

*all the days of my life so far –
and all the reels it took me to make it*

Christine Keller

The work of which a detail is shown on the opposite page as well as a full image is a handwoven textile panel on which the lines are digitally embroidered. The number of the lines relates directly to the actual number of days I have lived so far – over fifteen thousand.

My practice is situated between traditional techniques such as weaving and their contemporary counterparts found in digital textile processes, for example in digital embroidery. With the piece featured here, I am starting a new personal engagement with the subject of time, I mean the way in which I am handling my own lifetime. Everyone will know how we perceive time in our everyday experiences in different ways. Sometimes hours and days fly by, sometimes minutes seem to never pass. We live our lives and without our doing something about it, the days are always going by.

Mentally we do not count identical units like a clock would but for this piece I chose to visualise time through embroidering a line for every day I have lived so far, as mentioned earlier. I intend this to provide a reflective view on my existence. I am interested in how we have only one time, only one try for doing things in our lives. While we can choose to repeat a specific task, we cannot make things un-happen. It is up to us to take responsibility and make the best of our one chance at living. We can take opportunities or let them pass by and we will never know if it was for better or for worse. Regarding my own personal growth I am not particularly proud about everything I do but I am trying to arrive at a balance between

Image opposite page: *all the days of my life so far...*, nylon sewing thread, digital machine embroidery on handwoven textile, 2.65 x 0.85 m, 2003-2007, detail while the backing gets washed off (courtesy of the artist).

Inset opposite page: detail with backing on (courtesy of the artist).

the different opportunities, demands and challenges that come my way. When I am exhausted or worried or scared, a few lines I heard Al Jarreau singing many years ago come to my mind:

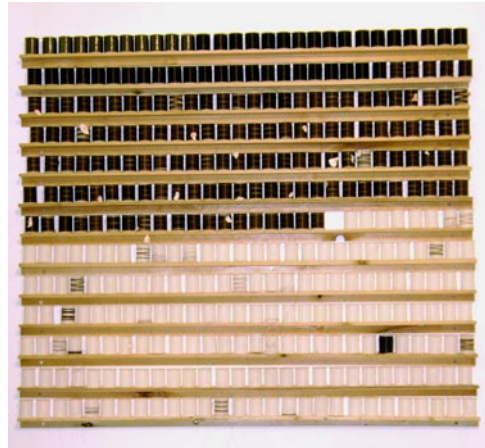
you really only got two choices
you can lay down and be weak
or you can stand up where you're at
and still be strong

This is to me an appeal to do the best I can. It is easy to give in to weakness, but doing that disengages one from life. I think this is what is being suggested by Jarreau's lyrics. Looking back at my own past, I realise how much time was spent in agony, selfpity or depression. It still happens at times, but now I try to be more aware and appreciative of my life's time. My looking back has changed my attitude towards how

I do things in life and I hope this entails a change for the better. I try to live my dreams and be appreciative of people I meet.

On the panel, I have left lots of free space. This signifies the potential that might still be left to me. In *and all the reels it took me to make it* the bobbins of the sewing thread are collected and arranged: the empty ones are included as metaphors for all the resources already used in life, while the half full and full ones reference the resources we still have at our disposal. Together they can be seen as a record of time in themselves. None of us know how much time and opportunity we have left to live our lives but I have learned that choosing and taking on challenges are what matters. If we accept life it should be no problem that there is an end to it. Death is part of the cycle and can be accepted as long as one's life is 'used' to its best ability.





Left: *all the days of my life so far...*, (photograph by Shirin Khosraviani).

Above: *...and all the reels it took me to make it*, 13 wooden shelves, 364 nylon reels (courtesy of the artist).

In visualising the time I have lived so far I am trying to make peace with past times not lived so well. This delicate weaving made with a material that resembles my hair was made in the spirit of celebration and appreciation of a life; one which we can measure but which we will never be able to understand.

The work of German-born New Zealand-based artist **Christine Keller** is positioned between traditional textile design and weaving, new media art 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 and 2005). She is an award-winning designer for her woven and felted design work for the "Handweberei im Rosenwinkel" (1998-2001) in Germany. Christine Keller has taught textile design, weaving and textile arts in Germany, Mongolia, Australia and Canada and is currently Head of the Textile Section at the School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand.