Emelie Röndahl — **Crying Rya**
A Practitioner's Narrative Through Hand Weaving

UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

Fig. 1. *Serial Babies*, 2016. Rya in wool on linen warp, 50 x 60 cm. Part of an on-going series repeating the same motif.

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A Practitioner’s Narrative
Through Hand Weaving

Emelie Röndahl

Fig. 2 Anna Ehrlemark, 2018. Illustration for *Google Weaving Stop-time*.

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This research project examines a repeated focus on time and slowness that I have experienced over years in connection with my hand-weaving practice using the Scandinavian technique of rya. Research through my own studio practice has led me to question a public image of weaving as time-consuming or slow and why temporality is attributed to the finished object, while I claim that it is only experienced in the making process.

The claim of weaving as slow does not consider the body that weaves. I have wanted to highlight the myth of slowness in crafts and handweaving that does not always match my experience of the bodily knowledge of weaving. The aim is to use myself and my own practice as a hand-weaving artist to explore what is beyond these recurring concepts. My knowledge includes conditions such as frustration, boredom, irritation, as well as joy, curiosity and fascination. This research is thus motivated by what I see as incomplete knowledge, where my contribution consists of understanding my own practice, with transparency through my own knowledge development that I hope is useful more generally to future craft research.

I have combined my writing with several rya projects made in recent years (2016–2022) structured from a personal perspective around my interest in reflection on artistic practices, my body in making and the figurative rya weaves I create. My research offers an example of how the connection between claims about weaving as slow and time-consuming collide with the experience of the development in the studio, as well as with my own body, in a hand-making practice.

I hand weave figurative *rya*, a traditional Scandinavian weaving technique which has a built-in two-sidedness, where the material is pushing out of a textile base giving my figurative woven images the impression that they are crying or falling out. When I weave, I have my fingers in a tangled underground without knowing what is hiding down there. Research through my own studio practice has led me to question a public image of weaving as a time-consuming or slow practice and why temporality is attributed to the finished object, while I claim that it is only experienced in the making process.

My research investigations have their origin in the recurring question I am often asked of how long it takes for me to weave a rya. This question has functioned as a fuel in my search to clarify the underlying thoughts about crafts and time I have faced. I have chosen to address the issue based on the practicing body, the body that weaves, my own. The aim here is to investigate and explore experiences of time within a hand-weaving practice in order to explain how the idea of weaving as time-demanding or slow is both a product of a romantic view of handmaking when compared to my own experience, as well as a practical reality of lived experience in the studio.

The study has been characterized by what the Swedish philosopher Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen describes as the *formulation work*: to face something we have not yet named before, but for that matter do not want to capture in language[1]. With the guidance of her discussions, the practice has aimed at being formulated without reducing it. The project and my artistic practice are placed in a contemporary craft context; a context within weaving with predecessors such as Anni Albers (1899–1994) Hannah Ryggen (1894–1970) and Maria Adlercreutz (1936–2014), female artists no longer alive but vivid and relevant in contemporary textile discourse. These artists also faced questions about time. Albers and Ryggen did not focus on their work as time consuming but rather spoke of content and material, whilst Adlercreutz left behind more romantic statements on weaving.

Several contemporary artists who weave figuratively, among them Erin Riley and Annika Ekdahl, are also used as steppingstones to my own understanding. Both artists are often associated with concepts of slow, intimacy and repetition when their practices are discussed. Professor of Sociology Nick Crossley's explorations on reflexive embodiment, have provided an understanding of how I, as an embodied being, reflect on

my own embodiment, and provided insights into how difficult it can be to change the body in relation to external statements.

The weaving body possesses knowledge that is tacit. Ironically, the bodily knowledge of a handmade practice can be hidden even from one's own practice. In my case, a shift and new insights began to become visible only when I began to understand that I myself repeated a language about my practice that did not match with what my body experienced. Instead, my hidden knowledge became visible when I began to draw by hand, which in turn generated a method to write out my knowledge.

In Part 1, I give a deeper background to my research interest in time through my own practice and from my experience as a hand-weaving artist. I show by example how weaving is sometimes described as *slow/time consuming*, often with a language expressing positive values. While these contemporary weaves are often associated with tradition and history, these concepts often do not match my perception as a practitioner. However, it is a vocabulary I have used myself. I argue that the bodily knowledge of time that comes from within practice often does not match these descriptions.

In Part 2, I share a different kind of experience in my practice that I investigated – an experience of collaborating – in which I learned that collaboration was a much more complex experience in practice than in my mind. In this part, I reflect on a project in which a group of twenty-eight weavers worked together, all from their own studios in several places around the world, as part of the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial. In this project, I worked in my own studio with an assistant, and I share how this led me to insights into what an artistic weaving practice means to me, asking and investigating whether bodily knowledge can or cannot be shared through this type of collaboration.

In Part 3, I discuss my development in practice and how this has informed my understanding of time and two-sidedness as part of learning through deep reflection on my own practical work. In this part I present how I have investigated what is more relevant in practice than the time/slowness described from the outside, even though time is constantly present in all parts. By developing my own practice and experimenting with a faster type of rya weaving; loose rya (*glesrya*), I found that I make room for more awareness and attention to materials and their colours and textures instead of measuring hours in woven rows (to meet internal or real deadlines).

In the concluding discussion, I review the combined reflections, acquired insights and suggest directions for future steps of this research project in the field of crafts in artistic research. I call for artists and practice-led researchers to dig deep into reflections on their own practice, since much of what goes on in the weaving or the crafts studio from the perspective of the maker or artist in craft practices still remains unspoken.

The investigation has led me to the realization that the claim of weaving as slow does not consider the body that weaves. The claim excludes the weaving body. Slowness linked to handmade practices contributes to a romantic view of contemporary crafts. I take with me my experience of the different stories outside my practice and my knowledge and experience from within it and weave the two into one story. This helps to highlight hidden knowledge in practice and provides new perspectives and insights on hand weaving.

In my research I have combined my writing with several rya projects made in recent years (2016–2022) structured from a personal perspective around my interest in reflection on artistic practices, my body in making and the figurative rya weaves I create. These insights, and this story, make knowledge of my own hand-weaving practice when verbalized no longer only personal, but accessible to and shared with others.

Recommendations for further explorations

I recommend further research into repeated myths and clichés about handmade practices that stick and spread.

In my latest woven works, that of my dead dog and those of my own children, I move away from the idea of weaving as a slow medium. The alleged slowness was destroyed in my own language. Partly because I no longer felt bound to how I had used the technique with rya, I spread it out, I allowed the back to be less accountable than before, and I was firmly rooted in the motifs. The myths and clichés about the time-consuming work no longer found a central place.

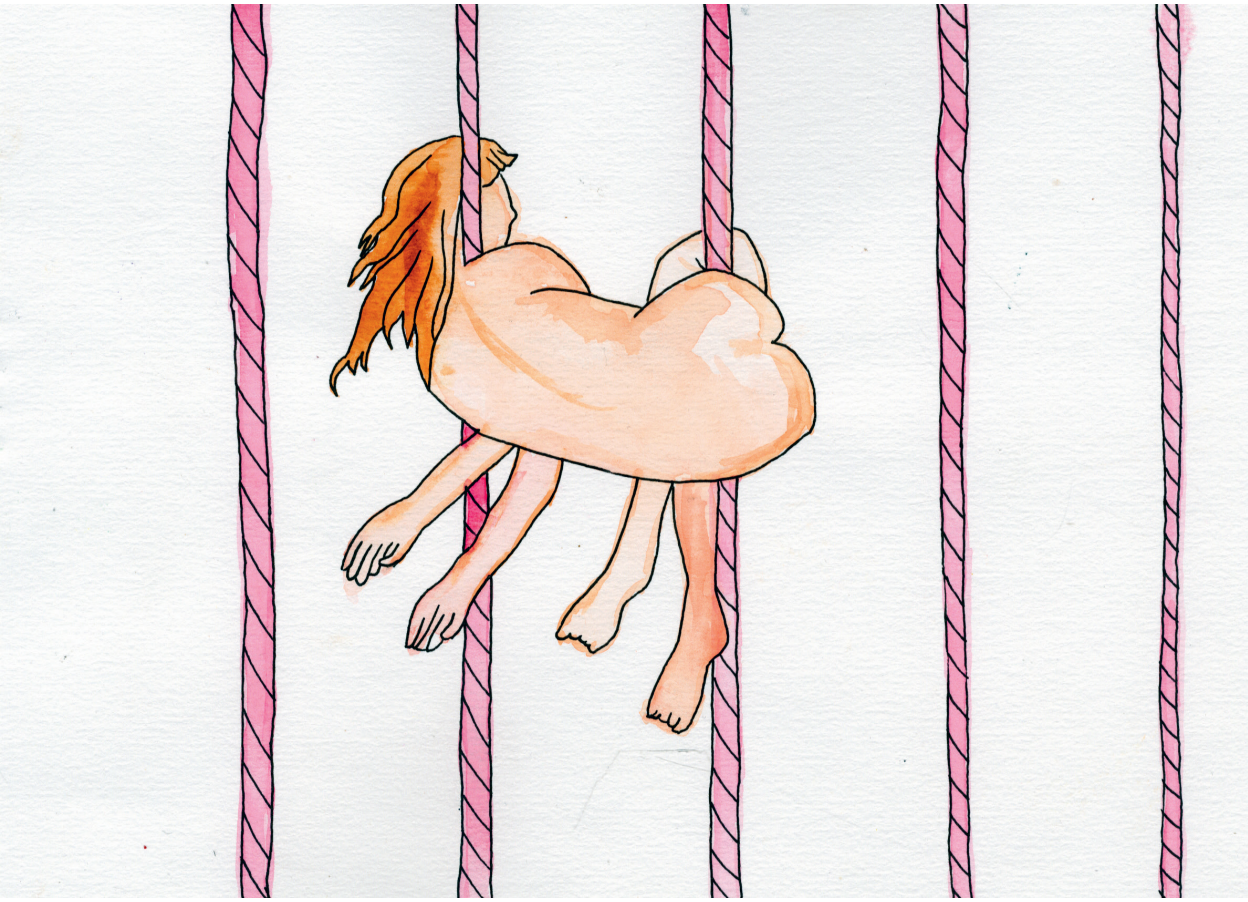
Now that I have expanded my understanding of my hand-woven practice, I have created a space around my reflective ability, and I imagine continuing to explore areas about these recurring claims about how crafts are created. I picture, even if it is beyond my own bodily knowledge, that

ceramics and metal, other textile techniques, and other crafts that exist around the world, have similar oversimplifications attached to them just as the hand-woven has.

A feminist perspective on the body had given more dimensions to this project and is something I imagine will continue for my own part. They are not so highlighted in my presented reflections, but I have read and been inspired by authors such as Iris Marion Young, Luce Irigaray and Ann Cvetkowich, who have shown me ways I imagine I could continue a future work with a feminist perspective that begins in the body. The body in my work presented is a particular one: pregnant, then mother. Early in the project I wanted a feminist analysis, but this way of academic work was too foreign to me at the time, and I needed to start in what I mastered. Theoretical feminism has been too far away from my practical reality. Now I can see that what I also wanted was not to be overshadowed by theoretical analysis. I did not want to get more lost than I already was. But now that a basic understanding of the practice has been laid, and the myth of my hand-woven practice has been questioned and described from a new perspective, I see it as the next step in examining through which bodies the myths surrounding crafts are projected and repeated.

1 Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen. Att reflektera över det som ännu inte sagts. In *Methodos – Konstens kunskap, kunskapens konst*, Magnus William – Olsson (ed.), 63–84. Stockholm: Ariel Förlag, 2014.

Fig. 3. Emelie Röndahl, drawing, 2021. All future drawings are author's own.



Introduction

Studio-note May 2022

Weaving portraits is like clawing someone's face: I see you look happy, but beneath the surface you are angry, sad, lonely, broken, dead.

I scrape them in the face with my two hands. The action is experienced and systematic. The result is leaking and pouring and bleeding yarn from its textile bottom.

Background To Research Interests

One question I often hear is: *How long did it take for you to make this?*
The question is typically asked at an exhibition in front of one of my rya weavings.
My answer can be simple: 50 hours. Or 100 hours. But from experience I know that the answer is rarely satisfactory, either for the person asking or for myself – at least not the answer that tells only the number of hours. The question can be annoying. Is what I do only seen as a time-consuming project to prove something like perseverance, skill, patience? There is a romantic shimmer about the question as I experience it. For a long time, I thought my thesis was about to solve this time issue. "How much time it takes" is not a research question, but it has evoked curiosity, and my research topics are a response to that. My research takes place in the space between this innocent question and the answers I seek.

Within some craft practices, such as hand weaving, there is often a focus on time both from the outside (writers, curators, theorists and exhibition visitors) and from the inside (artists, designers, weavers), as revealed in questions like "How long did it take you to make it?"[2] or statements like hand-weaving on a loom is a slow process, or even "extremely-time-consuming".[3] I am not innocent myself: I have talked a lot about time.[4] I think that when textiles similar to mine end up in a time-consuming category, other qualities go unnoticed and, above all, *they are not really time consuming considering the speed of hand work*. This idea of slowness and this question have always triggered me, but although I used to always respond quickly with a number of hours, the research process has forced me to explore and understand both the question and my response from within my practice.

Slowing down is trending in western culture in the last decade. A quick glance at the magazines for sale in my local supermarket reveals head-

lines relating to "slowing down" associated with magazines on various topics – with yoga, mindfulness, running, food, gardening – it seems nothing is exempt from the call to slow these days…
The Slow Movement advocates a cultural shift toward slowing down life's pace. It began with Carlo Petrini's protest of the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in Piazza di Spagna in Rome in 1986, which sparked the creation of the slow food movement. Over time, this developed into a subculture in other areas, like the Cittaslow organisation for Slow Cities. The slow epithet has subsequently been applied to a variety of activities and aspects of culture.

Carl Honoré is a Canadian journalist who wrote a book in 2004 that would later become an international best seller, *In Praise of Slowness*, about the Slow Movement. On craft he writes: "Crafts are a perfect expression of the Slow philosophy."[5] The sentence is placed in the chapter on leisure, so I understand he means as a hobby. Honoré does not mention weaving as a hobby, but he writes about knitting:

> Many knitters use their hobby as an antidote to the stress and hurry of modern life. They knit before and after big meetings, during conference calls or at the end of a tough day.[6]

It seems complicated to weave "after big meetings", but "at the end of a tough day" seems reasonable. Weaving as a hobby and as a profession are different things, but it still makes me think how complicated it is when crafts get the prefix slow in the exhibition context, such as in the 2010-11 exhibition *Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution*.[7] The word slow may be understood as a tempo, in the sense of something being slow, or in the context of the Slow Movement. The pace, the slowness, is not conceived for understanding weaving or other crafts, and a basic understanding of slow means that things should happen at different tempos, sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly, depending on the circumstances. On art (which is not craft to Honoré), he writes, "Paintings, sculpture, any act of artistic creation, has a special relationship with slowness."[8] He goes on to write, "In galleries all over the world, artists are putting our relationship with speed under the microscope. Often the works seek to shift the viewer into a more still, contemplative mode."[9]

In the 2012 exhibition *Slow Art,* curator Cilla Robach at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm showed crafted objects that she believed fit under the rubric of slow. Robach explains the exhibition:

> The objects that are presented here as *Slow Art* were hand-crafted in slow, often intricate processes. The considerable time required to make these works has not always been a cause of frustration for artists or craftspersons. On the contrary, they have valued time and regarded slowness as a central element in their artistic process. Many practitioners have put special emphasis on shaping certain details, without having to fear the mental boredom or physical pain of repetition. Instead, the viewer suspects that they have found tranquillity in the monotonous and slow work stages that were required to create a specific piece.[10]

I weave ryas, a traditional Scandinavian rug technique in which knots are tied at the same time that a smooth surface is woven and holds the knots in place (Fig. 2). The knots are folded around the warp, so one side of the fabric becomes hairy and the other becomes smooth. I use this technique to make figurative textiles. Weaving work, for me, happens at the loom, and it is something I distinguish from other parts of the practice such as planning, thinking and organisation – elements that do not constrain the rest of my life to the same degree, but rather can be fit in between other commitments. The loom is concrete and divides the surrounding life. In my case, as a professional weaving artist, the loom is also where everyday life is processed, as it fits in with everything else that needs to be taken care of: family life and studio time adjust to each other. At the same time, however, I can also say that the loom is a place beyond everyday life, a place where domestic tasks are set aside, and offers a life where I am only responsible for myself and my visions and goals. As a weaver I am slow and fast, bored and frustrated. I like to weave and do it as much as I can, but I get pain in my hands and my shoulders get stiff. Sometimes I tear threads in anger and I lose my temper, and I also have very good patience and can work tirelessly if the circumstances are right. In my weaving practice, I have chosen a specific knot (there are many kinds of rya knots – see Fig. 4) and style of weaving as my artistic expression. The knot I use is the simplest and the first and only one I learned in my preparatory weaving education before my advanced studies at HDK-Valand, which may help describe my perspective. Working at the loom, weaving a rya, defines the place where I immerse myself artistically in images, light and contrasts, materials, textures and colours. It is important to point this out, because the question how I weave a rya did not come up until one of the final seminars late in my doctoral education. I had never thought of that before, which shows that my preconceptions are so embedded in my practice, so absorbed by it, that the practice seems essentially invisible to me.

Fig. 4. Vivi Sylwan, *Svenska Ryor*, p. 64. Variation of knots, figure 12 shows how I tie the knots.

My artistic interests have always revolved in various ways around visual content that can be associated with sadness, sorrow and anxiety – and with material associations such as broken surfaces and crying tears of loose threads. My colour choices have tended toward the childish, with pastel colours that I have contrasted with darkness.

I earned my MFA in Crafts at HDK in 2012. When I wrote my application for the doctoral programme at HDK-Valand in 2016, I expressed a "longing to reflect" on my artistic practice, but I could not understand the assignment beyond what I already knew when it comes to weaving and reflecting on it. The title I used was "Woven rya: to make silent material speak" – an incomprehensible title for me today. The application began with a long artist statement and this clarification: "I wish to answer the question 'Where does the picture start in a rya woven tapestry? And how does it face a viewer in a public space?'"

My fantasies about how my doctoral project would develop were quite simplistic. I described how I would weave one and the same motif throughout all the years of the programme. And I wanted to write about images, I think. I was accepted into the programme and thrown into an uncomfortable context with an academic language that stressed me out – with titles and authors and theories I had never heard of before. I felt like failure was inevitable before I even got started. Except in one area: the practical weaving. Weaving was my safe place.

About The Title

A rya is a type of weaving with a tied-in knotted pile that was traditionally used as a bed blanket and later as a floor rug in Scandinavia. My understanding of the word rya is related to the geographical and cultural context I grew up in. Although most Scandinavians may no longer be sure how a rya is constructed, in a Swedish language context the term is not foreign but instead carries the stereotype of being a "hairy" textile. I am using the word hairy instead of the more common term explain textiles like this: shaggy. To me hair is not just hairy, it is growing. It is alive. *Like a baby*. For me as a weaver, the concept of a woven rya (there is also a type of rya that is not woven on a loom, which is not my focus) stands for several things at once: technique, method, artistic practice, craft and tradition.

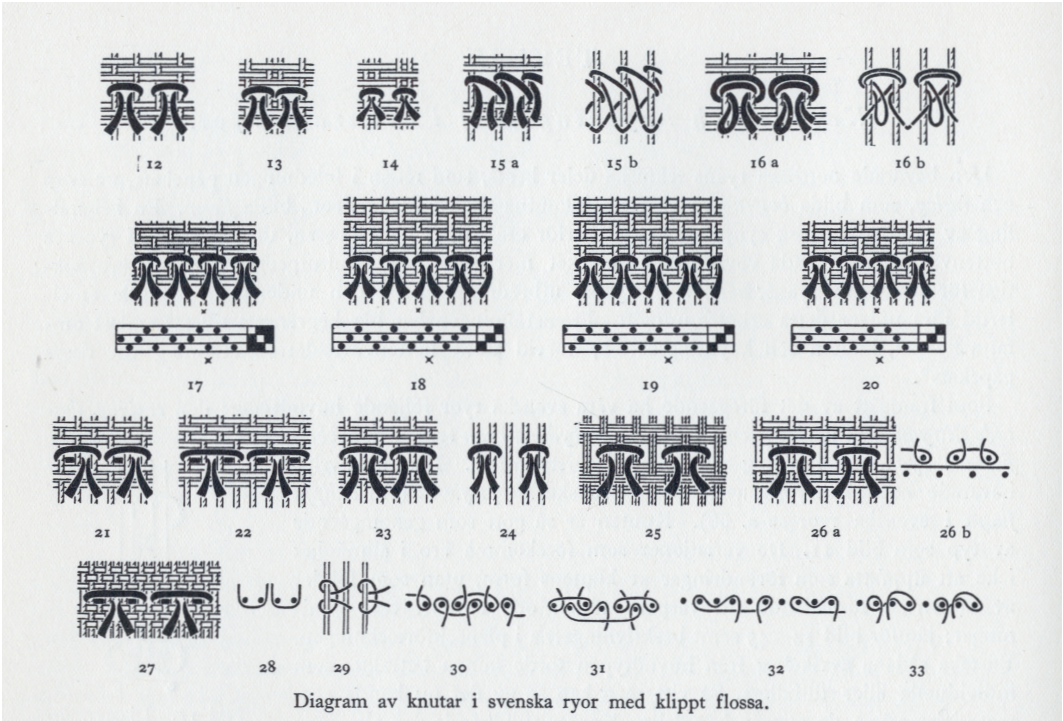


Diagram av knutar i svenska ryor med klippt flossa.

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The title aims to show that the narrative part of the ryas I weave is important: the motif comes from something and carries with it a story. The rya itself also says something about its origin and its history, and means to say both that ryas are narratives and that my ryas tell specific narratives with their specific visual content. *Crying* indicates both visual content and weaving process.

The concepts of time and two-sidedness are the mainstays of my thesis project. It is in the concept of two-sidedness that I try to see and expand my knowledge through my practice.
Time (in terms of pace) as perceived by the general public provides a background for the work, a general context that I call a public image. It is in the search for something, something in the two-sidedness of the technique (Fig. 5), that I find a space in the weave that is most meaningful, a space where my feelings of fascination and deep interest are kept. It is this interstitial space I explore in this project. In this space there is a (tiresome) struggle for the place of craft in art, for the comparative hierarchical ranking of the two, for language, for chasing myths about time and the romantic view of slowness in hand-making that is inaccurate based on my experience as a hand-weaving practitioner in a contemporary art-craft context over the past decade.

Artistic Background

A few years before I began my doctoral education, while I was an artist in residence at IASPIS[11] in Stockholm in 2013–14, I made my first large-scale figurative rya (Fig. 6). I recorded my experience of revisiting the suburb where I grew up in a weaving of wool on a linen warp. The weaving contains different pictures, some taken with my mobile phone, others from Google, and still others from my mother's photo album: a garage in Tensta Centre, a cockatiel, a facade, an interior with a window and a line from a Lady Gaga hit – *I'm on the right track baby, I was born this way*. From this first rya I made, the two-sidedness in the technique was fundamental; here the fringe was short, and there were only a few main wefts between the knot rows – to get clear but different kinds of motifs on both sides. The two-sidedness built into the technique was a pre-understanding I had through the ryas historical function – its warming quality as a quilt for the bed, a technique invented by its needs.

Fig. 5. Drawing reflecting on two-sidedness, 2021.

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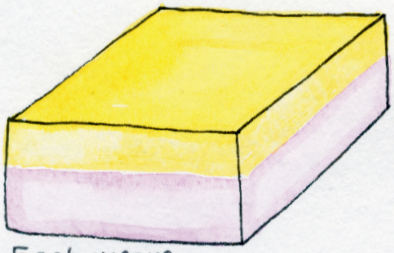
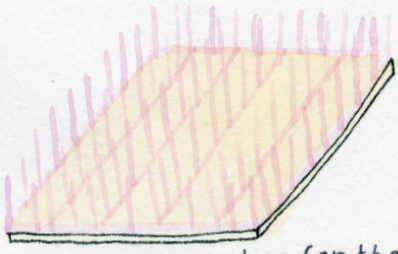
TWO-SIDEDNESS

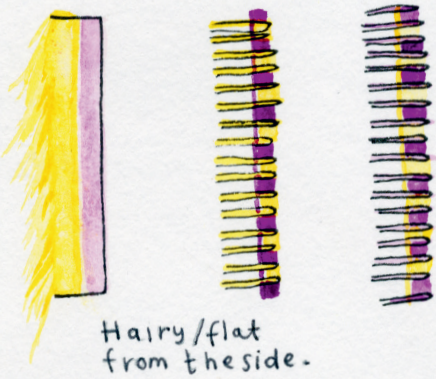


Each weave appears to have two sides (images) with different meanings even though it is ONE piece.

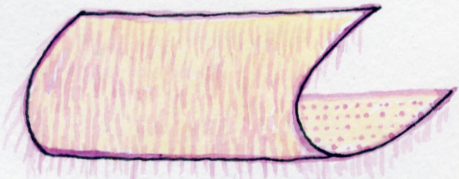


A fascination for the yarn "growing" out from a surface.

while weaving one side is semi-hidden.

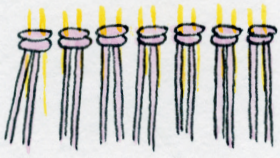


Hairy / flat from the side.



I wish my eyes could see through the hairy surface. But I can't. And this is my drive.

The rya knot from the flat or smooth side.



The rya knot from the hairy side.

I was worried that the motif would disappear if it were too loosely woven. A textile displayed on a wall or bed has only one side visible, but in this early work I chose to keep the work away from the wall and added mirrors to encourage viewing of both sides. This move was instinctive and nothing I really reflected on at the time. In addition, I had learned in community college that "a rya has three centimetres of plain weaving between the knot rows",[12] so it was a rule I obeyed uncritically. The back had great value for me, especially artistically. By exposing the two sides (drawing attention to the second side through the mirror behind), I imagined that my weaving became more than a rug. I carefully counted all the knot rows in the finished weaving and described these rows as countable *time*.

Fig. 6. *Return of the Weaver (Weaver Begins)*, 2015. Wool on linen warp. Detail of installation.

That this rya came about depended on several factors, including:

1. I left my new home in Gothenburg to return to Stockholm and the suburb of Tensta, where I had spent the first years of my life. It is an economically vulnerable community, and although as a child I did not perceive it as such, later my memories have been affected by its political and social status: grey, *sad* concrete buildings blend with childhood games in the yard between them. The return felt obvious and important in order to understand my life as it was at the time. As a recent graduate of an art academy, I had an idea that I wanted to be just a weaving artist – I wanted to weave the return visit.

2. I have pictures from my childhood, pictures that are part of the construction of my memory of childhood.

3. There was initially my idea to use *The Bayeux Tapestry*[13] as a reference (Fig. 7) – a textile referred to as a "tapestry" though it is technically an embroidery and tells of the battle of Hastings in 1066 in a lengthy fabric. In my version it would instead tell about my early life. In the *Bayeux Tapestry*, Vivi Sylwan has noticed that we see a man lying on what is thought to be a rya, which I saw as a further connection to my interests.

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Fig. 7. *The Bayeux Tapestry,* detail. Vivi Sylwan recognise (*Svenska Ryor*, p. 18) the gray-green cloth in the sequence appears to be a rya. Denny & Filmer-Sankey.

I searched for expressions that could be associated with the decay, fatigue and sadness I was so much drawn to. Should I sew threads into a picture, or tear up fabrics that had pictures on the surface? Initially, my thoughts were whether I could make a weaving that looked torn or ripped – like clothes that have hung out in bad weather for a long time, or like cheese that had been shredded on a grater. Somewhere in that association flow, I thought, *Maybe I can weave an image in rya,* with long threads hanging out of the picture. I started to weave in small sections that I later stitched together. The pieces were only the size of an A4 paper, which had to do with the fact that I did not know of an affordable place to make larger prints, but mostly the fact that I had no clue of the time commitment I was about to invest in this new technique. A small scale felt safe.

The weavings were made on a Glimåkra[15] Victoria loom – portable, something between a table loom and a floor loom. The beater that presses the weft into place is weak, but thanks to the small sizes of the textiles I was weaving, I managed to get an acceptable quality, though for bigger pieces the result gets sloppy because the tension gets uneven. After finishing my piece, I left some of the warp threads hanging and added some new rya bundles that I cut shorter or left as they were. Then when stitching the work together I added more single threads. I was fond of the idea that some *information* was woven in – the information of the content, history and memory, and the image and the small part with text were developed (like photographs) through the different heights of the rya knots.

The finished piece is 6.5 meters wide and 0.3 m high, installed suspended on a steel wire. The residency took place over a period of six months. In the first two months I travelled back and forth between Gothenburg and Stockholm. But as this became tiresome and expensive, I decided to rent a room in Stockholm and went back home to Gothenburg occasionally on the weekends. Looking back, I see how *slowly* I made this piece. There were practical reasons for this while I was travelling back and forth (I did not bring the Victoria loom on the train), but why did it take so long to make even after I moved to Stockholm? It was, of course, the absence of experience.

My fascination for the rya's back-and-front issue appeared immediately as I was making this first figurative rya. What fascinated me was not flipping


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it back and forth, but seeing both sides simultaneously, which I solved visually by exhibiting it with a mirror behind, thinking of both sides as one. On reflection, I think that my presentation of the installation was successful. I was thinking about how hairy pictures work on several levels: we look for the foundation in the blur at the same time we are fascinated by the disorganised tangle. And then, if presented with the smooth back at the same time as the front rya with the help of a mirror, as I did for *Return of the Weaver (Weaver Begins)*, our eyes can wander between chaos and order. I remember thinking of the long piles as tears, as *crying pixels,* though I did not call it that yet.

My practice is repetitive, both in visual style and in working method, as threads tied in rows dangle from the place they are attached. One concern in my artistic strategies and my work with notions of seriality are the serial qualities of the hanging thread, the pile itself, and I ask myself what those threads mean. I believe the answer is embedded in the rya. The long threads on the front of the finished rya and the pixelated back of the same piece together form a document that traces the history of its making. I do not think this is unique to ryas. Other textile or craft techniques may also share this sense of recording traces of their making – all techniques that both build their construction and create surface.
Artist and writer Mel Bochner stated in "The Serial Attitude" (1967), "Serial order is a method, not a style."[16] Bochner argues that serialism is a general working method among artists who use series, repeating variations on a basic theme in their repertoire. Bochner describes the "unnaturalness" of serial art as "heightened artificiality due to the clearly visible and simply ordered structure".[17] Much digital art has been made since 1967, and the intervening time does affect how we see his observation, as digital repetitions have become fast and easy to construct. In textiles, the emergence of digital technologies for printing and weaving has also allowed pattern to become infinite rather than based on repetition.

My studio work has a structure in which I have identified four discernible stages. It follows a logical sequence, because the weaving is practical and naturally has elements, or stages, that follow one after another. It is also worth mentioning that when I say studio, I do not just mean *one* physical place or a delimited room. To me, a studio is a loom and a little space for yarn. Looms can be moved and set up in different places. In addition to a studio of my own, I also have a loom at home in the house where I live. Previously I had one in the basement where I work at HDK-Valand, and sometimes I have also borrowed a loom in the workshop there. I have

brought looms with me to artist residencies, both in Sweden and abroad. There is one in my partner's garage. And so on.

When the inner thought work with the image is finished and I know what I want to weave, I print the image on paper at scale 1:1 as a first step. In this picture *I can see* what it will look like as a rya. But I do not make a further sketch of it. The paper is a base, not an exact model, but it serves as a starting point that defines size in width and length, darkness and light, and colours to a certain extent. A warp that matches the width is set up and the loom is prepared. Setting up a loom involves several stages (which I am not going to bore you with detailing), but as weaver Dienke Dekker explains, "I don't enjoy setting up the warp, but from there on it only gets better".[18] All weavers have different feelings around this.

The second step is weaving. This is the slightly mechanical part of the process, which adds threads to lines and knots to pixels as I weave from the bottom up. The woven image that I saw in the printout grows but is not yet there. The result seems to match my intention, but I cannot yet see the whole.

In the third step, I finish the weaving and cut the piece off the loom. It is released from its tension, and here I get an idea of its volume: the warp is very different under tension and when released.[19] I look at it as its first viewer of the whole. In its entirety, with the different sides, I feel that a new physical dimension has been added that I could not foresee. A kind of "meatiness" in the fluff often gives me a positive surprise and makes me happy. Sometimes I am not happy enough. Sometimes the satisfaction grows with time.
In the fourth step, I take pictures and look at the work through the distance imposed by the photograph. Sometimes I also draw the finished weaving – without technical finesse but to capture the impressions that are similar to my intention. If I look at the drawing at the same time as the weaving, I know why I am primarily a weaver rather than a painter: in the fluff there is a physical darkness that the flat image does not reproduce. In the photograph, on the other hand, contrasts between lightness and darkness are clearer. I like to see them in photographs. However, there is often a lack of bodily understanding of the scale in the photograph.

The project *At the Shore of Amygdala* came about during my residency at the Textile Arts Center in New York City (2014–15) and was the starting point for my application to the doctoral programme I was later admitted to. I wanted to continue what I had learned through working on my first

rya, *Return of the Weaver (Weaver Begins)* (2014). It was the hairy surface that interested me, and how I could connect it to a visual expression that matched the emotions I wanted to work with and reinforce. After the first experience with *Return of the Weaver (Weaver Begins)*, rya was no longer something that was foreign or strange to me, something that I relate to as if from the outside and fantasize about; I was now into its technique, I knew what it could do and what kind of time it demands of me. I had also learned something about the material it was made of. Thus, there was now no question of how I should work, no question of the possibilities of rya, because I knew it at that point.

The difference now, after the experience from my first weaving, was that this sense of "feeling something for" had become a direct entrance into the rya technique and the material – as if the sum of the initial idea, the experience with the technique, and the material qualities that are visible in the rya had been shaped into a way of telling a story: a rya narrative.

In a studio note from this time in 2015, I wrote:

> I weave textiles, rugs, wall hangings: soft, hairy, tactile and fluffy dust collectors. Yarns and threads are tied in rows between rows of plain weave. The picture grows slowly from one side to the other, like a print-out from a printer.

The meeting between my tool (loom) and medium (thread) creates the place where my skills take place. I discovered that the autobiographical story that was the starting point for *At the Shore of Amygdala* fell completely into place, where the seriality of the threads themselves held the story. The rhythm of tying the threads, with the baby slowly growing in the loom, could both convey a force of action to myself (*to deal* with certain things, emotions that came with the personal story attached to this work) and communicate to the outside world. The thread, attached at one end and hanging freely at the other, worked well with my desire to share split feelings about loss and the difficulty of *moving on*. I think of the work, with its long front threads, as something overgrown, something that has lost control and been allowed to grow wild. Weaving is linear, and I cannot so easily go back, unlike some embroidery or other textile techniques. It is built from the bottom and up: the bottom is the start, and the top is the end. This built-in timeline can be related to my memories of this period in my life.

