

# Finding Ground

## Threads between here and there

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### Abstract:

My thesis called: "Finding Ground" is an examination of my own artistic expression. Inspirations are memories of Finland and inner landscapes. A focus of my examinations lays in the historical background and the ground of my choices for material, technique and colours. The practical outcomes are woven objects of paper yarn und paintings in oil on canvas. Both are speaking a different visual and sensual language, but talking about the same topic, the one of an end of searching and getting clear/finding ground. Weaving by Hand and painting are slow techniques. I choose them as a method to slow down and take a close look at the microcosms of structures and colours. Creating one's own rhythm and structure in working and travelling provides a "ground" or a state to be between disciplines and places.

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Archipelago Finland

# 1. Introduction

During the initial work on my thesis, I flew regularly to Helsinki. This frequent changing of countries and cultures between Austria and Finland is part of the process of “finding ground”. It meant searching my own roots and the place where I belong. Finland has been important in shaping me as a designer and person. It was the source of my inspiration and my chosen home for three years.

As a background to my current work I will show my fascination for Finland and its textile culture connected with some personalities in that field who influenced me. Therefore I consider important to mention their names and methods. My previous work and experiments, as well as the experience in weaving with paper yarn for many years, is the starting point for the process of writing this thesis.

At present I am working in a weaving mill in Bludenz, Austria, drawing jacquard designs for West African fashion. Three years ago, when I moved to Austria, It was my aim to gain work experience in industry. Getting familiar with the world of the textile trade in West Africa with the high quality required for their damask fabrics was extraordinary to me in different ways. In my industrial work I have to deal with virtual weaving at high speed. Again dealing with another culture I “lost ground”.

Now I long for a sensual work with actual material, like weaving with paper yarn by hand. It seemed natural for me to return to my own loom and the artistic work I started in 2009. “Den Faden aufnehmen” is a German expression for: to pick up the threads, which means to start again. In this thesis I want to continue my previous work by picking up the paper thread. This is a process of slowing down and finding a rhythm in weaving and in daily life. The rhythm of weaving itself is an inspiration.

With the topic “Finding Ground” I introduce a new theme into my work. This theme contains a spacial, geographical aspect. I have chosen painting and weaving as the techniques to implement this topic with photography for documentation. I see my thesis as a process to further develop my own method of working further on and to find a position for my work in the field of fine art, a field that was familiar to me so far as a viewer only.

In the chapter “Thoughts about Art”, I shall include observations and ideas, which are essential for my process of orientation. The discussion with Iris Hutegger, artist in Basel who is also my mentor, has been important for this examination.

Some of the woven and painted works and outcomes of this process have been shown in the exhibition called “Lange Nirgends” in St. Gerold, Austria in September 2012.

Towards the end of the time working on this thesis, I started to rent a studio. Together with Christine Lederer, graphic designer and artist and Christof Thöny, historian and publisher in Bludenz. We started the discussion about what, together we want to implement in the village alongside our own occupation with our individual work.

## 2. Background of my thesis

### 2.1. Inspiration

Before travelling to Finland for the first time I was already familiar with Finnish paper yarn and applied it in my weaving. This material aroused my curiosity and a desire to get to know the country where it comes from. Travelling to Finland in Autumn 2004 opened up a new world for me. The colours seemed to be extraordinary and surprising in their combinations. The light of the north gave the Finnish landscape a magical flair and aroused my fascination in me. Looking closely at the ground of a forest e.g had a lasting effect on me, in particular the structures and colours of lichen (in Finnish: jäkälä). Carpet like lichen or moss spread out on the ground over soil and rocks. Not only was looking at them a memorable experience, but also feeling, as I walked over them, their three dimensional consistency. Throughout the time I stayed in Finland many photographs were taken of this diverse micro cosmos. In Autumn 2005 I travelled through Finland along the west coast towards Rovaniemi to accurately capture the colours and structures of this country and its landscapes.

“Paper yarn from Finland is material and Inspiration for my work”. I have written in my Diploma thesis at the University of Art and Design Lucerne already in 2006. For me this is still true today. This is the reason why I want to continue in the same direction and “pick up the threads”. Before I started studying textiles I became familiar with paper yarn through Sirpa Lutz and her distribution company “Webkante” in Männedorf, Switzerland. I frequently helped there, assembling colour cards and doing other little works, getting to know the qualities of the yarns and learning the numbers of the fitting colours by heart. Already the range of colours, selected by the dyeing factory Lappajärven Värijäämö in western Finland (which I visited in 2005) showed me a different world of colour and aroused my fascination. While studying for my diploma degree in Lucerne I made constant use of paper yarn in my weaving.

“Paper yarn has a long memory,” says Päivi Kokko-Vuori, studio master at the Aalto University. She means the stiff and unruly character, which prevents paper yarn from adapting smoothly to the wanted form. Instead it retains the original shape, for example when spooled on a bobbin. This might be an annoying effect, making a weaver struggle. On the other hand it shows a strong character.





Lichen in Finnish: Jäkälä



Paper twist bleached and raw

The tactile quality of paper yarn reminds me of the one of dry jäkälä. Paper yarn has a characteristic smell and visually expresses understatement. It does not shout nor shine but creates a silent and warm atmosphere by playing a background role. In a modest way the material reveals its clear woven structure. Paper is not a typical textile material. Its stiffness and pure visual characteristics give paper yarn sculptural connotations and applications. It does not easily fit into any category, it might be in the field of art or architecture, small or large scale, It is strongly connected with Finland and its history. In Austria, for example, it has an exotic touch and causes surprise when used as a textile material.

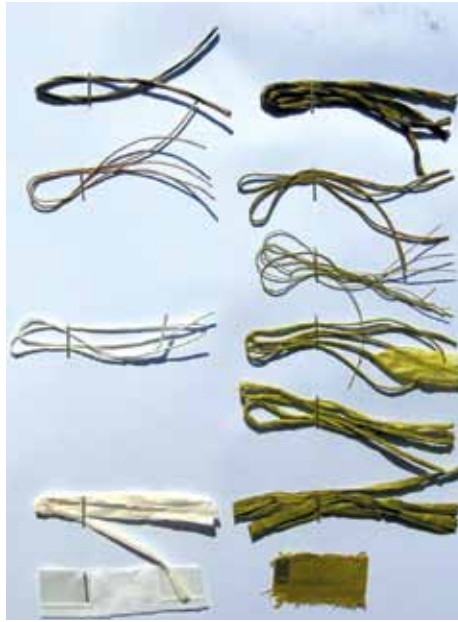
It was not only Finland's material, structures and colours that inspired me. As I sensed and experienced Finland, the country itself was an Inspiration. Even though I do not have any family roots there I was deeply moved by Finland and felt that I had found home.

I was fascinated by everyday's habits, the way people communicate with each other, the dark humour, how they make friends, the way Finns apply patterns on every day's objects. The fine perception of materials and their applications is to Finland. This is one of the common points that build a connection between Finland and Japan, a country





Jäkälä



My dyeing samples from 2006



Dyeing factory in Lappajärvi

that also has a vivid scene of paper artists, which I do not mention here more detailed. Another quality the two cultures share is the closeness of the people to the nature. In Finland I was at first surprised and charmed by the self-evidence of going into the forest to collect mushrooms, berries and inspiration for turning into art. In an middle European academic context this would not be considered serious. Later I heard quite often: “I got my inspiration from the forest”.

The natural interweaving especially in textiles of art and design fields is very different from central Europe. I was excited by the fact that it is common for Finnish designers to do Fine Art as well as design. These two fields play with the same techniques and visual and tactile means of expression therefore I consider it unnatural to separate them.

Weaving itself is an inspiration, (see chapter 3.1.) The different steps of the process from planning the warp, beaming, threading the yarns and finally weaving the weft, interest me. Depending on the planned fabric and the chosen thickness and density of the yarn, the slow rhythm of weaving is given.

## 2.2. Paper yarn in the Finnish textile culture

In this chapter I will examine the textile history of Finland with particular reference to the personalities in the field concerning paper yarn. Using examples of artists who have influenced me in one or the other way, I reveal the background to my work. Although this might seem self evident to Finns, and those familiar with the field, by illuminating parts of their biographies and taking a detailed look at their work I intend to give the non-Finnish reader an essential context to paper yarn.

Paper yarn has been applied in ryijys. The phenomenon of ryijy is unique to Finland, therefore I dedicate a separate chapter to it.

### 2.2.1. Paper yarn and the artists working with it

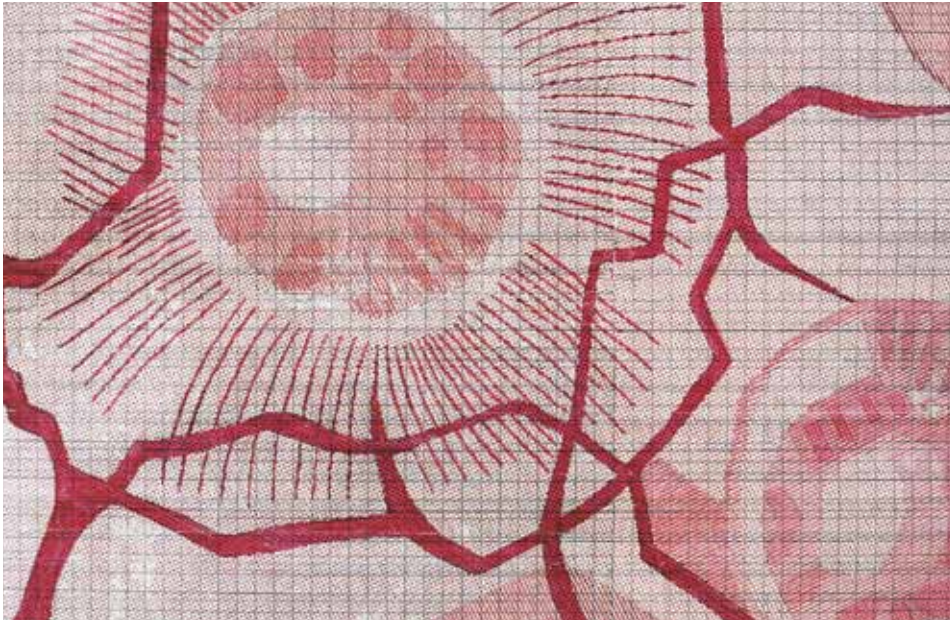
**Dora Jung** born in 1906 is one of the most important fabric designer and textile artists in Finnish history. She is an example of a creative weaver personality who fluently combined art and industrial design in her life and work. Her life is an interweaving of doing art works and applied fabrics, in her own studio and at the Tampella weaving mill, working consistently and gaining fame in Finland and abroad. In 1932, she was among the first students who graduated from Central School of Applied Arts Helsinki<sup>1</sup>. Immediately after that she started to weave on her own Jacquard loom at home for orders, such as for example church textiles, which at that time had a high reputation in Finland. With her damasks she also took part in competitions in Finland and abroad. At the Milan Triennial 1957 she won a bronze medal and study trips abroad followed.

From her Swedish textile design colleagues she heard that they were making designs for industrial production. While in Finland this was not yet common<sup>2</sup>. Dora Jung started collaborating with the Tampella in 1937. There she received orders in large scale, for example designing the table linen for a grand restaurant to be opened. This meant they needed to be woven by industries. Jung's unique handwriting in damask became known and available for many. There are patterns such as: "Play of Lines" and "100 Ruusua" (100 Roses) which is still famous today. Using paper yarn was not a free choice for Dora Jung. Her favourite material for weaving was linen.

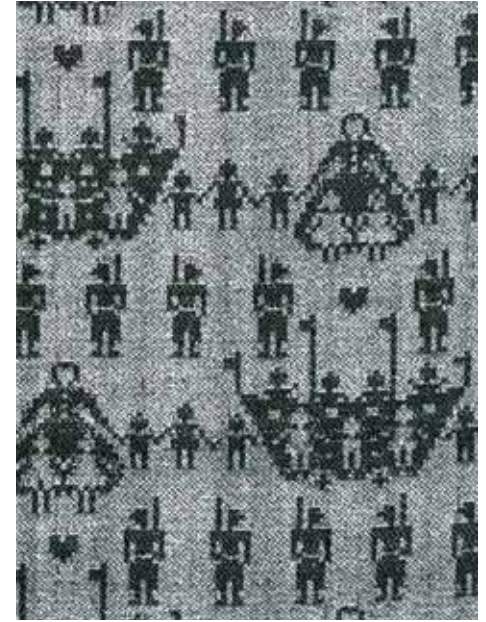
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1 Palo-Oja R. & Lehto A. 2011. 15

2 Palo-Oja R. & Lehto A. 2011. 17



Dora Jung: drawing for "Valmu" (Poppy)



Paper fabric: "Barntransport"

Throughout her career she has been mostly faithful to this material in her own studio as well as at Tampella's. In 1939, before the war started, there was not enough material at the Tampella mill to meet the demand for interior textiles. New, local yarns were needed to be found to continue with the production. Dora Jung made the best out of the situation of material shortage. She open mindedly experimented with spun paper yarn, developed at Tampella. It was first used only in the weft, but later also as a warp. The stiffness of paper caused some limitations in the production. Also colour ranges were limited because they faded more easily than on other materials.

