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My Unique Way of Warping

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Abstract

How might the language of art fabric benefit from the use of a warp whose strands were not traditionally parallel? The order of weft covers is congruent with the direction of the course of the warp strand, which does not always have to go in a straight line. In my artistic research, I give it different directions thus drawing patterns by means of the warp, which are then reflected on the surface of the fabric - a kind of "drawing with warp".

Key words: artistic expression by textile means, language of textile art, drawing with warp, circular weaving, initial inner edge, inner and outer shapes.

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■ Different warps

When trying to determine why the means of artistic expression in tapestry¹⁾ was

becoming archaic, I realised that one of the reasons might have something to do with the custom of treating weft threads as the chief medium of the visual message. The restrictive technical definition of "tapestry" allows for little more than the creation of images woven by a colour weft. Yet fabric consists of both warp and weft. I decided, therefore, to devote more attention to the warp, which – though sometimes exposed, dyed or otherwise highlighted – is always subordinated, auxiliary and structural in nature. Once it has been prepared, before the actual weaving begins, it is rarely



Figure 2. 'Proverb IV', 2004, wool, sisal; detail, convergent and discontinued warp.

modified. These observations led me to wonder how the artistic language of textiles might benefit from the use of a warp whose strands were not parallel and flat, as is usually the case, but convergent, curved or three dimensional. Unlike a parallel warp, which is more or less the same throughout the fabric, a convergent (or divergent) warp fans out from a single point, getting wider as it gets less dense, which requires constant adjustment in order to obtain a sufficiently regular consistency and number of warp threads per decimetre (**Figure 1**).

These kinds of solutions can be related to those known from the round-shaped forms of basketry. In reality, woven fabrics with their warp-weft system, according to archeological scientists, are based on their precursors, e.g. platings originate from the paleolithic period.



Figure 1. 'Proverb III', 2004, wool, sisal; detail, convergent warp.



Figure 3. '1999', 1998, 350×320 cm, wool, polyamide, sisal; curved warp.



Figure 4. 'Stream', 2002., 90×400 cm, wool, flax, cotton, polypropylene, curved warp.



Figure 5. 'Structure', 2004, detail 1, total 100×100 cm, flax, wiscose.



Figure 6. 'Proverb II', 2004, detail, total 130×120 cm, wool, sisal, convergent warp.

Since its shape is not fixed at the start, it gives greater control and encourages modification (for instance, by using a different thickness of warp threads) at all stages of weaving. Another advantage is that the surface of fabric made on such a warp is dynamic by nature: not by virtue of the image produced with the weft but genetically, so to speak (**Figure 2**). The colours or patterns are determined separately.

It is similar in the case of a curved warp whose strands run parallel to one another, but do so along an arc (**Figure 3**). As they change direction, the strands enable the weaving of circles or arcs, which is especially useful when making relatively narrow and elongated fabrics. When working with an elongated format, modelling its shape and flow also makes it possible to modify the warp within the fabric. It also enables random selection and rejection of entire batches of warp strands. This kind of warping, at special designed

warp distribution allows to obtain fabrics, were being relatively flat, make the impression of three - dimensional structure (**Figure 4**).

Another method of warping I like is in an open-work structure in 3-D, where the

textile is made up of an arrangement of horizontal and vertical stretched strips of the warp whose surfaces are perpendicular to one another. Such an architecture makes it possible to look through the textile, and the resulting compositions com-



Figure 7. The fabric manufactured is structured on a wooden frame emulating a rotation of the fabric 'Orbitrek', (see Figure 12) initial stage of realisation.

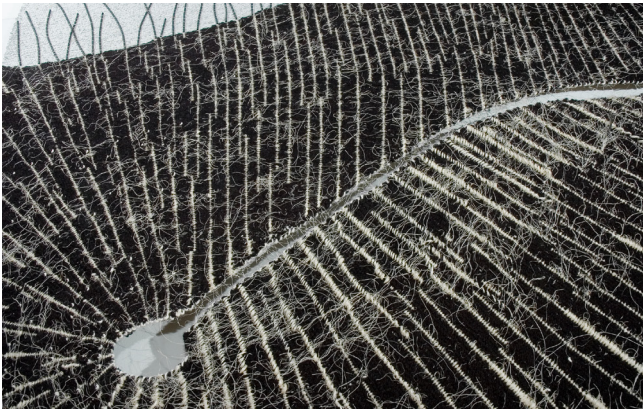


Figure 8. Orifices and slits of the fabric surface introduced purposely 'Seeing from ...', 2006, detail, convergent and discontinued warp, wool, sisal, flax, plastic tubes.

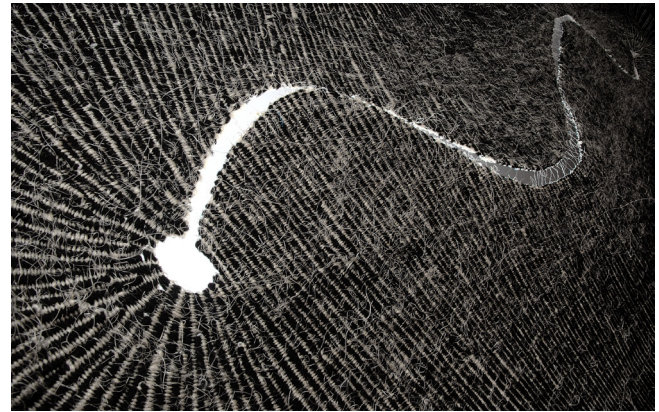


Figure 9. Orifices and slits of the fabric surface introduced purposely 'Orbitrek', 2007, detail, convergent and discontinued warp, wool, sisal, plastic tubes (see Figure 12).

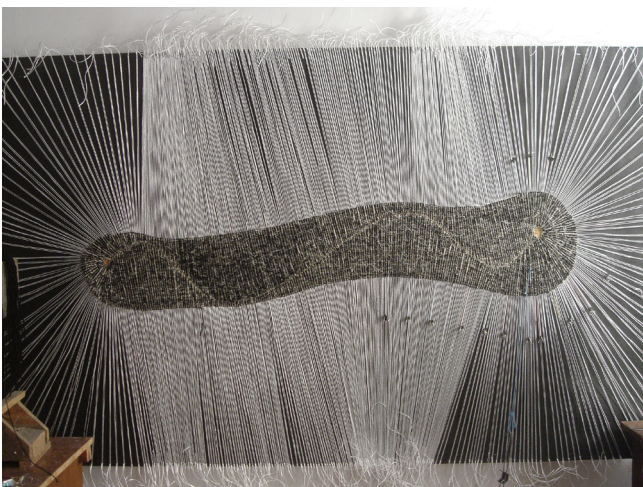


Figure 10. 'Orbitrek', working stage 1 (see Figure 12).

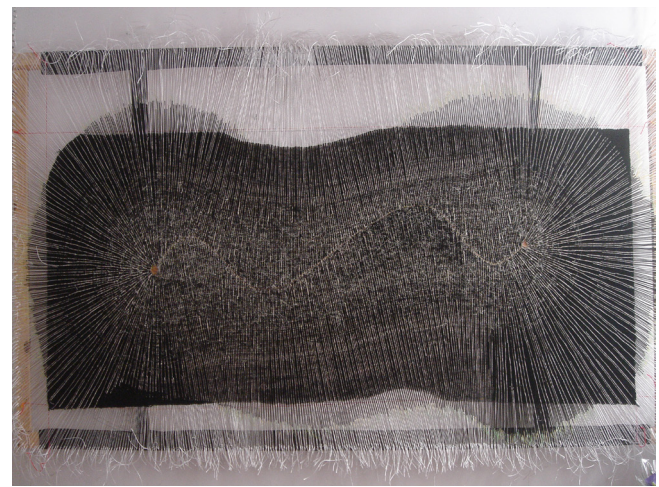


Figure 11. 'Orbitrek', working stage 2 (see Figure 12).

bine structural discipline with lightness and simplicity (**Figure 5** - see page 105).

■ Materials

When weaving my compositions, I prefer to use natural raw materials because of their corporal identity and authenticity. In my small works these are most often flax and cotton, with wool and sisal predominating in bigger ones. I have often been asked why I like sisal so much. There are many reasons: back when I was learning to weave, sisal was the cheapest and most widely available natural material. Though it absorbs dyes wonderfully, it looks best in its natural state. Its substance reminds me of magnified flax yarn, which brings up the material aspect of the entire composition. Straw-colored and slightly glossy sisal looks best next to matte black wool. The relationship between these two materials is not affected by the fact that sisal oxidises and gradual-

ly yellows as it ages; most of my textiles are two-colour compositions anyway.

I most often use flax as my warp, though when I need a lighter and more elastic building material I sometimes resort to polypropylene. Its "shape memory" is a disadvantage however, because when the fabric is kept rolled for a longer time, it can be difficult to straighten out.

■ Surface

The surface is a reflection of the structure of the warp, and one usually shapes the other. Under the epidermis lies the supporting structure of the warp (**Figure 6**). Its arrangement is emphasised by the weave, originating from the pick-and-pick rug technique, made by means of two differentiated wefts. The order of weft covers is congruent with the direction of the course of the warp strand, which does not always go in a straight line. I give it different directions, creating

drawing patterns by means of the warp, which are then reflected on the surface of the fabric. Such "warp drawing" would not have been possible on a loom with harnesses or treads. With a wooden frame I can stretch warps in every direction, and – owing to its lightness – rotate the entire set, which enables "circular weaving" (**Figure 7** - see page 105). I want the surfaces of my works to be coarse and light at the same time, and their appeal to be a function of the natural beauty of the material in accordance with the logic of the structure. In my recent works, I have purposefully disturbed the continuity of the surface by introducing orifices, cracks and slits (**Figures 8 - 9**). These gaps are to be filled in by the viewer's imagination.