The works of art I weave have motifs that hide something in their hairy appearance but also partly reveal it on their smooth side. The motifs are closely connected with the technique and the material. To describe in general how the image motifs of the weavings come about, there are crucial elements: an event, memory or experience is linked to an impression through an existing image, object or some information, which in turn is linked to a textile experience and, above all, a desire, a will and a skill to weave rya. In my first weaving, the experience was not specifically with rya, but after that first experience, rya became the method for combining an event/experience with an existing image. That is, in the first weaving, I saw in my mind how an image would flow or fall and convey associations with fatigue, sadness or loneliness. After the first experience in 2015, this *falling* was replaced by weaving rya.

These elements cannot be observed from the outside, and it is also difficult for me to identify and say precisely when they occur. The moments manifest themselves in both strong and soft shades and are at the same time both clear and indistinct. What was at first soft and unclear becomes strong and clear on reflection. Max van Manen shares an anecdote in *Phenomenology of Practice*:

> As I stare out of the window into the dark evening, I barely notice the mountains in the distance, across the wide waterways. In fact, I am scarcely aware that I am looking out of the window, until my wife casually walks into the room. "What are you up to?" she queries. Awoken, as if from a daydream, I say, "I am writing." "Oh no, you aren't. You are just looking out of the window." She laughs, teasingly, and leaves. It is true. I was staring out of the window. And yet, while I may have been observing the ocean, following some distant ship with my eyes, I did not really see that. My thoughts were elsewhere. More accurately: I was elsewhere. Where? One way to say it is that I was caught up in the words that I was writing, silently chewing them and then spitting them onto the keyboard, onto the computer screen. But is that writing? Am I writing? Well, yes and no. I am producing words, a text even. Yet, these are just words. This is not really writing. So my wife was right. But when could I say that I am actually writing? I wonder if there is such a moment that I can say: "Now. Now I am writing."[20]

Similarly, I cannot know when I make an image. I can answer (approximately) how long it took to weave the physical textile. But for me, the

image and the woven work are the same thing. And I never know how long the image took to appear.

In *Return of the Weaver (Weaver Begins)*, my first rya, I was inexperienced in the technique. I had virtually no sense of time in my body and could not calculate the time investment. It was exciting to work with something for several months without knowing whether it would work and turn out as I imagined. From my inexperience, I grew increasingly fascinated by the result (which was woven in different, separate parts and later stitched together), both in the course of making and in the finished result.

In *At the Shore of the Amygdala* (2015), my second rya project, I had some knowledge of the technique and how it behaved towards the motifs I was interested in. Here I connected what I had perceived as "long time" through the first experience of rya with my artistic idea for the three pieces. Again, I was in a state of not knowing throughout the process, because even though I could reasonably anticipate and plan for the work, I could not fully know what it would be like. And I was fascinated with the result.

In *Rana Plaza – The Collapse* (2016), a third work I want to mentioned that I made before starting my PhD, the technique was something I now mastered for my own purposes, and I had learned a lot about how colours and contrasts worked in the technique. I could predict the time it would take, I knew that the motif would work in rya. This time I had increased the scale to a much larger work than the previous ones. In addition, I made it in two pieces that I wanted to match perfectly across the seam between them. Therefore, it became important to add a system in which I noted the number of woven rows, because I needed to have a feeling for how hard I should pack the weave. I could know that if I kept track of how many rows I had woven, the two parts would fit perfectly when they were sewn together. In my personal notes I drew something similar to this (the original note is lost): Date – number of rows – length in cm (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Drawing, 2020. Notes on weaving time.

In this way I knew both the time required and that the motif would fit. I have continued with this method, in cases where it is needed – if I have a deadline or there are several parts to be sewn together. If this is not the case, I do not use the system. Here, too, the fascination with the result was my reward for this large work, which I could not see in its entirety. Since I cannot see the full textile while weaving, since it rolls up on a beam while

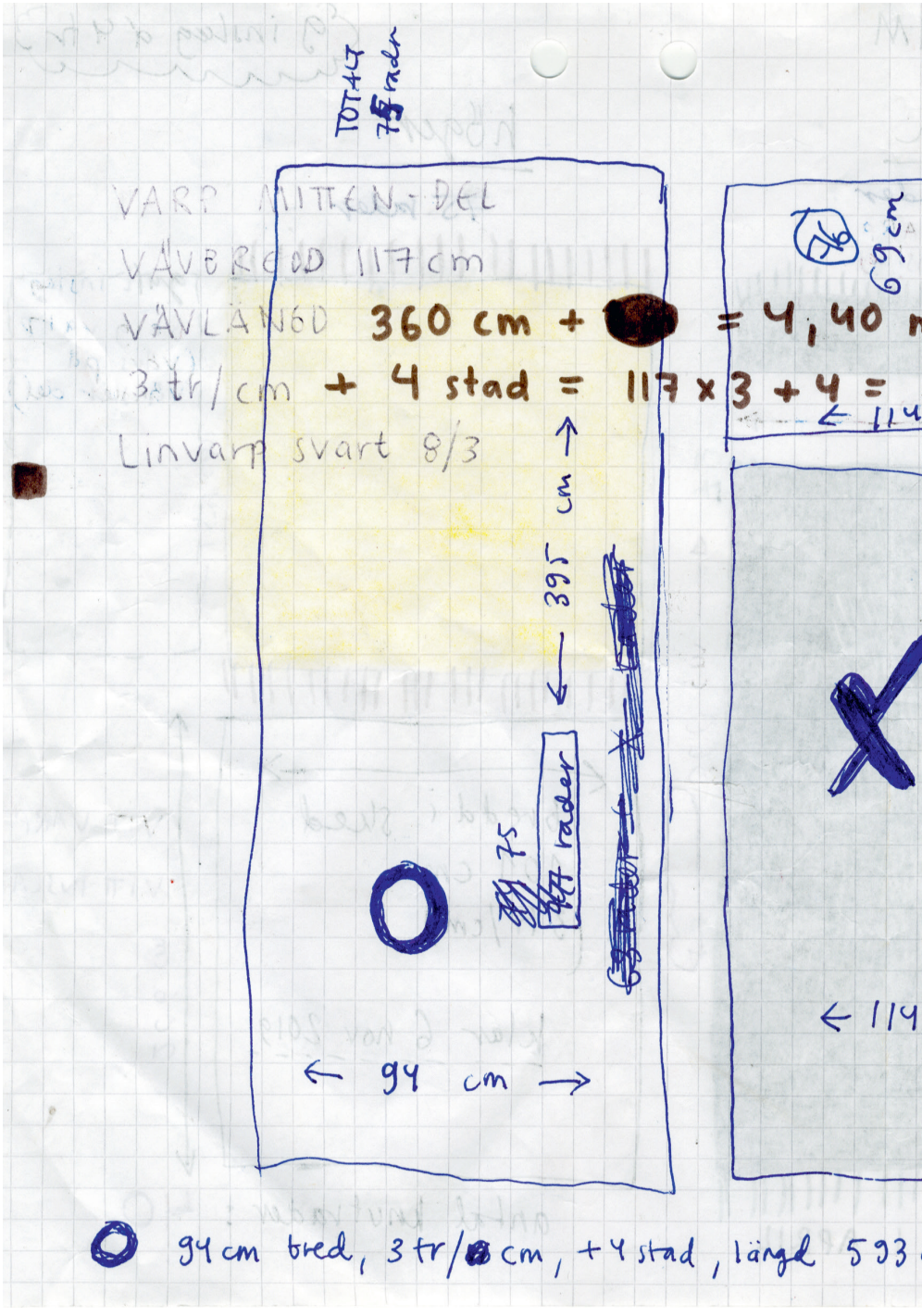
working, I had not been able to anticipate the richness of details during the weaving process.

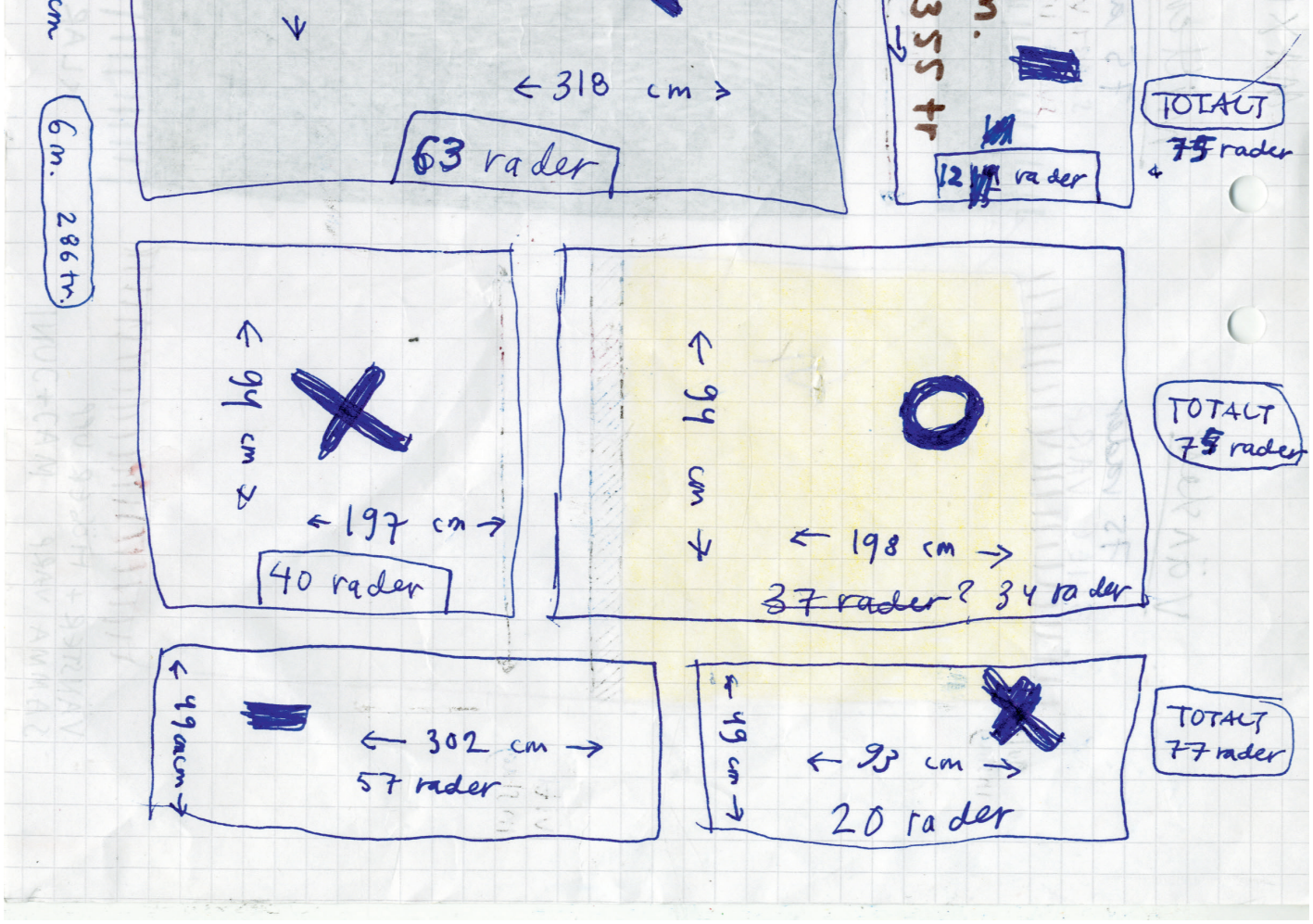
In the first work, the time itself was clearly interesting and fascinating to me as a practitioner, I felt proud of the time investment. It was also clear to me that the two-sidedness was fundamental, a feature of how ryas have been used historically, which felt important to acknowledge. In the two works that followed, I took notice of the time and gave it space. The idea of crying pixels was born with my second work, *At the Shore of Amygdala*, for the simple reason that it was depicting a face. In my work today, time has become a practicality to consider, but it does not come with any fascination or contribute any artistic value for me personally. In retrospect, I can understand now that the experience of time was never the meaningful part; what mattered to me was the image making and the technical two-sidedness, the material transformations, making textiles cry.

Evolution Of Focus

The focus in this research project is on the practice. It is through the practical weaving that I understand and reflect on the investigations that have come to form my research project. I weave and write as closely together as possible. When I finish weaving for the day, I make a note next to the textile. When I have focused on writing, I have kept a rya lying next to me. At the beginning of my doctoral studies, this felt wrong, as if I were going about it the wrong way. I struggled with theoretical texts and saw no connection between them and my practice. Then I also saw the weaving as a haven rather than a source of my own skills and knowledge. It was only in the spring of 2020, when society shut down to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and we were encouraged to work full-time from home, that I really dared to bring these different practices more closely together. And I see that my thinking and writing benefited from this. The step, or rather the thousands of steps, that *slowly* changed my idea of what a research project is, which was initially just my own ordinary weaving practice, occurred at this time. When the physical distance between office and studio was completely erased, writing, textiles, books, articles and thoughts began to bleed into one another in a new way.

My artistic practice is moving and changeable, and questions usually lead to more questions rather than answers. As an artist, I rarely work with a hypothesis or with logical consequences. My weaving can, for example,


TOTALT 75 rader
VARP MITTEN-DEL
VÄVBREDD 117 cm
VÄVLÄNGD 360 cm +
= 4,40
3 tr/cm + 4 stad = 117 x 3 + 4 =
Linvarp svart 8/3
69 cm
395 cm
75 rader
94 cm
94 cm bred, 3 tr/ cm, +4 stad, längd 593


6 m. 286 m.
← 318 cm →
63 rader
TOTALT
75 rader
12 rader
← 94 cm →
← 197 cm →
40 rader
← 94 cm →
← 198 cm →
37 rader? 34 rader
TOTALT
75 rader
← 302 cm →
57 rader
← 49 cm →
← 95 cm →
20 rader
TOTALT
77 rader

start in a memory, a sensation or a material surface, which in turn triggers the desire or creativity with the driving force to understand "What can this material do?" or the question "How can this image become a rya?" For me, even this stage used to be difficult, but I often did it in silence, driven by physical ability or intuition, by gut feeling. Paradoxically, perhaps, I have learned to verbalize these first artistically logical questions through my academic doctoral studies. In this way, it has become quite counter-intuitive to also have "What is your research question?" hanging over me. But as my artistic process has become clearer, the cloud has dissipated a bit, and I have also been able to articulate more reasonable research investigations around time and ryas.

Before my first year was over, I got tired of the weaving I had imagined repeating in many versions. Or rather, other motives entered, other projects, and later I went back to the first motive again and I still use it. With the weaving as well as with the writing, I have seen how I have had a strict boundary between what I considered research and what I considered art. It took a long time before I realized that what I was doing was research through art.

Early in my doctoral education, my focus was **on** time: what time is and what time looks like in hand weaving and in an image made of textile. I was "looking for time" in texts, not in practice. I thought that was what others wanted to know, and thus what I ought to focus on. But over the years, I came to realise that this was not really my interest; there was something else that interested me more. Writing now at the very end of the project, I view time from the inside experience, the embodied knowledge of time in my weaving practice, to understand how it is part of the whole, articulated to make room for exploration of aspects of knowledge in my own body as a weaver.

For many years I wove all my works in the same way: with one centimetre between the rya rows in accordance with some Swedish weaving tradition, but in 2019 I started a significantly larger weaving (3.5 x 4 meters) representing my dog (*Maxim 2012–2019*) and I decided on a looser weave. The "loose rya" (*glesrya* in Swedish) is a type of traditional rya that has been documented throughout history, but I chose the technique simply so that the weaving would be faster to complete. In principle, the technique is the same, with the same kind of knot; the difference is that there is a greater distance between the knot rows. In *Maxim 2012–2019*, the distance is 15 centimetres (compared to the more typical three centimetres),

which allows me to work on a larger scale but still finish within a time-span I can handle.

Fig. 9. *Serial Babies*, 2016. Detail to show the one centimetre of plain weave between the rows of colourful knots.

What I could not foresee was that this move would mark a shift in practice that generated new insights about time. When the weaving no longer took as long to complete, another part of me could slow down and really observe other parts of the process and the making. The contradiction is that I have always heard, and stated myself, that my weaving "takes a long time and goes slowly". Clinging to this statement, I had no room for other aspects. With a "faster" technique, it is as if I get closer to the images, material and composition. The shift in technique – a small change – has come to affect how I look at my images, how I construct them, what knowledge I possess about materials and how I can predict parts of the result. All this is knowledge that was previously hidden from me but came to light through the small change in the rya structure of *Maxim*.

I take the position where I stand in front of the loom, where I have the fluffy side of the rya weave closest to me and the reflection goes through the body and down to the obscured bottom side of the work. Being a doctoral student and at the same time an artist early in my career has been both enormously rewarding and enormously demanding. There have been many opportunities offered – more, I believe, than would have been offered if I were not a doctoral student. It's like the title itself is enticing. The struggle has been that for many years I have restrained my creativity, adapted and packaged my actions, my motives and my approaches in an academic format. I was a different person when I started this "project" – personally and professionally. Since then, I have grown older, I am a mother now of not only a new-born but two young children, I have moved to new houses, we have adapted our lives to a pandemic, people and animals have left me, new ones have entered my life.

As textile design researcher, Elaine Igoe writes in the beginning of her PhD thesis,

> I'm going to tell you my research story, and how it has manifested itself in the thesis that I am so feverishly writing up at the moment, in and around working as a lecturer and family life. This is not an introduction, preface or preamble; it explains (ex planare) the unfolding narrative of my lived experience.

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> As you read, you will note marked differences in the style of writing and research approach throughout this thesis. This is intentional and communicates a very real shift that I experienced from an objective research style to one where my subjectivity became vital to the research. This shift occurred in response to several contingent factors in both the personal and academic realms of my life.[21]

In the steps from initial interests and assumptions and moving forward, I ask the question, *How can my practice become knowledge for others?* Igoe captures a feeling, which I share, that the differences in style and expression also claim something. They are time markers. Igoe and I do not have the same starting point, but I think her experience juggling the private and the professional over several years is important to note from the start, as Igoe does.

The different working titles I have used for my thesis over the years say something about this development:

Rya Weaving: Where Does the Image Start? (2017)
Crying Pixels: A Practitioner's Narrative Through Woven Rya (2018)
Rya Narratives: Reflections on Time in a Hand-weaving Practice (2019)
Rya Narratives: Between Slowness and Wonder (2021)
Rya Narratives: Time and Two-sidedness in Contemporary Hand Weaving (2022)
Crying Rya: A Practitioner's Narrative Through Hand Weaving (2022)

Rya has always come first in my mind. *Crying pixels* is another name for my way of making ryas, a term I have used to describe the woven images, in which "crying" describes the visual content and "pixels" describes the rya knots. *Weaving* has evolved to *tell a story*. I left the *image* to make room for the *time*. But time was not tangible, and then I applied the concept of *wonder*. Wonder turned out to be too tainted with philosophy, which hampered me. By understanding where and how in the weaving I gave space for wonder, I found (through drawing) that it was in the *two-sidedness* of the rya weave – not all textiles are interesting on both sides – the two-sidedness holds wonder, time and image.

From my first question, "Where does the image start", until the questions I have today, there has always been a void. The questions have been made up just to have a question. I formulated the questions I have now a year ago, in the summer of 2021. It was as if my writing and thinking had

finally caught up with my weaving. The weaving has developed over a relatively straight path for the simple reason that I have woven constantly during my years as a doctoral student. And I continue to do so. Sometimes the writing must end and the last word be written. But the practice is on-going. Even during the time that this text has been in the hands of new readers for review, I have made several weavings. There is no chance that I could keep up this pace of both writing and weaving. Writing, for the inexperienced writer, is a demanding craft. Written words, unlike rya knots (which I can hide), can shift the whole meaning of a piece of text. If I change a colour or a quality in a knot, it does not have the same effect.

Fig. 10. *Serial Babies*, 2021. Detail showing the two-sidedness of a rya.

My writing and my reading and reflecting have moved in several directions. When I read what I wrote early, I see both imaginative and relevant sentences as well as extremely naive and silly statements. It can be painful to be in a learning process. But I cannot say the same of weaving. Writing fulfils its purpose in artistic research, but weaving has two purposes: first as an artistic practice that has nothing to do with research, and second as the basis of my research. I believe that my practice has developed thanks to my new reflective ability. It has improved in such a way that the complexity of the art created has emerged and taken me past general descriptions of my practice – providing insights I have taken with me back into the studio again.

Aims, Research Questions & Methods

The purpose of this project is to present understanding and knowledge about hand weaving, and specifically about hand-woven figurative ryas in an artistic context, which I have taken upon myself as a weaving artist with my own studio practice through years of practice, failures, skill development and reflection. Weaving and time are two words that are often paired together when describing hand weaving or woven objects. Hand weaving for me includes the body with the hands, sight and thinking/mind throughout the process, and therefore time is always part of the practice. But I want to show that time – the long/slow/rhythmic/meditative – is not an end in itself. As the Linguist Georg Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson say, "All of our understandings of time are relative to other concepts such as motion, space, and events."[22]

The aim of this research project is to investigate and explore experiences of time within a hand-weaving practice in order to explain when, how and why the idea of weaving as time-demanding or slow is both a product of a romantic view of hand-making and a practical reality of lived experience in the studio. Contradictorily, I say that weaving is both fast and slow, but that the time it takes is not the most important aspect of my practice, although outsiders frequently expect it to be and others have often described it as such.

In my dual role as both weaver and research student, my purpose with this thesis is to describe the weaving practice from inside – from within the process of choosing motifs, materials and scale – at the loom in the studio, from process to the finished weaving. I want to make clear that as I weave, I feel and experience the weaving from the inside, but as philosophy professor Drew Leader notes, the human body is its own blind spot,[23] and as the work is finalized, I also see the weaving from the outside, as its audience. This shift is important because it presents knowledge other than that of historians or curators, who do not experience weaving from the inside and therefore may not understand, or may misunderstand or overlook. Here my role as both weaver and researcher has the chance to cover a larger area of knowledge in weaving.

I also question myself in my practice: my descriptions and reflections are coloured by my own prejudices and under the influence of others. Knowledge seems to appear tacit even for me. I ask how knowledge that is tacit within my practice can be understood, communicated or shared with others such as the artistic research community or artists in a craft context.

The point is to contribute an example of a hand-weaver's artistic methodology and to understand the experience through reflection. By reflecting and writing in conjunction with the practice, my focus is to show how changes and shifts can affect the practice in an unknown direction, and that the awareness of these changes can highlight previously hidden knowledge. For example, I started weaving a very large rya (350 x 450 cm) representing my dog, and to prevent it from taking an absurdly long time (a year was my limit at the time), I chose to weave it more loosely than I usually do, with more distance between the rows of rya knots (the most time-consuming part). I initially thought this would be a compromise between results (a little worse) and the time it would take (a little less). But what I instead discovered was that the looser technique was more in line with my visions for my woven works. I will discuss this in more depth in Part 3.

To achieve my aims, I have applied critical reflection to my own practice using various methods, such as written studio reflections, reflective drawing, documenting through drawing, photo, video, diary notes and exhibitions.

Finally, I have identified three questions that appear to be the most relevant, and I say identified because most of my reflections were already written or drawn at the time I wrote the questions.

1. From an outside perspective, hand weaving such as rya is often described as slow or time-consuming and strenuous and demanding. But what bodily knowledge about time is embedded in practice?

With this question I seek to explore a deeper understanding of the bodily knowledge of time in weaving practice to offer an example from the perspective of a practitioner.

2. A craft like hand weaving is typically a solitary practice. Many weave as I do, in solitude, perhaps in a shared studio but alone at their looms. Except for with very large looms (Fig. 11), it is common that one body alone winds a warp, threads a loom, and weaves by hand – there is no physical space for another body within the tools. My question here is, How can the bodily knowledge of time be understood in cases of collaboration between two or more participants?

On hand weaving as a solitary practice I speak from experience. A loom may have multiple people weaving on the same warp (warp is long and different sections can be woven by different people, but in sequence rather than simultaneously), but they would, perhaps in most cases, sit down one and a time. However, this is not the case in my usual practice.

The debate about crafts today is in part characterised by its collective and activist potential.[24] I have found collaborations in all forms to have high value in the field of contemporary crafts, art and design. There are several examples of successful projects under definitions that use textiles and crafts as a medium or method – projects that are intended to shed light on various societal, domestic, gendered or environmental issues, to name a few. For example, Norwegian artist Lise Bjørne Linnert's on-going project (initiated in 2005) *Desconocia Unknown Ukjent*[25] has been implemented internationally through workshops and exhibitions for more than a decade now. The project aims to draw attention to the violence being committed

every day in Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican city on the United States border, by embroidering the names (or "unknown") of those lost crossing the border. Another example is found in Anne Wilson's durational public performance *The Cross (Walking New York)*[26] from 2014, which took place over the course of two months and resulted in the fabrication of a 1.5-by-10-meter sculpture: a colourful cross composed of innumerable strands of thread. The piece's four participants walked around the 3.7-meter columns in the exhibition space carrying a spool of thread to form a standard weaving cross. An example of a project with activist aims is the *Revolutionary Knitting Circle*,[27] which was first founded in Calgary, Canada by Grant Neufeld in 2000. Since then, groups have formed across Canada, in the United States, and in various parts of Europe. The first major action initiated by the Revolutionary Knitting Circle was the *Global Knit-in* held during the 2002 G8 Summit. Groups in several cities and towns hosted protest rallies featuring knitting outside of major corporate sites, especially bank office towers. Notable among these was the mass rally held in Ottawa, Canada, in which protesters set up a social safety net made of knitted squares.

Fig. 11. My huge loom installed at Röhsska Museum, 2019. A less common sight where several weavers work side by side on the same material. Photo: Mikael Lammgård.

These examples give the impression that collaborations are successful and rewarding for everyone involved. It is more difficult to find examples of projects that describe different degrees of failure. But an example can be found in Jools Gilson's reflection on the project *The Knitting Map*, which involved women in the city of Cork, Ireland who knitted together for a year. Digital codes were translated into knitting patterns, transforming the city and the weather into stitches and colours. I am particularly fond of the introduction of the article by Gilson, where she reflect on the project long time after it was completed. Gilson writes, "This writing is a navigation of failures."[28]

During my time as a doctoral student, I experimented with initiating a collective project linked to my own regular practice, something I found both challenging and not at all as rewarding as I had imagined. In the *Google Weaving Stop-time* project (2018–19), I collaborated with twenty-eight weavers from around the world through Facebook to create an installation for the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial. The requirement for participation in the biennial was precisely that the work should be of a collective or collaborative nature. At the time I was pregnant with my second

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child and decided to work with an assistant who would weave my own contribution. The experience changed emotionally over time: after feeling excited at first, it turned out to be the opposite of what I really wanted to do. Being physically disconnected from materials and making created questions and confusion about my professional identity, and for me it was not offset by the fact that I was the hub of a project where others worked with their hands and in direct contact with materials. I will illuminate this project further in Part 2.

3. How can hidden knowledge in hand-making practices be discovered?

My third question investigates the previously hidden knowledge in my practice, which I explored through loose rya (*glesrya*), a small and rather random change I made when I was going to weave the very large rya representing my dying dog. I imagined that I could cheat by weaving with wider spacing between the knot rows in order to have time to finish the piece in less than a year and thus be able to include it in an exhibition I had been invited to. This hidden knowledge revealed itself as material knowledge I did not know I had. I felt like the way I had been weaving all these years was like driving a car in the wrong gear. There was a highway available to the result I wanted, but I had been driving on back roads.

To find that hidden knowledge, I needed several factors: time pressure, goals and motivation; I needed a motif I could stand working with for a long time; and I needed materials that transformed the impression. Importantly, the knowledge I was searching for was to be found in woven objects, not in books.

I have worked with these three questions in three parts, and devoted different amounts of writing to each part. Part 1 is mostly text, in which I discuss examples of how weaving often revolves around time and slowness. It was as if Part 1 demanded more writing from me, in arguments and examples. Part 2 deals with the collective experiment I undertook, during which I was still looking inwards, rather than outwards toward the group, to find what was relevant. In the third and last part, I wanted more visual material. I think that it may be important to show here, through graphic design and the volume of text, for example, that in this last phase of my writing I found my way back to my practice again after several years of largely uncreative routine. And for me practice is, to reiterate, the most important way of working and of conducting research.

The methods I have used in this practice-led study begin with practical weaving. But this is easy to say in retrospect. As I have already recounted, I have spent a lot of time looking for knowledge about my practice in books and in theories. The reflective practitioner is, according to Donald S. Schön,[29] the professional who knows more than she can put into words.[30]

Reflection takes place, for example, through writing – writing as closely to practice as possible in a reflexive and embodied approach.

> Embodied writing tries to let the body speak.... [It employs] a quality of resonance between the written text and the senses of the readers that allows readers to more fully experience the phenomena described.[31]

I did not choose this way of working initially, but identified it much later as something that seems to agree with how I instinctively work. Some un-articulated knowledge embedded in experience and skill, judgment and accuracy, risk-taking and balance in decision-making, identified as tacit knowledge,[32] is partly made visible through an embodied way of writing. Yet I acknowledge that practice-led research through craft cannot be rigorously tested or empirically measured, since the emotional and subjective aspect of making is often unpredictable and takes the maker to unforeseen places. The method for articulating the practical work can be described through an approach in which I first reflect on (or memorize) the weaving while doing it. It is thus a reflection on the body's experience. Then I write down what I have memorized, often in the company of a finished weaving (which takes weeks, sometimes months to finish) to reactivate the bodily memory. Returning to the studio work, reflection can be confirmed in new work or it can be questioned. In this way, the development of knowledge is obtained, and the body becomes a tool in research. However, I do not weave to write, and I do not write to weave. Writing is subordinate to practice – but for research I see it as necessary to express myself through text. I am an artist who is committed to research – the artist as a researcher, never the opposite.

In addition to this reflection in writing, I reflect through drawing, which I have included in the latter part of my thesis project. Drawing makes my writing possible. For example, drawing a detail of parts in the woven texture enables me to think of it in words, using my body memory as a point of departure.

It was after a year of full-time homework at the end of 2020 that drawing within the framework of this research project arrived. I had a longer period of sick leave and, looking for something to do, went out and bought watercolours and paper. I had previously not seen the potential of drawing and painting for reflecting on knowledge, instead thinking drawing and painting was only a way to quickly get an idea down on paper. By drawing weaves, rya knots, patterns, looms and my body at work, I was able to quickly articulate insights and statements that could otherwise take many sentences to describe in words and still not feel as clear at all. I see drawing as a method in my research. I do not use drawing when I plan my woven works. Instead, my drawing has the character of note-taking that leads to writing. Some scholars suggest that drawing is a phenomenological act,[33] just as writing can be a phenomenological practice.[34]

Artistic methodology is distinctive in that the point of departure is that it is my own experience of a phenomenon, rather than others' experience of it, that is central.[35] The purpose is to understand the experience by engaging others in it and linking the personally experienced phenomenon to overall structures.

One of the first texts I read (and remember) from my first semester in the doctoral programme was Swedish philosopher Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen's contribution "Att reflektera över det som ännu inte sagts" ("Reflecting on What Has Not Yet Been Said") in *Methodos*.[36] I well remember a note I wrote: "Practice does not sit around and wait to be rescued by theory!" When I later went back to the text, I realized that it was not a quotation, but rather an interpretation I had made. I misunderstood it and saw in the sentences something I wanted to see. Or did I perhaps not misunderstand? Maybe I *misremembered* and the phrase was more my digestion of the writing rather than a direct quote from another's voice.

In the introduction to her essay, Hjertström Lappalainen writes:

> When you want to think about your practice or something you have done or are in the middle of, this usually means that you want to think about something that you have not yet formulated. We imagine that what we must do is capture the thought in the language. But it can be misleading to think that the wording work is about capturing something.[37]

Elaine Igoe and Caroline Slotte both suggest, according to my understanding, that we try to find words that help capture the phenomenon. I agree

with both. But through Hjertström-Lappalainen, I understand that precisely this capture can risk reduce the complexity that comes with practical knowledge.

When I wrote that my practice would not "wait to be rescued by theory", I was worried, of course, because I did not know what my theory would be in my research project.

Part of me felt that I so badly wanted to find something, or someone, who could confirm my own reflection. I had not thought that if I take in knowledge from a theorist or historian, I will also be brought into their world and lose the sharp focus I need to have on my own practice to come to my own insights.

Hjertström Lappalainen continues:

> When we think like this, we risk looking at the relationship more statically than we need to. The essential thing in the wording work is perhaps rather that we are facing something for which we do not immediately have words. Then it's not just about finding the right word but about capturing the unknown in a way that does it justice. We should then mainly focus on formulating it without reducing it.[38]

The last sentence feels more important now: *to formulate (articulate?) without reducing*.

My recipe for reflection in this research project is thus embodied knowledge, reflexive embodiment, time as lived experience and material thinking and material knowledge through reflexive writing through materials, and body self-observations and self-awareness as a reflective practitioner.

Audience

> For millennia the image of Penelope sitting by the hearth and weaving, saving and preserving the home while her man roams the earth in daring adventures, has defined one of Western culture's basic idea of womanhood.[39]

It sounds familiar – and at the same time not. I imagine that many, like myself, are looking for and inventing opportunities and possibilities to

be able to carry out our artistic practice. I am not waiting; I am spending my time wisely. There are many components in my work and the circumstances of my practice that could be attributed to femininity: the home, the textile, the children (the woven ones and the real ones). I do not know if I have adapted my life to my artistic practice or if my practice has been coloured by my life. I pick up the kids from school in the early afternoon. That the children are brought home early (according to Swedish norms) is not because I am such a good and tender mother but primarily because I then do not have to leave the house later and disrupt my own flow. Instead, they are at home and safe, possibly they are bored by my absent presence when I work at the computer or loom.

> Just such are the crafts of spinning, weaving and sewing: repetitive, easy to pick up at any point, reasonably child-safe and easily done at home. (Contrast the idea of swinging a pick in a dark, cramped and dusty mine shaft with a baby on one's back or being interrupted by a child's crisis while trying to pour molten metal into a set of molds).[40]

I am aware of my position: the circumstances surrounding textile work look very different in different parts of the world, and in contrast to the work in the global textile industry, I am reluctant to call my work *work*: it must be understood as an abbreviation of *artistic* work. Either way, my chosen practice of rya is generous in the way described above. I can get interrupted and quickly go back to weaving. Being interrupted in writing is more difficult – not impossible, but I am sure it affects the style of the text. But who has the luxury of long undisturbed time in the society I live in?