"Paper yarn may be looked down upon as a substitute for more precious textile materials, but, in any case, it has given me the opportunity to continue practicing my profession and has provided many fun work assignments." Dora Jung said<sup>3</sup>. Paper fabrics were used for the same purposes as linen; curtains, tablecloths, upholstery, lampshades and mats. Some of the Dora Jung's paper textiles were shown in exhibitions, for example "Barntransport" (Transport of Children) in the craft and design exhibition 1945, which illustrates the topic of the war in Finland and suits perfectly with that material of wartime.

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Palo-Oja R. & Lehto A. 2011. 36





“Ketunhätä”, detail



and “Vincent” by Ritva Puotila

Like Dora Jung, **Ritva Puotila**, born 1935 experienced the shortage of materials due to the war and encountered paper string at the Tampella mill. Puotila also combines in her life being an artist and an industrial textile designer. Her original dream was to be an artist and painter. However, according to her mother’s wish, she first studied something applied: ornamental painting and stage design.<sup>4</sup> Already during her studies her extraordinary talent for colours was noted. Even though she was not trained as a textile designer, the founder of Dansk Design has discovered Puotila’s talent. This company produced tablecloths and other textiles for American homes. Some of the production was done by Tampella Oy, which provided Puotila’s first contact with this weaving mill. The collaboration with Dansk Design and Tampella lasted more than 25 years. In her career as industrial designer she also proposed designs for non-textile materials like glass and had the opportunity to travel abroad.

But Puotila appreciated the paper yarn for its own characteristics. She experimented with the raw brown and white colour, which she found at Tampella. Then she freed the paper yarn from the association with war times and brought colour to it by dyeing it in endless ranges of colours. With ryijys, first woven by “The Friends of Finnish Handicraft”, she gained recognition

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4 Svinhufvud. 2003. 23

and prizes in 1960. This is the year when she bought her own loom and founded her studio in Helsinki<sup>5</sup>.

By the 1980's unique ryijys and textile art works were highly appreciated and often seen in public locations. Puotila already had a name for commissioned textile work, when her solo exhibition took place at the Otso Gallery in 1986.<sup>6</sup> There her industrial work was shown next to her monumental unique ryijys with rich hues of colour and reduced, geometrical forms. In two of her ryijys Puotila used Japanese paper and paper yarn, which was something new. Her first ryijy woven only with paper yarn was "Ketunhäntä" (foxtail), which was secretly woven in the back room of her studio to make sure, visitors would not immediately notice something strange and new.<sup>7</sup>

Seeing the paper yarn as a warp for the ryijys on her loom, she realized its potential for applied fabrics. Samples for carpets and interior textiles were woven and Puotila received encouragement from the people close to her.<sup>8</sup>

That was how the idea was born for "Woodnotes". The company for high quality design products Ritva Puotila founded together with her son Mikko in 1987. When Woodnotes showed its first products at the interior shop institution Artek in Helsinki in 1987, they gained recognition, but were not yet economically successful. In addition there were some technical problems to be solved for the industrial production. One problem was that there was no producer of paper yarn in Finland anymore. Therefore Puotila developed good quality paper yarn together with Tampella. When Tampella closed down in 1992, Woodnotes bought their paper spinning machinery and one year later founded the Suomen Paperilanka, a company for paper string production.<sup>9</sup>

From then on, paper yarn became accessible to other textile artists and the public. In 2004 I visited the two companies in Finland specialized in dying paper yarn: Lappajärvi Väriäämö in a small village in southern ostrobothnia and the smaller one, with a wider range of colours: Pirkanmaan Kotityö in Tampere.

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5 Svinhufvud. 2003. 24

6 Svinhufvud. 2003. 95

7 Svinhufvud. 2003. 96

8 Svinhufvud. 2003. 171

9 Nimkulrat. 2009. 90



“Shadows of the twinflower” by Maijsa Turunen-Wiklund



Detail from: “I knit in the evenings”

**Maijsa Turunen-Wiklund** does not apply any traditional textile technique to the paper yarn. She reveals the unique organic character of the paper by using free techniques. By untwisting the yarn a crinkle batik effect appears and the paper can be formed into flowers and leaves. In this way she creates floral artworks and jewellery and many hobbyists followed her. Colourful paper yarn as a material for handicraft became known also in central Europe, partly thanks to the supplier company “Webkante” of Sirpa Lutz, Switzerland and the publication “Paper Textiles” by Christine Leitner, textile professor in Linz/Austria 2005.

Paper yarn in its raw brownish colour is the chosen material for the work of textile artist **Meri Vuolas** called: “I knit in the evenings”<sup>10</sup>. This quote refers to the time the artist spent knitting and to the rhythm of her every day’s life. Her work does not try to picture anything except the process of making it.

**Nithikul Nimkulrat** chooses white paper yarn for her artworks. As an industrial textile designer coming from Thailand she has an outsider’s view of the Finnish textile scene. During the years living and working in Helsinki and growing as an artist, she became familiar with the textile art

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10 Mäkelä. 2006. 126





"The coffee cup" by Nithikul Nimkulrath, detail

here and took part in several group exhibitions, such as the 7<sup>th</sup> Finnish Textile Triennial in Amos Anderson Museum in 2006, where she was the only foreigner. Paper yarn was a new material for her and it is strongly connected with Finland and its textile history. To create original works of art she chose a knot technique, which was familiar to her from her childhood in Thailand<sup>11</sup>. By the consistent use of white bleached paper yarn and her patient and elaborate knotting, she created a new lightweight look and brought fresh air into the world of textile art in Finland.

Nimkulrat is not only a producer of art and design, but also a researcher. Unlike most of her artist colleagues, she verbalizes the artistic process and expression in an academic language. She says that by experiencing a new material, textile artists can become more aware of their interaction with the material. This awareness can facilitate an articulation of the meaning of the material, so that knowledge can also be shared.<sup>12</sup> At the Aalto Helsinki, (former: University of Art and Design) Nithikul Nimkulrat did her PhD research and wrote her award winning book “Paperness” in 2009. With “Paperness” she founded a new term for the expressivity of paper yarn in Finnish textile art. Thanks to her, written knowledge about that narrow field of paper and textiles in Finland is now available to a wider and non-Finnish speaking audience. Nimkulrat elevated the art of paper yarn to a new and broader context, that of “practice-based or practice-led research.

### 2.2.2. Ryijy

Ryijy has first been a phenomenon and a symbol first of Finnish folk craft than later that of modern design and art. Its tradition is a foundation for the development of textile art. Until today artists referred to ryijys, with either enthusiastic or dismissive feelings. Ryijy cannot be translated in any other language. According to Wikipedia ryijy is a form of Finnish tapestry or cloth rug. The name ryijy originated from the Scandinavian word rya, which means “thick cloth”. The decorative ryijy rug is a form of art unique to Finland. Ryijy rug weaving developed as a folk art in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Concerning the technique, ryijy is a knotted woven rug, where piles i.e. short pieces of yarn, are attached to the warp. Several wefts are woven in after every line of knots. This technique is

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11 Nimkulrat. 2009. 104

12 Nimkulrat. 2009. 13



“Liekki”: the flame



“Metsä”: Forest, detail

similar to the one used in oriental carpets, but ryijy is rougher, with longer piles with gaps for the weft, which evoke a rip structure. The technique does not limit the freedom of the design or the number of colours. Often yarns of several colours are knotted together for a specific shade, which can be compared to mixing paint. Originally ryijys were made for practical applications, such covers for beds and benches or to keep warm in sledges<sup>13</sup>. For a population who was less well off, ryijys were used as a replacement for a fur to keep one warm.

Old ryijys had a strong symbolic value as an expression of Finnish national character. During the years between the wars, the ryijy became an expressively national textile type in Finland and this influenced its significance in the field of applied art. One of the most famous ryijy is “liekki” (flame) by the painter **Aksel Gallen-Kallela**. Today the “Flame” is displayed in Hvitträsk, studio and home for the three architects: Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen, built in national romantic style between 1901 and 1903, in Kirkonummi, north of Helsinki<sup>14</sup>. The flame was commissioned for the Finnish pavilion at the world exhibition in Paris 1900. The interior of the “Iris-room” in that pavilion, designed by Gallen-Kallela, soon

13 Svinhufvud. 2009. 253

14 <http://www.nba.fi/en/museums/hvittrask>, seen: 28.4.2012





“Summernight” by Ritva Puotila, detail

became famous internationally and a symbol of Finnish modernism in applied art. The ryijys received attention in Finland and abroad as a textile of interest<sup>15</sup>.

The ryijy “Metsä” (forest) by **Uhra Simberg-Ehrström** is a symbol of the Finnish forest and the high quality textile art of Finland. This massive work raised attention at the Montreal Expo in 1967, where it was displayed among objects of glass, ceramic, plywood or copper at the Finnish pavilion<sup>16</sup>.

“Metsä” is a large ryijy for the floor, measuring 9 x 4.5 meters. Without motifs or ornaments, Metsä includes an immense variety of colours in finely tuned shades. Simberg-Ehrström is considered a master of colours. In the 1950s she reformed the look of an art ryijy in a more ascetic direction. The way she designed the colours has rather painterly qualities similar to the french painting style of pointillism. Close collaboration between the designer of the work and the weavers was of great importance. “Metsä” was completed at the weaving studio of the association “The Friends of Finnish Handicraft” in Helsinki.

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15 Svinhufvud. 2009. 252

16 Svinhufvud. 2009. 282

Weaving a ryijy by strictly following a sketch is a time-consuming and demanding work. The association: “Friends of Finnish handicraft”, founded in 1879, provided skilled weavers who implemented artist’s ideas into a ryijy. Textile artists were able to use this service and applied the ryijy technique to create fashionable and decorative interior textiles in a modern way. The new variants of ryijys attracted attention and they were displayed in exhibitions in Finland and abroad in 1920s and 1930`s. Specialized training for textile artists and designers was offered at the Central School of Arts and Crafts Helsinki in 1929.

There was a regular boom of ryijys and they became popular in the 1930s. At the same time it is also an ambivalent object, and it is still today. “Either you hate or you love ryijys,” is a common saying about ryijys. There was the question of putting “those furry square pieces,” (as called by the architect Aarne Ervi in 1949)<sup>17</sup>, on the wall or on the floor, as a piece of art or applied handicraft. In contrary to traditional ryijy with national motifs by unknown weavers, the so called: art-ryijy was introduced as an expression of individual artists around the 50’s.

The freedom of motif and colour for a ryijy offers artists an interesting perspective and a means to show their skills. Originally doing handicraft was a female occupation. The regular competitions for ryijys launched by the “Friends of Finnish Handicraft” and also their service of skilled weavers to implement designer’s sketches attracted people outside the textile world, such as painters and architects to design ryijys. Names such as Arttu Brummer, Uhra Simberg-Ehrström were mentioned in connection with ryijys.

The appearance of the art ryijys became more individual and free from motifs. Colour became more important and the quality was painterly. This required an eye for colour, perseverance and experience based on years of collaboration between the artists and designers. Some designers employed their own personal weavers.

In Finnish tradition the relationship between the ones developing an idea and those implementing it is very close, as shown with the example of the ryijy. Artists, designers and skilled craftspeople work together in low hierarchy. Craft skills were needed for artwork and are highly appreciated. Pieces of artwork in the ryijy technique have been made for interior projects of national importance, such as Parliament House, universities, and embassies as well as places of business.<sup>18</sup>

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17 Svinhufvud. 2009. 257

18 Svinhufvud. 2009. 257

So far the common material for the piles of the Ryijys was wool. After the 1970's textile artists experimented with other materials like linen, sisal etc. as well as with unusual formats and different lengths of pile. Ritva Puotila was one of the popular ryijy makers as I mentioned already in 2.2.1. Her works won prizes and they were shown in exhibitions in Finland and abroad. She says: "Since the 1980's there have not been any patterns in my ryijys. There is only shifting colour. The most important thing is the overall form, the right proportion of height and width, and naturally, the depth of textile structure."<sup>19</sup>

Puotila applied paper yarn to the ryijy technique. This changed the image from that "furry, dusty square thing" to a clear and modern look. She, as well as others, experimented with new formats. "Bog tree" 1995, for example, has a long triangular form, pointing downwards.

