

TEXTILE ART PROSPECTS

TEXTILKUNSTPERSPEKTIVEN

REPORTS

WEAVING ON ROOF BATTENS Christine Keller
6-DAY FLYING-8 COURSE WITH ANDREAS MÖLLER

Many weavers have experimented with loom construction plans, for instance Peter Collingwood, who built a carpet loom in the 1960s and 1970s. However, I have

never met anyone whose work is as free from conventions as that of Hamburg weaver Andreas Möller. The result of his experiments, the Flying-8 loom

(the name derives from ‘flying shuttle’ & ‘8 shafts’) constructed from roof battens, nails or screws, cardboard, sticky tape, paper and string, produces fine weavings quickly, efficiently and much more quietly than conventional looms. — Brilliantly simple!

Andreas and I met in 1986, during our apprenticeships at the Hamburg weaving college. Since then, our paths have crossed time and again. In my case, my apprenticeship served as the starting point for broader training in the textile sector — a university course in art and design, leading to stays in Canada and, currently, New Zealand for design, study and teaching purposes — whereas Andreas has devoted all his ideas to one subject: how can handweaving be optimised so that the loom fits the weaver, and a good product can be made within a short space of time? Andreas took a northern German master weaver’s comment that ‘it was impossible to make a living from weaving one way or another’ as an insult to the craft, if not as a challenge. For nearly twenty years, he has proven that it is possible to make weaving a profession!

Aside from his own production in his workshop in Hamburg’s St. Pauli district, Andreas Möller has been teaching his Flying-8 on an international level since 2001 (in Africa, Scandinavia, South America and the Caribbean). To date, his looms have been constructed in 10 countries. There were plans to establish a summer weaving school at Anu Raud’s farm in Estonia. Unfortunately, the designated building collapsed before this vision could be made reality. In search of an alternative, textile designer Tine Schröter and wood and basketry designer Wolf Schröter, who run a workshop and gallery in the town of Rothen in the Mecklenburg region, became excited about the idea and offered their light-filled loft for the purpose.

I came across the construction plan for the Flying-8 at a friend’s house in New Zealand and found it extremely interesting. Andreas invited me to attend his course in early June to give me an opportunity to examine the loom more closely. The course ran from Tuesday to Sunday, with access to the looms from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. We were eight participants on

the course — two long-standing weavers, three journeywoman weavers who had completed the course in Kukate, one instructor of a workshop for the disabled, and two people interested in looms and weaving with some prior experience. The standard was extremely high from the outset, and a friendly atmosphere prevailed in the group, with course participants assisting each other and openly sharing information. The objective was to make us all aware of what improvements had been made to the loom, and how everyone would be able to apply these to their own looms or to their own future production. Participants who had completed the course were supposed to have the courage to build their own looms or to remodel existing looms so as to weave as quickly and comfortably as possible. Moreover, the course encourages participants to question tools and traditional working methods. For instance, one participant’s view, “this won’t work”, expressed on the first day, changed to “there’s something wrong with this” after some time. The second statement invites problem solving. Many innovations in weaving production were discussed and practised, such as warping mills, much improved by the Lift-System; warping on one’s own using a device called “Best-Friend”; making conical weft bobbins from paper and masking tape, and much more. Everyone found the course well worth attending. Further courses are planned in Rothen for next spring.

Discussion of the Flying-8 loom during the courses enables constant further developments. The design is fluid. In addition, the fact that Andreas Möller freely shares all his insights is a rare stroke of luck that allows many weavers to benefit from these ideas. If your loom runs well, faster and more quietly, you tend to get more enjoyment out of weaving — simply brilliant!

The construction plan (in English) and the operation manual (in English or German) can be acquired directly from Andreas Möller. Contact: www.moeller-hamburg.com I will take the Flying-8 to New Zealand and develop courses there. The construction plan is available from me in Australia and New Zealand. Contact: www.christinekeller.net

Photo: Joop Wever, Tilburg



Martina Müller Kern
at the Flying-8 loom

Flying shuttle device
with driver and shuttle

Photo: Joop Wever



Photo: Christian Lehsten



Weaving course, from left Holger Frank and Andreas Möller

DOCUMENTA 13

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (CCB) was appointed the artistic director of the Kassel documenta 13 in 2012. Born in the US in 1957, the art historian of Italian-American descent was the director of the Museo di Arte Contemporaneo in Turin until 2009.