The circumstances of the pandemic, which has been going on for a large part of my work with this research project, have meant for many that work has been allocated to the home. With the restrictions in Sweden, and the subsequent easing of these, working from home has gained increasing acceptance. I have always worked best at home. The home for me stands for security and safety, something a female body still can't take for granted in society.

Author Melissa Febos writes:

> Every woman in New York, and perhaps any city, knows her bodily relief after the apartment door is shut and locked behind her.[41]

For me the home, the place where my artistic and research work takes place, is not a place that I experience as confined, or as a wall to keep out the surrounding world. The work and the visions I want to realize I have staged and carried out at home, because it is the safest place *for me* to do so.

My children are small, but they know quite a lot about weaving and the work I do, even though it is diffuse for them. By not relocating my visions and goals to another place like a studio outside my home, my work can take place whenever I want – at night, early in the morning, or late in the afternoon. Weaving and working without the guilt I might feel according to the norm and expectation to prioritize my children becomes a reality because I myself have created a symbiosis between these parts that are important to me and for which I am responsible.

In this thesis I focus on what I perceive as a void in the understanding of what time is in a hand-making practice. I often find the descriptions given by theorists, historians and curators to be deficient, sometimes romantic and incompatible with my own experience as a practitioner/maker/weaver. Since the practical knowledge of weaving is made up primarily of tacit knowledge, I also see examples of practitioners (myself included) who describe their practices with a rather romantic and appreciative language about the *slow and meditative* pace of weaving as something positive (how can it be meditative to weave when I am constantly interrupted by my children?). I think this is often due to the practitioners themselves not having critically reflected or questioned their views or values, leading them merely to repeat stereotypes. The audience I imagine I target in this work are those who are interested in the bodily experience and the inside knowledge of a hand-making practice.

My thinking and the new knowledge are embodied in the practical work. This includes notes on process and materials, finished woven work, and reflection on these as well as the evaluation obtained through writing. Research is generated through reflection from within the practice, oriented towards the questions posed. This in turn generates concepts, processes and objects that are presented to peers in the field inside and outside of academia and to the general public through, for example, exhibitions. My contribution is therefore valuable for those who are interested in why descriptions of hand-woven objects do not benefit from being described as slow or time-consuming in the first place. I consider the main audience for this thesis to be craft researchers, curators and writers in the field of craft and/or textiles, as well as practitioners, educators and students who

work with craft processes in some way as an example of a methodological guide for practice. My contribution is aimed at those who want to take part in a reflection on hand-making practice and understand time from the maker's perspective.

Through my reflection I want to shift focus from time in the time-consuming work to what happens beyond the temporal, developing the idea that how long something takes to make cannot be read in the physical material. It is often claimed that we can feel the work that went into an artwork – spending a long time on a handmade work does not say anything about its value or quality. An examination of what is meaningful in a hand-weaving practice is relevant to others because it goes deep into finding words and language for practices that are not self-evident – because it does take time and attention and focus.

In this research project, the focus is on my own experience and the reflection that follows. However, other individuals, such as practitioners and audiences, are very important to enable reflection, and in some cases essential for completing a work such as *Google Weaving Stop-time*, on which I collaborated with twenty-eight weavers from around the world via social media for the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial (2018). That project could not have been completed without the work of the participants and a project assistant. The collaboration with other weavers, as well as the meeting with audiences in exhibitions that communicate directly and indirectly with me and my work, is a prerequisite for this research project – and for my artistic practice in general. The exhibition, or a finished woven work, is not something I see as a conclusion. On the contrary: reflection starts in something finished and looks backwards. I would be overly bored by planning everything in detail and completing something predetermined. I think that those who are interested in taking part in my work want to take part in, or recognize, the recurring ambivalence or the sharp changes between knowing and not knowing.

Hand weaving, including ryas, is a broad subject. I have a certain insight into Swedish and Scandinavian rya weaving, historically and in the contemporary context. But the knot can be found in many different geographical places around the world with different names (e.g. the *ghiordes* knot in Turkey, where I carried out the above-mentioned project in 2018). Weaving traditions outside Sweden are not something I have chosen to investigate further; instead, I have limited myself by writing and working with the type of rya weaving I have learned in Sweden, where my practice

is based. The audience for my work are those who understand and value historical and theoretical references, but at the same time humbly recognise that I am neither a historian nor a theorist, but speak from the basis of the constantly changing state that comes with being a practising artist. Upon reflection, these theoretical and practical aspects always seem to belong together.

When I talk about the weaving body, I refer to my own body. Of course, this does not mean that I believe that my body speaks the truth for all bodies, but only my own. I have not gone into the experience through the bodies of others; however, I offer the experience from my weaving body at work and in reflection as one example. At times my experiences have not been shared by others, such as the difficulty in reaching the loom during pregnancy and acknowledging that I did my thesis work during a period of considerable personal change in my own life/body, including starting a family. The same was true for Elaine Igoe.[42]

Fig. 12. Weaving during pregnancy, 2017.

Thesis Structure

In my weaving practice, I have a view of the hairy, more diffuse side of the weave on the top of the warp, and at the same time I see the *original* clear image, which is my cartoon, through the warp threads. Invisible to me during the process is the clearer woven side on the underside of the warp. I have chosen to incorporate the two-sidedness in graphic design as well, where one side is sketches, drawings, images and studio reflections, and the other takes the form of a clearer body of text. I wish to design my thesis with a roughly equal amount of visual and written content in order to highlight that this research project is truly led by my artistic practice, and the only way I can think of sharing my practice is through images (an exhibition cannot last as long as a book). I am aware that dualism can be problematic and contributes to dichotomies or simplification, but in my case the two-sidedness is a visual reality, and I believe that the format in its simplicity can help the reader follow my thinking. It is also my intention that it be possible to extract answers to the research questions from the artistic practice, and that the practice itself be more than the finished weavings. Therefore, fragments of the process must be communicated. Sketches and pictures are an attempt to highlight the tacit knowledge that is often difficult to define in words alone.

Fig. 13. *Serial Babies*, 2016. Weaving process.

I have chosen to discuss the investigations of these three questions in three different parts, although discussion of the same woven projects will recur in several places and the texts also bleed into each other.

In Part 1, I give a deeper background to my research interest in time through my own practice and from my experience as a hand-weaving artist.

In this part, I show by example how weaving is sometimes described as *slow* or *time consuming,* often with a language expressing positive value. While contemporary weavings are often associated with tradition and history, these concepts often do not match my perception as a practitioner. However, it is a vocabulary I have used myself. But I argue that the bodily knowledge of time that comes from within practice often does not match these descriptions.

I describe approaches in my weaving practice and show how my previous statements and attitudes to time in weaving have changed and how tacit knowledge has been made visible and/or formulated through reflection in writing and other methods such as documentation and drawing. The bodily knowledge of time in weaving ryas is present in the two-sidedness that is inherent to the technique of making them. I am fascinated by the growing character that figurative rya weaving offers, whereby pixels on paper become rya knots and images emerge through the process. Slowness with a positive value in hand-making practices is not self-evident. Other artists testify to slowness as frustrating, boring and linked to bodily discomfort. For me, slowness is implicitly positive: I subscribe to the Slow Movement, which is a response to external factors in Europe and North America. In my practice, time is relevant as a practicality in the profession (keeping track, meeting deadlines). Slowness is not an end in itself, nor is it cosy or meditative.

In Part 2, I share a different kind of experience in my practice that I investigated – an experience of collaborating, in which I learned that collaboration was a much more complex experience in practice than in my mind. In this part, I reflect on a project in which a group of twenty-eight weavers worked together, all from their own studios in several places around the world, as part of the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial. In this project, I worked in my own studio with an assistant, and I share how this led me to insights into what an artistic weaving practice means to me, asking and investigating

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whether bodily knowledge can or cannot be shared through this type of collaboration.

Through this experiment I understood some of the preconceived notions I had about both *work* and *collaboration*: that work for me is being physically present at the loom with materials in my own hands, and that collaboration for me can take place on many levels, but there is one component I do not want to collaborate on: the physical weaving. It was inevitable for me that I would eventually weave my own version of my assistant's work, and this expanded my understanding of my body's knowledge, how the contact with materials makes the work meaningful and how time and the body belong together (I need them to).

In Part 3, I discuss my development in practice and how this has informed my understanding of time and two-sidedness as part of my development in learning through deep reflection on my own practical work. In this part, I present how I have investigated what is more relevant in practice than the time/slowness described from the outside, even though time is constantly present in all parts. By developing my own practice and experimenting with a "faster" type of rya weaving (*glesrya*), I found that I make room for more awareness and attention to materials and their colours and textures instead of measuring hours in woven rows (to meet internal or real deadlines). In the *glesrya*, the two-sidedness (the back) becomes less important, and the clock-like lines in the textile become fewer and do not trigger time reading in the same way as in my previous works. I also do not feel the same need to show these works with both sides visible, partly because there is no physical slowness to emphasise but also because the time in the material is toned down due to the fact that there are fewer lines created by the rows of knots that provide the information for the image to be seen easily. Through this change in technique, I became aware of how much of the knowledge in my practice is hidden even for myself. This part reveals a change in my practice that has been possible due to my deeper knowledge of reflection as a result of my thesis project.

In the concluding discussion, I review the combined reflections, acquired insights and suggest directions for future steps of this research project in the field of crafts in artistic research. I call for artists and practice-led researchers to dig deep into reflections on their own practice, since much of what goes on in the weaving or crafts studio from the perspective of the maker or artist in craft practices still remains unspoken.

Glossary

Terms I use for rya weaving.

Rya can be described as a pile weaving technique that is done by hand. Ryas can be made on a loom by weaving a base with what is called weft (the horizontal threads in the loom) through the warp (the vertical threads in the loom), first constructing what I call the in-between weaving, with yarn (can be anything from one weft thread to many) and a shuttle passed through the warp. After the base weft has been woven in, pre-cut strands of yarn are tied into a row of pile – rya knots, each strand of which is attached around two warp yarns. Rya rows are closed with in-between rows throughout the completed work.

The knots can be made differently, but I often make a knot called *ghiordes*. Types of ryas include simple rya (slitrya) and ornamental rya (prydnadsrya). Traditionally these two types had different patterns, different uses and posessed different material qualities. If the in-between weaving between the lines of rya knots line is bigger, which produces a larger surface of smooth fabric, it is called loose rya, which is a type of simple rya.

Plain weave: sometimes also called tabby, the simplest form of weaving in which the warp is raised and lowered every other thread and locked with weft. (Plain weave is what I use between my rows of rya knots.) Woven pixel is a term I use in my practice. It does not belong in a standard vocabulary on weaving, although I believe it is generally understood and used among weavers. On the smooth side, the rya knot is two dots that meet in the middle and form a V shape. This is my woven pixel. This side of the weave is the one most similar to its original (digital) source. The hairy side is what I call the side where the loose threads from the rya knots hang loose in my work. The smooth side is what I call the side where the rya knot is seen as a stitch or dot (woven pixel) in my work. Together these different sides make up the two-sidedness, but seen from the side (I usually display my works hanging freely in the space) it can be regarded as a multi-sidedness, since it also has a small three-dimensional aspect.

Fig. 14. *Serial Babies*, 2020.
At Rian Design Museum in Falkenberg, Sweden.

Fig. 15. *Serial Babies*, reversed.

Fig. 16. *Serial Babies*, 2017. Tying rya knots.

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1 Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen. Att reflektera över det som ännu inte sagts. In *Methodos – Konstens kunskap, kunskapens konst*, Magnus William – Olsson (ed.), 63–84. Stockholm: Ariel Förlag, 2014.
2 See my collection of written examples and of anecdotes from exhibitions in part 1.
3 M. Lind, "Looms Everywhere", *Art Review*, November 2017.
4 Jessica Hemmings, "Mending the Fashion Industry: Scandinavian Style", *Surface Design Journal*, Fall 2016, pp. 26–31.
5 C. Honoré, *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, San Francisco, HarperOne, 2005, p. 219.
6 Honoré, *In Praise of Slowness*, p. 221.
7 Reviewed by Jessica Hemmings https://www.jessicahemmings.com/taking-time-craft-and-the-slow-revolution-dovecot-tapestry-studio-edinburgh/ writing, "In this way, the textiles included in this exhibition struck me as work that happens to be slow, rather than electing to be slow."
8 Honoré, *In Praise of Slowness*, p. 230.
9 Ibid.
10 C. Robach, *Slow Art*, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, 2012, p. 12.
11 IASPIS is the Swedish Arts Grants Committee's International Program supporting international exchange for practitioners in the areas of visual art, design, craft and architecture. IASPIS's activities aim to enable professionals to develop artistically and improve their working conditions by establishing international contacts between practitioners and professionals such as curators and critics and others active in the field. https://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/default.aspx?id=11328.
12 Cf. U. Snidare, *Ryamattan*, Stockholm, Nordstedt, 2007, p. 162.
13 N. Denny and J. Filmer-Sankey, *The Bayeux Tapestry: The Story of the Norman Conquest, 1066*, London, Collins, 1966.
14 Vivi Sylwan. *Svenska Ryor*, p. 18.
15 A Swedish loom manufacturer.
16 Mel Bochner. "The Serial Attitude", in *Art Forum*, December, 1967, p. 28.
17 Ibid., p. 28.
18 K. Treggiden, *Weaving: Contemporary Makers on The Loom*, Brussels, Ludion, 2020, p. 159.

19 Here Anna Ray's work *Tassels* is a good example. The work is constructed with wire lines, and she refers to thinking of the tension of the warp as it is released as inspiration. See article by Jessica Hemmings in *Embroidery*, Jan./Feb. 2020.
20 M. van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2014, p. 357.
21 E. Igoe, "In Textasis: Matrixial Narratives of Textile Design", PhD Thesis, Royal Collage of Art, 2013, p. 15.
22 G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, New York, Basic Books, 1999, p. 137.
23 D. Leder, *The Absent Body*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990.
24 For further reading on this topic I suggest *Collaboration Through Craft*, which also describes complications of collaborations.
25 https://www.utep.edu/rubin/exhibitions/past/desconocida-unknown-ukjent.html
26 https://www.annewilsonartist.com/texts-credits.html Anne Wilson is, according to her website, "a Chicago-based visual artist who creates sculpture, drawings, performances, and video animations that explore themes of time, loss, and private and social rituals. Her artwork embraces conceptual strategies and handwork using everyday materials—table linen, bed sheets, human hair, lace, thread, glass, and wire."
27 https://medium.com/@grantneufeld/the-revolutionary-knitting-circle-proclamation-of-constructive-revolution-67efc906bf9d
28 J. Gilson, "Navigation, Nuance and Half/Angel's Knitting Map: A Series of Navigational Directions…", in *Performance Research* 17:1, pp. 9–20. DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2012.651858.
29 D. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, New York, Basic Books, 1983.
30 Cf. N. Nimkulrat, "Hands-on Intellect: Integrating Craft Practice into Design Research", in *International Journal of Design*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2012, p. 3.
31 R. Anderson, "Embodied Writing and Reflections on Embodiment", in *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2001. For another example of writing of this style, I suggest Kate Fletcher https://katefletcher.com/its-here-wild-dress-clothing-the-natural-world/
32 See M. Polyani, Personal Knowledge Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974.
33 See for example Dr. Deborah Harty: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/schools/design-creative-arts/research-enterprise/projects/drawing-is-phenomenology/
34 Cf. van Manen, Introduction, *Phenomenology of Practice*.
35 Cf. A. Bochner and C. Ellis, *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories*. Abingdon, Routledge, 2016.
36 M. William-Olsson (ed.), *Methodos*, Stockholm, Ariel litterär kritik, 2014, p. 65.
37 M. William-Olsson, *Methodos*, p. 65. Translated from: När man vill tänka över sin verksamhet, sin praktik eller något man har gjort eller är mitt uppe i så betyder detta oftast att man vill tänka över något som man ännu inte formulerat. Vi tänker oss att det vi måste göra är att fånga tanken i språket. Men det kan vara missledande att tänka sig att formuleringsarbetet handlar om att fånga in något.
38 Ibid., p. 65. Translated from: När vi tänker så riskerar vi nämligen att titta på förhållandet mer statiskt än vad vi behöver. Det väsentliga i formuleringsarbetet är kanske snarare att vi står inför något som vi inte omedelbart har ord för. Då handlar det inte bara om att hitta rätt ord utan om att fånga upp detta okända på ett sätt som gör det rättvisa. Vi borde då främst fokusera på att vi ska formulera det utan att reducera det.
39 I. M. Young, *On Female Body Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p 123.
40 E. W. Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1996, p. 30.
41 M. Febos, *Girlhood*, London, Bloomsbury, 2021, p. 134.
42 E. Igoe, "In Textasis: Matrixial Narratives of Textile Design", PhD Thesis, Royal College of Art, 2013, p. 15.

Part 1

Time
& Two-sidedness

Introduction To Part 1

In an informal meeting in the winter of 2019 with Jonas Rooth, then head of the Crafts Department at HDK and a glass artist with many years of experience, we got into a discussion about how we emphasise time investment in our own work. He asked me if I am sometimes embarrassed that it "doesn't take as long to weave something as many people actually think". I answered, "Yes, sometimes. I can exaggerate, rounding up. If it really takes 43 hours, I tend to say it took me 50. And did I really count the hours?" Then I can also admit that these 50 hours are not fully focused weaving. But what are these hours expected to contain? I might have to clean up in the studio to concentrate. Jonas Rooth admitted he did the same.

One of my un-dated diary notes written around the same time says:

> The restlessness in the studio, it takes so long. While I weave, I think about what to weave next. I'm silly when I think about how good it will be. I have high ambitions that I never reach. Next time it will be better. In restlessness there is also a built-in limitation: I can't weave more than two, absolutely three hours in a row, for now. It hurts. Pain in the shoulders and neck, the hands become stiff and do not want to obey, and with that the irritation grows. When I leave, I don't long to go back.

I think these two examples show the complicated relationship to time in craft processes. I value time: I *emphasise* time, I am *frustrated* by time, and *calculate* it as an inevitable part of practice. It is like I am pulling time in the opposite direction. Time is a practical matter of the making, but why is it often emphasised in the finished object? The viewer might consume it differently than I do.

Time/Slow Perspective On Hand-Weaving & Craft

Time in my practice is fundamental to practically carrying out my weaving projects and meeting deadlines for exhibitions. Clock time is part of the weaving just like in other activities. In an article by Jessica Hemmings, I claim in regards to my work *Rana Plaza – The Collapse* (2015) that "My time commitment makes a lot of sense: when I am weaving others are not."[43]

Another un-dated studio note says:

> On my middle loom, one row is about 45 minutes. On my small loom, one row is about 25 minutes. This is how I put my clock. I ask my partner, Is it

> okay if I go out to the studio and weave two rows and leave the children with you? He says yes, knowing from experience we are talking about an hour and a half. I usually don't manage more than four or six rows. After that I am sick of it, and my body hurts.

This type of time tracking was something I found important in the first couple of years as a professional weaver. I still agree that being ahead of time is useful, but doing so is more about the work than the time. It may sound a little arrogant, but I like to say that when others are not weaving, I am – which might give me an advantage.

The time in the studio is related to the flow[44], and resistance to the flow, because the material offers resistance, something goes wrong, something is not going well, I'm not working optimally. Sennett writes, "In most work we estimate how long it will take; resistance obliges us to revise."[45] The time in the making refers to the tempo, the speed at which the work is produced. For me as an artist, most of my work time comes before the practical work at the loom – in the work with ideas and planning of practical work. For this, work time cannot be calculated.

The place where I often hear the words time or slowness linked to one's own practice is in conversations with students, or in connection with their presentations in the crafts programme at HDK-Valand. In teaching situations, I hear statements like "I value the slowness of textiles", "I remember the nice, slow moments with my grandmother when she taught me to knit", and "I let my work take a very long time, and I want that to be visible in the result". Where have these students learned to highlight the slow time in their work? Inexperience is of course one part. But just as I have done the same, I believe that the public conception of hand weaving as a slow practice plays a role.

One of the more experienced (former) students who have participated in exhibitions in several contexts and received practical experience in describing and presenting their art is Anja Fredell, who makes hand-tufted figurative rugs and objects. She is used to the question of how long it took her to make them. She has started to be a bit bothered: "People are kind of disappointed when I say that it takes a week." I replied that one can always exaggerate.

When I'm at an exhibition of my work, someone often approaches me and says, "Excuse me, I have to ask: how long does it take to make one

like this?" The question is not neutral, so of course something happens in me. Who is asking is important, how the question is asked, the choice of words, the emphasis, what kind of relationship I have with the person asking and how I receive the question that day. It is not a question with a question mark as much as a curiosity, maybe a concern, with different emphases:

How long did it take to weave, *really*?
How *long* did it take to weave?
How long did it take?
Did you weave it *by hand*? How long did it take?

Then there is this question phrased in rather the opposite way, and always by people with some weaving or textile knowledge of their own: but that does *not take very long*, right? When the question is asked, I often disappear into myself in a way, looking for a suitable answer for the moment. It has been asked so many times that it does not surprise me in any way. But it stresses me that I do not have a satisfactory answer.

I can experience, and answer, in several ways. Below are some comments and anecdotes I have collected from exhibitions translated from Swedish.

Anecdote 1, Ung Svensk Form (2019):

"Wow, I would never have the patience to do something like this. Do you mean that each thread is tied in by hand? It must take a very long time, right?"

Anecdote 2, Rian Design Museum (2020):

In a meeting for an interview with a photographer who will be taking pictures of my work, which is hanging in an exhibition, we have had time to walk around and look for about five minutes before I stop in front of my piece *At the Shore of Amygdala* (2015), and the photographer asks, "Does it take long to make one like this?" The question has come up quickly and I think that he has not even had time to try to understand for himself what he's looking at, but instead is trying to understand the work by first finding out if it is time-consuming or not. The work in question consists of three equal parts, and I answer that I do not remember correctly but that it should be around seventy hours per part. He says, "Yes." And nothing else. I get the feeling that the answer does not give him any further understanding. Without him saying anything more, I go on to say, "I don't think

that's very much time; you probably spend the same amount of time on some of your pictures." I know I often apologize that way.

Anecdote 3, Konstepidemin (2019):

"Well, my mother wove a lot, mostly rag rugs, so I know a lot about weaving. *It takes a long time*. And then it is still not very appreciated. But this, what you do, was a little different. Do you put them on the floor or is it art for the walls?"

Anecdote 4, Fiberspace Gallery, Stockholm Craft Week (2020):

At an exhibition at Fiberspace Gallery in Stockholm, a person comes to the exhibition that I have met a couple of times in recent years and whom I appreciate talking to and have respect for. The person in question is a crafts artist who, among other things, works with weaving. The artist says, a little sarcastically, "But this does not take very long for you to do, does it?"

Anecdote 5, Konstepidemin (2019):

I meet a visitor, previously unknown to me, at my exhibition at Konstepidemin in Gothenburg. First she walks around and looks at it alone, and then I walk up to her and introduce myself. She says she has done some weaving in the 70s but stopped later and switched to ceramics because she did not have the patience for weaving. After a while, she asks, "But how do you have time to do all this?" The question is worded in a way that surprises me. Actually I want to say, "I do it during working hours", but instead of being defensive I say something agreeable like, "Yes, it takes some time of course."

Anecdote 6. This note is undated, and I cannot recall the event:

"Oh, it must be very wonderful and meditative to do them, right? How long does it take? I wish I also had time to do crafts." And then, "You dye the yarns yourself, right?"

(I do not generally dye yarns myself; I buy them in a variety of colours and blend threads in bundles to get shades I am looking for. This is one method I use to save hours for only weaving, but in my experience, people often tend to think that, as a weaver, I dye my own yarn.)

Anecdote 7, Handarbetets Vänner (2016):

A person comes up to me as I'm standing next to a textile, pinches it, investigating it up-close from all sides, and says, "I see, so you do like that. How long does this take then? I see that they don't have a high quality like rugs, but you've made them as works of art, I understand, so maybe the quality's not so important?"

What can be said about these anecdotes?

An anecdote is "a story of some sort", Mike Michael writes, "though there is an implication that this is about an actual incident, thus it is not simply a fictional narrative, but possibly a report".[46] There is a lack of clarity surrounding the matter of time here. This I interpret as an indication that it is not always *about time*. Like it is possible to ask how long it takes to be in the process, but in front of the finished object we stand mute. But what do we really ask about art when we're standing before it? What do we ask about a sculpture or painting? Maybe we should be grateful if we can visualise the process in our imaginations enough to have anything to ask at all. Works of art can make us mute – out of wonder or fascination or irritation or disgust. Perhaps asking about time, strangely enough, is the most tangible question we can ask. Maybe it's a diplomatic question, like asking about the weather. It's a question that has a concrete answer, unlike "What is this artwork about?"

One example of the use of the concept slow and slowness attributed to finished craft objects is the 2012 exhibition *Slow Art* at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, curated by Cilla Robach, who wrote in a book of the same title,

> The result is a few works that reach a relatively small audience and even fewer buyers. In this sense, Slow Art, has the same exclusive nature as that frequently seen in unique works of art, that is, that only rich institutions or private individuals can afford to buy them. Moreover, very few people choose to devote themselves to intricate artisanal production these days. Thus, the term *Slow Art* denotes a marginal phenomenon in the field of applied arts and design. But it is nevertheless interesting, since it presents us with different perspectives. *Perspectives that focus on doing things well instead of quickly*, on valuing quality instead of quantity. On handling materials, i.e., our common natural resources, with care, and showing consideration for future

> generations. *On seeing a value in slowness*. On allowing time to be a significant factor in the artistic process.[47] [Emphasis added]

I have a hard time seeing how doing something well can be compared to doing something fast. Weaving is neither fast nor slow. I do not see how the slowness can be given its own exclusive value. The slow concept is widespread across many categories in life, slow food and slow parenting being two examples. Robach continues,

> For what is it these slow artists accomplish with their relentless, slow and complicated work, full of repetitive movements that frequently cause physical pain? What drives Helen Dahlman to make her monumental embroideries in thin cotton thread, despite having to wear double plasters to prevent the blood from her pricked fingertips from staining the fabric.[48]

Pointing out the embroiderer's bloody fingers in the case may reveal a desire by the author to highlight the practice as work in the sense of a human activity that generates economic value in the form of goods or services, not merely a tranquil pursuit. But it is also unusual to hear about the bodily discomfort of the maker, which I find relevant.

In 2020, the Nordic Watercolour Museum described the work of Swedish artist Andreas Eriksson for an upcoming exhibition (Fig. 17):

> In their literal way, the tapestries represent one of the basic problems of painting: the play between depth and surface. Two artistic temperaments – the quick watercolour and the slow weaving technique – merge and become one. The end results are the unique expression of the works.[49]

Fig. 17. Screenshot from the Nordic Watercolour Museum's website in 2020 describing Andreas Ericsson's exhibition. The last sentence says: "Two artistic temperaments – the quick water colour and the slow technique of weaving – blend together and become one. The end results are the unique expression of the works."

Here another stereotype: the description of watercolour as quick and weaving as slow. Is watercolour fast because water can be fast? Or is watercolour fast because the distance between material and execution can be so small for the painter that it can be an unplanned work? But watercolour can be slow: it requires planning in image composition so all layers

Nordiska Akvarellmuseet visar en separatutställning med akvareller, teckningar och textilverk av Andreas Eriksson. Presentationen belyser den tidskrävande, komplexa skapandeprocessen från idé till uttryck, från skiss till vävnad.

Andreas Eriksson arbetar parallellt med olika konstnärliga tekniker. Hans stilar och uttryck kan skifta. Verken balanserar ofta vid gränsen mellan det abstrakta och det figurativa. Naturen utgör den viktigaste inspirationskällan.

Erikssons intresse för själva målarduken, dess textur och taktila egenskaper blev upprinnelsen till hans textila verk, som utförs i samarbete med kunniga vävkonstnärer. De stora, monokroma gobelängerna är en del av en pågående serie, som förutom några enstaka verk för första gången visas i Sverige. Verken har fått sina titlar efter geografiska platser, som *Weissensee* (stadsdel i Berlin), *Linköping*, *Djurgården* och *Vinterviken* (de två senare i Stockholm).

På många plan handlar hela sviten om själva materialet och dess ursprung. Allting börjar med Andreas Erikssons känsliga akvarellskisser och fortsätter genom vävmästarnas översättningar av dem till ett annat känsligt material. Vatten och pigment förvandlas till textila mönster som uppstår genom olika grader av täthet och flotteringar. Oblekta lingarner i olika grovlek ger textur. Linets naturliga färg, som skiftar beroende på i vilken jordmån det har odlats och hur mycket ljus det har fått, har bevarats.

På sitt bokstavliga sätt gestaltar gobelängerna ett av måleriets grundproblem: spelet mellan djup och yta. Två konstnärliga temperament – den snabba akvarellen och den långsamma vävningstekniken – smälter samman och blir ett. Slutresultatet är verkens unika uttryck.

MEDVERKANDE KONSTNÄRER

Andreas Eriksson →

end up in the right place, and long periods of drying between the layers. There is something unsophisticated about this fast and slow dichotomy.

Two exhibitions that I have participated in truly focused on time. The first was *Time: An Exhibition of Textile Art* (2016), the second *Everyday Matter: The Value of Textile Art* (2018).

For *Time* we were asked to write a short statement about our contribution with a focus on time. I wrote about my work *I Am Not Dead, I Am Just Sleeping* (not a weaving, because ironically, I did not make it a priority to invest time in creating a new weaving). I wrote, "Time: time is what time is. I am powerless before the nature of weaving – its nonchalance about time or, more precisely, its own time"[50] (2016).

The other, *Everyday Matter: The Value of Textile Art*, was described in the catalogue as "an exhibition focusing on materiality, slowness and the opportunities of the craft" (2018).

The exhibition was produced in connection with *Crossover Borås 2017: The 18th European Textile Network Conference*. The exhibition was curated by the organisation NTA (Nordic Textile Art), and artists were invited from around the Nordic region. The purpose was described as:

> The slow process of textile art with everyday materials as the starting point. Its methods eliminate time and communicate through their materiality. Threads we all recognize but take years to master. While we look back in history, we work towards yet undiscovered possibilities.[51]

As in the example of Andreas Eriksson, I think I see the dichotomy between slow and fast as a positive romantic value. We are certainly informed that it is the process that is slow (not the object), but that process contradictorily also eliminates time. Reworked threads remain –which we are told we recognize – and it is in the diverse work of these threads that time would be visible. My contribution that was selected for this exhibition was certainly large, but it was a simple one-colour rya mounted on an uneven pink staircase that I made over the course of a few weeks in brief moments when my new-born baby was asleep. I consider this work to be neither the product of a slow process nor particularly masterful.

In the article "Looms Everywhere", Swedish art critic and curator Maria Lind claims that craft is back at the forefront of visual art, as evidenced by the large presence of crafts in current exhibitions. And she notes that weaving is a particular focus in this general trend:

> An artist who has made a point of contributing to the revival of old weaving techniques is Anne Low of Vancouver; as might be expected, her studio is dominated by a large weaving loom, inherited from an older weaver and used for making cloth the historical way – meticulously and *very slowly*.[52] [Emphasis added]

I do not agree with any "revival of old weaving techniques" on the work Lind is refering to: the works described are hand-woven fabrics in silk and wool in, what I think, some variation of twill weave, a technique most weavers probably would not define as "very slow" (in Lind's words). Using pedals and a shuttle, it is most often quite an easy and smooth process, though speed may vary depending on the pattern and how thin the thread is. This is an example of the word slow being used by a writer who to my knowledge is not a maker herself.

Another later example comes from an article about the artists Eva and Elin Sundström (mother and daughter) in the Swedish daily newspaper *Uppsala Nya Tidning* with the headline "Art Created in Praise of Slowness"[53] that describes their exhibition of weavings and ceramics. Initially, the journalist writes, "At a time when the wheels of society are spinning ever faster, the artists Eva and Elin Sundström are exhibiting *slowly created art* in Sadelmakarlängan in Österbybruk. Works driven by power and enthusiasm" [Emphasis added]. As a comment to the article, Elin Sundström herself writes on her Instagram, "Nice article about our exhibition in today's *Uppsala Nya Tidning*. Although the part about slowness is probably about my mother... I work quite quickly and impatiently...".[54] The slowness is applied to the work by the journalist, even though Elin Sundström has obviously not been asked the question, and in fact describes her working method rather differently.

Maria Adelcreutz (1936–2014) was a Swedish weaver who describes weaving as a way of understanding political events – as a form of physical labour that can create space for reflection during the process thanks to its natural rhythm (its "slowness", as Adelcreutz describes it). Anna Laine writes in a book on Maria Adlercreutz from 2016:

> The weaving *In Her Eyes the People's Light* is Preserved, which has become one of Maria Adlercreutz's best-known weavings, is part of this community-engaged craftsmanship. Through the weaving, Maria Adlercreutz sought to engage her contemporaries in the terrible war that was going on in Vietnam. To shape the message, the properties of the fabric were essential to the design. The weaving itself was an important point of departure. The slow and steady was important in the message. There were qualities here that contrasted with the speed of the news media, where human fates became interchangeable. In a mass media stream, then as now, horrific images of people in the midst of the horrors of war were constantly recurring. Every day new terrible images. Human deaths that were reduced to a stream of images. For her, weaving became a way of stopping this flow, it became a way of rescuing individual human deaths from oblivion.[55]

Fig. 18. Maria Adlercreutz, *In Her Eyes the People's Light is Preserved*, 1972. Tapestry in linen wool and silk, 85 x 185 cm. Photo: Anna Danielsson/ Nationalmuseum.

Does the woven work have the power to stop an image flow at a high pace? I have also highlighted this approach in my practice. Today I think differently. The availability of the two media is fundamentally different.

Weaving is a broad subject, with many techniques in the art, and weavers with extensive experience do not need to master all weaving techniques to be considered knowledgeable in their craft. Therefore, there are also examples of how experienced weavers romanticise techniques that they do not usually work with. The interest organisation Svenska Riksvävarna's[56] website explains: "We all know that weaving is meditative, but that sitting and tying rya knots for half a day can be restful, was new. At least for me."[57]

But does everyone know that weaving is meditative? I would argue that "meditative" is a confusion of words, or rather a word we lack; the correct term would be a word that describes a condition in which we (the person weaving) may be left alone and at peace (free from the usual expectations). In a 1939 interview entitled "Wool Expert" for a book entitled *In Honour of Hand Work*, Thyra Rehnqvist said:

> Handicraft can be the tired housewife's way of isolating herself, her knitting and embroidery drawing a protective circle around

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> her. She is not reached by the children's noise and the clutter of household chores in the same way as otherwise. The work of the hand binds her thought and frees it as well. The rhythmic movement, which is at hand with many kinds of crafts, is an excellent basis for thought and inspires the imagination […]. To live is for many to wait.[58]

Rehnqvist's description is one I remember well from my own grandmother. She said she liked to make quilts because then she didn't have to do anything else, and nobody bothered her.

Through examples of artists who themselves highlight slowness as part of their practice, there are those who mention boredom and frustration or pain linked to slowness, but there are also examples of those who give it their own positive value. The above-mentioned Maria Adlercreutz made tapestries of images taken from the media of her time: newspapers. She described her work:

> Weaving is admittedly a slow technique. But the path that vision must take to become experience also requires time. In weaving, you have time – you have to work through the moment captured in the press picture, weft by weft.[59]

Adlercreutz associates the "natural rhythm" with "slowness", but rhythm does not necessarily mean slow. She puts the weaving in relation to the viewing that unites in slowness, as if the process continues on into the finished weaving, which is then viewed and understood as slow – as if as we are taking the time to follow the threads from A to Z. That is true for me in the process, but not in the finished weaving.

> By slowly transferring the photographic image to the woven one, she brought together her thoughts with an enhanced multi-sensory experience of the image that makes it more difficult for viewers to reject the violent content. Maria was concerned that certain events must be noted, understood and remembered – to be challenged and not repeated. The resulting design became a kind of brake, a medium that could turn our minds in a way that Maria believed the photographic picture couldn't.[60]

Here she describes the weaver's closeness to both the material, the image and the woven object she had her hands in, and I can agree that the

weaving can contribute to a kind of *brake*, as she says – a permanent moment that comes alive in some way because in the material, the threads, we see both the weaver's work and the image simultaneously. But a photograph also has a clarity that the weaving may lack, or in any case has transformed. If she means that the weaver's closeness, that she has had her hands in it, I can agree that the weaving can contribute to a kind of brake, or pause – a permanent moment that comes alive in some way because in the material, the threads, we see both the weaver's work and the image simultaneously. But a photograph also has a clarity that the weaving may lack.[61]

Diedrick Brackens (b. 1989) is an American artist who creates weavings that explore allegory and narrative through his own autobiography, broader themes of African American and queer identity, and American history. Glenn Adamson, a curator and writer who works at the intersection of craft, design history and contemporary art, cannot help but use the word slow in his description of Brackens's work:

> There are a few things that set Brackens apart, though, first and most obviously his chosen medium. While his works are certainly painterly, they are not actually painted, but rather slowly built up, weft by weft, on the loom.[62]

In another article, Diedrick Brackens says about weaving, "It's a meditative, relaxed state, and you get to disappear from everything else and go into a trance."[63] Artists can be misquoted, and they can give answers without much thought, perhaps saying quickly what they think journalists want to hear so they can get back to doing more interesting things with their time. But what would happen if he gave us an entirely different explanation – if the notion of the weaver's condition during the process were described as frustrating and sometimes lonely instead of relaxing? I suspect that kind of answer could generate an article with a different angle. However, Brackens would be perceived as negative, and readers might wonder why he wove if he found it frustrating. Glenn Adamson describes how Brackens's weaving "is rather built up slowly, weft by weft" (rather than painted), and Brackens himself describes his weaving (in process) as "meditative". These two descriptions belong together, I think, though they were given in two different articles. I myself have taken these quotations out of context, and Adamson describes other parts of Brackens's work, but I still want to focus on this even if it may not be completely central. Because if Adamson had written that the weavings are "built up, on the

loom", I would instead have read a story about an artist's work liberated from a romantic language. Its "slowly" is romantic, I think, but "weft by weft" reinforces this. As Adamson writes in his book *The Invention of Craft*,

> Given that the experience of modernity is so disjunctive, it is no wonder that the rhythmic quality of craft seems so comforting.[64]

In the search for the word slowness linked to hand weaving, I encounter emotions among practitioners such as boredom and loneliness. Something tells me that slow time in a handmaking practice is inevitably linked to emotions because we invest so much of ourselves in it.

Adamson on Brackens again:

> I walked into the weaving room and saw the machines and color-coded cabinets of yarn," he recalls, "and thought: I have no idea what this is, but it's amazing." He was hooked straightaway. He loved the slow analogue action of the machines, the sense that he was traveling through time, his hands and body echoing the shuttling motions of past weavers beyond counting.[65]

As a weaver, I recognize this sentiment. I also got hooked immediately (only to get tired for a few years before getting hooked again). But the story becomes one-sided, and I do not believe it ends there with "happily ever after". Do we have to travel back in time when we weave? I miss a story about what we have forgotten – everything that was difficult, complicated, frustrating – the things that makes the story more complete.

Katie Treggiden's book *Weaving: Contemporary Makers* on the Loom (2020) is beautiful, full of images with brief interviews of artists, almost all of them rather young. It includes several expressions of what weaving feels like for the weavers. Genevieve Griffiths (Hobart, Tasmania, 1981) testifies to having generally positive emotions: "It is a meditative outlet for my creativity", she says. She also describes the setting for her weaving practice in a positive manner: "I am rarely alone when I weave – there is always a child or two at my feet", she laughs. "My 3-year-old has started to take an interest and works alongside me, but the majority of my weaving is done once the girls are in bed."[66]

Dienke Dekker from Maastricht, the Netherlands, conveys more mixed feelings:

> I don't enjoy setting up the warp, but from there on it only gets better. I love the way my loom feels – it is the perfect extension of the body. I own a simple wooden dobby loom which fits the proportions of my body perfectly. Moving the shafts with my legs, inserting the weft with my arms, leaning back to make the weaving thicker with reed… to see a weaving slowly appear from this rhythm is a wonderful and addictive thing.[67]

The weaving timeline contains not only the finished weaving but also preparations that cannot be skipped. As the example shows, the different parts of the weaving process can be perceived differently, some more appreciated than others.

Dee Clements (New York State, United States, 1980) has been weaving for sixteen years, but it was far from her first love, we learn. Having spent four years studying sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), she was used to harder materials such as metal and ceramics, so she was keen to explore textiles – but not weaving, which seemed to her "slow and boring".[68] Dee Clements says:

> I have never enjoyed warping or loom threading – it hurts my body and it's not creative. I enjoy the actual weaving the most. Sitting at the loom is where I find myself the happiest and most fulfilled.[69]

Like Dienke Dekker, Clements describes a weaving timeline with preparations that cannot be skipped whether one likes it or not.

How can I know how experienced those who write or discuss are, or whether they are even weavers? I cannot. The only thing I can know is that my experience often chafes against the descriptions given. The word slow in my practice is linked primarily to frustration – not a positive value. Frustration in turn links to a growing discomfort in my body. Over time, the slow process hurts: aching hands, shoulders, and back. The concept of slow is something I connect to my body at work. And I have seen other practitioners doing the same. It can be seen in the examples above that several of the practicing artists have more mixed experiences, in which some parts that go slowly are boring and frustrating while parts that are more fun seem to pass quickly. The question in my practice is, what exactly is the difference between what happens over a *long time* and what is defined as *slow*? My work can be done over a long period of time but is not done slowly.

In a practical knowledge like weaving, repetition is embedded in the technique. In rya weaving, small movements are repeated similarly from one side of the warp to the other as the knots are attached to the warp threads. These rows become horizontal lines in the weave. Each small unit (such as the knot) as well as each line can represent a specific moment in time. The time aspect of making can then be understood by the viewer from these lines. But this is just one small technical part of the making of a weaving.

Serial Babies (2016-Ongoing)

My work on *Serial Babies* was born out of the piece called *At the Shore of Amygdala* (2014–15), a work I intended to base my thesis on it, thinking it would develop as a straightforward series over the course of my doctoral studies. I wanted to do a project over a longer period of time, which I had experience with in *At the Shore of Amygdala*.

The difference between these two works is that there was no clear plan or demarcation in *Serial Babies*. I wanted to design it more as an experiment, but I still had no plan for how to proceed. I have sometimes described the weavings in *Serial Babies* (eight in total, five of which were woven during my first two years as a doctoral student) as time-consuming in exhibition contexts and interviews. I would not do so today.

Ceramicist and researcher Conor Wilson writes:

> (...) Craft is a highly specialized, skilled form of production, involving an intimate, bodily knowledge of a (usually narrow) range of materials and related tools and equipment. Craft production is stable and based on repetition – to the point where the maker doesn't have to think about what they are doing. This is the point – doing something over and over and over again results in the ability to make unselfconsciously, the body-mind released from the tyranny of concept; the tyranny of uncertainty, of self-criticism.[70]

The tendency to complete shapes and figures is called *closure*. The law of closure states that individuals perceive objects such as shapes, letters, pictures and so on as being whole even when they are not complete. Specifically, when parts of a whole picture are missing, our perception fills

in the visual gap. It is therefore an *ability* to accurately identify objects that are partially covered (by hanging threads in my case) or *missing* (by broken lines created through the technique of the rya knots). The Law of Closure is part of the Gestalt Laws, a term used in gestalt psychology.[71] The study of gestalt originated in Germany in the 1920s. It is a branch of psychology that is interested in higher order cognitive processes relative to behaviourism. Gestalt theory is a theory about perception, which holds that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The aspects of this theory that are interesting for art practice relate to the theory's postulation of visual perception, the relationship between parts of the whole of visual experience. The properties here are the key principles of gestalt systems, including the laws of closure, similarity, proximity, symmetry, continuity and common fate.[72]

The law of closure links into the fascination while working in practice, and it is present in exhibition settings in the view and experience of spectator. When I weave, the image is not fully there for me: the finished part of the weaving is rolled on a beam under the loom, and the on-going parts about 20 cm high – where I see the sketch under the warp threads. In this way, I always fill in what I can't see to give myself an understanding of the whole. It is not like painting, where the whole canvas is stretched out in front of me.

Finnish rya weaver Tenka Issakainen describes her experience of rya:

> The fascinating thing about ryas is that you can do only one centimetre at a time. If you painted with the same technique, it would mean that you could only see a centimetre-long strip of canvas at a time and you couldn't go back to make changes afterward.[73]

Also in the finished weaving, closure is part of the experience. On the smooth side, we can follow the V-shaped forms of the woven pixels and visualise the whole, in spite of the voids between these pixels. If viewers are allowed to see the smooth side too, they usually express surprise and see the hairy image in a new way.

Fig. 19. Close-up from when I was weaving *Maxim,* with the cartoon attached under the warp, 2020.

Fig. 20. Kristina Müntzing, *Mee-Mawing*, 2016, detail. Müntzing describes herself: *Mee-Mawing* is an artistic research project, which investigates communication and hidden languages by looking at the history of textile industries and at the emergence of socialist movements. During the 20th century, groups of female textile workers from Lancashire, UK, invented Mee-Mawing, a secret language they used to communicate through the loud noises of the cotton mills. A combination of mime, lip-reading and dance, Mee-Mawing allowed for work-related conversations, everyday chit-chats and political discussions which would remain unintelligible to their supervisors. Photo: Kalle Brolin. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Swedish artist Kristina Müntzing[74] works with large collages in paper (Fig. 20), which she cuts into strips and re-braids together. She highlights the importance of the aggression in the process, a brutal action, as she describes it, which she then puts back together with tape and glue. Through this method, she simultaneously builds up and destroys images. These can always take new turns, and thus are constantly on-going.

This is not the case with the weaving I do on a loom. In my work, the image builds up systematically. But I still see a similarity in how we look at our role in putting together an image. Müntzing's imagery focuses on women's work historically, often in textile contexts. She mentions memory and historical oblivion as important starting points that she connects to the qualities of the material: "It falls apart easily, is something temporary."[75]

What I believe I share with Müntzing is in part the pursuit of closure in her somehow incomplete pictures. Both of us read in the missing parts. Parts of the motifs in Müntzing's works are not intertwined. She justifies this by saying, "The image needs different types of surfaces – partly to be interesting as a picture, but also for your own drive. Monotony is not desirable."[76]

Studio note dated 14 April 2020:

Studio-note

The idea of rya weaving as paint-by-numbers has been in the back of my mind. I recall that as a child I signed up for a "drawing school" by mail. A few weeks later, a booklet arrived with exercises on how to learn to draw. But what I remember is that I did not do the tasks – it was too difficult, I didn't think it was good to have so much freedom. What I did instead was I copied all the pictures in the booklets, made them like they were mine. I followed the lines of what someone else had done. And then I repeated this (without tracing over the drawing) – that is, I learned

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> a picture from the outside. Now I follow the lines of someone else's image, the digital image I take from the internet. I've always been disturbed by the fact that I can't draw. But I have never practised either. I have practised following other people's lines, and I have become good at it.

Paint-by-numbers has a predictability in combination with unexpected effects in the result, in the same way as my rya weaving. There is a certain control, which provides security, while there is always a degree of uncertainty and risk-taking.

When I weave, I *copy* pixels from a printed image, often one that someone else has taken (though lately I have made more from my private collection) and make it my own. I follow the pixels from the image and transfer them into the weaving in a way that is not entirely different from paint-by-numbers (which I was very fond of as a child – because the result was so much *better* than when I drew or painted freely). In my case, as in the finished painting kit, the labour of others (when I use downloaded images) is a prerequisite for my creation.

British craft historian Stephen Knott writes, "By default, paint-by-numbers has a (similar) revelatory quality, as the labour of others unavoidably shows through the final layer."[77] Knott continues, "However, even if the rules are strictly adhered to, each paint-by-number cannot fail to be a unique copy due to the inherent idiosyncrasy of the hand."[78]
For me, the colour fields and pixels are merely indicators: they need to be correct in terms of position and value of darkness or light, but not colour. My weaving uses this model as a guiding map, and I don't see the weaving as a copy of the original image. In paint-by-numbers, according to Knott, it is nevertheless important to understand that anyone who paints one always contributes something of their own.[79]

In any case, variety emerges: the colours are mixed differently, they are put into different places, and the upturned smile suggests different degrees of sadness.[80] This kind of variation is also fundamental to my pictures in the way I see the two-sided weaving. For example, the child in *Serial Babies* is happy on the smooth side, as in the original picture, and sad on the hairy side, where the rya knots are hanging down. Knott writes,

> Their practice exposes the repressed truth that all art, particularly since Duchamp's experiments with the readymade, is dependent on the labour of others. This demystification, however,

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> reminds us, more acutely than ever, that *the artist's skill is needed in the application of the outermost layer*. [Emphasis added][81]

Fig. 21. A paint-by-numbers canvas painted by me, 2021. Unfinished, too slow and uninspiring.

My motifs can be summed up with a few keywords: portraits, danger, grief, tribute, love and care. These are not fixed in any way but are relevant to what I weave now and have woven in recent years. The motifs stage something I am familiar with: duality, such as how sadness and despair are close at hand to joy and peace. I think the motifs often mix something silly with something very serious. Kitschy pictures of crying children have similar qualities.

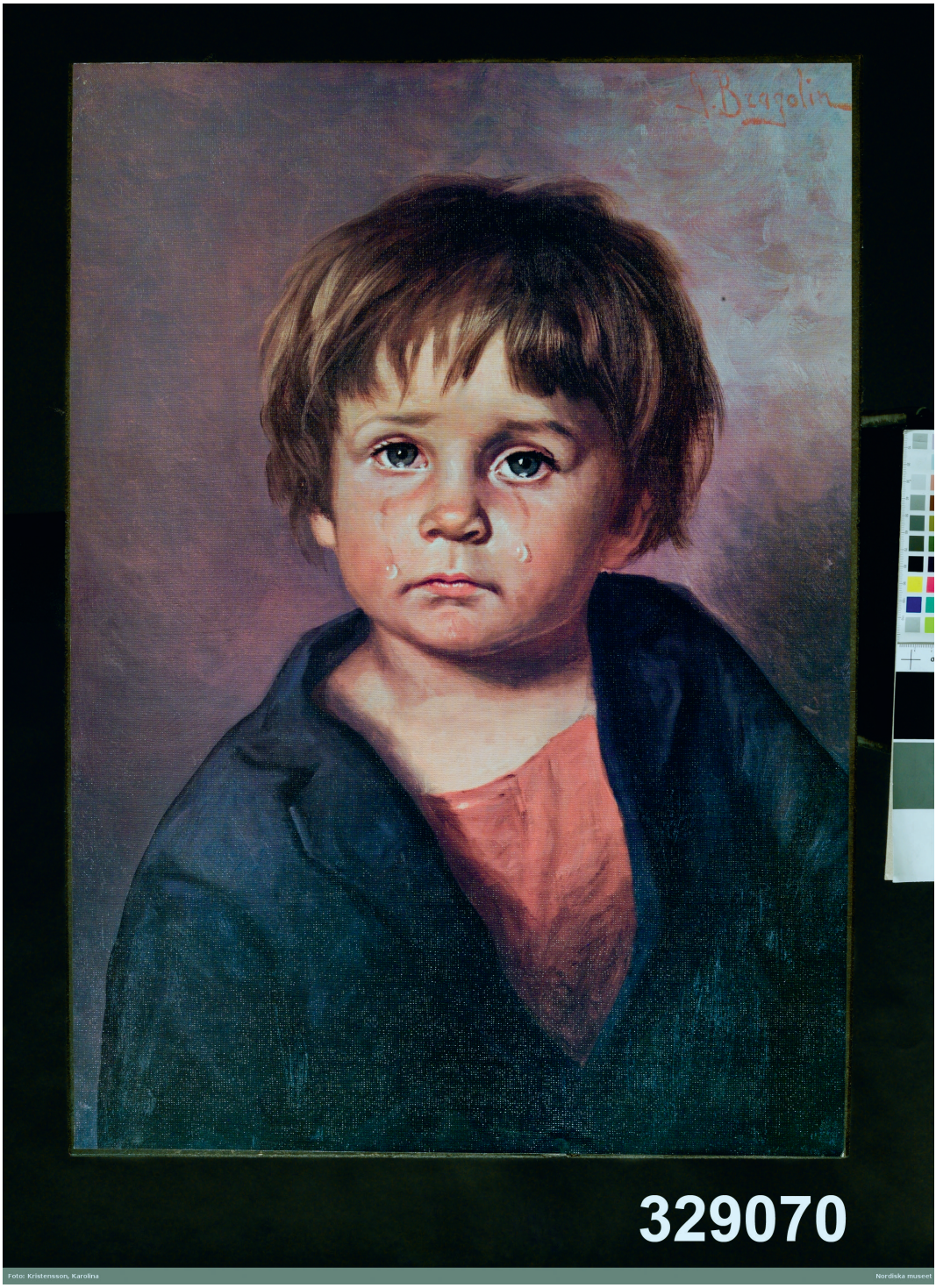
Fig. 22. Bruno Amadio, Eddie, 1972-75. Painting 70 cm x 50 cm x 0.8 cm. Photo: Kristensson, Karolina/Nordiska Museet. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.sv

Pictures of crying children are common motifs in kitsch art known in Sweden as hötorgskonst. Viviane Renaud writes in *Hötorgskonst – Tavlorna, målarna, marknaden och publiken*:[82]

> Best known are the crying children, whose original author was the Italian painter Bruno Amadino. The children are characteristically portrayed when they have just stopped crying, as indicated by a shining tear running down the cheek. These "portraits", which were actually painted from dolls, have been marketed all over the world in the form of framed reproductions.[83]

In the kitsch paintings of crying children, the point is to arouse empathy for the child, who has just *stopped* crying. They capture a turning point, where the last remaining tears continue to roll down, but the feelings have changed. I want my woven images to cry for the same reason. Because images to me do not stand still. Images evoke something. Something is set in motion. This is why I generally install my weavings in exhibitions to hang free rather than against a wall.

Returning to scenes and situations that I am familiar with means in a way that I expose myself to a certain emotional affliction. These allow me to be on the verge of pain but move forward through creativity, without losing control of my mental well being, and to develop knowledge of materials and techniques that provide satisfaction, as well as the fascination and



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motivation of the creation of images. All my rya weavings belong together in some way, like a family, where some belong to the closest family and others are peripheral members. I recreate situations from my original family, and through work, motifs and materials I make the lonely, vulnerable and grotesque into something better. I can also pay tribute to my own chosen family, showing all its sides from my perspective – sides that go through me and my work. The children are both happy and crying.

Two-Sidedness

I find several types of two-sidedness in my work. The most obvious is the practical one, the one in the loom: a hairy side facing me and a smoother side that hides under the warps, when the textile is woven, two different visual expressions of the same motif can be seen.

Early on, when I was still an undergraduate student, I had a need to make crying images. I wanted to do something that did not so much have two different sides, but more an image that hid something, but that could not hold it inside. Since my education was in textiles, and I grew up in Sweden, the idea of rya rugs was close at hand. A rya for me was a rug on the floor, but somewhere I had also already learned that its origin was a blanket in the bed. The ryas I had seen were short-haired and with graphic or floral patterns or monochrome. In my initial understanding of ryas, I realised that they must look different on the different sides. Because the yarn and the knot must start somewhere. I imagined that if a rya lay on the floor like a carpet, it hid something, hid a clarity. I also imagined its function as a carpet: to absorb dirt in the hairy fluff: breadcrumbs, gravel, ash from cigarettes.

My first rya as a work of art (*Return of the Weaver – Weaver Begins*, 2014) was short-haired. Because it was important to me that the motif was properly visible in the fluff, and I was determined that the fluff, the hairy side, would count as its front. I simply thought of it as a rug, although I would mount it against a wall. In the back of my mind, however, I had the memory of a textile from when I was in community college, a sample of a rya with no motif, just made up of different kinds of yarn in green shades in various qualities, and it was more long-haired. I wanted this new figurative work to be long-haired too. But I did not yet trust the technique. Instead, I wove it short-haired, and tied it in longer threads when it was ready and let warp threads hang down.

When I weave, the motif hides from me. I only see the threads that, like snakes, meander down into their holes. At first, I thought of the rya as a rug when I was weaving it, with a motif that lurks underground. The image cries out when I weave, even if these tears were minimal, a sob. Not close to the weeping I will approach later. Tears can be as creepy as snakes.

The two-sidedness is related to the historic rya that was used as a blanket: the hairy side lay down towards the made bed so the body would face the hairiness for its warming effect, and the smoother side up, decorative when the bed was not used by a sleeping body.[84]

The two-sidedness is an experience I have through my body when I work with woven motifs. My body is in contact with the hairy side. I weave a blanket: I weave as the textile should lie against me in a bed. I only see the smooth side in its entirety when the weaving is finished and cut off from the loom.

Swedish textile historian Vivi Sylwan claims:

> It is now well established that the simple rya was used with the pile facing down to the bed, and thus it was the smooth side that was meant to be seen.[85]

It is interesting that this has existed as a change in history worth noting.

Sylwan continues:

> The simple ryas, especially the older ones – shiny in the shifting white, yellow and grey tones of the natural wool pile with their often refined simple pattern – have so enchanted our modern aesthetic sensibility that it did not occur to us that this side could be the reverse.[86]

Sylwan found that the hairy side is the back and the smooth side the front, something that she says can appear wrong because the shiny hairy side is much more pleasant to see. The reason for the front to be seen as the "wrong" side was of course because of their function. There is no reverse or face/obverse side in my work. Both sides are equally important. Two-sidedness stands for difference: working with an image that is not visible in parallel with one that is visible but fluffy and indistinct.

Multidiciplinary designer and researcher Jessica Lynne Priemus writes:

> While there is such a thing as a textile having a right side up, especially in pictorial fabrics, woven cloth is generally experienced in a multitude of ways. We feel cloth from the inside and see it from the outside.[87]

That explains why so many textile practitioners often say that the back is more interesting.

Over the years, I have learned how the motif is affected by different lengths, colours, contours and materials. In that knowledge there is a fascination and wonder that has not diminished over the years. It is still interesting to see the result on the back when the weaving is finished. The two-sidedness links to the time elapsed in the making, the methodical work. What takes a long time is in fact working with something invisible while I work with an object that is two images in one. I could have consistently worked on making two exact copies of the same motif and assembled these together, but I do not. It is important that the weaving is two-sided. Where the historical understanding of two-sidedness has been its warming function, it has for me from the very beginning been a way of thinking of a two-sided image with a clear side and an unclear side – with one motif hidden behind another.

There is also a two-sidedness, or duality, to the rya knot itself, which I find in the word rya + knot. Whereas knot is associated with something hard, tight and firm, rya for me is the open, loose part with the hanging threads that are free to fold and move however they want.

There is a two-sidedness in a rya's relationship to the body that curbs the material: the body has its limitations in relation to vision and imagination. The hands too have their limitations, as do the back, shoulders, the lower back – everything that over time hurts, becomes uncomfortable and stiff. If I think about my practice as time-consuming, both the weaving and the textiles being woven get an imaginary status through that concept. I can make a living from it, even though it is malnourishing and keeps me in a certain category (slow art). If I instead emphasise the two-sidedness of my practice, the weaving will be meaningful, and I look forward being able to develop. Time in the weaving is an experience through the body. The two-sidedness is the most creative part of my process, and it is explored through different materials in different lengths. As an artist and weaver,

it is easy to think that I am always in the centre, but what is in front of me in the loom – the material and motif I work with – comes first. I have the ability to reshape the materials, but these are always in front of me.

Nick Crossley writes, "Embodied consciousness gives me a world, a setting, but in focusing upon this setting I necessarily put myself out of focus."[88] When I weave the motif, my body is absent and only makes itself known when it becomes uncomfortable or hurts. My attention and my motivation are strongest in the place where I fold the knot around the warp, when I know that I am creating a side – a motif – that is not visible to me in the moment.

Crossley continues, "Embodied consciousness sinks into the background of experience, allowing the world around me to be foregrounded."[89] The two-sidedness occurs in and through time, through the body. The way I experience it is that the two-sidedness is in front of me and the body is behind me, and I think that is the closest I can come to a description of why I do not experience the weaving as slow. In my mind, I imagine *something*. This *something* is seldom clear to me. It is not a clear picture, because I do not make an exact sketch that will match the result. This two-sidedness – between the obscure and the finished – is the body's shared work with the mind. It is an interaction that is pleasurable and motivating and keeps me in the present.

My ability grows as my skill inevitably increases. The larger the scale, the more important this seems to be, since the time then stretches out longer. I am, in all scales, from small to very large, unable to see the full finished weaving until it is completed, and in a larger format the time spent at the loom is not only longer but also more hidden due to its scaled-up motif that then needs a longer viewing distance to bring into focus.

Fig. 23. Illustration by Anna Ehrlemark. I have marked different areas in red where the image might appear, 2019.

The illustration in fig. 23 shows different places I can focus my attention and imagine that the image takes place technically. The whole knot and the warp together really contribute to the complete woven image. But I enjoy looking at this illustration, reflecting on where it seems to be more important. It is tempting to ask where the image is in the material – the place where I claim that it begins then becomes a kind of position zero from which the image grows out, where it sprouts – where material, phys-

ical and something emotional meet and activate fascination or wonder. Even though I know technically what is happening here, there is also something more – a curiosity.

Fig. 24. Drawing that attempts to indicate where fascination or wonder takes place in the material, 2020.

The drawing in fig. 24 indicates where the magical space of figurative rya is located – the space where the flat pixel from the cartoon grows out like a sprout and gives the image the life I want it to have. The space is non-reflective and free from criticism. The place is meaningful and desirable; I do not want to know how to categorize it and transform it into knowledge, a system, or a manual. I was fascinated by weaving from the very first time I tried it, and I want to keep this feeling of fascination alive.

The term *rya* historically refers to a woven textile with a long, loose pile, which in Swedish is called a *flossa*. It is made by weaving a bottom weave and adding in piles, meaning yarn is laid or tied around the warp threads and tied and held in place by the intermediate weave, which creates the bottom weave together with the warp. A rya is a knotted textile, with each knot traditionally consisting of one to three woollen threads.

The Scandinavian rya was originally made to be not a rug but a woven variant of sheepskin to be used on a bed as a warming blanket.[90]

About the use of ryas, textile historian Agnes Geijer writes:

> The rya-rug was soft and warm, and its great advantage over the fur was that it could stand up to the wet without becoming stiff and unmanageable, and it was also easy to dry again. For this reason, it was very popular among seafarers of all ranks.[91]

The ryas are usually divided into different categories regarding their practical use or variations in materials and patterns. Some are called *slitrya* (simple rya), others *prydnadsrya* (ornamental rya).

According to both Geijer and Sylwan, the common bed rya had the fringe of the rya knot (what I call the hairy side) facing down, facing towards the body in the bed, possibly with a folded edge at the top (decorated, with more expensive yarn). It was sewn together from two pieces, with the seam on the hairy side so it would not be visible on top of the bed.

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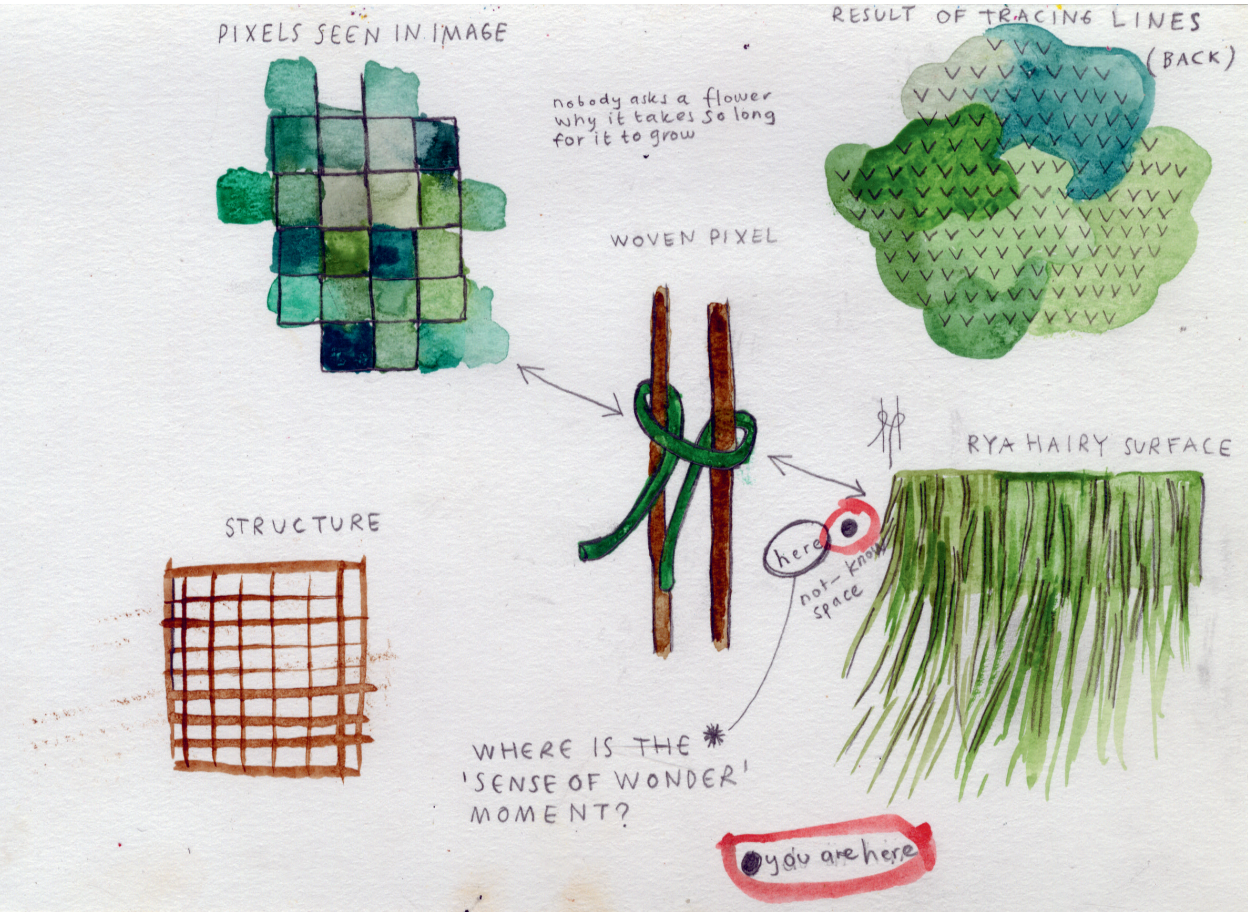
PIXELS SEEN IN IMAGE
nobody asks a flower why it takes so long for it to grow
RESULT OF TRACING LINES (BACK)
WOVEN PIXEL
RYA HAIRY SURFACE
STRUCTURE
here
not-know space
WHERE IS THE 'SENSE OF WONDER' MOMENT?
you are here

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Dating was unusual on the common bed rya – it was a consumable, not an heirloom – but did occur. This type of rya was often made from remnants household fabrics, saved up for several years before there could be enough for one textile. Sometimes rags were also used, though they were considered poor and not so warm.

The ornamental rya was placed with the rya knots (hairy side) upwards to show prosperity, skill and status. There were also double ryas that gave twice the warmth and showed economic prosperity because they contained more material. The ornamental rya, in contrast to the simple rya, was often woven by professional weavers, as these were richly patterned and required higher skill. These often had initials and year made woven in because they were made to be given in the form of bridal gifts, for example.

The two-sided nature of a rya textile is thus historical. The rya has always been perceived as two-sided, even when motifs or decoration were not the focus as they are in my work.

Agnes Geijer writes of the ornamental rya:

> The "ornamental rya" first appears in the form of the double-piled rya, which is simply the old utility rya woven in one piece together with a decorative bedcover. This tendency is already perceptible in the descriptions from Turku Castle. As was pointed out by Vivi Sylwan, the idea of executing the decorative side also in the pile technique evolved in Sweden, where it was probably inspired by imported items in so-called "Turkey-work". The decorative side of the rya-rug was made in finer wool and short knots, which made the pattern more distinct, while the utility side retained its original shaggy character.[92]

Geijer continues:

> The next stage in this development was that the many-coloured upper side became independent, developing into an exclusively ornamental rya used as a ceremonial coverlet, especially for the bridal bed. This change took place in Sweden during the eighteenth century, with the result that the one-sided ornamental rya soon came to predominate.[93]

Swedish textile historian Vivi Sylwan (1870–1961) writes that the ornamental rya belongs to the 18th and 19th centuries, when it was placed as an ornament on a bed made up on solemn occasions. In the ornamental pattern we easily recognize the pattern sources, particularly traditional *märkdukar*, which were samples of fabric embroidered with different compositions (often the alphabet, numbers and different pattern figures) that were made as practice pieces for embroidery art and used as proof of skill. But also other popular and modern embroidery patterns were translated to ornamental ryas as well. One stitch in the embroidery corresponded to a knot in the weaving, so there were no problems with the translation.[94]

According to Axel Nilsson, in general the older ryas were shorter-haired than the more recent ones (it is unclear what time period he is talking about). This, he said, related to the fact that the older had richer patterns and that could only be clearly discerned in the short-pile weaving.[95]

Like the ornamental style, the length of the knots also had an economic aspect. The more yarn used, the more expensive the textile was to make. Here we see a balance between the motif's appearance and the function as a warming blanket.

Historically, in Sweden the warp was usually wool, but flax (linen) was sometimes used, and later it became the most common. The bottom weave was usually wool, and thicker wool yarn was used for the knots.