The folklore researcher and textile artist **Touko Issakainen** (born in 1973) uses the traditional ryijy technique, but in the way of mixing materials of different length and character. He does not plan his work in advance and he refuses to verbalize or communicate the meaning. He says: "When I take a finished piece off the loom, I feel like I have just painted on a large canvas with a wide brush very quickly and spontaneously."<sup>20</sup>

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19 Svinhufvud. 2003. 78

20 Mäkinen. 2006. 150





Detail from "Colour concept" 2005 by Touko Issakainen, made from natural and synthetic fibres and found objects



Colour ideas from my sketchbooks 2012 and 2006

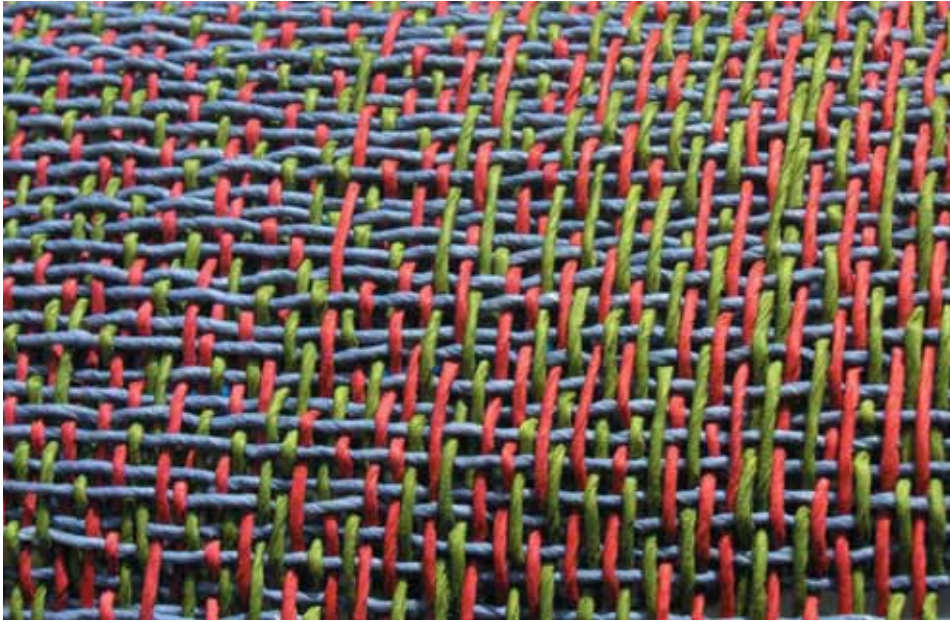


### 2.3. My previous work

Material, colour, structure and binding are my means of expression. Weaving with paper yarn on a handloom and painting with oil on canvas are the mediums I have been using in my previous works of art. The curiosity about the soul of the material was and still is the base of my numerous experiments and woven samples. I am interested in the outcome of the structure by testing many possible combinations of bindings with different quality of paper yarn. This leads to a great collection of sample pieces in various constructions. I have concluded that favorable samples are those with simple narrow binding, like plain weave, rips, that let the material appear at its best. Furthermore randomly changing yarns in different colours is of interest. Example are fabrics I applied as cushions. Two colours of Indian paper yarn was put in random order on the loom and is woven with a panama weave, see structure on the right picture next page.

To get a specific colour for a certain expression, paper yarn needed to be dyed by hand in many goes. The samples woven according to the colour scheme of my idea became a large collection. Both for weaving and painting I made colour sketches by simply attaching the combinations of colour into my sketchbook. Thus little pieces of yarns and cut-out details of magazines served





“irregular-regular” structures woven with shafts, 2006



cushions, indian paper yarn, 2008

the purpose. The layout of these miniature-size sketches already hints at a composition or binding. With my weaving I often found myself at the intersection of art and design. Rather than aiming at a certain product or outcome my interest has been an experimental character. These investigations lead to either a piece of art or a product of design. In my diploma work at the School of Art and Design Lucerne, (2006) the focus lay on the practical application of paper fabric. I decided to have applicable suggestions for products as my outcome.

As the conclusion of my Diploma work I suggested three different ways for possible applications of paper yarn in three different qualities. In collaboration with the corresponding professionals, I produced a hat, a lamp and an upholstered chair. Now the extensive collection of samples is most valuable. It is a stock of bindings and structures and a treasure of experience in weaving with paper yarn. After my diploma work many samples were added to the collection later. The process of weaving by hand is the tool and base of my work. Whether for a design or an art project I always considered the samples worth carefully keeping. Because they are the gained experience sustained in a sample piece. Apart from the final product, the project could have been taken an artistic direction with works of art in the end.



Details from my ryjy, 2004

Another examination of colour and structure is realized in my ryjy project. The long history of ryjy, the uniqueness of this technique bound to Finland and the ambivalence surrounding it, gave me the desire to make my own interpretation. Regardless of its final outcome, practical or artistic, it was obvious to me that my ryjy would be on the floor and not on the wall. The tactile and three-dimensional characteristics should be experienced by feeling, touching and by walking over it. The stiff paper yarn amplifies the spatial effect and frees the ryjy from its “dusty” image. The colours I choose are strong pink and red combined with a contrasting deep green. This combination represents the feeling of surprise of my first impression of Finland and specially its forests. I did not apply the ryjy knots in the traditional dense all-over manner. Instead the knots are spread more or less compact and so play with three-dimensional areas. This enables the interplay between ryjy knot yarn and the ground of weft.

I have not been exclusively interested in a particular end product. My curiosity let me constantly try new samples and create series of pieces of the same topic. This so-called sample collection may well form a basis for further decisions and eventually for products. I would rather leave the production to industries or crafts people. My works of art did, however reach a final stage. They are unique. For this reason I describe them in the following chapter.







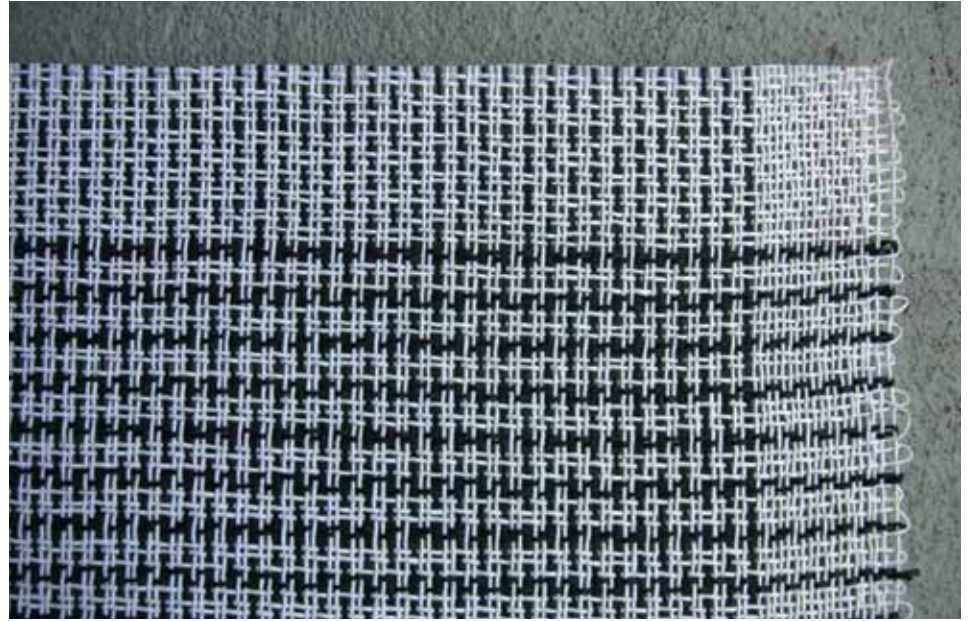


"Sundays" exhibited in Lume Gallery, Helsinki, 2009





“No Signal”



Detail from “Letters to my Father”

of weeks, a year with only Sundays. Dividing time into elements that are repeating and building a rhythm is appearing again in my topic “finding ground”.

Prior to “Sundays” I wove a piece called “**No Signal**”, also in a double weft binding. Paper yarn in black and light green refer to messages on digital screens. There is a hidden message. Like weaving in general, binding points are pixels in electronic illustration. As we were planning our trip to Japan I became interested in the semiotics of a foreign language with (to me) unknown lettering. Japanese signs, braille script or bar code look like a pattern for those who are not able to read them. There is a beauty in the signs I do not literally understand. Its structure is irregular, but still follows a certain concept, irregular and regular. To look at signs without understanding their meaning is the basis for my next work:

“**Letters to my Father**” woven paper, 4 pieces, A4 size, 2009 Often living far away, I exchanged letters with my father. His handwriting has a strong character and sometimes is difficult to read. He always used a black ball point pen. My woven “letters” with an irregular-regular structure of imaginary written lines in black on white, are my answer to his way of writing.



“Memories of Light” exhibited in Atski Gallery, Helsinki, 2009

“**Memories of Light**”, a series of monochrome surfaces. Oil on canvas and hand woven fabric on square frames in different sizes are combined in the exhibition at the Gallery Atski, Helsinki 2009. One of these surfaces has fluorescent yarn woven into the structure, which keeps light in its “memory” and reflects it in the dark. This work started in a painting class. The search for a specific canvas as a base for painting turned out longer than expected. As a weaver I had clear ideas for the binding and structure of the canvas. Finally, I wove some of the canvas bases by hand. The result was a series of painted surfaces as well as bare woven ones. An examination of light and its reflection in our memories followed. The starting point for this work was the darkness of Finnish winter when light hours are rare. The question arose: How do we remember the shine of light in our memories? Is it the reflection in the snow, or the orange pink colour of the sky, or the shiny surface of ice?

“**Un-shape**”, an object to be hung from the ceiling, woven paper, about 40 cm diameter.  
“**Nowhere**”: Painting oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm, both 2009

A horizon creates a wide space, an almost monochromatic painting of “Nowhere”. The counterpart of “Nowhere” is “Un-shape”, a woven object, crinkled to an undefined form



“Un-shape” shown at the Genesis exhibition, London, 2012



Painting: “Nowhere”