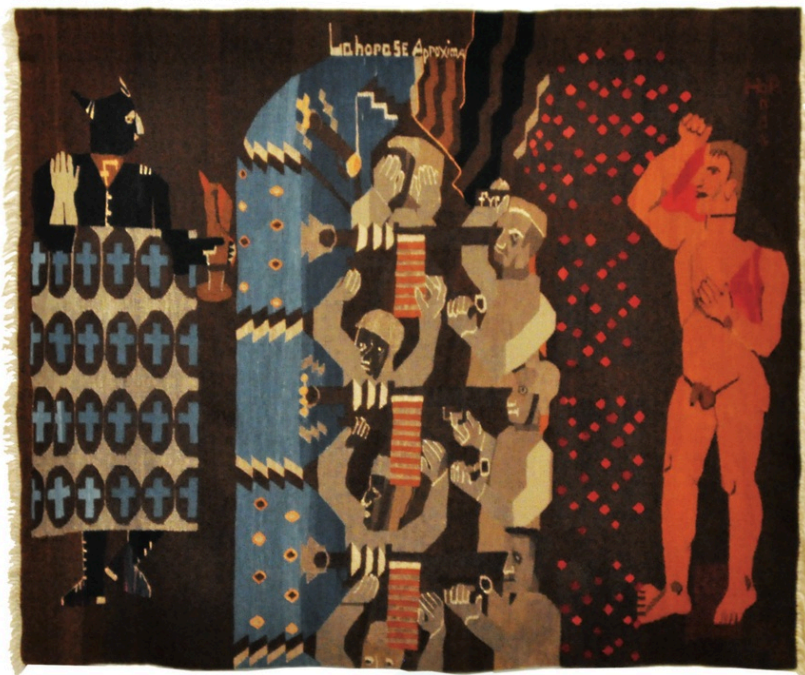
In a contribution published in 'Zeit Online' on 6th June 2012, she was dubbed "The Healer" and quoted as saying: "There is no difference between culture and art". From time to time she has stressed that she does not follow a concept. — *B. Sterk*

Photos: Christine Keller u. Beatrijs Sterk



▲ **GOSHIKA MACUGA**/PL, born 1967 in Warsaw: Digital collage for „Of what is, that it is, of what is not, that it is not 1“, 2012, wallhanging 17,4 x 9,2 m, Jacquard-woven. The artist lives in London

▼ **HANNAH RYGGEN**/N, 1894-1970: "Spania"/La Hora se aproxima" (The two Spanish fronts: The hour of decision is near), 1938, 226 x 193 cm - National Museum for Art, Architecture & Design, Oslo



► **ALIGHIERO BOETTI**/I, 1940-1994: „Mappa“, 1971, 228 x 147cm; from a series of embroidered world maps



Das Museum Fridericianum

TEXTILES AT DOCUMENTA 13

Christine Keller

Once every five years, the art community meets in Kassel to examine the view of the world that art offers us. Every documenta has a character all its own (this was the sixth I have attended since beginning my course of study in Kassel in 1987). On a regular basis since 1955, this rather pretty university town with 200,000 inhabitants has become a metropolis for one hundred days – a major art hype. Only invited people are allowed to exhibit at documenta; those who are admitted have made it. Some people are annoyed at the commercial character of the event, while others enjoy the hustle and bustle. The 13th documenta, scheduled from 9th June to 16th September 2012, is under the leadership of Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev.

As I have been asked to comment on the textiles represented at the d13, I feel it makes sense to briefly outline the development of documenta. Initially it mostly featured European painting and sculpture. Later the event became more international, but the spotlight was still on the art of the "western white culture". The idea of art has broadened over time, and now (thank heavens) it really does present artists and voices from every corner of the globe. Christov-Bakargiev has gone even further by initiating parallel events in Bamiyan (the former location of the large buddhas, now destroyed) and Kabul, Alexandria and Cairo, and Banff. Ever since Josef Beuys declared 100 Days of Discussion a work of art in his Bureau for Direct Democracy in 1982, the show has not featured objects only. These days the focus is on meaning making rather than the production of objects. In the light of this, it is not surprising that even a quantum physician has now been invited to the d13. At the last three documenta in particular, the discussion has frequently reverted to the history of art and society itself. Art objects presented at previous editions or important to the idea behind any edition for specific reasons have been (re)called to Kassel. Sometimes they were requested by the documenta decision-makers, but sometimes they arrived as part of works displayed by invited artists. And now, finally, for the textiles:

Fridericianum

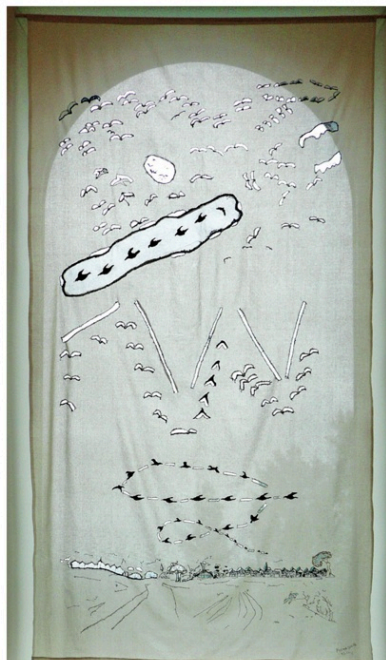
Mexican artist **Mario Garcia Torres** has produced a film exploring the theme of a hotel run by Italian artist **Alighiero Boetti** in Kabul in 1972 and presented at the d5. In his Kabul 'One Hotel', Boetti had a wall hanging made that showed a map of the world (we do not learn the name of the maker). This wall hanging, which juxtaposes Torres' film at d13, is described as a woven piece, but it is obviously embroidered. – My reaction: delight at the object and annoyance at this lack of attention to detail. The remarkable gobelins by Scandinavian artist **Hannah Ryggen** have been well positioned on the first floor of the Fridericianum's rotunda. Woven around 1936, they deal with the violence of Hitler's Germany and other fascist trouble spots, such as Spain and Ethiopia. Encountering these classic textiles in a location as central as this was a pleasant surprise. On the floor exactly beneath them, visitors are confronted with everyday objects from Adolf Hitler's Munich flat, taken from his private home by Vogue photographer **Lee Miller** on the very day when Hitler committed suicide in his bunker. Before entering the flat she had visited the Dachau concentration camp. The textile concerned in this case is a towel bearing the initials A H. Although I found it somehow touching and unsettling, I was at a slight loss as to what the object was supposed to tell me. The second floor of the rotunda presents a large jacquard wall hanging by Polish artist **Goshka Maguca** measuring 17 x 5.2 m. Its motif is a black-and-white photo collage showing Afghan cultural professionals in front of the ruins of a palace near Kabul. A somewhat smaller counterpart of this tapestry, showing a Kassel motif structured accordingly, is on display in a Kabul exhibition. I would have liked to know the name of the weaver, a fact not evident to visitors and obviously not considered important. However, I was reconciled by reading that **Maguca**, who studied in the UK and rather perceives herself as a curator, has examined the historic importance of banners and gobelins in depth. The piece is brilliantly executed! The carpet cut outs by **Fabio Mauri** are presented without a great deal of background information, so their meaning does not reveal itself to visitors.



▲ **FABIO MAURI**/I, 1926-2009: „L'universo“, come l'infinito, lo vediamo a pezzi“, 2009. Doormat cuts, installation view



▼ **Wael Shawky**/Egypt, born 1971 in Alexandria: Marionetteanimationfilm „Cabaret Crusades: The Horror Show File“, 2010, Video
Photos: Wael Shawky



Füsun Onur/TR: „Dance of the Crows“, 2012, 220 x 440 cm, embroidered cotton

Neue Galerie

In the Neue Galerie (New Gallery), carpet is again the material used in **Adriana Lara's** piece. Described in the catalogue as a 'mural on a textured surface', it is, however, rather unrewarding for textile enthusiasts. In this building, I found 'Dance of the Crows' by Turkish artist **Füsun Onur** a particularly unconvincing piece; sewn onto coarse untreated cotton cloth, the catalogue reads that it is a 'poetic intervention that subtly remodels the lighting conditions and atmosphere of an otherwise empty space'. Big words. To me, the quality rather resembled a first year student piece. Two puppet films in which Egyptian artist **Wael Shawky** tells the history of the crusades are not textile works as such. His accomplished piece explaining the historic background of the animosity between Christians and Muslims actually did strike me as poetic, making it my favourite contribution of all at d13! I am certain that the costumes worn by the puppets significantly contributed to the successful expression of the work. →



▲ **MOON KYUNGWON**, born 1969 in Seoul and **JEON JOUNHU**, born 1969 in Busan/ both Korea: „News from Nowhere“, 2012, film, installation and a book about survival in a post-apocalyptic world



▲ **THOMAS BAYRLE**/D, born 1937 in Berlin: „Airplane“, 1982/83, installation 13,4 x 8 m, to the left the „repeat patterns“ - The work, made of many single items, is a metaphor for the complexity of our society.



