

Know the Weaver # 8

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Katja

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Our association and fondness for the incredibly talented Katja goes back decades! With her roots deep into weaving and textiles, Katja is a classic example of how the creative and technical aspects of weaving can both be mastered by one simple mantra - pay attention to detail!

1. What got you started with weaving? And where do you draw your inspirations from?

What got me started? My background is from what used to be a small textile-orientated community in Finland, Orimattila, where the textile mills employed a majority of the working population. My mom used to work in a clothing factory and as far as I can remember, I've been visiting clothing and textile factories every year - all through my childhood. After high school, I also studied to be a dressmaker and graduated in 1991. During 1991, Finland saw a severe economic depression and during my studies, almost all of the clothing industry was closed down. I was lucky to get a job

that imported textiles and it was there – while working with very high quality fabrics - that I was drawn towards 'woven textiles'. In 1995, I decided to apply to the Wetterhoff School on Design, Häme Polytechnical School, to study woven textiles. And it was in 1996, during a 3-day workshop on the Thread Controller-1 (TC1), that my journey with the Jacquard started. I have worked closely with Digital Weaving Norway (DWN) since 1997 - starting as a visiting intern, making my final thesis for DWN, participating with DWN in several exhibitions and I have also visited many TC-loom customers. I bought my own "old darling" TC-1 in the year 1999 and have been happily weaving since then. Weaving, assisting, training, teaching, maintaining looms – if I glance back, I could never have imagined what an



My inspirations come from structures and materials and sometimes perhaps even from testing some of the unconventional materials and then, the finishing touches. I'm also quite practical when thinking about fabrics, the end-use and purpose is always very important.

2. What is the kind of work that you have been engaged in over all these years? Could you tell us a bit about your latest works?

One can easily call me a sampler. All these years - I've been weaving close to 20 years now - I feel more like an engineer or a weaver providing weaving services. Testing new materials and structures, and experimenting with what could the final use for the woven fabrics be? I do have some of my own artistic ambitions, but as of now, they can wait as I also just love to work with designers and artists - bringing my own knowledge into a final product in a structural way (Eh, a little hard to explain). It's something like - draw me a circle, tell me the purpose and colors/materials and I will make those into a live fabric...? (or something like that?)

I have worked a lot with church textiles where there is a lot of detailed weaving.

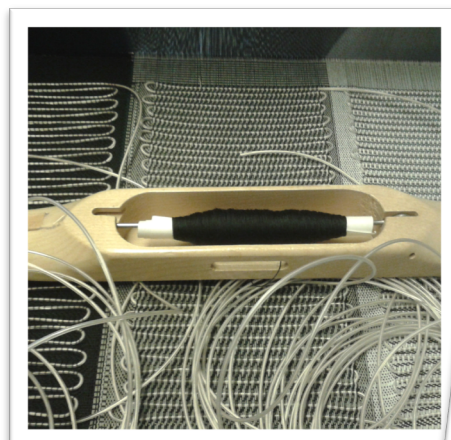
In those commissions, it's always a pleasure to work with an entire team of professionals, from a designer to sewing and embroidery professionals as well as interior architects.

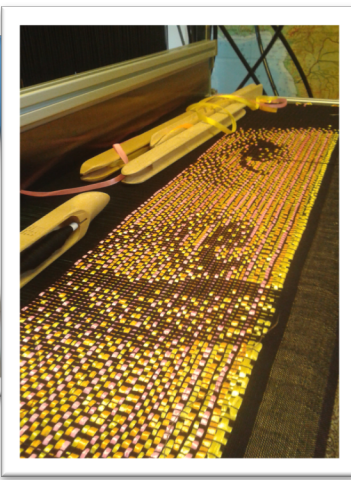
What I just love to do is for example during my last visit to DWN, among some other things, I helped out in creating weaving samples. With the samples, we concentrated on simple designs with special finishing effects. We first wove the designs and then finished them with different treatments - and we were continuously surprised with the way different materials turned out! With the warp as cotton and wool, several samples with double weaves were tested. We were intrigued by the 'behaviour' of weaves and materials, as well as 'hows' of developing the designs.

3. We understand that besides weaving, you have also been guiding/ mentoring budding entrepreneurs in Finland set up their businesses - could you share your experiences and the challenges you face, if any?

The 'mentoring' side of me...

For many years, I've been working with different projects related to providing guidance and support to start-ups/ small businesses.





And specially in craft-based businesses, we (the future entrepreneur and me), usually concentrate on how to price the work/service and how to develop the marketing aspects. Everything is done in a small and affordable scale as these entrepreneurs are real beginners. I feel that it is important to provide support and share one's knowledge in order to give a good starting point to another future craft person.

When working as a weaver, artist, carpenter etc., you are always dependent on your own hands/ skills and I have had the pleasure to follow many small companies who started from scratch and grew bigger... may be I was able to share some of my knowledge with them. There are many future challenges too, on my last visit to Norway, I spent two days training two great women from Cambodia... what an exciting and different experience it was! I will follow closely what happens in future.

4. Your thoughts on the Thread Controller

About the loom and looms that I love... In my own small studio, I have the TC1 and I have also worked on the TC2 on many occasions. Even though I just love my old loom, now I have come to prefer the TC2. The TC2 is a strong and stable loom for everything that is possible to weave. As I've been working with the previous loom i.e the TC1 for over 16 years now, the new loom feels more comfortable

and much faster to weave on. New functions like the automatic warp-advancing gives me the freedom to focus only on 'weaving'. As the warp beam can advance automatically, I can also easily pull the new warp on the beam on my own. Every professional weaver should have the TC2 as it gives the flexibility to create custom designs and rapid product development and also for testing new ideas.

People often ask why there are no automatic shuttles to insert the wefts. That would just make the loom too technical to work with and the joy of weaving and testing new/ different materials too difficult. There are power looms and textile industry to produce ready designs that one has developed with the TC2! For unique textiles and small-scale production, the TC2 is 'The Loom'!

5. You have travelled and exhibited your works extensively through the course of your journey as a weaver - could you share the details of any of the interesting or challenging projects that you worked on?

As a student, while weaving on the TC1, I still remember a moment when I was laughing at my dream to have my own studio with such a loom, and this was 20 years ago.





And even then, I had no clue where one loom could lead me. Right from being the technical support for loom, to having visited numerous artists and institutions for training and maintenance purposes and even visiting several fairs - for example, Väv 1997, Convergence 1998 and 2012, ITMA 1999 and exhibiting the loom in Finland at Habitare 2011.

But if I once thought that it would be cool to have my own loom and when I did get one, I had a thought (laughing to it again) - what would it be like to be on stage with my weavings? Well this happened in 2013 at Abu Dhabi. Did I ever imagine that weaving would get me there? No! But it was one phone call from DWN just two days before the Christmas of 2012 asking if I would like to go and weave at an exhibition at Qasr Al Hosn at Abu Dhabi...and it took me like three seconds to answer, " Yes" and then I asked what would this be?

And it ended up being an overwhelming experience of weaving live in front of an audience for 12 days. But before that, there was an enormous amount of preparation that was done wonderfully by DWN and its collaborators. What was exhibited was the new version of traditional Sadu-textiles at an interactive exhibition. I was weaving the motives that visitors chose and developed online - by the stage - and I was weaving them! At the end of the exhibition, the showroom ceiling was covered with my weaving, over 60 meters hanging there – it was an extraordinary feeling.

Watch the video of Katja weaving at Qasr Al Hosn at Abu Dhabi –

<https://youtu.be/3rM97T2p5fg>