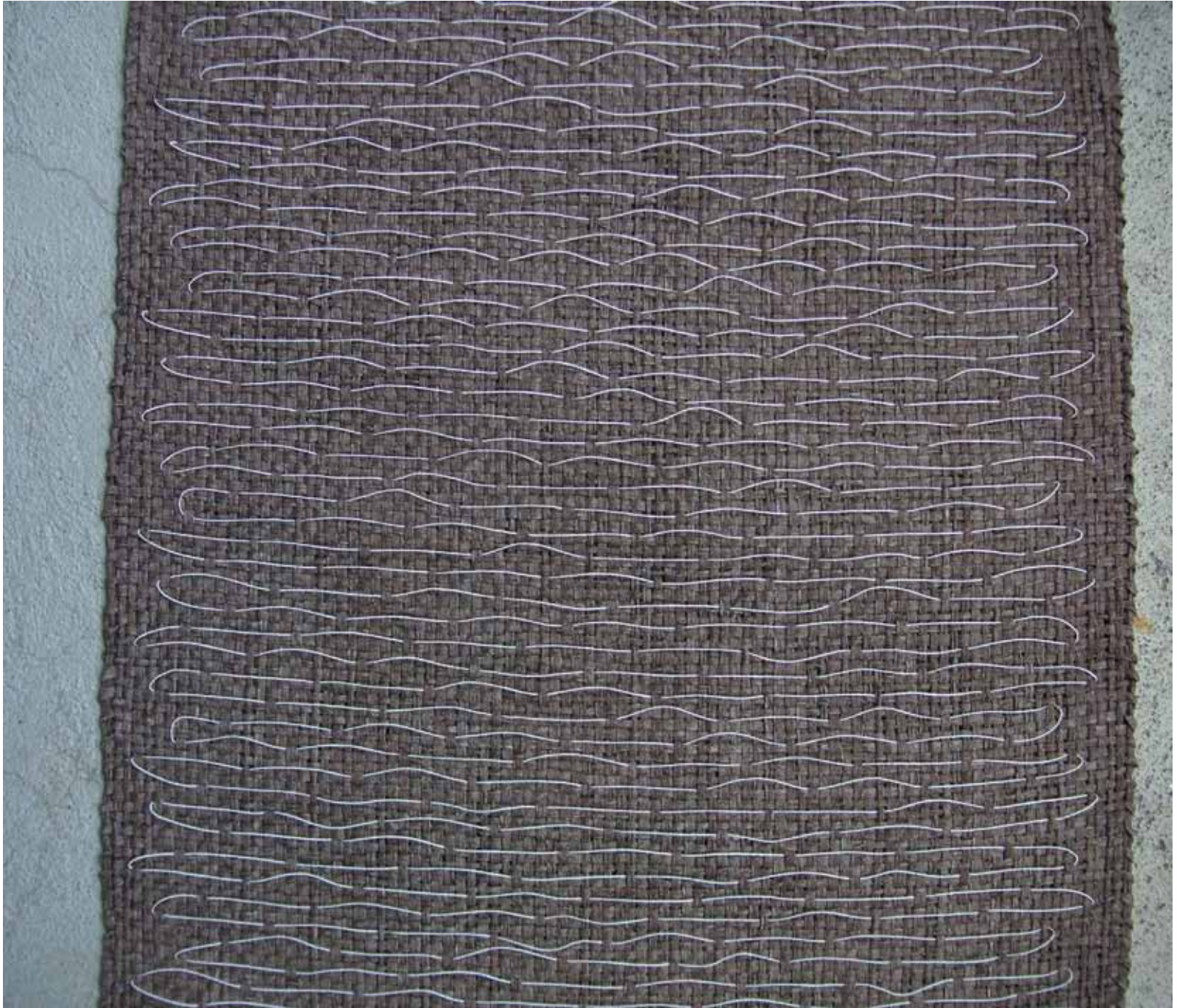
hanging from the ceiling. These two pieces were shown at the Cluburban group exhibition with the theme: “Genesis” at the Shadwell Studios in London in 2010. This works express a state at the very beginning of creation. It is the one when light was there but before colours and form was created.

“**Naked**”: Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, 2011, showing shades of fair rose to skin colour. This painting deals with the state of being mentally naked, feeling fragile or without skin. It can be considered as an entry to the theme of Genesis. In German I call it: “Inneres” (Insides).

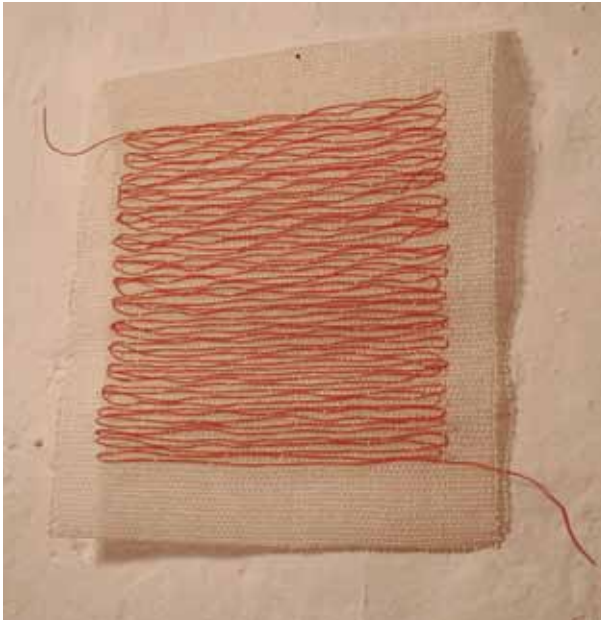
“**Umweg**” German for: “detour” or “The long way round”. Woven silk from Japan and Paper yarn 30 x 140 cm, 2011. A brown silk tissue builds the ground layer while the white paper yarn is interwoven as an additional weft. This turns at the selvedge and builds a “long way round”.

“**Roter Faden**” German for: “the red thread”. Paper yarn 30 x 30 cm, 2012. This idiom stands for a line continuously going through a story or life. In my woven piece one red paper yarn seesaws and builds a square of red. It is an additional weft floating on a plain weave ground. The beginning and the end of the yarn are visibly standing out of the square.





“Umweg”, (the long way round) brown silk from Japan and white paper yarn, detail



“The red thread” at the exhibition in St. Gerold and in process

“**Jäkälä**”, “**Ruska**” (orange-brownish colours of Finnish Autumn) and “**Own Garden**” are the same technique and size as “Roter Faden”. Here the additional weft is paper ribbon. This flat, not twisted, paper is broader and the square appears denser. Each of the three monochrom pieces shows its own topic, and yet still work as a series.



## 3. Techniques

The techniques of weaving and oil painting have long traditions and I became interested in their history. I recognised a connection between artists from earlier times using the same means of expression that I do and probably facing similar questions and challenges. Both weaving and painting have a very different past and so does my approach to them. I will take a closer look at in the following chapters.

I started to weave at the age of 20 and continued it until now through all my studies and more recently in my industrial work. I work by hand as well as with computer-generated looms and as well as the design of fabrics for industrial machines. In 2004, around five years later I discovered painting in oil taught by Thomas Nyqvist at the University of Art and Design Helsinki. It is not my aim to use mixed media by painting on my weavings or to use them in any other combined form.

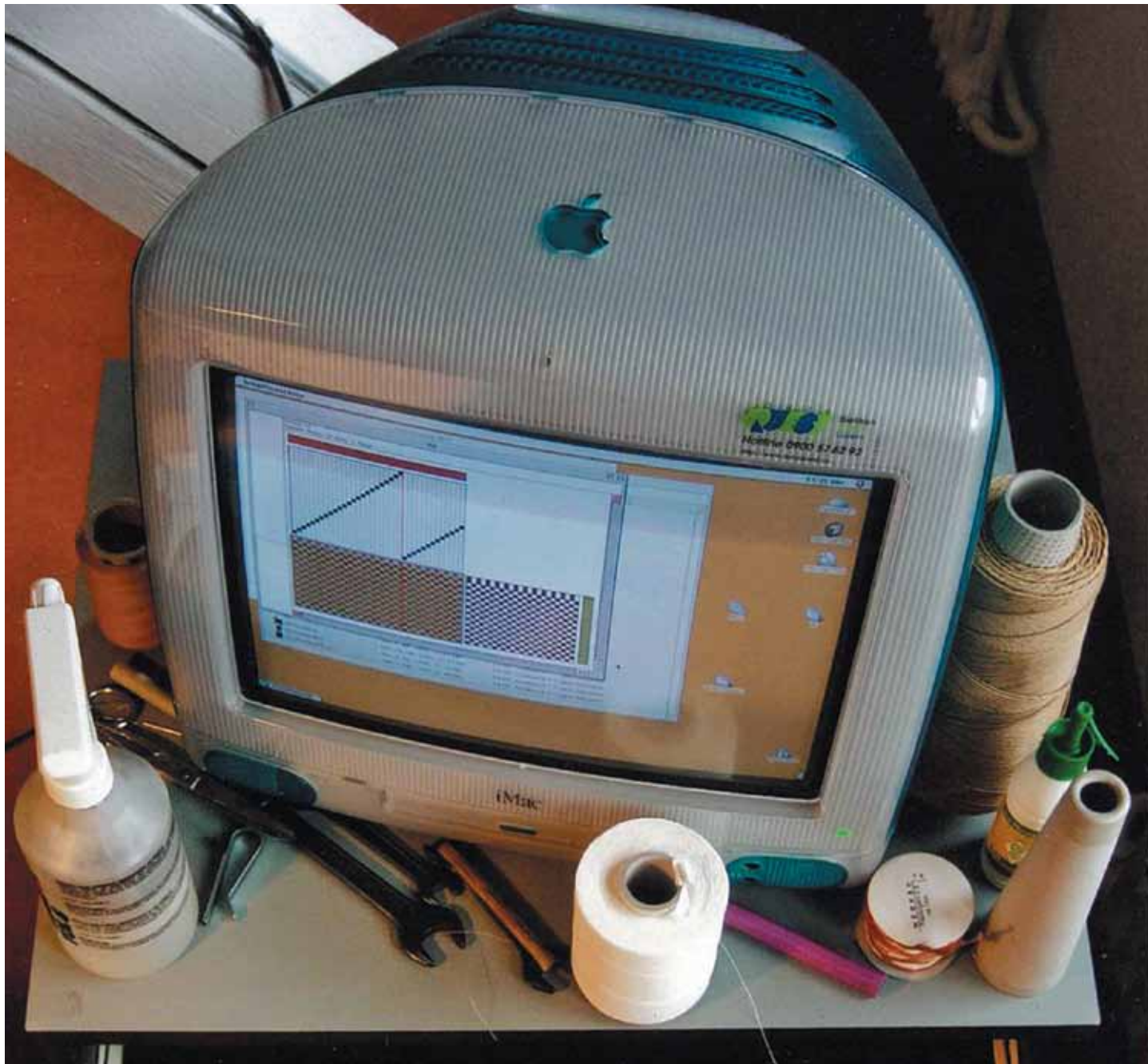
### 3.1. On weaving

Weaving is a textile technique and it is constructed using two or more rectangular systems of yarns called: warp and weft. The tool or machinery for weaving can be from a simple frame to complex industrial machines. The speed of weaving can be from very slow by hand to fast and loud at an industrial scale. One simple technique stands behind these different technologies. Their outcomes are products for everyday life for example as clothes touching our skin, or for technical applications or for art object in various dimensions.

Attitudes to weaving, along with other textile techniques, as a form of art has caused controversial discussion during the last two centuries. It has been a struggle for it to be taken serious as a form of art. The reputation of being a lower and only female occupation is strongly attached to weaving.

Like many other female artists **Anni Albers** faced discrimination in the male dominated art world. Being a woman she could not fulfil her aim, in 1920, to enter the class of painting at the Academy of Art in Dresden. Later she studied weaving at the weaving studio under Gunda Stölzl at the “Bauhaus”, because women were expected to work in that field! She accepted the situation, became a teacher and even learned to love textiles. “It was threads that caught





Computer we used for weaving at the University of Art and Design Lucerne, 2006



My loom at home

me, really against my will. (...) But circumstances held me to threads and they won me over. I learned to listen to them and to speak their language. I learned the process of handling them.” she said.<sup>21</sup> Anni Albers expresses her innovative ideas not only with threads but also in written form. In her writings she carefully examines and elaborately topics like: the relationship of the artist and his chosen material or the intuition to listen to material and understand visual and textile language. “Content, of course, was essential, but so were the aesthetics of writing. As in her textiles, she sought a mix of understatement and strength, a graceful tone, a relationship of the parts that was harmonious but never repetitious or boring<sup>22</sup>.” Nicholas Fox Weber wrote in the Foreword of: Anni Albers, Selected Writings on Design.

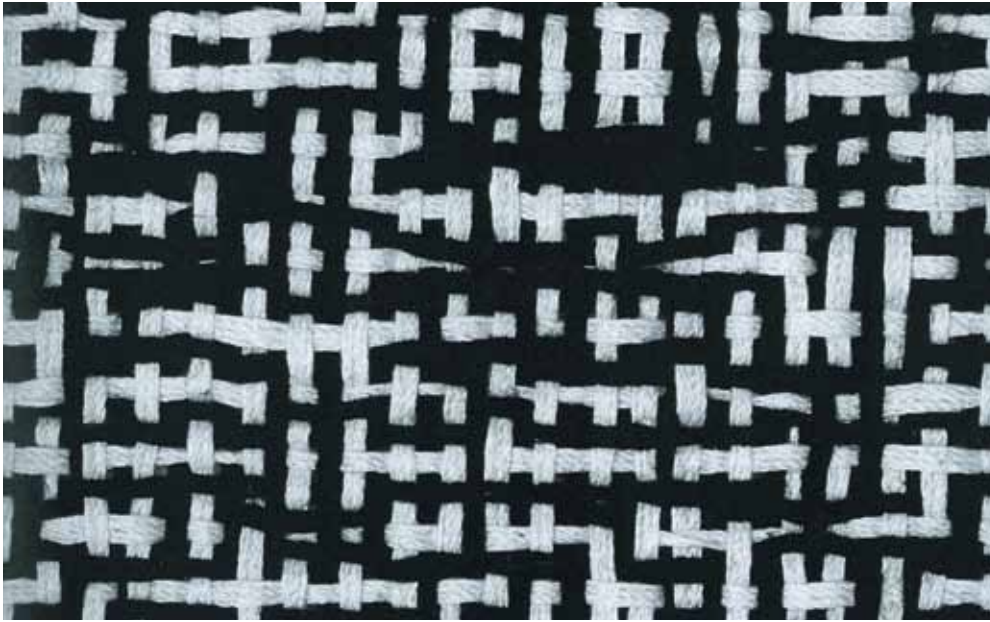
An ancient and figurative form of woven art in central Europe is tapestry. The weft colour creates the elements of a flat image. Contrary to the Finnish ryijy, tapestry is woven on a vertical loom without knots. It was an applied and decorative form of art until the 1960’s. At that time artists started to reflect on the old technique of tapestry in a new way and the term “textile art”

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21 Brenda. 2000. 75

22 Brenda. 2000. vii





“Inside an envelope” by Kirsten Nissen, detail



“Abandoned stage”, K. Rantanen

was introduced<sup>23</sup>. The first Biennale of Tapestry held in Lausanne (CH) 1961 drew international attention to textile art and their creators starting an increasing interest in art textiles. Fine art was than still functioning completely separately and organized in other exhibitions than textile art, also expressed as “soft art”. In the 1970’s there were American and Polish artists among the artists freeing textile art from its soft reputation. Although they knew about the heritage of tapestry and are grown up with the tradition of the craft of weaving, they introduced new forms and a monumental scale to art of textiles.