◀ **ETEL ADNAN**/Lebanon, born 1925 in Beirut, lives in the USA a. Paris: „Jazz“, 1999, 180 x 155 cm, tapestry woven at Legoueix in Aubusson commissioned by documenta 13



▲ **ISSA SAMB**/Senegal, born 1945 in Dakar: The artist is considered a total artist, acting, writing, painting etc. The photo is showing his open-air studio at the Kassel Auepark.

◀ **PAUL RYAN**/USA, born 1943 in New York: „Inventing Threeing. Three Rugs for Threeing“ - The photo is showing one of the three „Rose Window“ carpets at the Auepark pavilion. Photo: Nils Klinger

documenta-Hall

In the documenta-Halle (documenta Hall), a painting by Lebanese artist **Etel Adnan** has been translated into a woven gobelin displayed on a pedestal on the floor. **Thomas Bayrle**'s monumental drawing of a plane is not made of textile materials, but his use of repetition and repeat patterns seemed reminiscent of textiles to me. The costumes seen in the post-apocalyptic video installation of Korean artists **MOON Kyungwon & JEON Joonho** have turned out exceptionally well and could have been taken from 'Techno Textiles'; the actual objects are on display in the next room.

Kassel Auepark

Many pieces can only be viewed by walking through Kassel's Auepark. Regrettably, I never found Australian artist **Fiona Hall**'s 'Hunting Cabin', but I would think that her piece, composed of sculptures of endangered species produced from camouflage fabrics, is worth seeing. **Issa Samb** from Senegal has created an open-air space for his search for magic which he explores by talking to visitors. Textiles as costumes and prayer flags, are an indispensable part of his work. The same is probably true for the West Saharan desert tent displayed by **Robin Kahn**, but again, I was unfortunately unable to find it except in photos. American artist **Paul Ryan** presented a strategy entitled 'Threeing', intended to teach people how to interact in groups of three. In his stage-like pavilion, visitors encounter carpets of roughly triangular shape woven in Peru. The shape is important to mark the positions of the people engaged in 'threeing'. The catalogue describes them as knotted carpets, another example in which a technique and an actual object have not been properly attributed.

Kulturbahnhof

At the Kulturbahnhof (Cultural Railway Station) and the Sinn-Leffers department store, **Seth Price** has interpreted clothing as envelopes, presented as sculptural clothing-like pieces in one instance and, in another, as a wearable fashion collection developed in co-operation with New York fashion designer Tim Hamilton. Romanian artist **István Csákány** has carved a sewing workshop in wood, complete with all its machines, with figures resembling empty showroom dummies, clothed in carefully worked suits, 'walking' on a catwalk along the side. According to the catalogue, the piece deals with the 'by now highly diverse and contradictory'.... 'formerly close relationship between the arts and the crafts'.

documenta 13 is so spread out that in all likelihood, my list of works is incomplete. The central positioning of three textiles in the Fridericianum as a kind of textile backbone was a pleasant surprise for me. Inevitably, a show of this size will comprise many pieces that fail to inspire individual viewers. Although textiles as an art genre were not a central theme of the d13, and although the labelling of some works showed a lack of knowledge, I believe that textile enthusiasts can be satisfied with the selection as the medium has a vital place in the mix of pieces on display. ■

► **SETH PRICE**/Israel, born in Jerusalem, lives in New York: Clothing as envelopes, an empty package awaiting content. Above: The series shown at Sinnleffers department store, created with Tim Hamilton

▼ **ISTVÁN CSÁKÁNY**/RO, born 1978, lives in Budapest: „The Sewing Room”, installation with textile machines, carved from wood and a group of elegantly dressed figures



About the author

German-born New Zealand-based artist Christine Keller positions her work between textile design, contemporary art, new media research and innovation. She is interested in the clash of tradition and new technologies, and its social and political implications. Her work has been exhibited internationally and was featured in the publications, 'Techno Textiles 1 and 2' (1998, 2005). She is an award-winning designer, especially for her woven and felted design work for 'Handweberei im Rosenwinkel' (1998 -2001) in Germany. After teaching Textiles for five and a half years at Otago Polytechnic, today she is producing in her own studio in Dunedin and teaching privately textile skills. www.christinekeller.net