It is recorded that in Uppland in 1868, an ornamental rya was laid on the floor as a rug.[96] This is the first documentation we have of the rya as a rug. After this, the rya migrated from the bed to the wall, then to the table, and began to be used as adornment on surfaces throughout the home.

Its popularity has since changed in line with current interior design trends, designers and weaving artists' interests, economic viability and trends among today's handcrafters and do-it-yourselfers. Around the beginning of the 20th century, Lilli Zickerman travelled around Sweden to map the country's textiles through documentation such as photography, notes and purchases through the Association for Swedish Handicrafts (Svensk Hemslöjd), which she had started in 1899 as a forum for the preservation of good craftsmanship and handicrafts in Sweden.[97]

Some 50 years later, textiles reached their peak in popularity during the 1950s and 60s, with designers such as Elsa Gullberg, Märtha Gahn and Edna Martin (Fig. 25), who also created patterns for Svensk Hemslöjd that were sold through the association as pattern sheets so people could create rugs for their own homes.

Fig. 25. This rya is a recreation of Edna Martin's work *Korsstygnsmattan*, which she designed in 1984 for Svensk Hemslöjd. This product is available now at: https://svenskhemslojd.com/product/korsstygnsmattan-ryakit/.

However, this latter part of the story is less interesting to me. For me, the cross-fertilization between the blanket and modern image making using a hand-woven rya based on pixelated images is of greater interest. When the rya was laid on the floor, its two-sidedness disappeared from our immediate sight.

Fig. 26. Rya from the collection of the Textile Museum in Borås, categorized as BM2b120. An example of how a *slitrya* has not been matched perfectly when sewn together. I visited the Textile Museum in Borås on July 10, 2019.

I use rya for its pixel-like qualities. Many textile techniques can be described as pixels (some types of embroidery, knitting, tufting etc.). The rya knot has a particularly suitable expression, with its binding point, which is like a pixel, and the open, loose threads, which are like flowing or falling pixels. Or a growing pixel that grows out of itself. The lengths I use in these loose threads are not seen in a typical historical rya. The closest I get are the very early examples, which were single colours and simply made from longer strings of raw wool used by fishermen to keep warm at sea. I have learned with experience how to arrange the different lengths of loose thread ends over my motifs, with the longest at the bottom of the image and shorter higher up. But I insert some longer lengths throughout the motif as well. If the image has eyes, for example, these are considerably longer (as seen in *Serial Babies*).

My ryas are inbred versions of the historical: they have some of the same features and look and mix historically, with the hairy (or shaggy) and smoothly woven sides shown equally. The rya *Maxim 2011–2019* (2019-2020), which I will describe in more detail later, is a loose rya (*glesrya*), which historically was only decorative, but in my case is richly patterned (figurative) in contrast to tradition. A loose rya has a longer distance between the rows of rya knots, so the bottom fabric (what I call the in-between or intermediate weaving) is also visible on the hairy side, which

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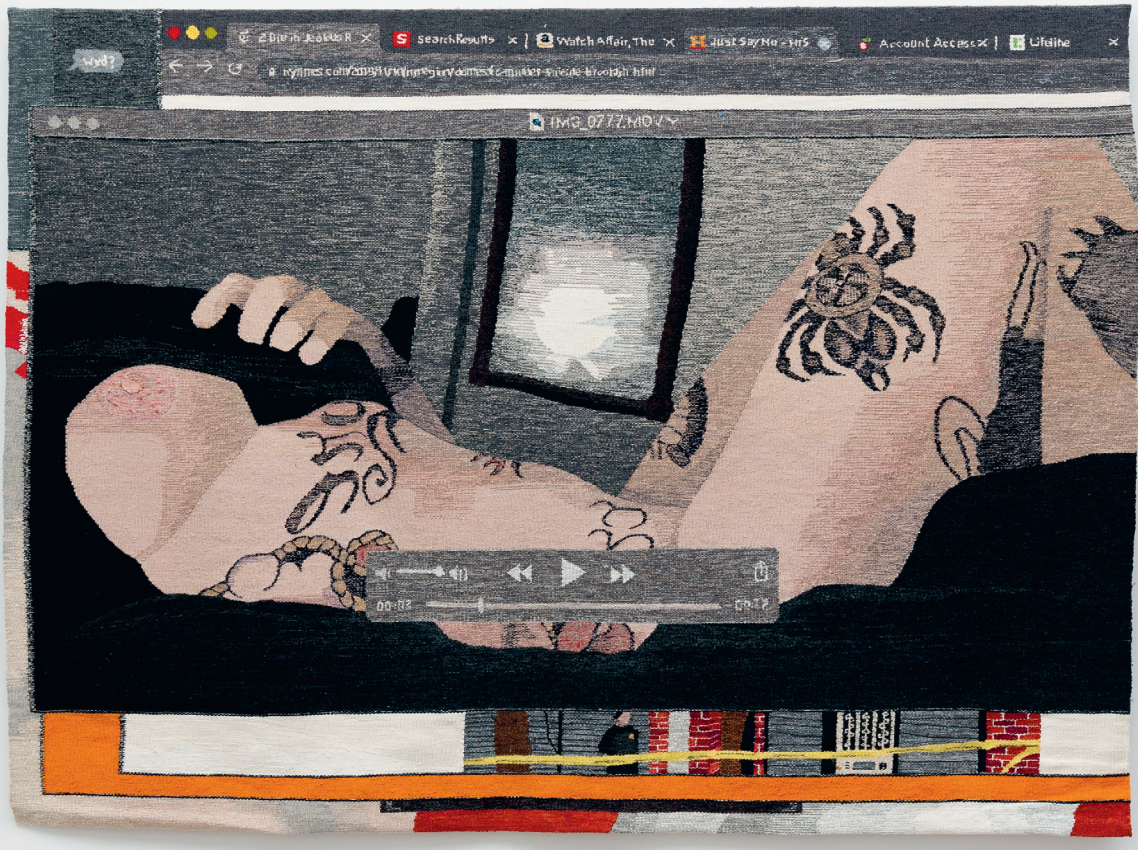
it traditionally was not. This means that a weaving must be large for the motif to be visible.

Loose ryas are also represented in historical archives, but I have not found how and why they were made. Loose ryas were decorated very simply or not at all, perhaps because they could not possibly have been warm enough for a bed. The structure, then, with longer distance between the warming knots of wool, is not as dense as in a regular rya. Sometimes I stitch my ryas together from two or three parts (the way the simple rya was made historically), and I use a stitch where the pieces meet and do not overlap. But I sew and fasten on the hairy side, as is the tradition.

I do not date my ryas (just as simple ryas were not dated, unlike the ornamental ones, as mentioned above), nor do I weave my initials into my work. I think it disturbs the image. I never give credit to the original photo (because either I do not know who took it or I use a stock photo or one my own private photos). It can be argued that the unsigned work is wrong from a feminist point of view: textile design, which historically was women's work, was generally anonymous, in contrast to fashion, and the labour/production of textiles even more so. I think, however, that image and form is a signature enough. (In Part 2 I connect this to my later reflections on my discomfort about how the Istanbul exhibition was presented and credited.) Maybe I am lazy. Maybe I also want to link to the everyday, simple rya that had no signature rather than to the more boastful ornamental ones. My ryas are often made from manufacturing waste – not my own, but from a supply of yarn remnants I have amassed over the years from the global market. In this way, I can say that I now also use waste from my own production. In the warp I use linen, and in the knots and intermediate weaving I use wool. In some works, I have used rags. These rags have always been special: *Rana Plaza – The Collapse* (2015) was made from torn black second-hand clothes donated from the Swedish second-hand shop Emmaus that were in too poor condition to sell. In another case, *Dead Migrant Boy* (2017), I used my first son's worn-out clothes. I have also experimented with inserting other materials, such as a teddy bear in *Child Picking Cotton in Uzbekistan* (2017).

Growing/Crying Pixels, Dripping/Melting Knots

The idea of the knot or stitch as a textile pixel is not new. It is linguistically and metaphorically useful to refer to the rya knot in my case as a pixel


SearchResults
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for several reasons. First, it links to the two-sidedness, where the textile pixel then represents the "back", the base or the beginning. But for me, as someone who works with digital photographs as sketches printed on paper, it is also useful to talk about textile pixels to understand that the sketches' pixels are *translated* into textile pixels – in yarn. A pixel is a knot. I only think of the rya knots as textile pixels, not the plain-woven space. Weaver Annika Ekdahl introduced me to the term "woven pixel".[98] I cannot remember how or when, but clearly remember I heard it a lot during the years she was my professor at HDK (2008–11). When I started with rya weaving as my main practice, I did it based on a visual desire. Attracted by things like *hairy strategies*, *broken or crying pixels* and *glitch*, images that don't hold together, don't stick in place. I saw a potential in the rya technique to fulfil those wishes and desires.

Many artists, past and present, have used the photograph as a reference tool for creating woven images. American Erin Riley (Fig. 27) is an example, as are Swedes Annika Ekdahl (Fig. 28) and Maria Adlercreutz. But what seems to be common with both myself and other weavers is that the finished textiles do not primary draw attention to their photographic origin.[99] The images remain as references, but are simultaneously erased, in the same way that many painters use photographic references in their paintings (however, flat weaving comes from a long history of creating replicas of paintings). As historian Julia Pastor explains, the woven content dominates the finished product, so the objects "read primarily as tapestries rather than as translated photographs."[100]

Fig. 27. Erin Riley, *The Affair*, 2020. Hand-woven textile in wool, 250 x 180 cm. Photo: courtesy of Erin M. Riley and P.P.O.W Gallery. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Fig. 28. Annika Ekdahl, *Definitely Gold*, 2008. Tapestry, 300 x 300 cm. Photo: Åke Nilsson. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

The pixels act as a guide in the actual making, but I can also see that they have another value, namely that they have already existed in another form before they were woven. They have been reproduced and their meaning in the first context has changed. The meaning is multiplied by new layers of woven work, for example, and materials.[101] Images on the Internet exist in an incomprehensible amount. Weavings in the physical world do not. In my practice, woven pixels are a collection of crying pixels that form a hairy surface that can be understood as *fluffy* resolution. But I also bring the historical context into weaving, its original use as blankets

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or quilts or rugs. I pair *rya* with *tapestry* (in the sense of a woven image) to get a mixed outcome that fulfils my ideas: *to make woven images that cry*. The rya technique is the way to get there – the practical method. The images in my works appear as low-resolution images transferred from a digital picture (high resolution) to a printout, which has been made into a *low-resolution* picture and woven into a rya. The high-resolution picture turns into a low-resolution picture at the pixel level. This in turn creates a different picture, with new qualities and new characteristics. What these textile pixels then "do" varies with the process and the motif. I have found that I use different explanations: pixels that cry, grow, melt, drip, flow. These states are something I understand as artistic. I describe a rya as hairy, which indicates that a rya to me has a hierarchy in its construction.

The artistic concepts I use, *crying pixels* or *growing pixels*, start in something: tears well up in the eyes, a seed sprouts and pushes itself out of the ground. Even what melts, drips and flows has its beginning in something. Everything shows movement. I have a desire to freeze something on-going. In my weaving practice, this beginning of the *on-going* is myself – through thoughts, ideas, visions, emotions in relation to both the motif and the process and material, to the body and the handling of material, through the two-sidedness where the material is laid on top of two warp threads and folded around and comes back towards my body. I find curiosity in what I can do to get the result I want. In the weaving process, the pixels grow out of the woven surface, though not by themselves – it is of course something I do and control myself. Over the years, I have learned what I want to reinforce in the motif: carbon black eyes with extra-long threads just become crying to me. Perhaps long threads in the hands give a melting feeling in the finished weaving. Red areas in the cheeks or in the mouth suggest dripping blood. It is as though I am looking for a moving and living state, something that is *wet, fluid, or leaking*: a still image of a subject in process.

Scale(s)

Spending a lot of time on a work does not necessarily make it good. But devoting myself to large-scale works that take time – not because I am a slow weaver but because they are big textiles – confirms that I have used my time for something tangible, used my time well, and applied my time to a concrete outcome that is visible to others.

Scale is related to time in craft practices: a large scale impacts the time required for a handmade work. Scale is also something that accompanies the viewer's experience. But scale for the maker involves judging proportions rather than emphasising time. The scale and proportion of my works relate to the hand and the process of making itself – my hands have their technical limitations, and so does the loom I am working on.

I weave smaller weavings on smaller looms, and larger weavings on larger looms. If I am doing a very large rya, I make it in sections that are later sewn together. My best scale is between 50 cm and 100 cm wide because it matches my body – I do not have to move laterally so much (laziness), and I get a visual overview while working that is satisfactory to me (and motivates me to finish).

Scale and proportion in art are both concerned with size. Scale refers to the size of an object (a whole) in relationship to another object (another whole). In art, the size relationship between an object and the human body can be significant. Scale refers to the size of an object in relation to another and is one of the principles of the organisation of structural elements in art. Scale is often very important in designing repeat patterns for textile design. Different scaling is applied in art when something needs to be emphasised, or when the importance of one element is emphasised by giving it disproportionate size. In my practice, if weaving takes longer and becomes a somewhat painful investment of time, I experience a mix of feelings of waiting for it to be finished combined with the idea that the longer it takes, the more justice I give the work. I do not know why I think so, but it is connected to the body: if the body feels something – pain, discomfort, frustration – but I continue anyway, I transfer some form of belief to the work. There seems to be a connection between size, honour and care.

Fig. 29. A drawing of various scales I encounter in my work, 2021.

Treggiden describes the looms on which American weaver Erin M. Riley weaves (with images of often revisited memories of a serious car accident earlier in life): "A choice of three looms – a 24" Dorset loom, a 48" Macomber and a 100" Clement – on which Riley can make tapestries up to 8 by 8 feet – *ensures the images are given the space they deserve* [Emphasis added], inspired by large-scale subversive work made by women in the 1960s on looms that are no longer in production."[102]

SCALE: IMAGE

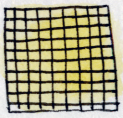
'bokmärke' (paper)

rya

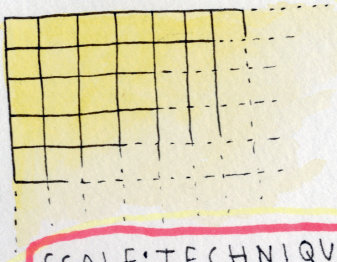
computer screen

google image search (one image is chosen) the image chosen is the first best alternative looking at content, composition, scale, contrast

SCALE: PIXELS

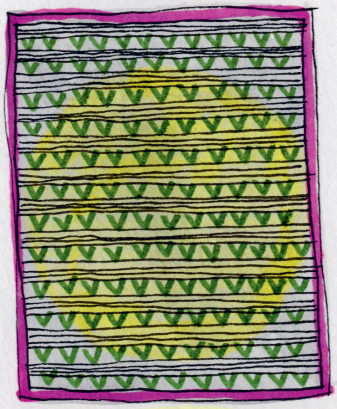


original image gets enlarged digitally in printing to match the intended rya

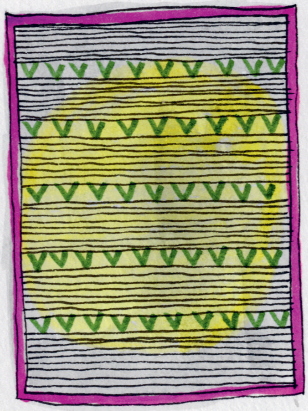


SCALE: TECHNIQUE

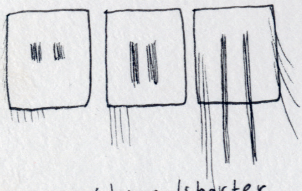
REGULAR RYA



GLES RYA



SCALE: LENGHTS IN KNOTS



The place of longer/shorter threads = success/fail in whole image

The lenghts are the most important part of the visual appearance "quality of art" (more important than content)

This technique result in a thinner (less heavy) weave which is faster completed than a regular rya.

It uses less materials.

This technique enables me as a weaver to make a larger rya within a timespan that is mentally and physically possible.

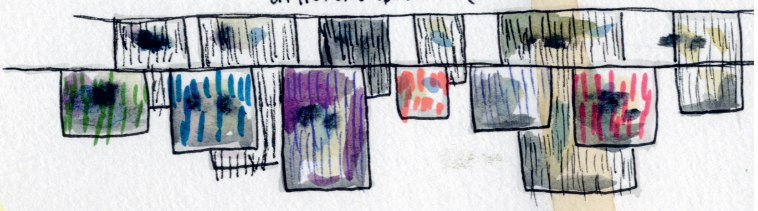
EXPERIM
SCALE 1:

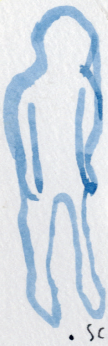
'bokmärke'

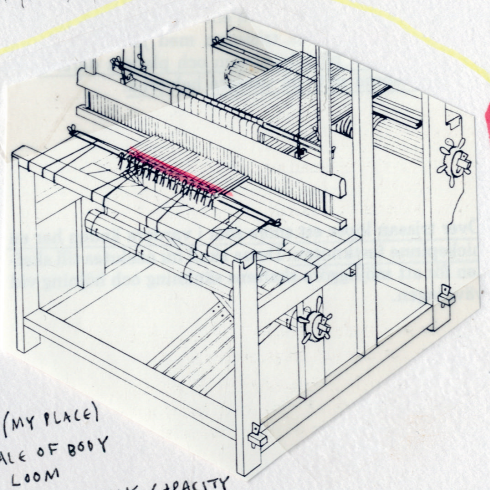
rya

SCALE: ISTANBUL

many weavers involved - different makers
different scale (defined minimum and maximum)
different qualities (weaving technique + materials)







(MY PLACE)

- SCALE OF BODY AT LOOM
- SCALE VS. BODILY CAPACITY

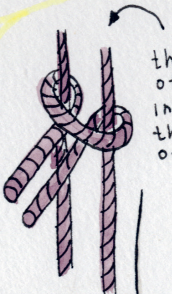
SCALE: BODY - LOOM - MATERIALS WEAVING IN ACTION

1. WHITH OF WARP
   - DEFINING SCALE OF RYA
   - BODY STILL OR MOVING WHILE WORKING
2. SIZE OF COMPLETED RYA NOT VISABLE UNTIL INSTALLATION (in cases of several parts sewn together)
3. NOT SEEING BACK WHILE WEAVING

ENT
I

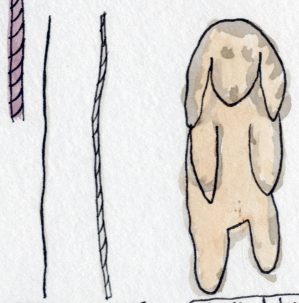
rya same size
s 'bokmärke'

small scale rya
esult in lost woven
ixels due to bodily
imitations (my hands
an't make to small knots
to thin materials



the scale of material influence the visual of the knot

SCALE: MATERIALS



linen

wool

stuffed toy

parts of clothes

fabric strips

Riley, who is similar in age to me, weaves nude or semi-nude selfies, car crashes, lines of cocaine, razor blade cuts – content that does not fit the tradition of tapestry. She spoke about time, and scale, in an interview:

> It can take Riley a month to finish a large piece of around 100 inches [2.5 m] across, and a few weeks to finish a medium-size one. But the slow, deliberate work of weaving, she says, suits her quietly searing images. "I can face my vulnerability and be comfortable with sharing those parts of me."[103]

The conscious work of weaving, I mean, also suits my emotional images.

Spending Time With…

In response to my question about what kind of bodily knowledge of time the weaver possesses, the clearest insight is that there is no time preserved in a finished woven object and that time and body are understood together. However, as researcher and ceramicist Caroline Slotte writes, "It is as though by simply spending a lot of time with an object, I can increase its value."[104]

I want to be inside some images. That is why I weave them. Looking is not enough. But the rya technique that allows me to wrap around warp threads and create images in yarn is a way to pull off the interaction.

Slotte continues:

> An increase in value that seems to depend on the amount of time spent reworking the object. Why is it that a rapidly achieved transformation is perceived differently than a gradual one? What do these working hours do? The hours do not, after all, cost anything. Time is not something we own. Time flows towards us as a gift.[105]

The reworking of objects, as Slotte writes, is not the same for her as for me. I process textile materials that are built up from paper prints; she grinds down already existing ceramic materials. But the question of what these working hours do is the same for me: they are a gift. Because what else would I do with my time?

> Could it have to do with something as inestimable as care? That a transformation simply takes place when something is treated well? Through the act of caring, one encourages to do the same: Look – this is valuable, because I treat it as such.[106]

But does it have to be valuable just because I spend time with it? Recalling what I wrote about spending a lot of time on a work, that may make it valuable for me, but must it be for others? Caring for materials is an over-represented concept in crafts. I do not feel that I am always *caring*, and sometimes I am rather the opposite – a little shitty and rather careless with materials. But I am clearly careful with my time, in its full complexity, because I do what I want to do.

British anthropologist Tim Ingold describes a thread as a line.[107] A thread can be long or short, but has a beginning and an end, regardless of which end. My rya narrative takes place within the length of the thread. Thus, the thread is also a kind of model for time in the making. That the thread is open-ended feels important to remember. There is a longing in image making (and the longing has no end) but answering questions stops the longing, because then I am there. I am spending time with motifs and materials and making links to a longing – longing for several things: for the image itself, perhaps for the real person or object in the image. There is always a longing for the perfect weaving.

For me, being with these textiles, these images, is *being* with materials that are first digital pixels, then printed on paper, and then transferred to the corresponding pixels in yarn (weaving). Being with these images also means being with myself, in my studio (which I do not share with anyone other than my family members), a voluntary isolation that can be experienced both as free and as boring.[108]

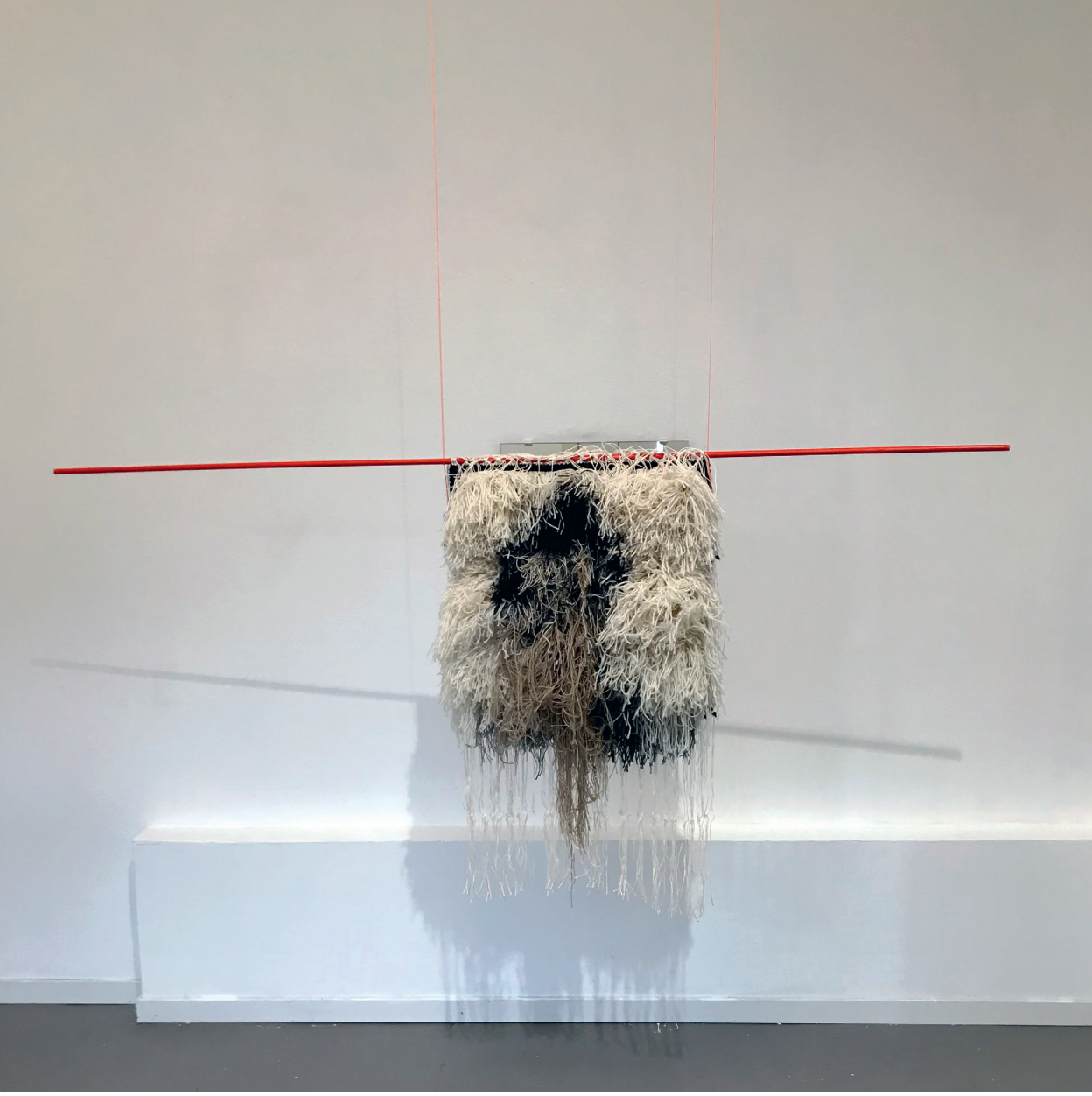
It can be argued that the clear lines of a weaving (on the smooth side in the case of a rya) communicate time with the viewer. A horizontal line of thread may represent a certain time (clock time). It can be easier to value something visible than something invisible. For some reason, I often see slogans in Sweden that say something like "Time must be valued". In many of these cases, time is used to signal the handmade. Phrases like this often come from handicrafts or hand-weaving organisations. Marketing is another place to find these examples – in the advertising messages with exclamation marks we find sitting in the bus or walking the streets.

But why should the time invested in objects be valued? If I say that the weaving has a visible time, which is expressed in a woven object through lines and knots that can be seen and counted, then one can mean that this time should be valued, either positively or negatively, as in "Why spend so much time on that?" But when one invests value in time, something else falls away. For the weaving is not only time. The weaving in my case is voluntary, and professional, and it has created the opportunity for the time investment. In thinking of the idea of spending time with an image, I do not think of it as *time* or *slow*. Paying attention cannot be defined in terms like slow or fast in weaving. My eyes and my hands take the time needed to see the image behind the warps and make them into rya knots. When I speak of spending time, I mean only the time of practical weaving at the loom. But the idea of the image begins much earlier. I see the image in front of me: sometimes I remember an image I saw and look it up on the Internet, sometimes I have an idea of one I want to find and find it, sometimes the input is theoretical or conceptual and then I simply Google a word or a sentence and find the image that way.

In 2019, I wove a rya of someone I am familiar with and called the weaving *A Man* (Figs. 30 and 31). I used a profile picture of him that I found online, the kind used as a profile picture at work. I start weaving in greyscale. It starting getting a little *weird* after a while – intimate. After all, at the time I had conversations with him a couple of times, for a couple of hours altogether, and always met with him quite informally. When I wove it, it became something else – a close-up study of a person on a pixel level, of details and contrasts. Annika Ekdahl said, when I described this to her via the chat on Instagram: "It IS intimate. But in a good way. Getting to fiddle in the nostrils and hairline, getting to spend time with someone in that way creates a very long-lasting relationship."[109]

Fig. 30. *A Man*, 2019.

Looking at someone for a long time, such as the image in the cartoon of *A Man*, is influenced by the fact that this particular image represents someone I know. It is also influenced by other aspects of the image: contrasts, light, framing, what it includes and what has been excluded, the arranged image, filters through cameras and computers, staging, and the relationship between creators and viewers (I did not take the photograph myself). In addition, I know the subject, I have my own image (idea) of him, what he looks like and what he is like.[110]



30

Fig. 31. *A Man*, 2019. Seen through a mirror attached on the gallery wall.

The Swedish philosopher Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen describes how, as a young philosophy student, she was captivated by Sören Kierkegaard's descriptions of the limitations of language. In one piece in particular, Kierkegaard rails over the brutality of Hegelian philosophy and describes its inability to approach and create a concept of an unknown phenomenon without at the same time violating the phenomenon: "Kierkegaard likens the phenomenon to a woman and the philosophical observer as a knight approaching the phenomenon in order to capture it in its concept."[111]

When she returns several years later to the text (*On the Concept of Irony* by Kierkegaard), she is struck by how provocative and sexist the image he gives is.

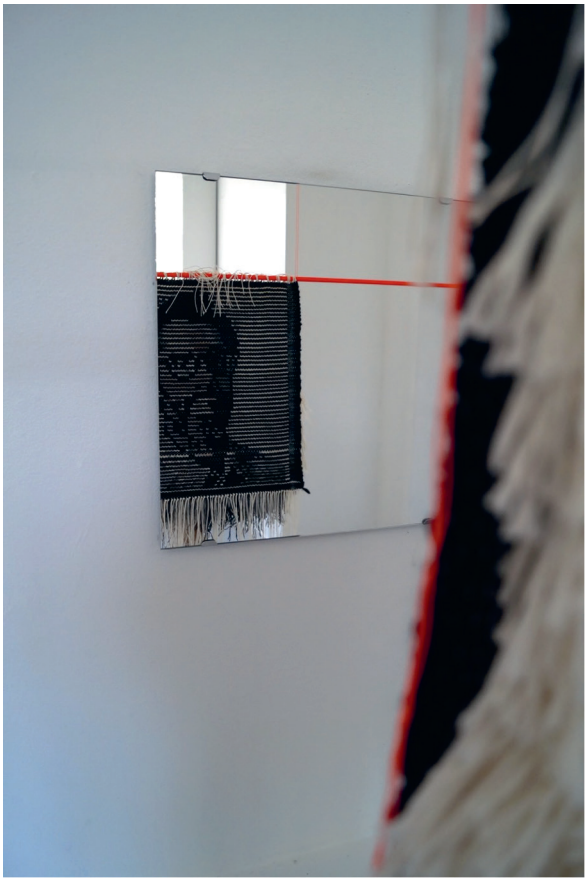
> When we must reflect on our practice, we go to theory. What happens then is that we end up in the theory's view of the world, the theory's distinctions and the theory's limitations.[112]

There might be an inconsistent balance of power between practice and theory, but "naming a phenomenon is not just about finding words and describing a practice is not about choosing the right theory"[113], Hjertström Lappalainen says.

Writing from a different subject area, Max van Manen presents a similar attitude:

> A distinguishing feature of a human science approach to pedagogy is how the notions of theory and research are to be related to the practice of living. In contrast to the more positivistic and behavioural empirical sciences, human science does not see theory as something that stands before practice in order to "inform" it.[114]

Theories are perspectives, and the position mentioned above is not an excuse to avoid using specific theories, but an active choice. I want to say that practice is knowledge. Since I do not want to be "rescued" by theory, I refer primarily to my own ability to reflect and the bodily knowledge and experience I possess, wherein also lies artistic knowledge. Spending time with special motives is mostly *a longing embodied*: if the motive is wrong in some way, the interaction here becomes a struggle against time – to just get done as soon as possible.



31

Per Fhager (Sweden) is an embroidery artist who creates motifs taken from old video games (Fig. 32). Based on the digital pixels, Fhager reworks them into embroidered versions with the distinct transition from the hardness of the digital pixel to the fluffy, more diffuse outer edges of the thread.

Fig. 32. Per Fhager, *Gimmick!* (version 6), 2015. Diagonal gobelin stitch needle point in wool, 49 x 37 cm. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

In the Swedish craft magazine *Hemslöjd* (2021), he says about his choice of making:

> I am in a way on a crusade. These old TV games that I play are so overlooked, they have never really gotten the appreciation they deserve for how they have affected me and so many others. It is about giving them restoration.[115]

I partly share Fhager's attitude in my image choices, how I decide which ones I want to spend time with.

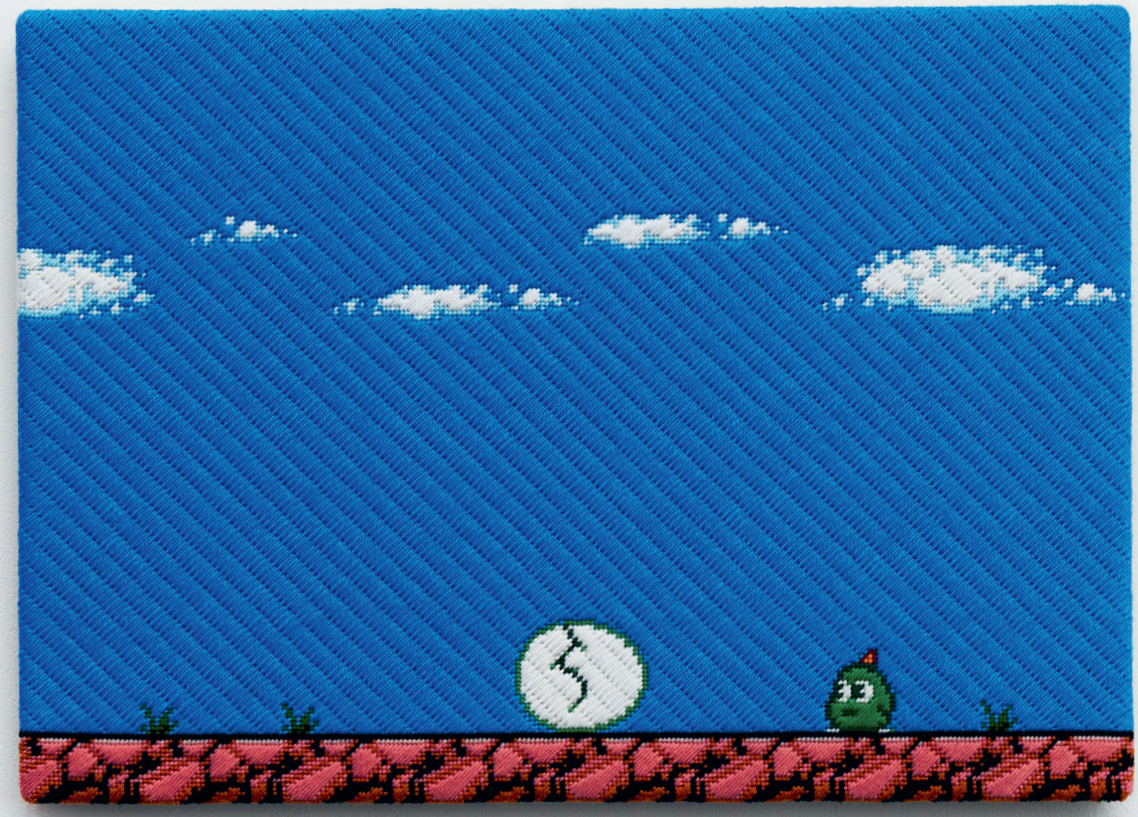
Born in the late 70s, he describes a deep emotional relationship to 8- and 16-bit video games. I remember these games myself and how I also could sit for hours and play (until my mother said she would play).

