have learnt a lot already, I feel am on a fantastic learning experience that pushes me into different directions.

The weaving in itself on the TC-1 is very nice, almost like meditation, a synchronised ballet where all the movements complement each other. Standing at the loom, alternating which foot is pressing the peddle, most of the time using 4 or more shuttles, I don't have a problem with the speed. I also feel that I have the very best of all TC-1 out there, all of my 1760 threads are doing exactly what I want them to do!

*The current exhibition of Agnes' works is called "EARTHINGS" and is a celebration to all the people past and present that donate their time, energy and creativity to make the Earth House\* what it is today.*

*Open from 2nd January to 31st January 2016. (Open weekends only)*

*\*The Earth House is the first in-situ built Adobe house in New Zealand and was built 20 years ago by the then 63-year-old Dhaj Sumner. Today, the building is used by a group of volunteers that create a wonderful place to go to for a healthy lunch using organic and locally grown ingredients only. Every now and then, they have exhibitions or musical events. A truly magical place!*

*- Agnes Hauptli*