The Polish **Magdalena Abakanovicz** is one of the outstanding artists who reached impressive dimensions with the scale of her work a three to four meter high and the number of her woven works. Later she withdrew from the textile circles and considered herself as sculptor<sup>24</sup>.

**Kirsti Rantanen** from Finland also reached monumental scales and free forms with her weaving. Strongly committed to textiles she states: “Yarns are my tools. They submit a message like

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23 Butters. 1985. 2

24 Butters. 1985. 4

words or pictures or a music note”<sup>25</sup> Around the same time Fine Artists applied textile materials to their works for example the “soft sculptures” from Claes Oldenburg and “soft art” is first shown together with “fine art” at the Documenta K-18 in Kassel 1982<sup>26</sup>.

The weaving itself can serve as an inspiration, especially the the basic process of bindings in the mechanical function of the loom and the translation of a weave point into a pixel for digital control. In addition there is the rhythm of the up and down of the shafts and the repetition of the various bindings to create solid and continuous structures. The rectangular organisation of the yarns in weaving causes many limitations. There are certain rules to follow by creating the binding to make a fabric connect to a minimum extent. All these limitations challenge creativity and help to develop new visual looks and outcomes. I embrace these challenges and use them as expressive tools.

Weaving is slow when done by hand. In this moment I turn to my handloom as a method of slowing down. Reducing speed provides a close view of the microcosmos of structures and bindings. “I do weaving because I am looking for a simple rhythm. Structured life is doing good”, I noted in my diary on 11.10.2004

The Danish artist **Kirsten Nissen** uses weaving and the principles of pattern making as an inspiration for her art. Her interests lie in patterns and principles and principles of their constitution<sup>27</sup>. “How much repetition is needed for something to be seen as a pattern and how much divergence can a pattern take before it is no longer seen as a pattern? Does the emergence of the computer as a working tool have any influence on the way today’s people see patterns?”<sup>28</sup>. She reflects at the technique of weaving and generation of pattern with a digital understanding. Her ways of challenging visual habits and prejudices is to combin traditional weaving with digital or mathematical programming and generating of the pattern. I value the way of questioning found within her woven pieces, which reaches thematically far beyond the textile, touching the meeting between culture and nature. **Heidi Tikka**, who graduated from Aalto University in 1989, has created pieces from black and white paperyarn hanging at the textile department already for many years. Now she is a practicing media artist, dealing with the interaction of technology and humans.

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25 Priha. 200. 25

26 Jefferies. 2008. 36

27 Koumis. 2005. 62

28 Koumis. 2005. 61

### 3.2. Weaving and painting in dialog

In this place a chapter only about painting is missing. The history and present movement of painting goes beyond the framework and scope of this examination. In what follows, however, I would like to highlight some points to compare weaving and painting according to my observations and intentions.

My approach to painting does not come from art or the art history. I started painting because of my interest in colour. In my diary, (27. 10. 2004), I wrote: “I don’t think its art, what I am doing. I do painting because I fancy colours.” The choices of colour are similar when painting or weaving. Therefore woven and painted works may reflect the same topic and be made out of similar colours. In weaving I have to limit the range of colours I have in mind and choose from the colours of the yarn available. Painting in oil allows me to use colour in exactly all the shades I intend.

“Like a dialogue of two musicians, my painting and weaving are approaching each other and are going to be friends sometime in the future”, from my diary 7.10.2004 when I was in Finland for the first time. In my work weaving and painting quite often deal with the same topic, but express different aspects. I do not wish to mix the two techniques, to avoid compromising. Each, weaving and painting have its own character and language of expression. They function in parallel both with their individual voice. Both painting and weaving requires an eye for colour, especially visible in ryijy or tapestry. To implement an idea of colour in a ryijy instead of in a painting belongs to a different context, and evokes other associations. This would be an ancient, narrower one and regionally defined.

Many female artists who intended to become painters in the past, had to take up a career in textiles for reasons of gender prejudice, like Anni Albers. Although female painters had difficulties to be acknowledged, it was not because the painting as a technique lacks for recognition.

The artist holds the pencil in his hand. The “ductus”, the artist’s brushstroke is individual. Instead the weaving artist can delegate his idea rather easily to someone else. A binding can be exactly described in a technical drawing and implemented by weavers, as the works of Dora Jung’s studio or for ryijy: the institution “Friends of Finnish Handicraft”.





Sketches for painting in my diary 2012



Contrary to weaving painting on canvas definitely belongs to fine art. For the past two centuries painting passed through existential crises concerning the concreteness of its image representation. Talk about the end of painting had already started by questioning painting through photography and the arrival of industrial print techniques in the middle of 19th century. The end of painting is the start of a critical self-analysis beginning of the 20th century: a questioning the essence of the painting<sup>29</sup>. Asking what remains when the representation of an image disappears results in the reduction of elements of image, monochrome paintings, white paintings and grids by artists like: Kasimir Malewitsch, Luigi Fontana, Robert Rauschenberg and Ellsworth Kelly, just to mention a few.

Painting has been influenced by the appearance of other media like video and computer generated pictures. The effect of blur has appeared in painting, which does not mean a painting is undefined. An exhibition held in Hamburg Kunsthalle in spring 2011 was called: blurry effect after/according to Gerhard Richter ("Unschärfe nach G.R."). For **Gerhard Richter** blurring painting is a tool for precision and not for random. The aesthetic of blur raises questions of what a painting is able to reproduce. The exhibition text stated that: The blurring of limits between

29 Meinhardt. 1995



Collage as a colour sketch for a painting



Palette for the latest paintings

painting and photography and the melting with other techniques as well as the nowadays fast pace are conditions for actual painting.<sup>30</sup> Today painting is a field where different positions are possible at the same time as well as different expressions, techniques used by one and the same artist. Richter is an example, practicing different styles of painting parallel.

To the classical education at the art academy alternative biographies are possible and influence the outcome of a painting. For example **Xenia Hausner** (born in Vienna 1951), currently one of the most important painters in Austria, has the background of a stage design career. In her work the experience of stage is visible in the scale and the ductus of painting.

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30 Gassner. 2011

## 4. Finding Ground

### 4.1. What do I mean with the topic finding ground?

“Finding Ground” has different aspects for me, both practically and metaphorically. The word “finding” expresses that there is a result of a searching process. The method I am using is one of trials and errors, of searching and finding. By making experiments I consider whether the results are good or useless.

“Ground” is like soil where the earth is the base, condition and means of nourishment for allowing plants and vegetable to grow. The process of letting grow requires certain conditions of environment and soil. For the creative process of letting ideas grow and artworks to flourish, also needs certain conditions. They need to be found by every individual. I am concerned to find them for my own work.

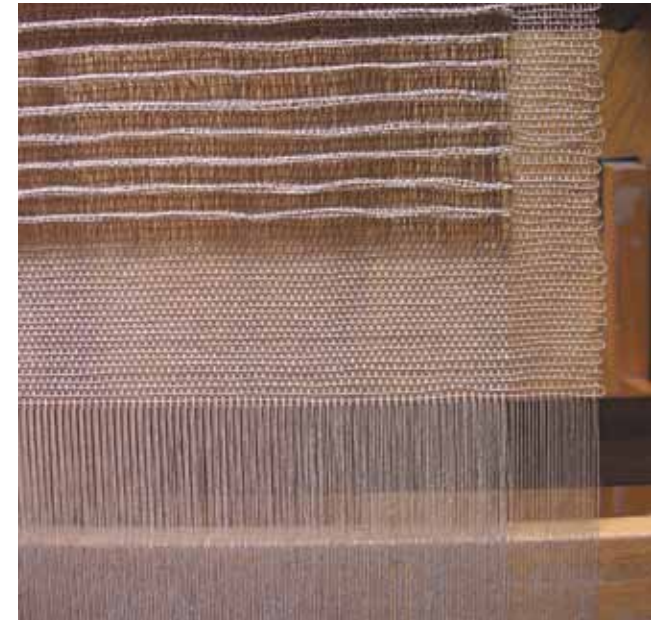
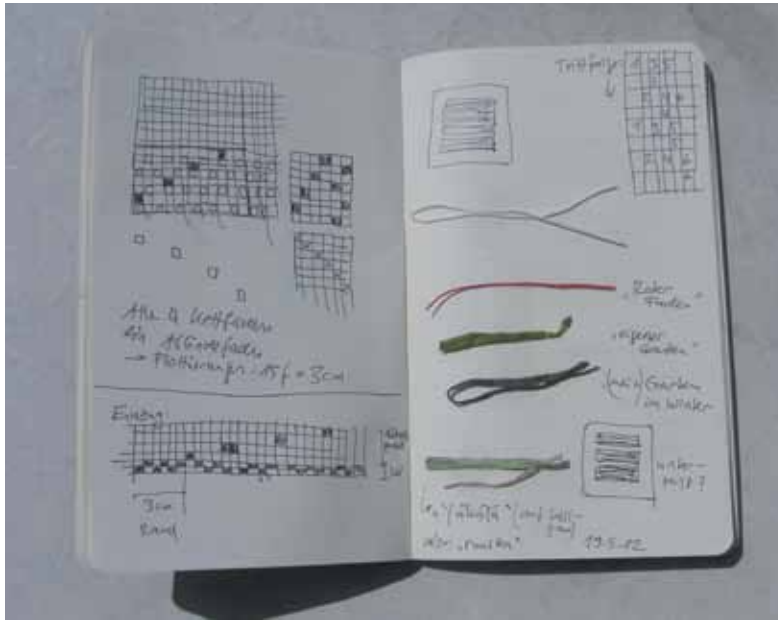
Video artist **Edith Flückiger** says about this theme: “The state of feeling safe and sound, solid and attached to the ground and the earth” to be contrary to: “feel lost in this world, to be without orientation, to fall and get lost...<sup>31</sup>. In her work she deals with the that state of having lost ground.