Per Fhager:

> I take these fleeting images and make them permanent in the worst and most time-consuming way imaginable. Once they are ready, you can think what you want about the motifs – but you cannot deny that they are there. And you cannot deny the craft.[116]

Here, too, I feel a certain kinship, even though Fhager's motifs differ from mine. But that "you cannot deny" the craft, something I also sometimes claim, comes with both romantic and practical indications of the craft. I interpret this as Fhager defining time as a strong factor in his making.

> At the same time, I had a long list of games I just had to get out of me. I am very picky when it comes to what games I want to make. I must have an *emotional connection* to them; otherwise I cannot sit for 300 hours and embroider them.[117] [Emphasis added]



32

This emotional connection to the work over a longer period seems for Fhager, as for me, to help maintain his interest. Time is not clock time from this point of view, but instead is linked to one's own desire and interest in the work.

> I have become a master at making effective colour charts to follow when I sew, simply so that it does not go wrong – it is the mistakes that take time, so I work all the time to avoid them. I don't have time for them.[118]

Here we see how the experience of technique and materials has made Fhager highly aware of actions in practice. The time-consuming work arouses his fascination during the long hours of work, but correcting mistakes is not part of the fascination. We learn to avoid these because Fhager, just like me, sees no point in it taking longer than it should.

Per Fhager notes that he uses wool thread in his works, which I see as the prerequisite for a soft pixel, and he explains, "It should cover the surface, and I want the craft itself to be done in the traditional way even if the motifs are not traditional."[119]

We share a fascination for the transition between the digital and soft pixels, and how these are conveyed through traditional making and affect the image.

Child Picking Cotton In Uzbekistan (2017)

Initially in my doctoral education, I imagined that I would repeat one and the same work (*Serial Babies*) over the entire course of the programme (5 years), but it did not take even a year before I was tired of weaving only one and the same motif.

In the summer of 2016, just before I started my doctoral studies, I had an exhibition at Rydal's Museum. The museum is an old spinning mill. I exhibited in a large room with high ceilings called *rensen* (from the word *rensa*, meaning to clean), the name dating to the time when cotton was cleaned by hand before it could be spun. It was apparently a job suitable for children.[120] During this period, I read some about today's textile manufacturing, and it turned out that the largest cotton production today takes place in Uzbekistan. In the spring of 2017, I suddenly got a memory of a

picture of a child in a pink sweater. I Googled "Child Picking Cotton in Uzbekistan". The picture was still there, and I decided to weave it.

With this work (Fig. 33), I learned more about visual concepts through its technical two-sidedness. By stitching a teddy bear into the arms of the child on the hairy side of the weave, where the original shows a bundle of cotton, I was able to influence one side of the narrative in the image. On the smooth side of the weave, the bundle of cotton is visible. This was the first time I made something more of the two-sidedness by adding a new component, a crucial step in my understanding of how important two-sidedness is in all my work. Through this intervention with the teddy bear, I began to suspect that two-sidedness was the fundamental thing in all my artistic expression – not the lines and pixels, not the time investment. I had imagined that I could push the two-sidedness by weaving many versions of *Serial Babies* and that these would describe these differences. But unfortunately I did not have enough patience. It strikes me now, as I write this, that I have no idea at all how long it took to weave this work. Before, I always wrote down how long it took. But I have stopped doing that: I do not find it necessary to prove time to myself anymore.

Fig. 33. *Child Picking Cotton in Uzbekistan*, 2017. Photo: Ian Hobbs.

Fig. 34. *Rana Plaza – The Collapse*, 2015–16.

Fig. 35. *At the Shore of Amygdala*, 2015. Photo: Ian Hobbs.

Fig. 36. *Return of the Weaver (Weaver Begins)*, 2014–15. Photo: Jean Baptiste Béranger.

Conclusion To Part 1

From an outside perspective, hand weaving such as rya is routinely described as "slow" or "time-consuming", "strenuous" or "demanding", a vocabulary I myself have also used. But I argue that my bodily knowledge about time that comes from within my practice often does not match these descriptions.

On a superficial level, or perhaps in the outermost layer of an understanding, time can be described as a currency that the (craft) artist works with. But on deeper reflection, I cannot see that the time invested has much to

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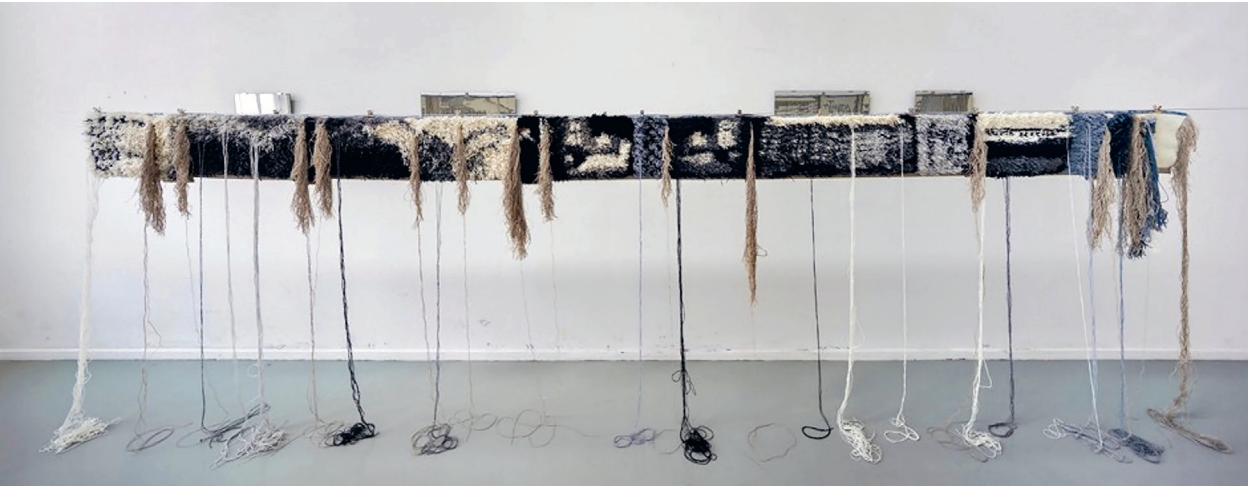


36

do with *economics*, but only serves as a linguistic metaphor. Instead, as I have reflected in this first part, time is linked to many aspects of hand weaving that simply cannot accurately be labelled as *slow practice*.

In this chapter, I have shown how weaving is sometimes described as slow or time consuming, often in terms that express a positive value. While contemporary weaving is often associated with tradition and history, these concepts often do not match the practitioner's perceptions.

I discuss approaches in my weaving practice and show how my previous statements and attitudes to time in weaving have changed and how that tacit knowledge has been made visible and/or formulated through reflection in writing and through other methods such as documentation and drawing. I conclude that time in weaving is among the linguistic metaphors we depend on rather than a bodily experience (as these do not match), and that there is no time preserved in finished woven objects; instead, time belongs in the process through the practitioner's (weaver's) bodily presence.

The bodily knowledge of time in rya weaving is most present in the two-sidedness that is part of the technique and making methods – the fascinating growing character that figurative rya weaving offers, in which pixels on paper become rya knots and images emerge through the process.

Craft today is not just a field that works with slow and orderly methods that depend on skill. Crafts look and appear in different ways. In many cases, traditional approaches meet new ones. As I look at my own practice, for example – traditional Scandinavian weaving with contemporary motifs, exhibited in contemporary contexts – I do not consider my own practice to be either slow or particularly skilled. I am not a master weaver from a traditional point of view.

In the introduction, I confessed to exaggerating the investment of time in my meeting with glass artist Jonas Rooth. Slowness as a positive value in handmade practices is not self-evident. Artists also testify to slowness as frustrating, boring and linked to bodily discomfort. Slowness that is implicitly positive, such as in the Slow movement (initially about food), is a response to external factors in the western world. In my practice, time is relevant as a practicality in the profession (keeping track, meeting deadlines). Slowness is not an end in itself, and it is neither cosy nor *meditative*.

To me, it is unclear why an object such as a rya is associated with slowness. Time is a factor in many other kinds of art practices, in the process, perhaps even in the vast majority.

I still wonder: How I can understand and explain why there is an expectation that my work with craft will take a long time, and whether this is a myth?

43 J. Hemmings, “Mending the Fashion Industry: Scandinavian Style”, in *Surface Design Journal*, 2016, p. 31.
44 See M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.
45 R. Sennett, *The Craftsman*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 221.
46 Mike Michael quoted in C. Lury and N. Wakeford (eds.), *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, p. 25.
47 C. Robach, *Slow Art*, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, 2012, p. 13.
48 Ibid., p. 15.
49 https://www.akvarellmuseet.org/utstallning/andreas-eriksson-0 Original text in Swedish: På sitt bokstavliga sätt gestaltar gobelängerna ett av måleriets grundproblem: spelet mellan djup och yta. Två konstnärliga temperament – den snabba akvarellen och den långsamma vävningstekniken – smälter samman och blir ett. Slutresultatet är verkens unika uttryck.
50 From the booklet produced for the exhibition (2016).
51 Nordic Textile Art, *Everyday Matter – The Value of Textile Art*, Exhibition catalogue, 2016.
52 M. Lind, ‘Looms Everywhere’, in *Art Review*, 27 November 2017.
53 M. Larsdotter, ’Konst skapad till långsamhetens lov’, Uppsala Nya Tidning, 1 Dec 2020.
54 Elin Sundström (@elinsundstrom_) Instagram, 1 Dec 2020.
55 C. Zetterlund, article in Maria Adlercreutz – Väverska mellan mörker och ljus, Stockholm, Ordfront förlag, 2016, p. 35. Original: “*Väven I hennes ögon bevaras folkets ljus* som har kommit att bli en av Maria Adlercreutz mer kända vävar är en del av detta samhällsengagerade konsthantverk. Genom väven sökte Maria Adlercreutz engagera sin samtid i det fruktansvärda krig som pågick i Vietnam. För att forma budskapet var vävens egenskaper väsentligt i gestaltningen. Redan i vävandet fanns en viktig utgångspunkt. Det långsamma och beständiga var betydelsefullt i budskapet. Här fanns

kvaliteter som stod i kontrast till nyhetsmediernas snabbhet där människoöden blev utbytbara. I ett massmedialt flöde återkom, då precis som nu, ständigt förfärliga bilder av människor som befann sig mitt i krigets hemskheter. Varje dag nya fruktansvärda bilder. Människoöden som förminskades till ett bildflöde. Väven blev för henne en metod att stanna denna ström, det blev ett sätt att rädda de enskilda människoödena 'ur glömskan'."

56 Swedish National Weavers.

57 https://www.riksvav.se/knut-pa-knut/ Original: "Att vävning är meditativt det vet vi alla, men att sitta och knyta ryaknutar en halvdag kan vara så vilsamt det var nytt. Åtminstone för mig."

58 K. Andersson, *Handarbetet till heders, Kvinnorna söka efter skapande arbetsuppgifter*, Stockholm, Natur och Kultur, 1939, pp. 81–82.

59 A. Laine, article in *Maria Adlercreutz*, p. 40. Quoting Maria Adlercreutz. Original: "Vävningen är visserligen en långsam teknik. Men den väg seendet måste vandra för att bli upplevelse fordrar också tid. I väven hinner man med – det ögonblick pressbilden fångat är man tvungen att arbeta sig igenom, inslag för inslag".

60 A. Laine, chapter in *Maria Adlercreutz*, p. 40. Original: "Maria insåg betydelsen av själva vävandet för hur den färdiga bilden skulle komma att uppfattas. Genom att långsamt överföra den fotografiska bilden till den vävda sammanförde hon tankar med mångsinnlighet, som ett sätt att förstärka upplevelsen av bilden och göra den svårare för betraktaren att avvisa. Maria var angelägen om att vissa händelser måste uppmärksammas, förstås och minnas – för att utmanas och inte återupprepas. Den färdiga gestaltningen blev en slags broms genom materialets och vävandets förmåga att aktivera våra sinnen på ett sätt som Maria ansåg att den fotografiska inte kunde."

61 American artist and weaver Lia Cook is another example of this thinking.

62 https://www.glennadamson.com/work/2020/diedrickbrackens

63 L. Rees, "Interview with Diedrick Brackens", *Galerie*, Galeriemagazine.com, 14 August 2019.

64 G. Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, p. 186.

65 https://www.glennadamson.com/work/2020/diedrickbrackens

66 K. Treggiden, *Weaving: Contemporary Makers on The Loom*, Brussels, Ludion, 2020, p. 31.

67 Ibid., p. 159.

68 Ibid., p. 17.

69 Ibid., p. 17.

70 Conor Wilson, "Sloppy_Dicipline", in *Sloppy Craft: Postdisciplinarity and the Crafts*, Academia, 2015, p. 7.

71 Gestalt psychology was founded on works by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler and Kurt Koffka.

72 See *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, K. Koffka (1935).

73 *Vävt och Vackert – Fyra Århudranden av Finsk Rya*, exhibition at Kunsthalle Helsinki 7 November 2020 – 3 January 2021. My translation from: Det fascinerande i ryor är att man kan göra bara en centimeter åt gången. Om man målade med samma teknik skulle det betyda att man alltid ser en centimeterlång remsa av duken och att man inte kan göra ändringar i efterskott.

74 Conversation between Kristina Müntzing and Emelie Röndahl, 19 March 2021.

75 Ibid.

76 An Irish artist working in a similar way is Sarah Browne, https://cca-derry-londonderry.org/exhibitions/sarah-browne-hand-to-mouth/.

77 S. Knott. *Amateur Craft: History and Theory*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, p. 32.

78 Ibid., p. 36.

79 Knott writes on this in the chapter "Paint-by-number kits: popularity, production and appropriation" and argues that it was not only seen as a harmless hobby, it was actually also protected as a democratic method in contemporary art discussions, even though most critical assessments were negative.

80 Knott., *Amateur Craft*, pp. 36–37.

81 Ibid., p. 43.

82 *Hötorgskonst* refers to art that might be

found at a flea market in Hötorget, a plaza in Stockholm, rather than in galleries.
83 V. Renaud, *Hötorgskonst – Tavlorna, målarna, marknaden och publiken*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1991, p. 18. Translated from: Mest välkända är de gråtande barnen, vars ursprunglige upphovsman var den italienske målaren Bruno Amadino. Barnen är karakteristiskt beskrivna då de just har upphört att gråta, vilket markeras av en glänsande tår rinnande ner för kinden. Dessa "porträtt", egentligen målade efter blunddockor, har saluförts över hela världen i form av inramade reproduktioner (om gråtande barn, see Swedish M. Holkers thesis: Gråtande barn. Populära väggdekorationer under 1970-talets slut, stencil, Inst. för Konstvetenskap, Stockholm, 1984). Avbildningar typ porträtt av små barn liknar ofta ett fotografiskt uttryck i den bemärkelsen att barnen är fångade i ett visst ögonblick. Somliga målares produktion består till största delen av barnporträtt, som tecknas utan fler utmärkande drag än de som betecknar barndom i vid bemärkelse: stora ögon, runda kinder, osv.
84 V. Sylwan, *Svenska Ryor*, Stockholm, Natur & Kultur, 1934, p. 72.
85 Ibid., p. 79.
86 Ibid., p. 79.
87 J. Priemus, (2020) "Materialising Weaving: Embedding a Narrative of Construction Time Within Experimental Woven Textiles", in S. Boess, M. Cheung and R. Cain (eds.), *Synergy: DRS International Conference*, 2020, Held online. https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2020.354.
88 N. Crossley, *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*, Maidenhead, Open University Press, 2006, p. 79.
89 Ibid., p. 79
90 A. Geijer, *A History of Textile Art*, New York, Rizzoli, 1982, p. 180. Dr. Agnes Geijer (1898–1989), a textile historian and leading authority on textile history, explains: "Rya-rugs were first mentioned in the rules of the Bridgettine order for Vadstena Convent, whose members were recruited from the leading families of medieval Sweden. The relevant rule concerns the sisters' bedclothes: "Over them they are to have a piece of white wadmal (plain woollen cloth) and a rya-rug (ryoi; the Latin version says pannus villosus, that is fleecy cloth). And a sheepskin during the winter." The oldest written version of these rules dates from about 1420, but there is no doubt that they were in force in the fourteenth century, when the convent was already established. The rule must mean that the rya was a lighter alternative to an animal skin. The latter was necessary during winter, but in the convent could be nothing more luxurious than sheepskin."
91 Ibid., p. 182.
92 Ibid., p. 183.
93 Ibid., p. 183.
94 Sylwan. *Svenska ryor*, p. 32.
95 A. Nilsson, *Vägledning i ryor*, Gothenburg, Elanders Boktryckeri AB, 1917, p. 12.
96 U. Snidare, *Ryamattan*, p.34.
97 Ibid., p. 36.
98 Cf. A. Ekdahl, *Gobelängresan – Boken om att följa hjortar*, Gothenburg, University of Gothenburg, 2017, p. 180, and 157 (Cotter), and K. Wickman, Vävda bildvärldar, 72 (2017). Swedish weaver Annika Ekdahl was my professor during my studies in Textile Art at the Academy of Design and Crafts (HDK). She started in my second year as a BA student and ended before I finished my MA. She has very much influenced my decision to focus fully on hand weaving, even though I did not do that during my study years. Annika is a weaver who makes large-scale, highly decorative tapestries with a close relationship to history. Her narratives are temporal, telling of her life and her world, but all make reference to the common – via both historical signs (like the deer) and the personal (like friends).
99 Artists such as Chuck Close & Lia Cook may be of a different opinion.
100 J. Pastor, "The Materiality of Tapestry in The Digital Age", in *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 9:3, 2016, pp. 289–311, DOI: 10.1080/17496772.2016.1249111
101 Acknowleding that the artwork with the highest original value is the painting and the weaving a replica...
102 Treggiden, *Weaving*, p. 85.
103 https://www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/erin-m-riley-tapestries-1234611704/
104 C. Slotte, *Closer*, Bergen, Bergen

National Academy of the Arts, 2010, p. 20.
105 Ibid., p. 21.
106 Ibid., p. 21.
107 T. Ingold, *Lines*. Abingdon, Routledge, 2016, p. 63.
108 On the notion of "being with" a material I recommend contributions by researcher and ceramicist Camilla Groth i.e. the dissertation, *Making Sense Through Hands: Design and Craft Practice Analysed as Embodied Cognition*, Espoo, Aalto University, 2017.
109 A. Ekdahl (@ponnymami), "Det ÄR intimt. Men på ett bra sätt. Att få pilla i näsborrar och hårfästen…att få umgås med någon på det sättet skapar ett mycket långvarigt förhållande…" Instagram, private chat, 10 June 2019. URL not available because it is a private conversation. Accessed 10 June 2019. Reproduced with permission of the account holder.
110 My work *Generic Middle-aged Man* (2019) can fit into this discussion.
111 J. Hjertström Lappalainen, p 67.
112 Ibid., p. 69. My translation from: När vi ska reflektera över vår praktik går vi till teorin. Det som händer då är att vi hamnar i teorins blick på världen, teorins distinktioner och teorins begränsningar.
113 Ibid., p. 69.
114 M. van Manen. *Researching Lived Experience*, p. 15.
115 R. P. Columbus, "Pixelbroderaren", in *Hemslöjd*, Issue 1, 2021, p. 49 (my translation).
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 See for example Swedish historian Dick Harrison.

Part 2

Rya Together

Introduction To Part 2

In the first part of the thesis, I immersed myself in my bodily knowledge of time, which I identified in my own practice, against the background that weaving and crafts are repeatedly described as slow and time-consuming.

In this second part, I reflect on collaboration in a craft project, which is also regularly described in positive language. Through an experiment with a collaborative weaving project, I understood in retrospect that what I see as most important in my practice – spending time with images, working at the loom and being in contact with materials – was so basic to me that I failed to see it and failed to include it initially in the project.

Through reflection, I describe how I intuitively – through my own work with my own body – got out of the feeling that something *was wrong* and was at least able to correct parts of the project and incorporate it into the whole of my practice.

The focus in this part seeks answers to the question of how one's own bodily knowledge can be understood in collaborations among two or more practitioners.

> Our machinery has become intricate, our manner of working fast. Yet every age must have felt that way about its achievements, and only looking back does everything that went before seem slow. How slow will we appear some day?[121]

When Anni Albers describes the development of the loom throughout history, she concludes that all technological development has had one single common goal, a goal that extends over thousands of years – namely, to increase the speed of the weaving process. But the actual structure of weaving has not changed for centuries, so there has been no structural progress or development, only the ability to produce the same structures more quickly. At all times throughout history, I believe weavers have been weaving as fast as they can, and there is no logic in being slow for the sake of slowness.

This part focuses on a collaborative project I called *Google Weaving Stoptime* (2018). We were a total of twenty-eight weavers who participated, and I initiated the project.

Fig. 37. The image shows the shared PDF in an email I forwarded to the potential participants after they had contacted me by email or social media and asked to join the group *Google Weaving Stop-time*. After reading the instructions, three participants decided not to join after all, since they saw it would be too time-consuming, not relevant for their practice, or too difficult a task for them to confidently handle within the timeframe.

Google Weaving Stop-Time (2018-2019)

Google Weaving Stop-time was commissioned by the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial (2018), which was curated by Jan Boelen. *Google Weaving Stop-time* was a collective project that connected almost thirty hand weavers via social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Collectively gathered around a shared assignment and through an encapsulated moment from a Google picture search, participants created one or several woven rya works in their own studio settings (and countries) based on the same search phrase: "textile-labour-Turkey". The process of weaving was shared in a private Facebook group page with the same name as the project. Participants created the works in their own studio settings or homes, with the shared goal of meeting in a physical exhibition in Istanbul as part of the biennial. In the *Google Weaving Stop-time* project, the idea was to capture a moment on the well-known search engine and transform image information into a hand-woven object using the rya technique. A contrast in speed can be discerned between the online work and the hand weaving, where the latter is understood as *slower.* And as in many of the popular articles on weaving that I have described before, the pairing of time and hand weaving was often in focus – something of which I myself was not innocent, and a connection I am not avoiding. The biennial was divided into different schools under the overall theme *A School of Schools*: the Unmaking School, the Current School, the Scales School, the Earth School, the Time School and the Digestion School. These themes aimed to explore, test and rework a variety of educational strategies to reflect on the role of design, knowledge and global connectedness in contemporary Istanbul and beyond, according to the biennial statement. During the application process, I had to choose which category I thought my project fit best in, and I saw no alternative to the Time School for me, because during the project I still did not question the "natural" connection between weaving and time. Through the application process I placed the project in the time category and then got it confirmed by the biennial and journalists. Today I see that I could just as easily have been placed in the Scales School – that might have been even better, to give hand weaving a much-needed break from Time.

Dear Weaver,

*Type in "**textile labour turkey**" on a computer on a specific day (picture 1). Note the date and time. Save/print one of the first picture hit on your google.com picture search, do not judge the picture's aesthetic (picture 2).*

Your cartoon: *Make your print or make a sketch/drawing in the size of 60 cm wide at a minimum and 100 cm in height at a maximum (picture 3 and picture 4).*

Your warp: *use any size of reed, quality and material you wish. (I use a linen warp, 3 threads per cm).*

Your weaving: *The pixels in the cartoon should be translated into woven pixels. However, you are allowed to interpret the picture (picture 5 and picture 6).*

You are free to choose your colors and materials.

The technique used in your woven tapestry needs to be in GHIORDIAN KNOT/TURKISH KNOT (picture 7) *in the total design. That does not mean that every single square centimeter needs to be covered by knots and piles, but it needs to appear as a pile-woven rug.*
(picture 8 – several examples besides the one you can see that I have made)

The required size and technique is a bit of time-investment, but from own experience I calculate this size of work for about 20-30 hours of work (2-3 hours daily in 10 days).

Document your weaving in process. Keep notes on how many hours you invest. Do not stress. Post pictures, comments, questions, thoughts on our Facebook group (minimum 3 times during your weaving process). If you have questions or something you don´t want to write on the shared Facebook group please do not hesitate to contact me personally, via e-mail, Messanger or phone etc. I am happy to help in any way I can.

Your finished piece should now be a pile-woven tapestry in the size between 60 – 100 cm in witdh and 60 – 100 cm in hight.

Your mounting: *please leave fringes long enough to tie around a stick for hanging (minimum 10 cm, OR stitch on a tunnel of fabric – which a stick could pass through)*

The title of your work will be: *"textile labour turkey 2018: your own subtitle" + the time you downloaded it on your computer. I also encourage you to give it a subtitle of your own, something that is meaningful to you.*
Example: "textile labour turkey: young boy with sewing machine, February 20, 2018", tapestry in wool and recycled yarns on linen warp, by Emelie Röndahl 2018.

Your final work(s) will be displayed in an exhibition setting, as it is important for people to meet with woven textiles in real.

Thank you for your invested time and the knowledge you share.

With love, Emelie

Nadine Botha writes in "We Learnt Everything from the Designers" that *Google Weaving Stop-time* highlights a durational paradox between practice and information: "Inspiring over 20 weavers from around the world to participate in exploring the durational paradox between information and practice, Emelie Rondahl used a Facebook group as a space for exchange. Learning, we realized, is a social activity."[122]

Another news article, which I read someday during those hectic days in Istanbul, and therefore lost, emphasised that the weavers who participated worked in different time zones around the world, something I had not considered. Both Nadine Botha and the later news article focused primarily on the group, not as I did on the weaving.

In the project, I reluctantly but necessarily abstained from physical weaving and collaborated with an assistant. In the work with an assistant I removed the time factor that is well anchored in my body, and time became a completely different experience from the one I am used to. For me, the time indication in the project is not necessarily asserted by an idea that weaving is a slow medium, but by the fact that millions of images are immediately visible on the screen when some keywords are entered. The term "stop-time" in the project's title was intended to draw attention to the fast image flow on the Internet, not that weaving in any way stops time.

To a certain extent, I think I wanted to misunderstand the curatorial statements that were written because at the time I was unaware of what a convulsive relationship I had with time as it relates to weaving.

With the question "Is anything done by hand?", David Pye argues for the futility of defining something as "handmade". Weaving on a loom, which is a kind of tool or apparatus, is generally accepted as handwork. Since I described the nature of the project as a process of *hand* weaving, I can see that I pigeonhole myself when outside eyes are directed towards practice, because, as Pye writes, "Handicraft and Hand-made are historical or social terms, not technical ones."[123] The writing of David Pye is not recent, but perhaps when it comes to time, it shows that the discourse has changed very little in craft. And as I described in Part 1, hand weaving takes place in today's discussion through some not-so-well-thought-out and often repetitive journalistic texts in a niche that describes it as "belonging to a long tradition", "time-consuming", and "a slow medium". Given that handmade, or hand-woven, is seen as a historical or social term, together with the fact that my project was part of the biennial's Time School and the fact

that I myself used concepts such as time and hand weaving, there was not much room left to look at the project from other angles. Another reason I now feel a certain scepticism is my own changed attitude to the purpose of a project I initially described as follows: "*Google Weaving Stop-time* is a weaving workshop, (thinking of the traditional workshop) in a contemporary format – online – focusing on knowledge sharing, emphasising the Turkish knot, which connects Scandinavian design with so-called Oriental design." This was my first articulation of the idea written in January 2019, right after the Skype meeting in which the biennial crew told me my application had been accepted and invited me to put the project in motion.

The focus was on inviting others to weave *like me* in terms of structure and quality. Now I see more that the project moved towards the edge of the weaver's realm,[124] where structure and material were not central, but instead existing images were imitated in a weaving technique through colour – a skill beyond what I am usually comfortable with. Working with several others was something new for me. The social aspect was foreign, albeit interesting, and something I could never plan for, but I had to adapt and re-evaluate the direction of the project over time. Where the weaving stopped and other territory took over was unknown to me. My own knowledge of time, construction in weaving and materials was not of use for the social part. It was obvious that I could not understand how others would weave through their bodies. Because even though I described technique and approaches, and at the same time encouraged everyone to weave and choose materials however they wanted, I got the feeling that the collaborating participants' weaving took longer than expected. Although Anni Albers believes that weaving on a loom has evolved over millennia in the direction of becoming more efficient and timesaving, and that the weaver has always wanted to work as quickly as possible without affecting quality, there is ironically one type of weaving she calls time consuming: the Persian and Turkish knot, siblings of the Scandinavian rya weave:

> Since each single knot can be of a different colour, the design possibilities of pile fabrics are practically unlimited. A pointillist design would perhaps come closest to the technical potential, though it would of course be very time-consuming.[125]

In discussion with some of the participants after the project was installed in Istanbul, several mentioned that I had underestimated the time it would take to weave a rya as I described it in the instructions. It had taken

longer for many of the participants – up to twice as long – and been more time-consuming than I had claimed. It became a proof to me that I spoke through my own experience/body and assumed that the others were in the same place as me in their knowledge, skill and experience. I am reminded that just as I am my body, all human beings are also their bodies, each with their own perceptions of time, speed and material knowledge.

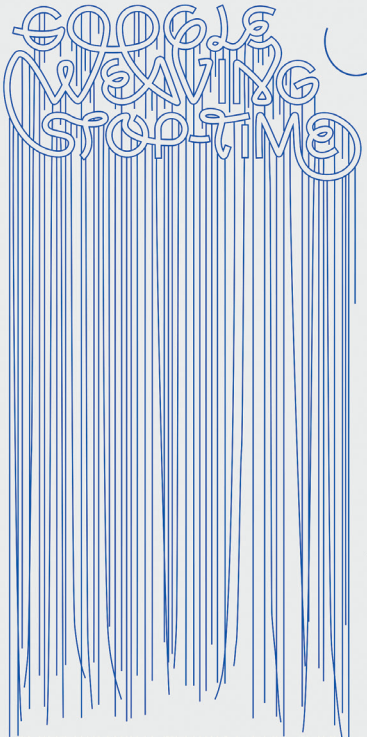
Fig. 38. The image pictures the flyer I made together with graphic designer Joakim Karlsson for the opening of the exhibition in Istanbul in September 2019.

The Internet images I weave in my regular practice are often taken from of a seemingly constant stream of images. My method was long based on the following principle: *I take the first best and feasible image returned by Google for my selected search words.*

By often showing my works freely hanging in the room, I want to retain parts of their digital origins and at the same time invite viewers to the view of these images in their reworked, crying form. I want to invite the exhibition viewers into the pictures, like taking a step through a computer or phone screen, and offer a poetic, emotional image of what it can look like on the inside. This was also my initial idea for *Google Weaving Stop-time* – to create an installation that invited viewers to enter and move around "a textile Google search", presenting many places and many times together, and made by many hands together. Also, the Facebook page I set up for the project would be seen in many places and different times (timeline on Facebook) all together, a parallel conception of a physical workshop place.

In the collective weaving project *Google Weaving Stop-time*, the time investment was different than in my usual solo practice. There were the other weavers who decided how long things would take. And my own time in the project was spent mostly in front of the computer following their processes and answering questions and comments by email and on Facebook, organising practicalities, being one or several steps ahead to avoid mistakes or failures, motivating the others (to meet deadlines). This experience was slow and viscous, and in the end, I realized I did not enjoy it.

The technique shared in the project was the Scandinavian rya knot, also known as the *ghiordes* or *Turkish* knot, which has been used for centuries in traditional textiles in both regions. Together with other flat-woven



WELCOME TO AN EXHIBITION BY EMELIE RÖNDAHL AT SALT GALATA

as part of the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial

Google Weaving Stop-Time is a collective hand weaving project created by **Emelie Röndahl** for **the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial**, organised by *the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts* and curated by **Jan Boelen** under the theme "A School of Schools". The project has brought together weavers from all over the world who have responded to a social media invitation to weave.

The weavings are all based on images from a google search for "textile labor Turkey". An image has been selected by each artist and transformed into time consuming hand woven textiles. The ghiordes knot used in each weaving has been used in traditional textiles for ages in Sweden and Turkey (among many other places).

Google Weaving Stop-Time is an overwhelming material encounter that presents a very physical image of textile labor, tradition, tacit knowledge and hand craft. It hopes to evoke questions regarding how much we let Google influence our everyday life and our perception of the world.

With contributions by: Aleksandra Tyszkowska (Poland) Andrea Pizarro (Spain) Arianna Funk (USA/Sweden) Begüm Cana Özgür (Turkey) Betul Sertkaya (Turkey) "Dhoku" (Turkey) Emelie Röndahl (Sweden) Ezgi Aum (Turkey) Francesca Piñol Torrent (Spain/US) Heidi Pietarinen (Finland) Karine Makartichan (Armenia/USA) Lina Dornhof (Germany) Liron Shua (Israel) Lise Frølund (Denmark) Maja Petrović (Serbia) Marguerite Roux (South Africa) Marta Sobczyńska (Poland) Margaret Jones (UK) Mardi Nowak (Australia) [redacted] (Afghanistan/Sweden) Ragnheiður Björk Þórsdóttir (Iceland) Ritva Jääskeläinen (Finland) Steffy-Luise Dyer (UK) Sayumi Suzuki (Japan/Sweden) Susana Negre (Spain/Brazil) Şebnem Uğuz (Turkey) Zorica Zafirovska (Macedonia).

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techniques such as kilim, pile-woven rugs appear as an essential part of regional culture in both Turkey and Sweden. The reason I created this project was mainly because I saw it as an opportunity to explore in practice how different hands created different results, even though we all followed the same instructions to type in particular words on a Google search. I assumed that the woven images would vary in expression and quality but could not predict how these weavings would look in reality – especially how they would look installed as a group of textiles. As an installation in the exhibition space, *Google Weaving Stop-time* presented the audience with a globally made installation of woven works in which digital images had been transformed into a kind of *physical and material Google search engine*.

The most important part in the project is that it could never have taken place without its invited collaborators. Those were:

> Aleksandra Tyszkowska (Poland), Andrea Pizarro (Spain), Arianna Funk (USA/Sweden), Begum Cana Özgur (Turkey), Betul Sertkaya (Turkey), "Dhoku" (Turkey), Emelie Röndahl (Sweden), Ezgi Aum (Turkey), Francesca Piñol Torrent (Spain/USA), Heidi Pietarinen (Finland), Karine Makartichan (Armenia/USA), Lina Dornhof (Germany), Liron Shua (Israel), Lise Frølund (Denmark), Maja Petrovic (Serbia), Marguerite Roux (South Africa), Marta Sobczynska (Poland), Margaret Jones (UK), Mardi Nowak (Australia), M (Afghanistan/Sweden), Ragnheiður Björk Þórsdóttir (Iceland), Ritva Jääskeläinen (Finland), Steffy-Luise Dyer (UK), Sayumi Suzuki (Japan/Sweden), Susana Negre (Spain/Brazil), Sebnem Uguz (Turkey) and Zorica Zafirovska (Macedonia).