■ Shapes

Openings made in the surface of a flat fabric by means of slitting or parting edges have what one might call an in-

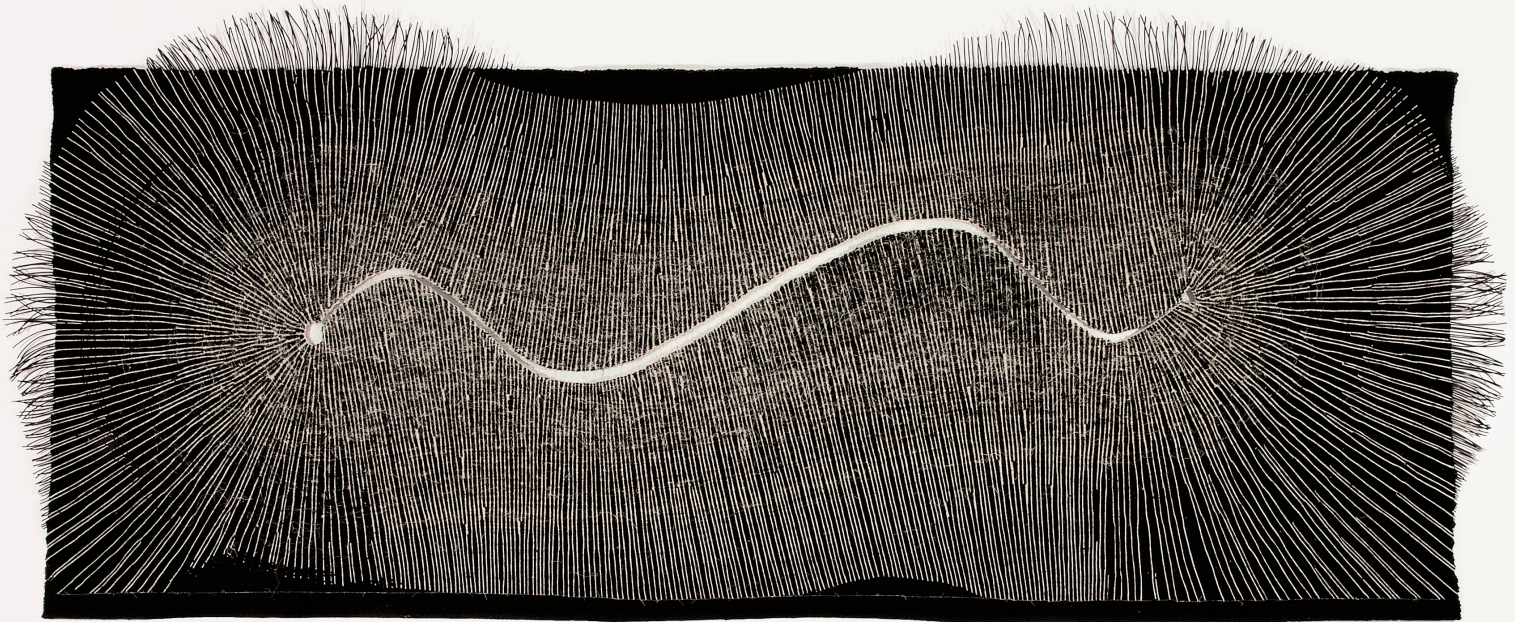


Figure 12. *'Orbitrek'* 2007, 100×300 cm convergent, discontinued warp and inner shape, wool, sisal, plastic tubes, Gold Medal of the 12th International Triennial of Tapestry, Łódź, 2007.

ner shape: an initial inner edge. Hence we have two types of shape in one composition: the inner and the outer (**Figure 10 - 13**). "Circular weaving" leads to a number of interesting consequences. First, the fabric does not have to be built from the bottom up (from the beginning to end). The sequence of weaving depends on the arrangement of the warp; it is often necessary to start from the middle, and in several different places. Following its own logic, the weft gradually fills in the warp, creating different shapes in the fabric as if by way of incidence (**Figure 10 - 11**). This relieves the monotony of the weaving process and helps one focus on it. The experience of tracing ever-new and not always predictable shapes can serve as inspiration for new projects. Weaving from the middle outwards makes it possible to determine the best layout for the external edges of the fabric and to modulate its rim accordingly, which also makes it possible to expand the format over what was originally intended. Once they have been cut off the frame, the edges do not differ from one another, and there is no difference between the initial and final edge and the lateral edges. There is no need to tie the endings of the cut-off warp as they do not fray (**Figure 13**).

The Architecture of Textiles is in my opinion also a field of contemporary realisation of textile structures which I am now exploring in the hope of blending my own method of selecting unique ways of warping. The autonomous objects produced as a result of these explorations are still fabric, yet serve primarily as vehi-

cles for the imagination. My works are, in a sense, conceptual models expressing selected emotions, thoughts, and subconscious states. I want them to speak to all who look about me and themselves in a language all their own.

Editorial note

- 1) *Tapestry* – a thick textile fabric in which coloured weft threads are woven to form pictures or designs (acc. to Oxford Dictionary).



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Figure 13. *'White leaf'*, 2004, 20×20 cm, flax, cotton, convergent warp with outer shape.