“Finding ground” can have a spatial, geographical aspect. The topic deals with a place or the image of a place, it might be a fictional one or a real one. My paintings remind me of a landscape as does my weaving, when seen from a close up perspective and at a flat angle. Indicated by the view of a horizon, landscapes raises the illusion of a place, of an outdoor area. For spatial connotation this is the minimum that is needed. No more details are shown, just the basic hint at a place, surrounded by a colourful fog. The interplay of blur and clear elements gives the idea of the topography of “searching” and soon after, “finding”

For me Ground strongly stands for structure and rhythm. The weaving gives a structure in my time and everyday life. This structure and all the activities I do regularly, provide a base for life and for growing. This contains the aspect of making a network, spinning connection to people and places, creating my own structure. The division of time into weeks and the days into common workdays and days off has already been a topic at my work “sundays” and the works

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31 Flückiger. 2002. 17

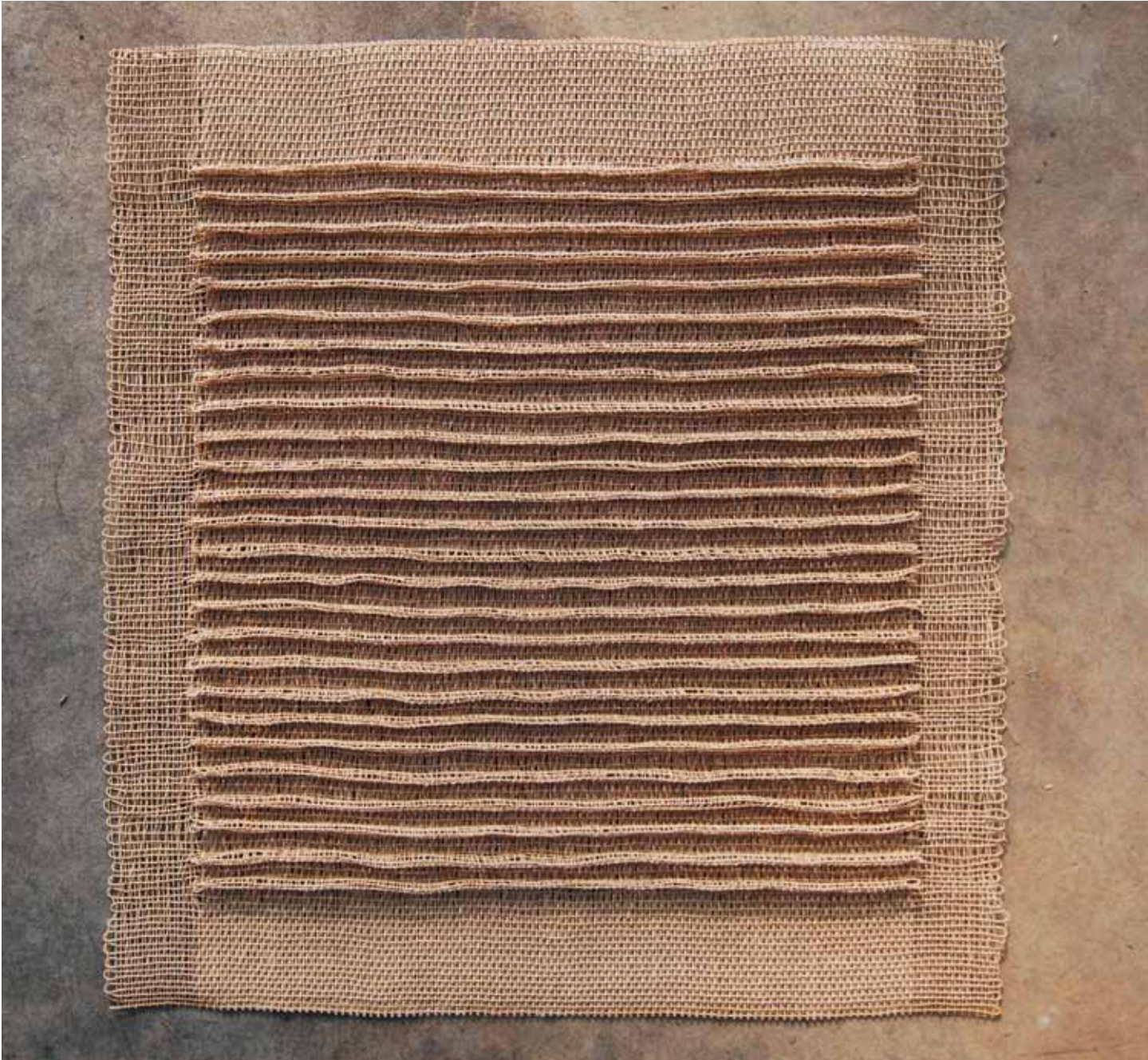


Bindings and ideas for “finding ground” and work on the loom

for the “genesis” exhibition. It is part of our western and Christian culture. “We are about to give up an achievement of our culture in favour of convenience,” My father questions current trends of loosening that strict rhythm. According to him, the structure of time enable a free mind. Eliminating that structure has been used by autocratic states like China with the purpose of brainwashing.

Furthermore finding ground means to me finding reason. I am trying to find out why I am doing art. I probably came to associate that because the German word for ground is the same as for “reason”: Grund. When I know why I am doing what I am doing, when I know why I wanted to start, a solid background and drive/motivation to keep on doing it is then provided.





“searching” the first one from the series “finding ground”



Detail of "searching"





“at ground level”



“near the clouds”

## 4.2. Material, format, colour

Paper yarn has sculptural properties. They are shown best in a three dimensional form. A double weave with folds and two independent movable wefts emphasises the grooved structure and creates volume. Leaving a margin of three to four cm with flat binding on all sides around allows the fold structure come out into a central display and evokes the effect of a frame. Each object is woven in one piece without assembling or finishing work. It is ready when it is taken off the loom. For weaving fine folds with paper yarn only thin ones can be considered. For both, the under and the upper warp I use the one with 0.4 mm diameter from the German factory GarnTec. It is available raw or bleached. The folds vary in size interrupted by gaps. For weft I play with colours and contrasts and use also the thicker yarn and the flat paper ribbon. Resulting variations of waves rises in various grades of clarity from the ground level fabric. The weaving measures about 32 x 32cm. The ripped surface is meant for a horizontal display in a vivid way, just according to its own form. “Floating” at eye level, the viewer gets a close look and an illusion of topography. It is the viewer, who determines the level zero with his eye hight.



“bigger jumps” in black





“bigger Jumps” in red

Colour shades are strongly influenced by the natural raw brownish colour of paper. Earthy and warm colours like orange reddish shades and white, pastel variations are added. Blur and clear areas interplay and express searching, finding or losing orientation.

For painting I choose square as a format which can be turned and combined in various ways: 40 x 40 cm or 50 x 50 cm. It is an atypical format for landscapes. Aimed to be hanging on the wall, the paintings provide a stage, or a background with colour and atmosphere for the flying woven structures.

“Finding Ground” could mean the very practical search for a good and solid construction of the fabric in the case of weaving. That structure should provide the material a unique expression, without imitating another material.

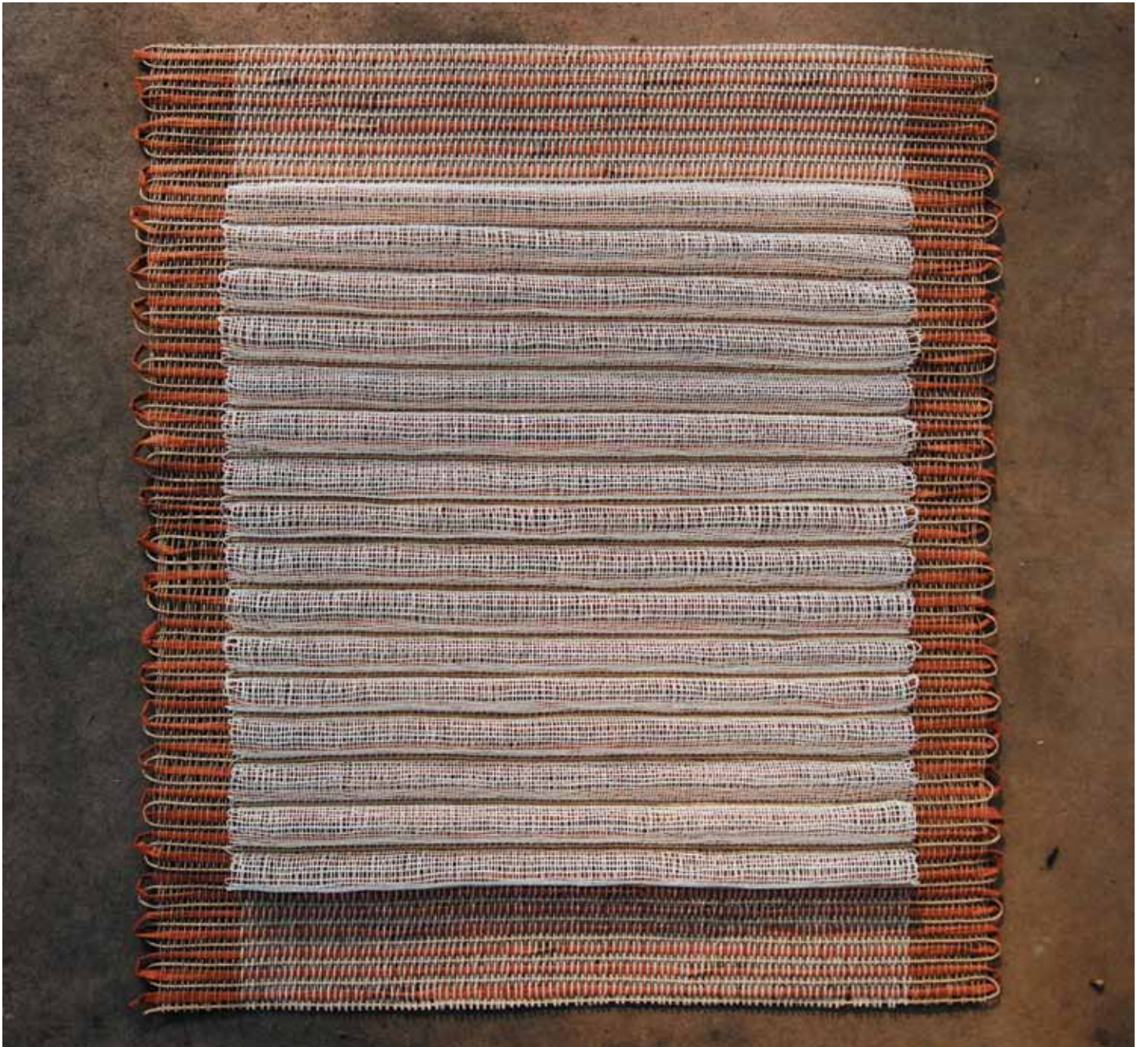


“between here and there”

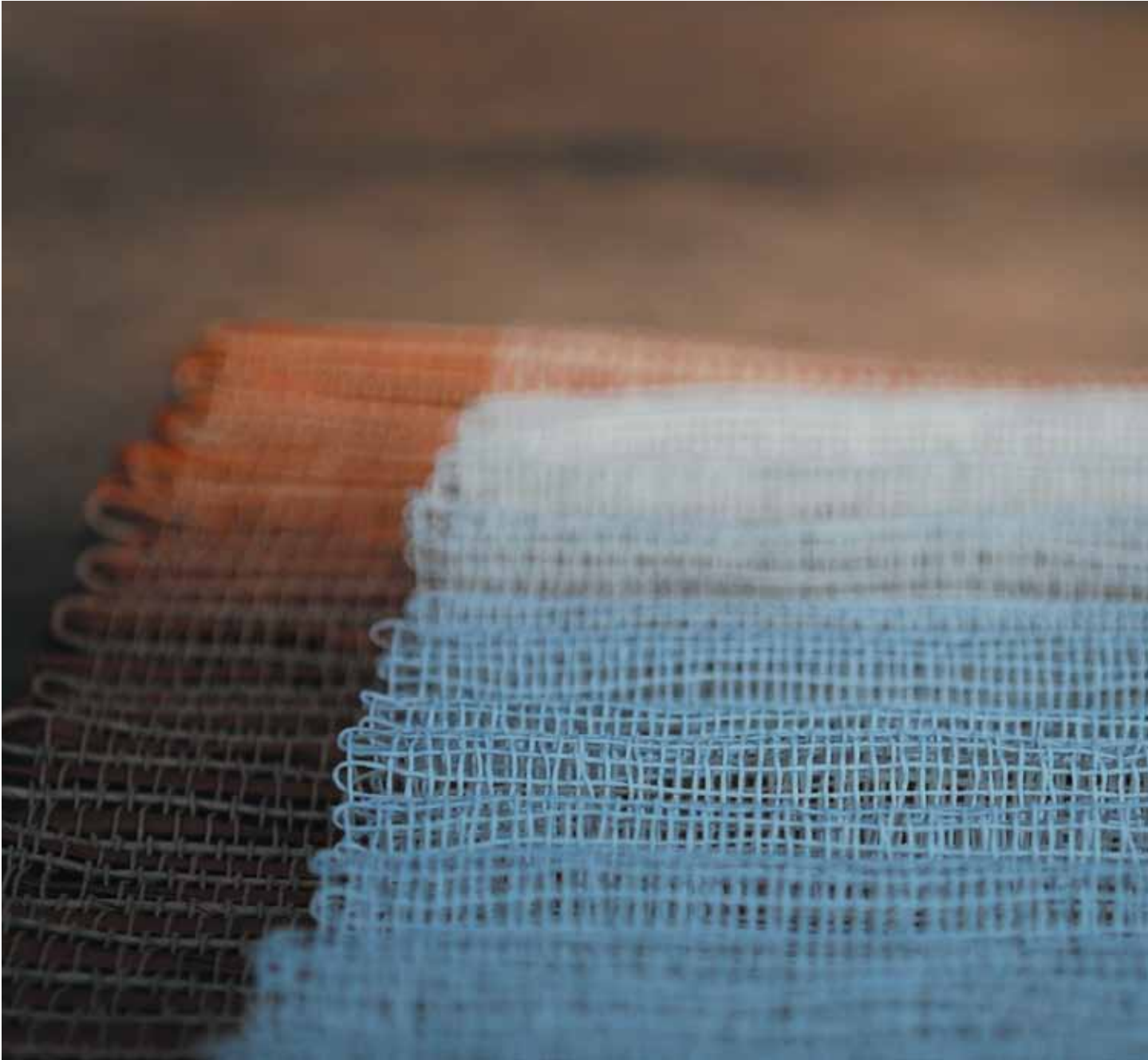


"ground"