There was little risk for me in the weaving part of this project; the real risk I took was the social part – working together with a group was, as mentioned, a new experience for me. The risk, as I see it, in my usual practice lies in the fact that I can never know for sure how a weaving will turn out in its finished form. This is of course also a driving force. If the result is better than expected, there is a feeling of satisfaction; if the result is less successful, there are lessons to be learned that I take into the next weavings.

David Pye defines what he calls workmanship: "Using any kind of technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgment, dexterity and care which the maker

exercises as he works".[126] It is a definition I agree with in my work. In his concept of "workmanship of risk", Pye believes that the quality of the result is constantly at risk during the process. As a weaver of figurative rya based on pre-existing photographic sources, I also agree that this constant risk-taking is very present: a too-short thread, an unfavourable colour in a particular area, or a dislocated pixel can make the whole result skewed and strange.

Through workmanship of risk, I understand that I do not really know what the project *Google Weaving Stop-time* was about. Pye calls the opposite of workmanship of risk "workmanship of certainty", which he believes is a process that is completely predetermined (and often automated) – something I believe was also part of the project. I think I would have needed to give far more controlled instructions to the weavers, and not asked them to weave by hand, if I had wanted certainty.

The Current (?) Popularity Of Collaborations

In the contexts in which I find myself, collaborations seem to be emphasised and receive a certain status. Above, I recounted that the whole theme of the Istanbul Design Biennial revolved around learning in collective form.

Many things were unsatisfying from my point of view: these disappointments and failures should be understood as my own and not directed at any of the participants or their work. These disappointments indicate that my expectations did not match my knowledge or experience and were therefore inevitable. Articulating these can aim to expand my experience and increase my knowledge for future projects. I have a feeling from my own experience that the institutions that grant financial support encourage this. Collaboration can be a great success and provide us with new breakthrough opportunities, but the risk is also there for it to be a waste of time and energy.[127]

Finnish scholar Hanna Kuusela writes:

> The phenomenon has something new, something old and something borrowed. Collaborative experimentation has always been present in art and ensemble work goes back a long way in many art forms. Recently, however, collaboration, collectivity

> and creating together has also increased in areas where the power of an individual artist has been the norm.[128]

As a solitary artist myself, the focus on the participants in the project became huge. Sometimes it felt like I did nothing but satisfy the needs of others at the expense of my own creativity. From a strictly personal point of view, the project mostly meant being overwhelmed with administration, many hours on Facebook (which I had dropped some years earlier), and an absurd number of emails which I was very keen to respond to as quickly as possible. The "making friends" part on Facebook forced me to be online-available most of my time. My own creativity had to take a back seat, and for the project I just made a weaving of the smallest dimensions I had stated in the instructions, and the final result is not among the best I've done. In the end, this felt a bit embarrassing.

American author and lecturer Susan Cain writes:

> In the age of the Internet, the word "collaboration" has taken on a sacred dimension. Through the miracle of electronic crowdsourcing, the Internet produced astonishing collective creations, such as Wikipedia. But these things were created by individuals sitting alone in their offices, communicating with other individuals across wires and cables. Electronic collaboration is very different from the in-person kind, but we act as if they're one and the same.[129]

Since I personally appreciate the dimension of loneliness in my weaving practice, I did not understand the extent of this loneliness in group work. I saw the fact that we were individual units working alone in our own studios only as a way for me to carry out a group endeavour. Herein lies my biggest doubt that this project was a group endeavour at all. Some of the participants' practical responses affected the direction of the project, even though the actual result was never included in any kind of early risk analysis by me. One example is how some testified that I underestimated the amount of time that would be required in the instructions mentioned above. This was an oversight.

The textile works constructed in the project are of varying quality and expression. This was beyond my control, of course, since they were all woven based on the participants' own conditions and in their own studios.

Many were more abstract than my own, their colours and choice of materials were different from those in my weaving and of course from one another. I make my ryas consciously longhaired because I want the image to be less clear on the hairy side than the smooth side, and some, but not all, of my imagery is personal. All the weavings contained rya knots, but some were to a larger extent constructed as plain weaves with elements of knots. In the instructions I had written that they should appear as a *pile-woven textile*, but here I am a bit doubtful whether everyone really did. The expression in the exhibition is sprawling but still cohesive: all the weavings are of a similar scale (around 50x50 cm) and they are tied together by similar motifs. My goal was that the weavings could be seen as a physical, woven Google search, and I think that one can associate them as such, at least with the support of descriptive text.[130]

When I saw the exhibition space at the biennial, I was disappointed to find they had given only my name and not acknowledged all the individual collaborators as I had intended. On the wall I could read: "Emelie Röndahl with collaborators". For me it was a matter of course that everyone would be named next to my name – that I would be named, for example, as a project owner and then all the weaving participants would be listed, including me. This was not communicated clearly with the biennial, but instead something I took for granted. It felt awkward when I discovered this when I went with the workshop participants to see the exhibition together. I had imagined that no textiles would come with a name label but be part of a collective group, and then the poster on the wall with the project description would contain all of their names. Instead, it was the opposite: the biennial had put a name tag under individual works and excluded the participants' names from the wall text. I think this undermined the project as a collective endeavour. Textiles have long been traced as anonymous work, and perhaps it is this history that makes their continued treatment as partially anonymous particularly worrying.

I learned that the project had no satisfying closure but that the idea of exhibitions overshadowed the process. I should have taken more responsibility for highlighting the process, for example, in the exhibition format. A collective craft project requires a learning attitude, an openness to the goals of others and no predetermined outcome if the wish is to experience an honest collectivity. There is a need to be honest about my own assumptions and to show willingness to change initial thinking. I believe I would have been much more flexible if we had met offline earlier in the project. In cases in which I did meet other participants offline, the

relationships were strengthened. I see a failure on my part that I was not in fact honest about my assumptions, even to myself – because I did not attempt to identify them from the outset.

Studio-note 19 April 2020

I claim that I "always" write in connection with my weaving in my studio. This is a truth with modification. As I go through my notes, I see how many gaps there are. There are periods that I haven't done that at all. For example, when I've been stressed, or focused on other people (also a stress), lack of time is a big factor. But I can also see that in the circumstances when I have found that the situation has been difficult in some way, such as when I wove with M, the notes are solely about myself and my own experience, and nothing about the weaving or working. These two examples, with either the absence of these notes – or the focus being solely on my own feelings – say something about my practice also. In its absence of reflection on my practice, one might think that it shows something about the difficulties and dilemmas that I do not know how to handle, that I do not even dare to write something as innocent as a note.

This first studio note was written much later, when trying to understand what happened in my relation to my assistant M.

Studio-note January 2019

It turns out as a personal failure for me: I break down or give up…everybody else tries to communicate with me but I do not respond…I do not make a rya myself…
Then what?
Ask and support and help! See if I can get an assistant and share the burden. Since "not weaving" for me is a quite unlikely scenario it would turn out to be an interesting written reflection in my own practice…

The second studio note is an extract from a risk assessment I did before starting the project in practice. It was a list from A to H speculating on different scenarios, and suggested response if they occurred. I find it interesting that I wrote that "not weaving myself was quite unlikely", and just a short time after that I concluded I could not weave.

Fig. 39. Workshop participants weaving side by side at the Röhsska Museum, 2019.

Fig. 40. Detail of the beginning of the work at the big loom, before the rya knots are tied in, 2019. Photo: Mikael Lammgård.

Fig. 41. *Shipyard Loom*, 2014.

Fig. 42. *Shipyard Loom*, detail.

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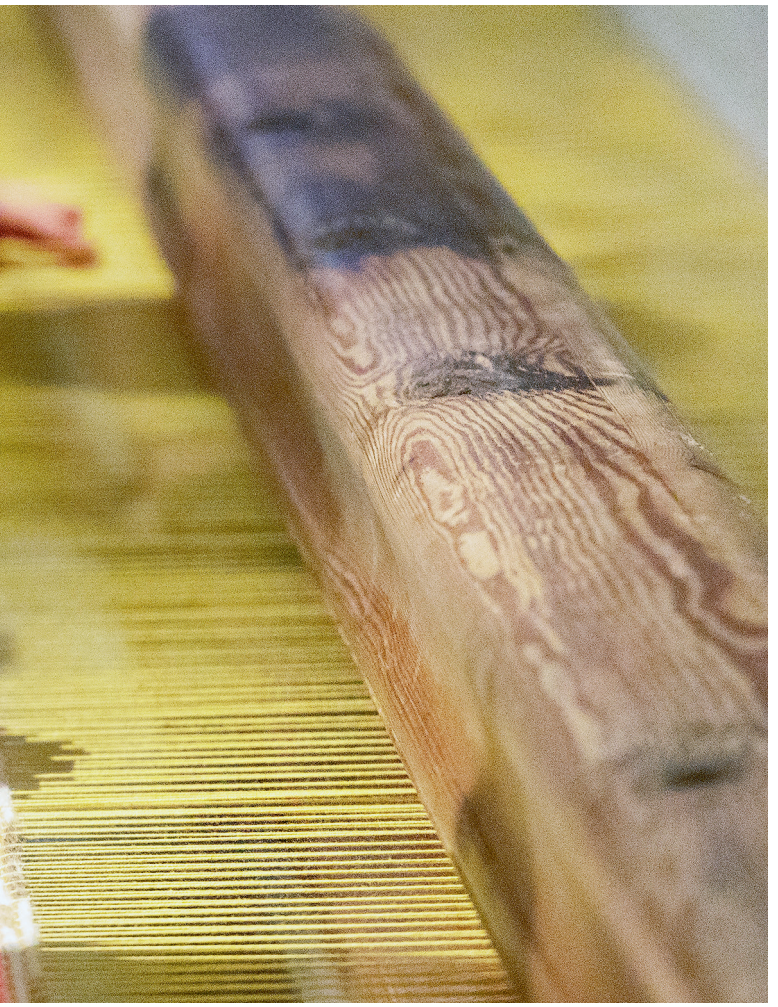

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What Was The Collaboration?

I understand collaboration as being when two or more individuals, groups or organisations carry out tasks together for a common benefit, as opposed to competing for self-interest. What then does the collaboration consist of in *Google Weaving Stop-time*? Since the individuals sat with their own materials and looms or weaving frames, I cannot say that we collaborated in the weaving. I gave instructions, and the participants were free in their own bodies – free to choose materials, how they coordinated their experience and took risks (some had not made a rya before).

I did not realize that I had strong opinions and preconceived notions about the word collaboration. As a weaving artist, I am the one who weaves. I do not make images that are to be transferred to another material by someone else. I weave – that is my practice. Do I collaborate with the motif? Do I collaborate with the material? Can I understand what the collaboration was about? The formulated "common" goal was mine from the beginning, and the participants were invited to share that goal with me. I think that is an acceptable way to look at it: to invite learning and offer opportunities.

Professor of sociology Nick Crossley defines *reflexive embodiment* as "the capacity and tendency to perceive, emote about, reflect and act upon one's own body."[131]

My own instinct – that I am my body – is a basic definition of reflexive embodiment. Building upon Gabriel Marcel's (1965) formulation, Crossley says: "We must conceive our embodiment in terms of the twin aspects of 'being' and 'having'." This agrees with how I look at my body in relation to my weaving, and I will return to that later, when I borrow from Crossley's and Leder's ideas about the *Absent Body*. But Crossley also writes that reflexivity affects not only the individual body but to a large extent also the collective body:

> There are important collective aspects that we must be attentive to, however. First, "society", "social groups" or "populations", as embodied phenomenon, can be and often are the object of reflexive discourse and intervention.[132]

He offers discourses on public health as one example of when the focus on the body is not on the individual but on the collective.

> Even at the individual level, however, reflexive embodiment is achieved by way of mediation of practices which are, in some degree, diffused within and derived from a collective – practices which the individual has not invented for herself, which may both pre-date and outlive her, and whose "rules", "logic" or "feel" she has to learn.[133]

This is probably where much of my confusion lies. I invited other weavers to weave *like me* and be part of the collective. That I am my body is something I assume, and this must then mean that I also assume that others are their bodies. But to return to the twin aspect, we *are* a body (which experiences the weaving and what belongs to it), and at the same time *have* a body (which performs weaving, for example). How then shall we combine this into a group endeavour? "Engaging in exercise, for example, may change my perception of my body and the meaning it has for me," Crossley writes.

In the best of worlds, I want to think that everyone appreciated the project and developed. However, this is not true. Some abandoned it (having become angry or tired), and some said that they would never weave a rya again, or even weave. The motivation was great to create an exhibition and have their work exhibited in a large institution (which later became several). A few were completely satisfied. Crossley: "Bodies are not simply passive objects we can manipulate and project meaning onto, however."[134] And this was always in the back of my mind, that someone would feel like I was using others for my own purpose. I never got away from that feeling. And that feeling is proof enough for me that I am not the best person to arrange projects of this kind.[135]

I have two other experiences to compare. The first example is from a symposium that I and my colleague, fellow PhD candidate and textile designer Rosa Tolnov Clausen, arranged together with the Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg in the autumn of 2019 as part of our doctoral programme. The programme consisted of practical workshops and lectures and in the centre we had installed a huge loom I own that is almost five meters wide, which we and visitors actively wove on. On occasion, ten people stood side by side, talking and weaving (Figs. 39 and 40). This was organised one year after my collaboration with the Istanbul Design Biennale and was for me an attempt to get closer to what I was missing in *Google Weaving Stop-time*, namely the collaboration *through* weaving. Working together with Tolnov Clausen at Röhsska gave me energy and a feeling of having

achieved something. It was the close connection to the participants that did it – and that I was not alone, as my colleague carried the heaviest load, and her interest in projects of this kind also spread to me. (*Maybe I do not have to be an introvert all the time.*)

A second example is the project *Shipyard Loom* from 2015,[136] some time before I became a doctoral student, in which my artist friend Anna Ehrlemark and I collected materials for weaving on site and together filled the oversized warp with thick boat ropes (Figs. 41 and 42). In this project, only the two of us wove and installed in an open space, a shipyard, surrounded by those who worked there. The project lasted for a week. I was an experienced weaver; she could not weave. I remember I took command – we did not collaborate in the weaving, but we collaborated as friends and colleagues and planned for the practical work.
From these two experiences, it becomes more obvious that I see the material as definitive in collaboration as it is in my solitary practice. It seems like two different systems, and I seem to be reluctant to change this.

Discomforts In Outsourcing My Work

While working on the *Google Weaving Stop-time* project, I quickly realized that I had a practical problem. The project was initiated in January 2018. In February 2018, I was five months pregnant with my second child, and it was important for me to contribute a weaving to the installation for the biennial – to be an *artist* in it and not just a *project manager*. The practical problem was the growing stomach, and the enormous fatigue of physical activity. I decided to see if I could find someone who could weave with me, an assistant who could do the practical work. I had never done this before. Through friends, I met M,[137] a young man about twenty years old who was originally from Afghanistan, where he had worked in a weaving studio. When I first meet him, M was seeking asylum in Sweden. M's work was based on him weaving the image I had chosen for the project. My idea to work together started off well, but a sense of failure on my part quickly crept in and developed into a tangle of complex emotions: guilt, injustice, power and powerlessness, to name just a few.

For many years, I have understood that I use weaving as a place for *escape* – an escape from more difficult tasks in life. I have made myself busy weaving and committed to deadlines. But what I missed during *Google Weaving Stop-time* was using that time for conscious and reflective think-

ing. Instead, my role as a (*not-thinking*) maker had to take the lead, the highest priority, and my doctoral work had to adapt to it. I put things off. The insecurity I felt in the doctoral programme started to throw off my art production. I became more self-critical, questioning everything, not letting anything just flow in an undisturbed way. As an artist I am not so afraid of mistakes – it is always possible to explain, re-do, improve, challenge. As a doctoral student, I have been indescribably afraid of failing – so afraid that I dare not even try.

When I worked with M, I quickly got into many ethical dilemmas. Who was I to work with him? What did he get from me? What did he give me? My own notes do not help me, because I took so few at the time. But there can be information and understanding to retrieve even in their absence. One thing I know for sure: it bothered me that he was weaving *for me*. That type of commissioned work does not sit perfectly well with the overall aim and purpose of my practice (which is not to produce objects, but to be a weaver), or even the love for my practice. But also: *where was I to escape?* The invitation from the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial made me greedy to produce objects in a sense – almost a small batch production through a "community art" project. As I did not make many notes during the period of my work with M, I have only a few observations noted in my phone and in a notebook. I know why that happened: I was afraid to write, afraid to write wrong, afraid to misunderstand. There was also the fear that my ethical concerns would end up in writing, in printed text. Instead I withheld information and my observations.

The result that came out of it, perhaps unsurprisingly, was not good. My failure here to stand firm and neutral was infiltrated by personal shortcomings and selfishness and wanting to avoid appearing bad. M's work followed the same instructions I gave the others in the group: do an image search on the words "Textile Labour Turkey", print it out (or draw it), and weave a rya. It was the same instructions for everyone. But he did not take these steps. I was the one who Googled, chose, printed the image and gave him yarn. He was weaving on my loom, in my warp. Only from there did his work begin. The manual handwork. He himself could interpret what colours the weave would have based on the image. It was a positive element when I understood that he did not see colours in the same way I did. He saw green where I saw red, brown where I saw pink and so on.

Working with M was concrete, simple. He was incredibly skilled. He made no mistakes I could see and had an enormous amount of skill in

his craftsmanship. Working with him was also difficult. I often came to meet him in the studio. We shared a little from our private lives. His was complicated and fraught with many difficulties. He asked for help with everyday matters, and I helped him as best I could. We had some difficulties in communication, as his knowledge of Swedish was not great. One day he asked me about the picture he was weaving, and it struck me that we had not talked much about it (as I almost never talk about my motifs), except that I had described the project in its entirety. He said that he himself came to Europe through Turkey and that the boy in the picture could be him. A tension arose…I began to panic. *What am I doing? I'm in deep, dangerous water now,* I thought. A change in my view could be felt. He was not just a weaver, in Sweden, involved in my project; there was so much more – things I could not grasp or understand.

The triangle between us was delicate. The motif of the vulnerable boy at a sewing machine; the young asylum seeker weaver; and I the Swedish, pregnant artist. At that time, I only had one goal – everything else is honestly a reconstruction – to get a finished textile in time. I was tired and overworked with all the responsibility. I just wanted to sleep. The experience of pregnancy from the perspective of the pregnant subject: I was engrossed in my own fatigue; I could not think of anything other than what was exactly in front of me.

Professor of political science Iris Marion Young writes:

> Certainly there are occasions when I experience my body only as a resistance, only as a painful otherness preventing me from accomplishing my goals. It is inappropriate, however, to tie such a negative meaning to all experience of being brought to awareness of the body in its weight and materiality.[138]

My body had prevented me from doing what I really wanted to do (weave the work myself), but I had sought a solution. With the solution came power imbalances I had not previously had to think about outside of my own experience and my own decisions. I had woven ethically complicated motifs before, but I had never before asked anyone else to weave these motifs for me. M's connection to the motif was fundamentally different from my own. His connection was real. Mine only emotional. I justified the depictions of suffering in my own woven textiles by giving my time to them and drawing attention to unfair circumstances and atrocities, such as the collapse of the textile factory *Rana Plaza* or the child worker in the

cotton field. The suffering was now also present through M's lived experience and his uncertain future. Everything was a mess.

I was so happy for my expected second child. At the same time, I had put myself in a situation that I felt did not have room for so much joy.

Professor of philosophy Elizabeth V. Spelman explains:

> But artistic renderings of human suffering continue to be part of various forms of art that surround us. Such works can't help but suggest a way of understanding and responding to the suffering depicted. Our reaction to them involves an assent to or resistance to such an understanding. The message of the work and our response to it are ripe for moral appraisal, a moral evaluation that is impossible to untangle from our aesthetic appraisal.[139]

Aesthetically, I was happy with the weaves. I was so happy with how *I had made them*. But I had not woven them myself. And this was hard for me. I ignored the uncomfortable feelings, pushed them away.

Spelman continues:

> Once human suffering becomes the occasion for and topic of art, we cannot help but be on delicate moral ground.[140]

When M's work was finally finished, I felt relieved… everything had gone according to plan… *but what was my plan?* He made another woven work at my request… Somehow, I slipped into my usual pattern… I went on working, hoping that something would come out that I had not understood, that a solution would be found in the work ahead, that the activity in the hands and the body would tell me something. But in this case, I was not the one weaving; he was. I asked if he could imagine weaving another rya for me, as if his weaving would solve my feeling that something was not right. It was almost self-destructive behaviour. Summer passed, autumn arrived, and the opening of the biennial came and went, and I was finally able to let go of the responsibility for it all, the practical responsibility. I felt strongly that something was just wrong. I did not handle the situation according to my will, but I was confused and did not know what to think. Did I do him a favour? *Did I take advantage of him?*

Although there is a historical (and contemporary) tradition of artists commissioning weavers to weave their images/paintings,[141] it is relevant to ask

what a weaving artist is when the two seemingly different roles (historically) are in the same body (contemporary). My belief is that there is no separation of thinking and making. The material is a physical thinking and making in one. I do not weave based on an elaborate plan. Weaving can be well planned and predetermined, where the number of threads and patterns are fundamental. We span between detailed patterns and very complex weaving, such as jacquard weaving. But even a simpler weaving structure such as a twill demands planning. My structure is the most basic plain weave with inserted rya knots. I think of my weaving as an empty surface, maybe a table, that I fill in. If the result is not satisfying, I do not redo, I do not unravel and make it right. Instead, I finish and acknowledge, "That was not very successful". Then I move on with a new weaving. In any case, I make the whole construction; I am used to being the one in front of the loom.

Fig. 43. Trying to understand the bodily knowledge of time between myself, M and the participants in *Google Weaving Stop-time*, 2021.

Not being the weaver here made me think of who the weaver was. This is sometimes portrayed through different stereotypes. Among the first images of weavers I saw and noticed were paintings by Vincent van Gogh (Fig. 44) in which poor farmers can be seen behind large looms in pitch darkness.

> For the loom and its structure, rather than the weaver and his skill, dominate the image; the worker is reduced to an accessory of the monumental machine…almost lost in a dark cramped interior…the psychologically oppressed artist projects his identity and alienation into images of caged artists.[142]

The image of the weaver that van Gogh painted depicts weaving peasants behind looms that appear like torture machines. The weaver is alone, tormented by the demands of their labour.

Fig. 44. Vincent van Gogh, *Weaver,* 1884. Pencil, watercolour, pen and ink, on paper, 35.5 cm x 44.6 cm. Credits: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

British artist and potter Grayson Perry often uses humour and sarcasm when speaking of the "craft world". About his digitally produced jacquard textile *The Wathamstow Tapestry* (2009) he noted, "I was uncomfortable

The time I focus on is my time at the loom with an image and materials

By working with my body I understand and influence the process and thus the result

When the result is finished I understand the weave because I remember the process. I can reflect on what was successful or unsuccessful and bring it into the next work

Time in the process is not some kind of waiting but is an active making directed forward. I am driven by desire (to weave) and motivation (to see the result)

MY TIME

I can imagine M at the loom but I assume that he acts and works as I do

When someone else's body is working I can not understand or influence the process (unless I do it actively). I am presented with the result but do not know the way he got there. I can only know how I would have done.

When the result is complete, I understand it through my own previous experience. I can speculate about the color and material choices made. I can reflect on what I would have done differently but physically I have no connection to the weave

Time is a kind of waiting for M to be finished. I am motivated to see the result but the desire is absent - others weaving is not important to me

M'S TIME FROM MY POINT OF VIEW

Just like with M, I can only imagine the others weaving, and I assume that they weave as I do. The distance is also longer because I do not visit any of the participants in their studios or workplaces as I did with M

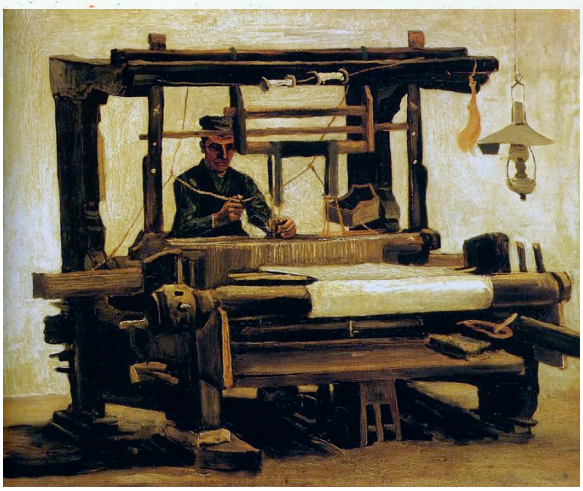
By asking the participants to post at least three pictures on facebook during the process, I (and everyone) got a little insight presented through pictures. These pictures were typically visable without the weaving body, because it can be difficult to take pictures of yourself at work with your phone and that was also nothing I asked them to do

As with M, I understand the other weaves through my own experience. The results are very different. I see colors, scales and materials I had not chosen. I was pleasantly surprised by it because I thought the instructions were so directional that the results would be more similar

Everyone had about 4-5 months to finish their work. We had a deadline of when the weaves would be sent to Istanbul. We all waited to see the results coming together. The time of weaving was on the individual weavers, but the waiting time was part of the group dynamic.

The time between us consisted of communication and responses, questions and answers. It was a kind of administrative time and everyone hoped that everything would go according to plans. Many participants posted pictures on facebook when the shipping companies picked up their weaves. The weaving did not feel like part of the time together as much as this part.

THE TIME OF THE GROUP FROM MY POINT OF VIEW



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with the idea of someone hand-making another tapestry, as had happened with *Vote Alan Measles for God*."[143] The reason for his discomfort has not been disclosed in print, but for a previous textile work, *Tree of Death* (1997), which was not a woven tapestry but a quilt, he says that the work was planned digitally, using a computer: "I used an industrial process to make it because, as much as I love traditional folks craft, I couldn't really countenance the idea of having little old ladies sewing for me."[144] (Acknowledging the irony of Perry's Alter Ego here – Claire will one day be a little old lady too). The weaver, or at least the textile person, is maybe assumed to be uncomfortable with the often perverse and twisted motives of Perry (the quilt has a pattern of colourful dicks).

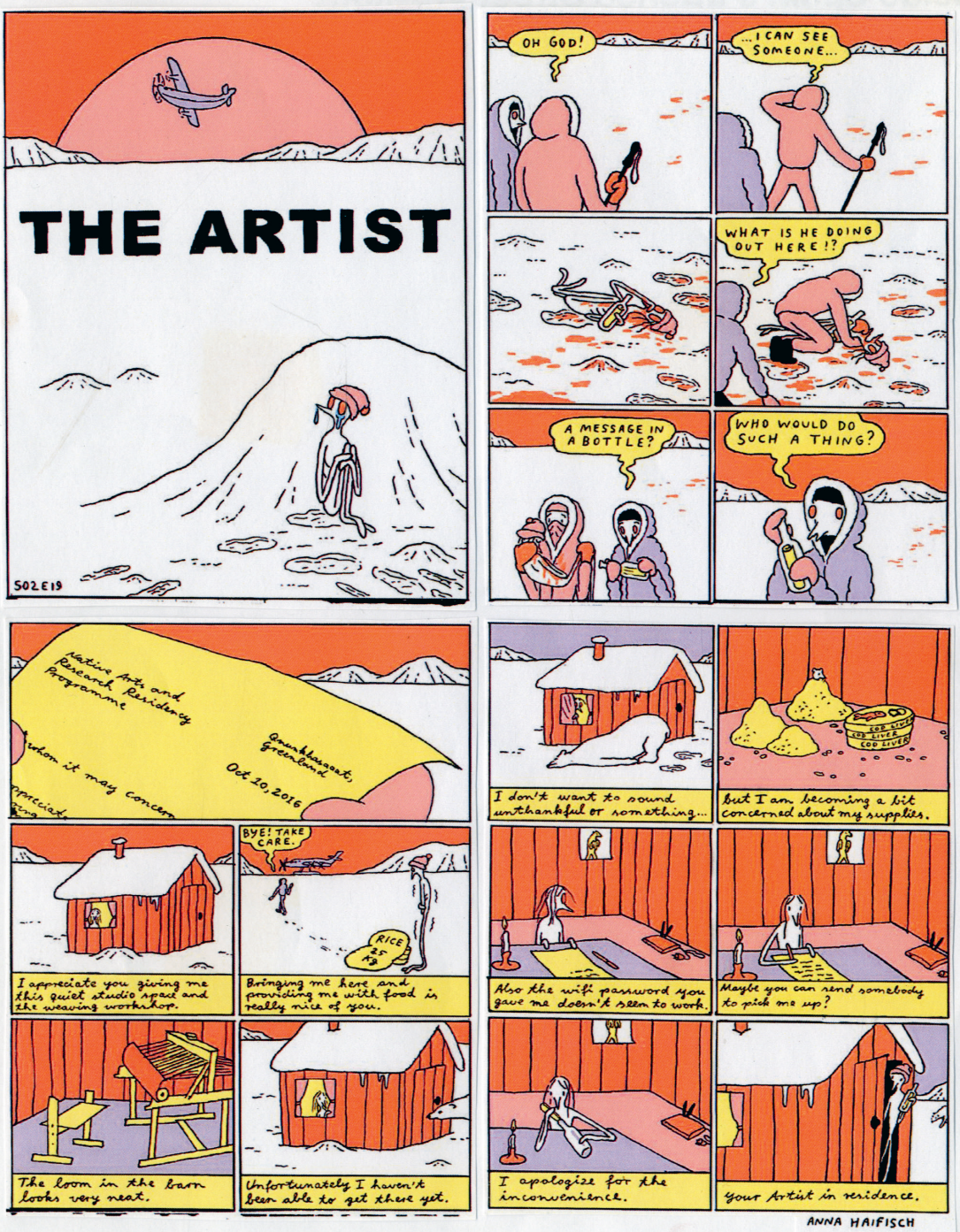
Anna Haifisch offers another stereotype in her graphic novel *The Artist*, in which we meet an artist who goes to a residence in the wilderness to weave but instead dies of starvation. The weaving artist, again alone, but also grateful and happy with a little quiet time at the loom.

Fig. 45. Anna Haifish, *The Artist*, 2019. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Vanilla weavers, I sarcastically call those who weave because they find meditation in making their own curtains and kitchen towels and often see their practice as a refuge, a kind of rest from everyday life. I often find pictures of this stereotype in weaving handbooks. Where brisk middle-aged women (and sometimes men) stand happy with a hand-woven chequered shawl over their shoulders.

Rosa Tolnov Clausen shares my view on how weaving is most often taught: strictly. I remember my first lesson in weaving, and it took many days before I sat at the loom and wove. For some reason, many people in charge of weaving classes or programmes seem to think that the beginner should not only learn to weave, but always prepare the loom first. For those who have never woven before, this creates the impression that weaving is extremely complicated. But Tolnov Clausen testifies to a different attitude from her education in Kolding and Berlin, something she has based her own project *The Weaving Kiosk*[145] on in part:

> Committing to a weekly weaving course is today difficult for many people and there are certain steps that you seem to have to learn to weave the right way. My hypothesis is that this prevents some people from even trying to weave. A very strict, rule-


THE ARTIST
S02E19
OH GOD!
...I CAN SEE SOMEONE...
WHAT IS HE DOING OUT HERE!?
A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE?
WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING?
Artist in Residency Programme
Qaanaaq, Greenland
Oct 20, 2016
To whom it may concern
I appreciate you giving me this quiet studio space and the weaving workshop.
BYE! TAKE CARE.
RICE 25 KG
Bringing me here and providing me with food is really nice of you.
The loom in the barn looks very neat.
Unfortunately I haven't been able to get there yet.
I don't want to sound unthankful or something...
COD LIVER OIL
but I am becoming a bit concerned about my supplies.
Also the wifi password you gave me doesn't seem to work.
Maybe you can send somebody to pick me up?
I apologize for the inconvenience.
Your Artist in residence.
ANNA HAIFISCH

> bound approach was not how I learned to weave. In my education in both Kolding and Berlin we were encouraged to sit down at a loom and experiment.[146]

It seems like I got the opposite education: *experiment* was not a word I even heard when I learned to weave, but rather words like *weave samples*, *draft notations* and *weighing of materials* (so you did not waste or took too little). I learned this, but never took it with me into my own practice.
These different varied images perhaps present the weaver as a rather neat, meticulous and quiet creature, a diligent person seeking solitude and silence (prejudice). This description is fiction, though of course the description may fit some people. But it is relevant to pay attention to these as stereotypes, for my time at the loom as a weaver is not fiction but a lived reality.

Nick Crossley writes:

> The sensuous structure of consciousness is, in phenomenological parlance, "intentional". It is consciousness of something other than itself, of a world beyond itself. Embodied consciousness gives me a world, a setting, but in focusing upon this setting I necessarily put myself out of focus. Embodied consciousness sinks into the background of experience, allowing the world round me to be foregrounded.[147]

As an example, Crossley describes how he has sensations while sitting at the computer, but instead of perceiving these sensations he perceives the computer. I am familiar with this: when I am weaving in my studio, I don't perceived time as the time I see on the clock on my phone; instead, each element, each knot, is another iteration of a new "now" that sinks into the experience. In the background, time goes by as usual and the clock shows that thirty minutes have passed and that I soon must go in to take care of my children, but the body and hands perform actions as if only by themselves, and I do not reflect on this until something goes wrong, or I drop a pair of scissors or a thread on the floor. One experience always takes the position in the foreground at the expense of the other.

Crossley continues:

> I do bodily things and my being consists in these bodily doings but my conscious is directed at the world in which I am acting rather than upon myself. I notice my own effects upon the world

> but am not necessarily conscious of how I generate these effects. Moreover, when we do try to concentrate upon how we do things this often decreases our competence and inhibits our action. When we become self-conscious about how we walk, for example, we are more likely to become clumsy and awkward. Likewise, when we try to teach others practical skills we sometimes have to run through the action "without thinking" in order to try to work out how it is that we do it. Thinking about it makes action more difficult.[148]

In my collaboration with M, where he performed what I "was supposed to be doing", I never really understood what my role was, even though I was the one who invented these two roles for us. Was I even a weaver when I was not weaving? I am so used to being master of the space where my absent body is operating in my work that I have never had to develop a communicative language for it. But now I asked someone else to weave for me, and weave like me. This was of course impossible. Maybe weaving is not at all an escape from more difficult tasks (like writing). The weaver I am may instead be one who operates best when freed from constant self-awareness, a space where the body can be involved without necessarily being in the centre. If I then give away my work to someone else, regardless of whether I have a practical reason such as pregnancy or not, I also give away one of the most important components of my work.

"No-Sidedness" Did Not Work For Me

Maybe *Google Weaving Stop-time* became more of a digital project than a weaving project. I try to understand where the body (bodies) went in the project. In our passive screen culture, I am so used to that pointless looking that social media encourages. Late evenings in bed with endless scrolling, passive looking at photos on Instagram.