“near the clouds”



“near the clouds”, detail





"somewhere"





“getting clear”



Detail of “getting clear”

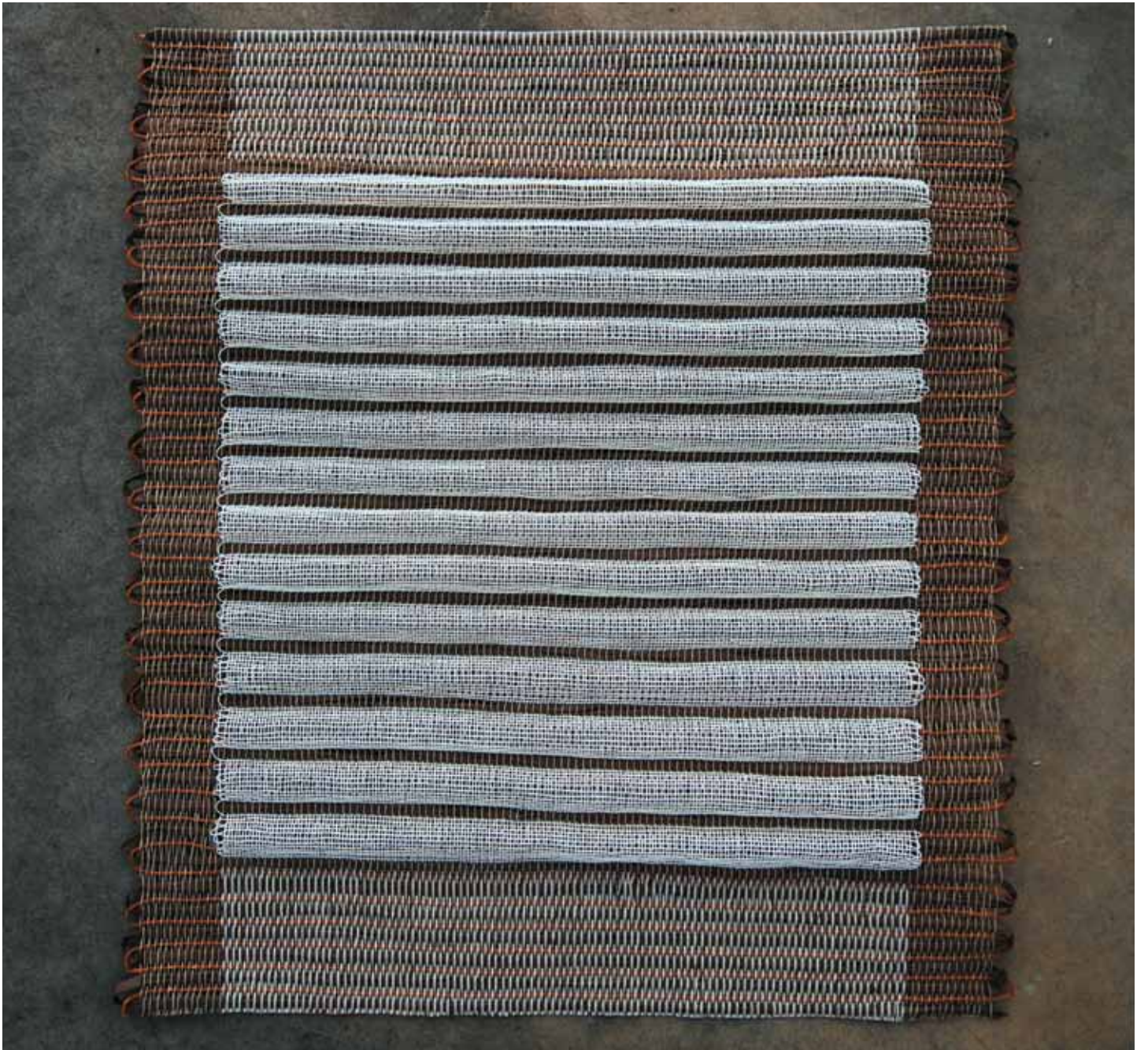
### 4.3. The works “finding ground”

Four paintings and six woven objects are the actual products of “finding ground”. It does not mean the topic is discussed to a final extent. Additional works may be added to the series in the future. Names given to the works are momentarily and might be changed in another context.

The process started with weaving of samples, bindings and on the other hand with the search of fabric for the canvas, the basics of creation. By reducing more and more elements, a focus is found. Painting and weaving proceeded simultaneously. Each technique is an inspiration for the other one and helps continue their process. It is a dialog between them with mutual enriching and feeding of ideas. To mention is the topic of blur and acuity that appears in painting. It led to a discussion of how to translate that topic in weaving.

While getting clarity, finding a horizon and an alignment to ground level it became clear that the woven objects are float in horizontal display. The paintings are ment for the wall and build a background and colour atmosphere.





“finding”

#### 4.4. Exhibition “Lange nirgends”, 31.8.–21.10.2012

Showing my own works in an exhibition to a public audience is part of my thesis. Placing it into a context as well as choosing that context, building an atmosphere of space with my works belongs for me to the creative process. Further more making it available to comments or even to buy is part of “finding ground” and growing as an artist. It is a play, by showing artworks in different light and space, or hanging them in different way, the attention and the visitors experience varies.

The connection to St. Gerold goes back to my childhood. Regularly I went there together with my parents and brother until the age of 14, to spend our ski holidays combined with music and culture. It has a long tradition of supporting artists and musicians.

My exhibition took place in the “Klosterkeller” of the Propstei St. Gerold, Austria. Belonging to the monastery of Einsiedeln the Propstei runs as a guesthouse and offers a range of seminars. In the region it is well known for its distinguished concerts and its gastronomy. The “Klosterkeller”, where my exhibition was held, is the restaurant and a space for cultural activities. It draws both local and international audiences.

With postcards I invite people interested and friends to my exhibition. The picture on the invitation card does not reveal the scale of the work and arouses curiosity. It shows a detail of the weaving in front of a blur landscape. Postcards are valuable means of communication and handouts.

The text in the brochure by Christine Lederer: «Mit dem Titel der Ausstellung definiert die Künstlerin einen Zyklus, der im Moment der Präsentation abgeschlossen scheint. Sie zeigt in St. Gerold aus Papier gewebte Objekte, Bodenstücke und Sonntage, Briefe und Nachrichten, sowie Malerei. Ihre Arbeiten sind ein wiederkehrendes Suchen nach Struktur und Grenze; finding ground in einer Art Bodenlosigkeit; innere Landschaften nach Außen. Die Künstlerin sagt: Ich muss mich arrangieren zwischen dem Gut und dem Nicht.»

The text refers to the restart of my artistic activity, the picking up the threads. It is hinted at the end of a state of vacuum, a period of being nowhere that is than completed. On the other hand it illustrates the collection of different objects and topics. It talks about the process of working and constantly searching for structure and “Ground” in art and in a geographical sense.





Two different photographs for the invitation cards

It was a different situation when we held our exhibition in Kyoto 2009. There we were part of a conference held at the university which gave us publicity, even though we were not locally connected in that area. Now the “lange nirgends” exhibition took place in the region where I lived for more than three years and where I have been making friends and am networking during that time. This was a fortunate situation in order to find an interested audience and be in a dialogue with them.

The exhibition space with a vaulted ceiling is divided into a main space and around the corner three more rooms. All of them are connected to each other. The surface of the walls have a rough white painted surface. The order of hanging is chronological and according to the topic. Older works (from 2009 to 2011) are shown in the main entrance space. These are the works dealing with the topic of time, and the works with filigran weavings.

In the second little room more colourful works from 2012 hang on the white wall: “Own garden”, “Ruska”, “Jäkälä” and in the third room the “Finding Ground” paintings. A red square painting in the back of the last room drew visitor’s attention. It was already visible from the first room. It was specially made to suit that purpose. Together with “the red thread” these two red



The “lange nirgends” exhibition in St. Gerold

squares build the end of the tour. Besides the opening I held a guided tour twice for people who were interested. For the opening at the 1st of September, I engaged the musician Andi Amann. With double bass and loop station. He created a background sound with several layers and repetitions. He calls them “Soundscapes”. I recognize a connection between his music and my works. In both repetition and rhythm are central and they create an atmosphere without being loud or in the foreground.

My father gave a speech at the opening. His speech drew a bow through my works and the facilities. It combined the different works and topics and lifted them to a philosophical level. By interweaving the different works and topics of the exhibition, he presented a philosophical point of view concerning a dispute about both of the words: “lange” (long time) and “nirgends” (nowhere), a timely, and a spatial dimension. The text of the speech is attached in the end.

As a visitor mentioned, titles were important to gain access to the works, especially for those who are not so familiar with visual language. Comments were encouraging. Most reactions are surprise about the material of paper and the three dimensionality of weaving. The topics and especially the names of the works served as a starting point for conversations.



Visitors listening to the speech at the opening

## 5. Conclusions

Opening up in an exhibition has been a rewarding experience. “It is good that you show yourself”, a visitor at the opening commented. It was fun to think about a context where I see my works. It makes them complete. The exhibition is a possible form to display works. Lots of samples, ideas and thoughts have been hidden in my sketchbooks and storage for several years. Now I took the chance to “pick up the threads” and restart with a new topic. I first had to look back at the motivation of my previous work and moving to Finland, as well as the history of what has been done before. Therefore the chapter of background took much attention in this thesis.

The progression of “finding ground” has been an adventure. From the beginning it was not clear where the process would lead to. By the time the blurry path became more and more clear and took shape. A horizon appeared and gave orientation. The focus concludes in a geographical place. So the choice for techniques and materials as means for expression became clear. A fundament was laid for me to continue the discussion about art.



I am aware of my thesis being a personal one. This work with its silent expression reaches the audience in a gentle way. This is a contrast to my industrial work for production in big scale and high speed. There I design for specific groups of customers, who wear our products as symbol of high status. “Finding ground” turned out to balance these two poles.

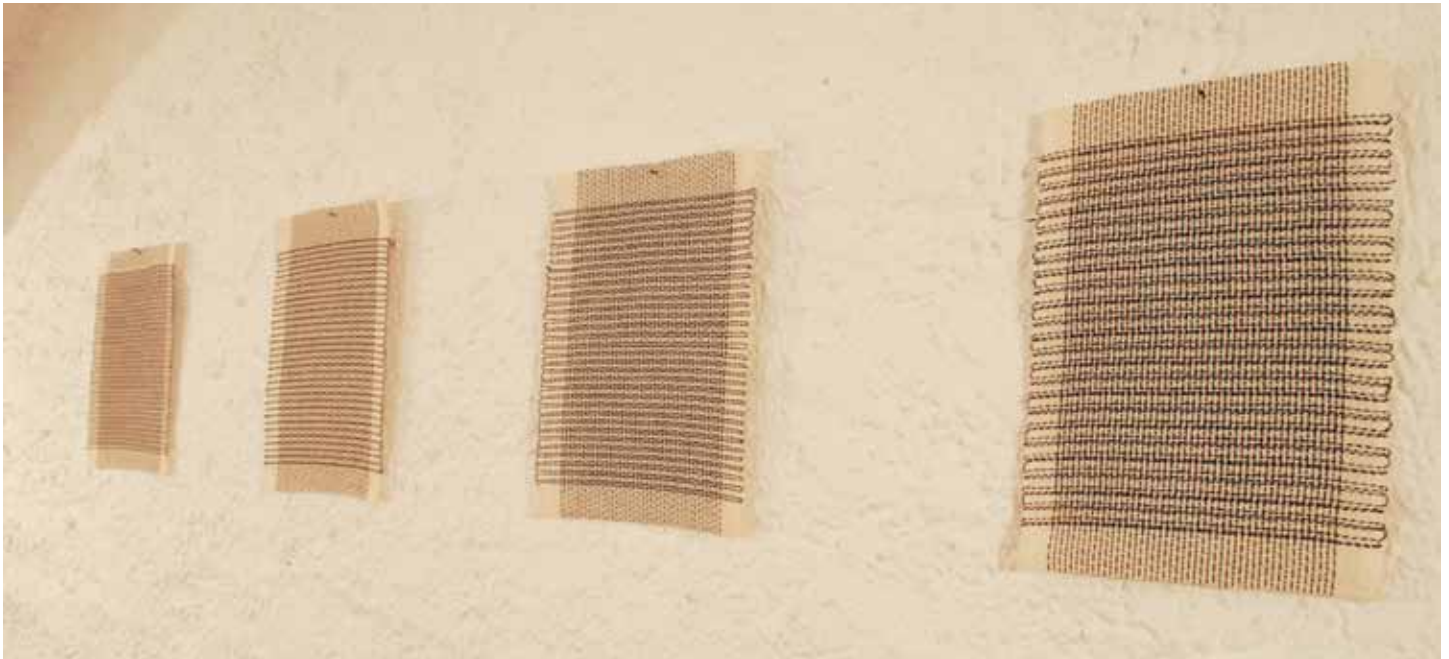
With this examination some threads are woven between Finland and Vorarlberg, between textiles and art. May the texture of the result be visible and tangible in my work.

## 5.1. Thoughts about art

Art and design use the same visual language, techniques and materials. As an industrial designer coming from the applied art, I try to get some orientation in fine art. My designing at the factory is part of the chain of mass production. The patterns, like flowers or geometrical or free forms are empty of content. In particular my current industrial designs at the factory are not supposed to contain any meaning or symbols. I choose art because I am free to examine a certain content. It is a way to deal with a topic which might be conceptional or visual, practical or philosophical. I think that for art there needs to be a discussion or topic, which goes beyond the actual technique or colour. And which raises questions or thoughts, more than just the binding or material.

Art evokes a debate, which goes beyond the material outcome. The visit of the art and design fair “ArtDesign” in Feldkirch(A) raised in me the question: Why spending material and effort producing an object that already exists in great numbers and can be bought for a low prize, for example a stool. I concluded in my diary 11.11.2012: “...rather thinking than producing material.” Why again and again producing something new? Is something new always better?

The process of my thesis and the discussion with my mentors Iris Hutegger and Raija Jokinen have been interesting because both artists, with different backgrounds, represent diverse perspectives in looking at art. To find my own position I have to listen to others first. A statement or an example of an artwork, as numerous are mentioned in my thesis, serve the orientation in the topography of art. There is always a geographical and timely, historical dimension. I have the choice to refer to it or not. “There are steps you have to take out yourself and steps the art history is doing,” Iris Hutegger says.



“Letters to my father” at the exhibition in St. Gerold

Art is a conglomerate of many individual positions. When artists are individuals, how can they fit into a ready made system? Ai Weiwei says about the circus of art: “Art is a game, either you join in or you skip out.”<sup>32</sup> What are the rules?

Ambivalenz and many open questions remain. On 24.11.2012, Christine Lederer stated in a performance about what art might be: “...Sich nix diktieren lassen. Weder von der Werbung noch von der Galerie. Sich gesund zu ernähren und Sport zu treiben. Damit die Psyche sich nicht verheddert. Damit die Gedanken oben bleiben. Wie das Öl auf der Wasseroberfläche...”<sup>33</sup> The text talks about to reconcile personal energy and idealism by being authentic.

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32 Ambrozy. 2011. 50

33 engl: “...dont get dictated, neither by commercials nor by the gallery. Eat healthy and do sport. So that your mind does not get disturbed. So that the thoughts stay on, like oil on the surface...”



My studio in Bludenz(A). It has previously been a carpentry.



## 5.2. Ideas for the future and the new studio

I became more clear about the country in which I want to live. With the studio at the Sturnengasse in Bludenz, in the Austrian alps, I have found a location for my artistic activities. The exchange with the studio colleagues who are working in different fields has been inspiring. Together with my industrial job in the factory located in the same village, a spacial and timely framework is given. With my thesis I have established a rhythm that is intended to continue for the future. It is the rhythm between work and time off, between money and soul, the rhythm between being online or offline is the interweaving of the threads of everyday life.

Surprisingly, during the process of “finding ground” the ground gained a certain easiness and new topics arose. They appealed to my interest for further examinations. These are for example “blur and clarity” in painting and its transformation into weaving. Another interesting theme is how to express rhythm in painting. The dialogue between weaving and painting will carry on and may lead to a deeper expression. In addition I am curious to experiment with different contexts and forms of display and so changing the perception of the works.

Finland remains an important inspiration and the friends there will always stay with me. I am going to visit the cherished country regularly. Might it be an illusion of home, it is good to live with illusions and images. During the time of my thesis, it became evident, that the base of my present life and work is in Vorarlberg.

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## Illustrations:

page 11: Palo-Oja Ritva & Lehto Anne-Mari. 2011

12, 18: Svinhufvud Leena. 2003

14, 21: Mäkinen Eeva.2006

15: Nimkulrat Nithikul. 2009

17: Svinhufvud Leena, Eeva Viljanen. 2009

35: (left) Koumis, Matthew. 2004

35 (right): Rantanen

56, 57, 58: Fotos taken by Rainer Gamohn

all other photos taken by me. p.42-53 with the advice of Rainer Gamohn.



## The speech

From the speech held by Peter Rosenstock at the opening of the exhibition “for a long time nowhere” in St. Gerold, Austria, 1st September 2012. Translated by Almuth Rosenstock.

### 1. Introduction

The topic deals with time and space. “For a long time” and “nowhere” are terms without structure, which lack a meaningful purpose or inspiration.

### 2. “For a long time”

- “long” stands for continuity of time with a beginning and an end but non-committal. Nothing happens. You are waiting for something which should come, but it does not arrive. It is like in the drama of Samuel Becket “Waiting for Godot”. The question “what is time?” was answered diversely in history. Albert Einstein e.g. said: “time is what the clock indicates”. In this way time is reduced to what can be measured. This may be correct, but leaves out man’s inner awareness of his time. Physical time is abstract, constructed. How men realise time is something else, but central for them. Let us be inspired by Augustine, the early church father, who wrote about “time” in this way in his interpretation of Genesis. Dorothea mentions this theme in connection with her object “unshape” and painting “nowhere”, originally created for an exhibition in London.
- Time can reign over us or can be a gift. It is governing us when it seems to us fugitive, as restless haste, running away. Or, what is the same, when time seems to us monotonous, leaving us disappointed without a purpose in life. We are happy when our time is fulfilled instead of entertaining ourselves with superficial amusements.
- The dominance of time is an actual topic in some medias (e.g. the psychologist Daniel Hell in Neue Zürcher Zeitung). In modern psychology “fulfilled time” means “experience of the present” as a medium against “long time”. Augustine interpreted it in a religious way. A “long time” consist of many short sequences of time, which pass and cannot be simultaneous. Eternity however, means all is present at the same time. As already said, “long time” is the absence of a fulfilled” present”, which cannot be shortened or prolonged. . It has depth and can make the world lucid.
- This “present” cannot be kept. It is the source of our inspiration, which does not simply fall from heaven. Its reception must be prepared. The inspiration comes out of a deliberate search, which, when found, gives us rest and the chance to dwell on it (Daniel Hell). To achieve this present does not only need patience but also strategies of defence against distur-

bances, which hinder us all the time. For both - search and defence - structure and rhythm are necessary everyday.

- Dorothea has put this process into shape in her woven object “Sundays”, which she created for an exhibition in Japan. The division of the year into 52 segments, indicated by the Sundays, means a strategy of defence against getting bored and therefore creating a situation allowing for artistic inspiration. In this way, being prepared for the present, Dorothea, when talking about weaving, says “weaving is structure. It is a regular activity which implicates a rhythm. Weaving by hand is structure for me during the day and week.”

### **3. “Nowhere”**

This term is illustrated especially by the object “unshape” and the oil painting “nowhere” which were made for the “Genesis” exhibition in London in 2008. In the beginning God created heaven and earth, (Genesis 1.1). The second verse follows with Augustine’s surprising translation: “the earth was invisible, without order and darkness covered the abyss.” How can the unshaped, the precipitous and the nowhere be connected with God’s creation when it seems to be an undefined space? How can the abyss covered by darkness be enlightened as it is actually done in the painting “nowhere”? This mystery can be explained when you further read Augustine. He said: “Before you interwove the formless material with forms there was nothing; no colours, no shape, no body and no spirit. However the material was not really nothing. It was some kind of unshape without a shape”.

- Augustine looked at the process of creation in two phases. In the first place God created the unshaped material, the tohuwabohu or the maximum of chaos which needs God’s regulating hand. This primarily created material is without shape but can be formed. It comes into existence before God began to count his work in days, before he created time. He formed the already existing formless material in six days. At the very beginning God created light, necessary for all creation which followed.
- The relation between light and darkness is reflected also in the human soul. Before it becomes alive it is also in darkness. But there is no darkness without the vision of light. Both are related to each other. Without God’s arranging and creative spirit the earth is waste and empty. Augustine made the experience himself that man is tempted to fall into darkness. In the 12th book of his “confessions” he prayed that neither his own darkness nor his death should overcome him. This darkness meant for him not being himself, being far from God. This meant he cannot hear his own inner voice, which would make him live.

One loses oneself and comes on to “roundabout” ways. This is a title of another woven object in the exhibition. The source of life fades because of the “noise of the restless”, as Augustine said. But this darkness loses its power when it is confronted with light. Furthermore Augustine said, that he only resists the temptation of going into the dark when he remembers God and the light he created. Then he becomes aware that he must not live inside his own darkness. Remembering this, the darkness becomes something to grasp, it can be formed. Thus chaos becomes an attractive field for inspiration.

But to go back to the pictures and objects of the exhibition:

- “unshape” as well as “nowhere” are the expressions of a certain part of the creation and are showing ways of “finding ground”, the title of other objects in this exhibition. The object “unshape” is apparently a paradox; a trial to give meaning to the formless but formable materia. This is only possible as Dorothea exposes the formless dawn to the coming light, making it visible. I see the painting “nowhere” as a variation of the completely enlightened material. It symbolises the creation after the creation of light on the first day but the moment when the chaos has already withdrawn. The earth is ready to be formed and is predisposed to order. But it does not yet have a body needed to define it as a place.



## Curriculum Vitae

Since October 2009: textile designer for damask for African fashion.

Including businessstrips to West African countries and London.

Mai and June 2009: Internship at Getzner Textil AG, Bludenz, Austria.

Jacquard designs for collection 2010/11 for men's shirt fabrics.

2007, Autumn: start Master Studies Textile Art and Design at Aalto University

2006, December: moving to Finland

2006: Diploma degree in Textile Design, University of Art and Design Lucerne, Switzerland

Diploma thesis: Paperpotential – Weaving and application of Finnish paper yarn;

Research and practical work

2003 to 2006: University of Art and Design Lucerne, Switzerland. Industrial Design,  
specialisation in Textile Design

2001 to 2003: Introduction and foundation course at University of Art and Design Lucerne,  
Switzerland

2004: Exchange term at Aalto University Helsinki

2000: A-level at Kantonsschule Küsnacht, CH

1979: Born in Männedorf at lake of Zürich

## Exhibitions and fairs

September, October 2012: Solo exhibition: “Lange Nirgends” with woven objects and paintings, at Propstei St. Gerold, Austria

November, December 2010: Club Urban group exhibition, showing painting and textile object, London

Mai 2009: “memories of light” paintings and fabrics, group exhibition at gallery Atzki, Helsinki

March, April 2009: “Creativity under given conditions”.  
Group Design exhibition in Kunming, China

January 2009: Stand at Heimtextil Frankfurt with Print designs. “Patternlab”:  
a group of 10 designers from TAIK Helsinki.

September 2008: “Aika” Textile art, group exhibition at Lume Gallery, Helsinki

April 2008: “Aika” Textile art, group exhibition at Cumulus design conference,  
Seika University Kyoto, Japan

September 2006: Solo exhibition with paintings at Sentitreff, Lucerne, Switzerland

July 2006: Diploma exhibition at University of Art and Design Lucerne, Switzerland

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