In my work I am used to the space between the body, the material and the loom. I know how that place feels, how big it is, how it is used. The space between the body and the screen is about the same size if I am sitting at a computer, but it is used differently. And above all, the movements are different, both physically and emotionally. The body is involved in weaving. It is not at the computer, except minimally. The silly, tiny movements when we click with the computer mouse have been described by designer and researcher Andreas Nobel. The body does not move, except for the

minimal movement of the index finger. He describes it as the small-scale movement bringing with it a kind of whining and a negative uncertainty.[149]

> Social media is supposed to bring us together – but it is tearing us apart. The evidence suggests it is making us sadder, angrier, less empathic, more fearful, more isolated and more tribal.[150]

Is there anything critical about weaving? Can it be stupid in the same way? It would be an oversimplification to simply pit the screen and the loom against each other, the first a bad habit and the second a good one.

American art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson gives a suggestion for how we can look at contemporary arts and crafts by highlighting their connection to the past. I acknowledge that this suggestion is number 3 out of 11 conflicting propositions that Wilson offers – she is being contradictory on purpose, her writing has an ironic undertone – but as always with irony, it also offers the opposite:

> Craft draws its very strength from its anachronistic quality and its ties to traditions, both its adherence to conventional artisanal labor and also its more messy reinventions. Handmaking maintains its integrity in response to and in opposition to industrialization. Why should we insist upon craft as contemporary when its important and distinctive ontology is its very connection to the past, to the entire rich terrain of thrift and ingenuity, to knowledge production passed down through the hand, and skilled legacies? Craft embodies its histories in its materials. It should not be seen as yet another trend within current art but rather is assertively and proudly uncontemporary.[151]

This writing is excellent, and I have read it so many times. However, beyond irony, this connection to the past, where the "hand" in hand weaving is also understood as a historical or social term as Pye suggested, this embodiment and materialization of history can be risky when hand weaving is paired with social media, as I did in my project, and cannot help but romanticize the handmade. Because what we do with our body as it "has always been done" becomes a proof that it is "good". Similarly, *slowing down* is something we are encouraged to do in countries such as Sweden, and that is then applied to anything from craft and weaving to cooking, mindful approaches to walking, running etc. It is supposed be something we apply to our body, which almost absorbs it and then heals from stress

and becomes slow. Similarly, in discussions about weaving's innovative encounter with computers, weaving is seen to have existed constantly, and while the calculator was invented through weaving, it developed rapidly (and developed into computers), while hand weaving is perceived to have stood still (innovations have been made, as Anni Albers points out). If we apply computer thinking to old-fashioned weaving, we automatically get an exciting formula, something "new". Again, the weaving body is not present.

Fig. 46. A surprising finding appeared when, after completing the project, I typed in "textile+labour+Turkey" on Google and found one image of a small work I had made as an introduction for the project among the more expected images.

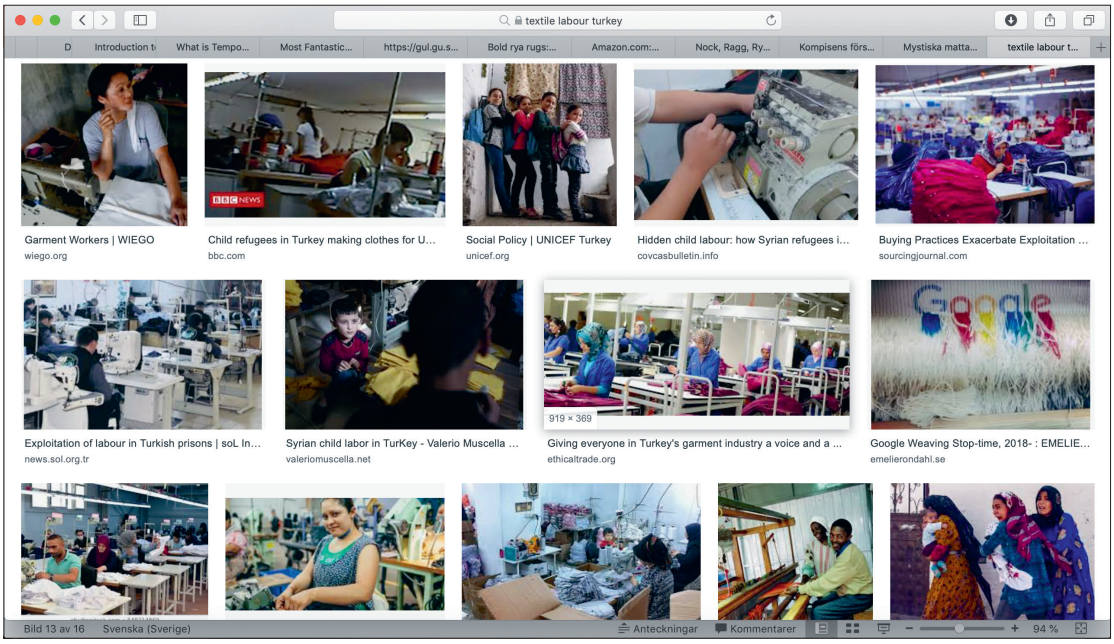
Fig. 47. A screenshot of the shared Facebook page for *Google Weaving Stop-time*.

In Part 1, I described the rya's two-sidedness and how in the meeting inside the weave between fluff and a smooth textile pixel it creates the fascination I feel for the technique. This two-sidedness is what I am in direct contact with while weaving and contributes to my interest in spending time with images and materials. Tying rya knots on the front while weaving triggers the motivation to finish the weaving and see the other side as viewers will.

Anni Albers uses the term *Janus-faced* (a concept of twin aspects that contrast, perhaps even contradict each other, though the two sides of my textiles are not necessarily contradictory) in a chapter that describes tactile sensitivity. Here she means that we have lost opportunities to feel material due to how society has developed – that these successes have their advantages, but that the intelligence capacity of touching stuff has been lost: "We remove the cellophane and there it is – the bacon, or the razor blade, or the pair of nylons."[152] For Albers, it is fundamentally important that it is the cooperation between the inner structure of the weave and the outer textile surface – the material – that defines weaving. This is clear from her written reflections but also her own woven work. Manuel Cirauqui notes that:

> Albers's work is also Janus-faced, oscillating like a pendulum (for she also used that metaphor) between the terms of various polarities – craft and art, handwork and industrialized production, ancient and modern, pictorial and tactile, theoretical and immediately empirical.[153]

46


textile labour turkey
Garment Workers | WIEGO
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Child refugees in Turkey making clothes for U…
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Social Policy | UNICEF Turkey
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Hidden child labour: how Syrian refugees i…
covcasbulletin.info
Buying Practices Exacerbate Exploitation …
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Exploitation of labour in Turkish prisons | soL In…
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Syrian child labor in TurKey - Valerio Muscella …
valeriomuscella.net
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Giving everyone in Turkey's garment industry a voice and a …
ethicaltrade.org
Google Weaving Stop-time, 2018- : EMELIE…
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Bild 13 av 16
Svenska (Sverige)
Anteckningar
Kommentarer
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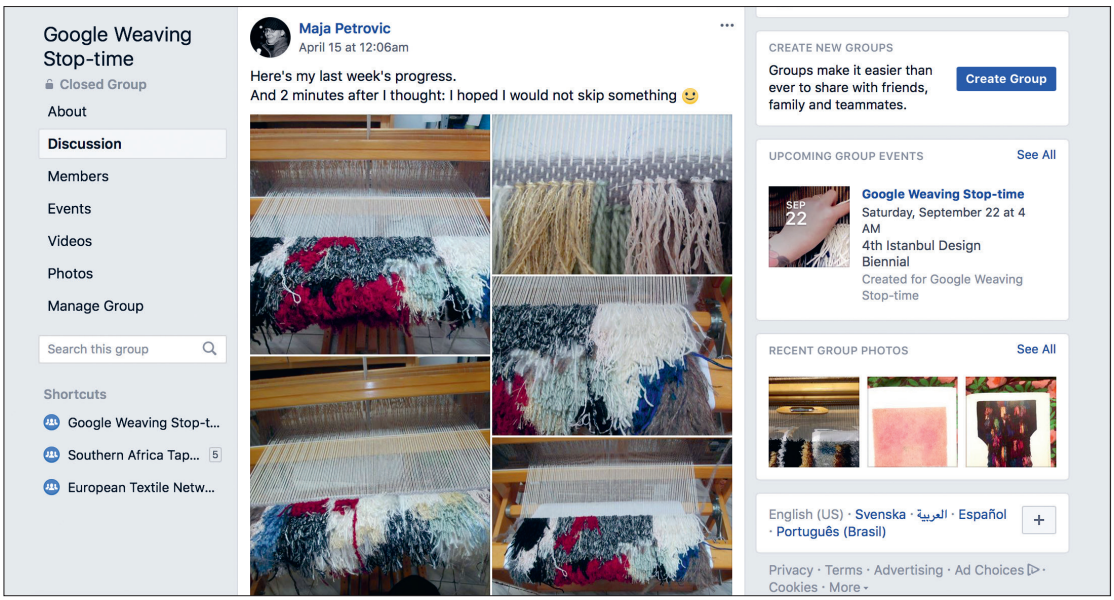
Google Weaving Stop-time
Closed Group
About
Discussion
Members
Events
Videos
Photos
Manage Group
Search this group
Shortcuts
Google Weaving Stop-t…
Southern Africa Tap…
European Textile Netw…
Maja Petrovic
April 15 at 12:06am
Here's my last week's progress.
And 2 minutes after I thought: I hoped I would not skip something
CREATE NEW GROUPS
Groups make it easier than ever to share with friends, family and teammates.
Create Group
UPCOMING GROUP EVENTS
See All
SEP 22
Google Weaving Stop-time
Saturday, September 22 at 4 AM
4th Istanbul Design Biennial
Created for Google Weaving Stop-time
RECENT GROUP PHOTOS
See All
English (US) · Svenska · العربية · Español · Português (Brasil)
Privacy · Terms · Advertising · Ad Choices · Cookies · More

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For Albers, this duality may not be interpreted quite literally as it is in my work. But I understand the description and can draw parallels to my work – what happens in the solitary practice as well as together with others. That component in the weaving and in the weave that arouses my fascination is the one that makes the two-sidedness visible. The two sides of the textile are in a way independent of each other: there is a smoother side with a clear pattern, and there is a hairy side where the pattern has become a different, more abstract image/figure. What binds these together is what Albers describes as the nature of weaving, its construction of warp and weft, which holds the sides together.

> A fabric, we may say, is a three-dimensional object with nothing between its two opposed surfaces. They twine in the inside, and to look inside a weaving is very much to look through it. In many cases, both surfaces can be read as front surfaces. A weaving is, again, Janus-faced.[154]

This is true in my weaving – in the work with the knots and the hairy mess on the front. I am just as focused on how the image on the hairy side should be designed and executed as I am on my inner understanding of what the back will look like.

When the moments of interest and fascination disappear from my own hands, the work becomes meaningless. When I think of this important part of my practice and think of it in relation to the participants and to my weaving assistant, these sides disappear for me. M holds the woven material in his hands, and I can only speculate whether he is as fixated on this as I am, or if it passes him by unnoticed. The same applies to the other participants who sat in their own workplaces or studios somewhere in the world.

The two-sidedness is strongly linked to material, and material is linked to different concepts such as intuition, impulse, gut feeling, desire and balancing the type of material. But the two sides of the rya do not have values that indicate a deceiving state; they are just different. When these two different surfaces are no longer connected to my body, I experience a *non-sidedness* with the weaving, and my contact surface is only social: *I talk to the others, communicate with them over social media and endless email threads, I meet M, I sometimes watch when he weaves*.

In *Google Weaving Stop-time* I wanted to create a project in which hand weaving takes up a lot of space and attention in a biennial context, and I

wanted to share my fascination for what the technique of rya can do with images taken from the Internet. But through the structure of the project, I removed myself from the main and meaningful step of tying rya threads on a warp. The same applies to the collaboration with only one other weaver, as in my relationship with M.

Fig. 48. This drawing, which has already appeared, captures the link between my body and the material I work with. I find the drawing a bit disturbing, and I cannot remember why I decided to make the body naked, but I do remember making it and feeling that *this is what I mean*. However, I am still not capable of verbalising what I mean with it. In the drawing I tried to capture how my body is involved in each of the knots that make up a rya.

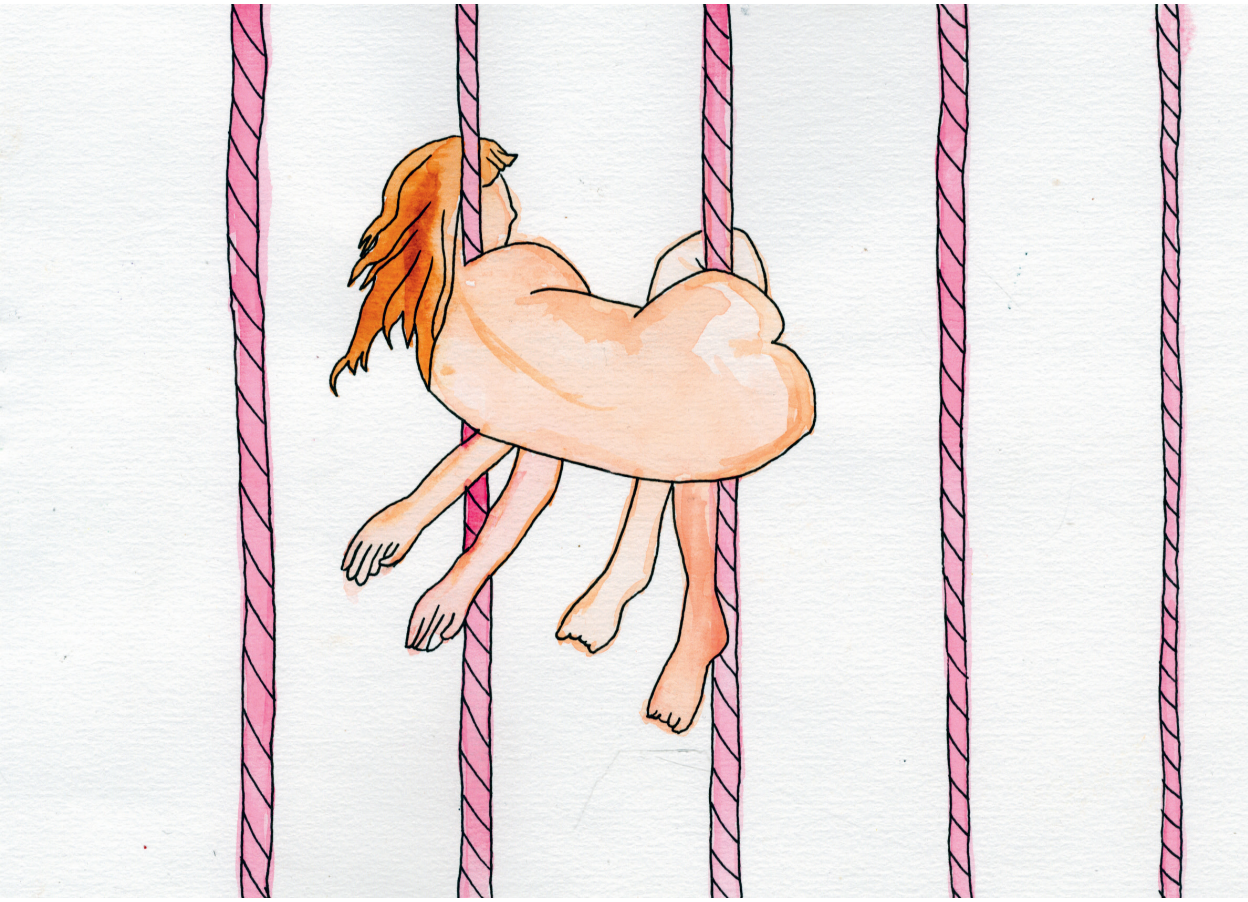
Fig. 49. *Textile Labour.* This photo shows my rya to the left and M's to the right here installed in an exhibition at Fiberspace Gallery in Stockholm, Sweden (2020).

Reweaving

One day months later in my studio, I got a quick impulse to weave an image, in the same way it usually happens. It is the same image that M has woven. I still have his cartoon: it lies there in the corner of my studio together with remnants of yarn from his weaving. There lies his rya as well. I look at it – it is so beautiful, flawless (Fig. 50). I want to weave the same image partly because I understand images by weaving them, often in repeated versions, and because I understand that I cannot stand that I have not woven this piece myself. It has nothing to do with me, it does not exist because of me. I asked him to do it, and I made the sketch, and printed the cartoon, and chose yarns that he in turn could use as he wished, tracing lines, as a connection to paint-by-numbers, described earlier.

Fig. 50. *Textile Labour,* 2018. M's work.

But I have not done it with my hands and my body. That was the mistake. So I turn to thinking that M's weaving is my sketch. When Anni Albers described that many have lost the capacity for tactile sensibility, it was because we are not given enough opportunities to touch different types of materials and surfaces. Everything we consume and surround ourselves with comes to us finished and packaged (more so today than in Albers's time, with the enormous development of online shopping in Sweden and the rest of Europe). Albers emphasises: "We touch the things we form"[155]. And if we have not done so, as I did not touch the material in the making of M's weaving, something is lost.



48

The fundamental thing in all kinds of weaving and certain other kinds of other textile constructions is that the surface and the structure belong together and are dependent on and affect each other. "Structure", according to Albers: "needs our intellect to construct it or, analytically, to decipher it."[156] While the quality of the surface differs, it is not perceived intellectually but rather receptively. When touch was removed from me, along with the spending-time-with-images element described in Part 1, I now understood that it is more about spending time with materials while making images that I mean.

This is a knowledge that PhD in design Thomas Laurien wrote in his essay "Knowledge Through Disappointment" ("Kunskap ur besvikelse") that led him further to a development he describes as "the do-over" ("omtagning").[157] In his 2016 dissertation, Laurien describes how he finds knowledge by reflecting on what was the disappointment. He then describes a do-over, based on his own experience: being allowed to return and do again, bringing in what he learned from the "mistake", which can be based on dissatisfaction. I understood in working with M that my intuition was guiding me, though unarticulated. *Something* told me that *something* was wrong, and a restlessness arose: *I must do something*. In this way, my weaving became a kind of do-over in the broadest sense. It was through active action that I was able to restore something to myself. American sociologist Richard Sennet writes on the role between master and assistant, "Authority in the generic sense relies on a basic fact of power: the master sets out the terms of work that others do at his [her] direction".[158]

Fig. 51. The image shows the woven textiles, which are based on the image to the right, picturing a textile worker that is unnamed online, found when searching "Textile Labour Turkey", 2020.

In this case, the most important thing is to understand that in textile terms I was in no way the master over M; he was a better weaver than I. *I also do not want to use the word master* and I want to be very careful here: I only mean it on the level of the textile, because in every other way he had no power as an asylum seeker. The hierarchy was such that I had all the privileges, I had an assignment to carry out a work, and above all I had an outlet for my artistic voice that M did not have.

Sennet again:

> Workshops, present and past, have glued people together through work rituals, whether these be a shared cup of tea or the urban

The lenghts of the threads in the knots are uneven but yet more or less the same. When cutting yarn for the knots I wrap as much that fits around my hand and cut it open at my palm, this makes the lenghts in the outermost layer slightly longer. I do not cut the surface when the rya is finished.

Comparing with the cartoon to the right one can see that I do not follow the pixels in the image exactly – neither colour or shape is exactly the same.

The two sides of my woven version of M's rya *Textile Labour* (2019). Black linen for the warp and black wool for the in-between plain weaving using a regular rya space of three shots or 1,5 cm consistently. The rya measures 90x140 cm.

Image above shows the pdf of the printed cartoon used as a guide under the warp threads. This version has reduced colours via a tool in Photoshop – something I usually do not use. I most often paint over the background or mark the contours by hand using a thick marker or paint with a brush if necessary.

> parade; through mentoring, whether the formal surrogate parenting of medieval times or informal advising on the worksite; through face-to-face sharing of information.[159]

With that as the background, I can know that M got one thing from me at least: he got support and a bit of help, albeit only a little, in his situation as an asylum seeker. I orally translated papers for him into easy-to-understand Swedish and tried to find out various steps in processes that he had not understood on his own. Through our relationship, I learned of the violence he had endured through the parts of his story he told me. But I also got to experience an unintended self-destructiveness that I myself caused through the strategies I created in the hierarchical roles of "master" and assistant. But the embedded and perhaps more invisible social parts, the small exchanges that take place between people, meant a lot to me, and hopefully it meant something to him. Despite our completely different political and financial situations, the set-up in our small temporary workshop could serve as a refuge from society – for both of us on, though on very different terms.

Fig. 52. An experiment to think through the situation, drawing on David Pye's concepts, 2022.

I return now to the concepts of the craftsmanship of risk, the craftsmanship of certainty and the intermediate form David Pye calls limited risk. By trying to organise the different parts of the process through these concepts, I see that it is not entirely easy to understand how they can be separated. Instead, the process twists and ultimately consists of a bit of all parts – even if the diagram in fig. 52 reveals slightly more elements that can characterize M's work as workmanship of certainty. What I understand is that I understand his work through my own body – that is, even if it was he who did the work, it was my risk. I traded the risk to him and did not have full control. In a way, M automated my work. He did it time-efficiently because my pregnant and tired body at the time had not been able to keep the pace I expect and feel comfortable with in my work.

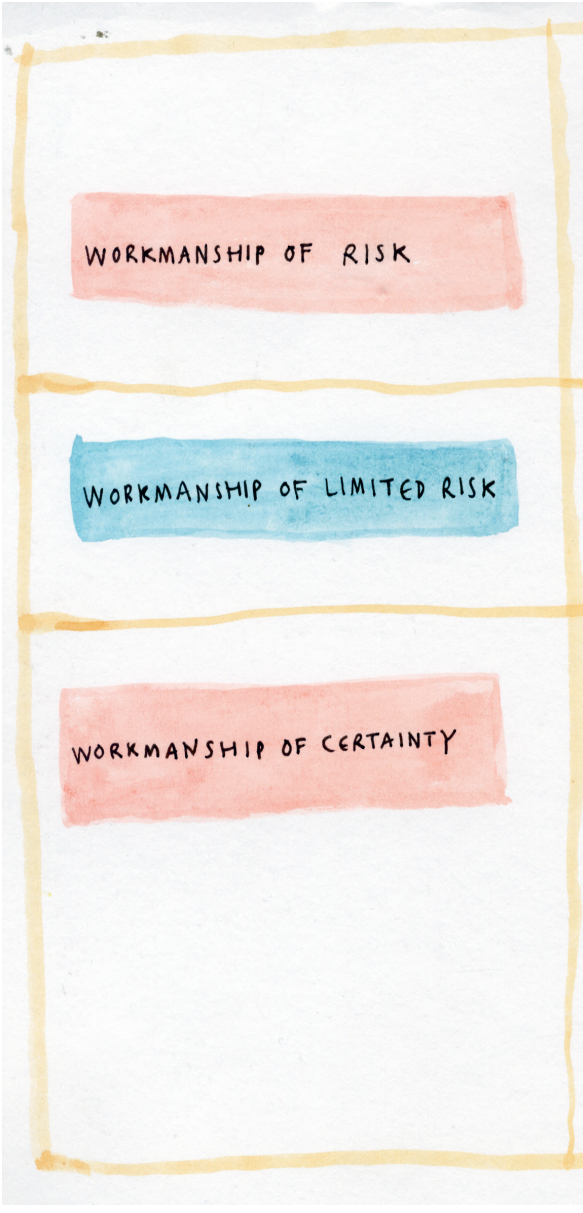
M was uncomfortable with my system of attaching the paper under the warp because it was not the way he had woven before. He did what he was used to, following the printed image with his gaze (attached on the wall in front of him, at the end of the loom) and instead calculated in his head, or perhaps *just knew*, the number of knots in each colour field – a system that is more common, I understand. To me, it seems complicated

and thought-demanding, which is why I have never bothered to learn to weave like that. This means that his weave can probably be described as more accurate in comparison with the sketch, while mine has a slightly freer interpretation with displacement of pixels and colour fields.

M also turned out to be colour blind,[160] I think, because he consistently changed places on all shades of red and green. This was something I saw as positive, since it altered the rya from the original cartoon. Otherwise, he followed the colour scheme as it was. He always called me on the phone if he was missing a nuance and asked me to come by and advise him. When I weave, I am not so careful. I just choose a different colour, maybe similar, or a completely different one that I think matches the neighbouring colour. Then, most characteristic of our differences, M consistently used equally long threads in his weaving (I think he also cut them afterwards as he was used to, even if I encouraged him not to), while I stuck to my habit of being consciously careless with different lengths, sometimes consciously choosing in the moment longer or shorter threads depending on whether I wanted to emphasise that part or not.

The realization is that weaving, for me, takes place through my body, with materials, at the loom. I cannot say that such work can be collaborative in my practice. I have realized how important closeness to the material is and that I could not ignore it in my preconceived ideas about what collaboration is. Several different parts of me were active. In *Google Weaving Stop-time*, I handled the administrative role, and there was a collaboration in how the project was designed on the Facebook page. But the part of me that identifies as a weaver did not collaborate; I outsourced most of my weaving work entirely for practical reasons (pregnancy), and I did not initially intend for the project to be shaped that way. It was a compromise. And over time, extending beyond pregnancy until I got my body back and again fit at the loom, I became more and more dissatisfied with my non-participation as a weaver in the project. Thus, the only remaining alternative was to weave myself. And it was insignificant that this project was now complete and already out on tour.

The simple formula for analysis is intuition + reflection. It is the simple answer to how new insights are added and enable analysis. What happened and when? Why did it happen? Such questions have their origins in the intuition that something felt off. The reflection comes in small parts, a little here and a little there, small pieces of the puzzle that take time to put together into a longer and understandable reflection that can also be


WORKMANSHIP OF RISK
WORKMANSHIP OF LIMITED RISK
WORKMANSHIP OF CERTAINTY

M IS WEAVING MY WEAVE	I AM WEAVING M'S WEAVE
M WORKED ALONE WITHOUT MY CONSTANT PRESENCE AND SUPERVISION THEREFORE HIS BODY, EXPERIENCE AND INTUITION WERE IMPORTANT.	I WEAVE AS I USUALLY DO WITHOUT COMPAIRING MY WEAVE DURING THE PROCESS WITH M'S WEAVE.
THE WORK WAS NOT 100% PREDETERMINABLE – HE CHOSE COLORS HIMSELF.	I USED THE SAME YARNS AS M BECAUSE I WANTED THEM TO FIT TOGETHER.
THE SKETCH WAS PREDETERMINED BY ME. I CHOSE AND GAVE HIM YARN TO WORK WITH. I ARRANGED THE LOOM AND SET UP WARPS AS I USUALLY DO AND THAT DID NOT CHANGE DURING THE PROCESS. I SHOWED HIM PREVIOUS WEAVES I HAD MADE SO THAT HE WOULD HAVE SOMETHING TO COMPARE WITH AND UNDERSTAND WHAT RESULT I EXPECTED.	LOOM AND WARP ARE PREDETERMINED AND DO NOT CHANGE DURING THE PROCESS.

understood by others. I do not want to be the equivalent of a ghostwriter – a *ghostweaver*. When someone else weaves my narrative, part of the story is lost. I cannot think if I do not weave myself, and that is the main reason why it has been so difficult for me to get a grip on this project.

Everything I weave belongs together, regardless of results and visual content. It belongs together through my physical, emotional commitment over time, and the result gets its own distinctive style through the small decisions made about materials and colours in the moment. I build on my experience, and chances are the result will be as I predict. I identify as meaningful my way of making and weaving as my own bodily connection to materials and tools. If I remove that connection, I cut off most of my knowledge – the corporeal.

Conclusion To Part 2

In this chapter, I have reflected on a project consisting of a group of twenty-eight weavers, (all working from their own studios, from several places around the world invited by the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial (2018–19). In this project, I worked in my own studio with an assistant, and I share how this led me to insights into what an artistic weaving practice means to me.

Through this experiment I understood some of the preconceived notions I had about both work and collaboration: that work for me is being physically present at the loom with materials in my own hands, and that collaboration for me can take place on many levels, but there is one component I do not want to collaborate on: weaving. I do not want to collaborate on the action of weaving because my body must be central to the production of my work.

In collaborative projects like *Google Weaving Stop-time*, time for me was felt physically as frustration and slowness when it happened digitally – via social media and email, the time "together" was characterized by an unpleasant kind of loneliness behind screens, waiting for responses and reactions between us (so-called "digital likes"). It was a time that differed from the one I otherwise choose – a time with images and physical materials (yarn) that I see as a more meaningful state. To succeed better in the future with similar projects, I understand that I need to think of components that do not take this away from me.

Through the gesture of weaving my own version of my assistant's work, which was probably inevitable for me, I have expanded my understanding of my body's knowledge and how the contact with materials makes the work meaningful and how time and the body belong together. The lines in the weave, the neat horizontal ones on the smooth side, are the surface between me and the original image. The chaotic lines on the hairy side are vertical and can also be seen as escape routes that lead out of a still image. The most meaningful in my practice is to have such a place – a path, a movement, that I myself create. In the space between the sometimes described and sometimes experienced slow rhythm of weaving, and that of experiencing two-sidedness, is the place where I can construct a woven narrative. In multiplying, as in the *Textile Labour* weaving, I have understood through practice that it is not only colour fields with their light and darkness that are transferred in making, but also experiences, emotions, preconceived notions and a human need to do good and to fix. Just like in the paint-by-numbers kit, this weaving is completely dependent on someone else's labour.

What knowledge did I derive from this whole experience with *Google Weaving Stop-time*, including working with a weaving assistant. The feeling of failure and disappointment, where the will to make others happy became an obstacle to collaboration, was as if I was tracing lines through others' successful collaborative projects, so charged with good experience (from an outside perspective), but had lost my own interest along the way. It became diffuse and fuzzy from my silent inner expectations and my outer idea of making everything "work". Scaling up beyond my actual individual capacity also caused me to lose my inner desire, control and power.... By contrast, for *Maxim 2011–2019* (a work I will describe in Part 3), which was a large work I created on my own, I had only to focus on the weaving. By weaving my own version of M's *Textile Labour*, I got a chance to recover a little. Having my own hands in physical materials is what makes sense.

121 A. Albers, *On Weaving: New Expanded Edition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 18.
122 N. Botha, "We Learnt Everything from the Designers", XXI, [website], 2018, https://xximagazine.com/c/we-learnt-everything-from-the-designers.
123 D. Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, London, Herbert Press, 2008, p. 26.
124 Albers, *On Weaving*, p. 58. Albers describes how historical and contemporary pictorial tapestries woven from painter's designs are often lacking in textural and structural interest and therefore move to the very edge of a weavers's realm. These works might be impressive as compositions, but not as weavings.
125 Ibid., p. 39.
126 Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, p. 20.
127 For deeper discussions on this topic I recommend the introduction to *Collaboration Through Craft*, which elaborates on problems and differences in expectations when collaborating. A. Ravetz, A. Kettle and H Felcey, "Collaboration Through Craft: An Introduction", in *Collaboration Through Craft*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013.
128 H. Kuusela, "Collaboration Is Trendy But Is It Good?", Year unknown, https://kiertoliike.tanssintalo.fi/pdf/TT_artikkeli_Kiertoliike_Kuusela_FIN_2016-ENG.pdf.
129 M. Kelly, "Does Artistic Collaboration Ever Work?" in *The Atlantic*, 25 July 2012.
130 For a good example of a group project being understood differently by the group than the artist's creative vision, see J. Gilson, "Navigation, Nuance and Half/angel's *Knitting Map*: A Series of Navigational Directions", in *Performance Research*, 17 (1) 2012, pp. 9-20.
131 Crossley, *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*, p. 1.
132 Ibid., p. 3.
133 Ibid., p. 3.
134 Ibid., p. 3.
135 As an example of collaborative weaving, Anne Wilson's work *Walking* is worth mentioning again.
136 The project was made at Skver Art on the Croatian island Mali Losijn and was organised by Dunja Jankovic.

137 I have anonymized his name for his protection. He allowed me to use his first name, but I decided to keep it as only "M".
138 Young, *On Female Body Experience*, p. 51.
139 E. Spelman, *Fruits of Sorrow: Framing our Attention to Suffering*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1997, pp. 153–54.
140 Ibid., p. 154.
141 It is important to understand that weaving has long been designed by artists and made by others – Dovecot Tapestry Studio in Edinburgh and the similar West Dean Tapestry Studio, where I gave a presentation in 2017, set up for this work. The difference was that I was trying to provide a particular type of help because of M's asylum status. Liza Lou writes about her ethical worries with bead weavers in Durban, South Africa – maybe a closer example because she is an individual artist but wanted to try to help others in need by commissioning them to do the work.
142 C. Zemel, *Van Gogh's Progress: Utopia, Modernity, and Late-Nineteenth-Century Art*, Berkely, University of California Press, 1997, pp. 58-60.
143 J. Klein, *Grayson Perry*, p 267.
144 Ibid., p. 130
145 The Weaving Kiosk is a concept created by textile designer Rosa Tolnov Clausen and conducted together with fashion designer Merja Hannele Ulvinen. The Weaving Kiosk is a public space where weaving tools and materials are made available for anyone to use. Together with the tools and materials, collections of weaving samples and readily designed product proposals are presented that are based on traditional Nordic weaving techniques.
146 J. Hemmings, R. Tolnov Clausen and M. Fairbanks, "A Dialogue about Social Weaving: The Weaving Kiosk and Weaving Lab", in *Textile*, 19:2, 2021, pp. 223–36, DOI: 10.1080/14759756.2020.1856549.
147 Crossley, *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*, p. 79.
148 Ibid., p. 8.
149 A. Nobel, "Dimmer på Upplysningen: Text, form och formgivning", PhD Thesis, University College of Arts, Crafts & Design, 2014, p. 73.
150 J. Lanier, *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*, New York, Henry Holt, 2018, introduction page.
151 J. Bryan-Wilson, "Eleven Propositions in Response to the Question What Is Contemporary About Craft?" in *The Journal of Modern Craft*, vol 6 issue 1, 2016, pp. 7-10.
152 Albers, *On Weaving*, p. 44.
153 M. Cirauqui, in *On Weaving*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 214–31.
154 M. Cirauqui, in *On Weaving*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 214–31.
155 Albers, On Weaving, p 44.
156 Ibid., p. 45.
157 T. Laurien, *Händelser på ytan – shibori som kunskapande rörelse*, Gothenburg, ArtMonitor, 2016, p. 154.
158 R. Sennett, *The Craftsman*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 69.
159 Ibid., p. 73.
160 Colour blindness is more common in men because carried on the X chromosome (8% men to 0.5% women swap red and green.

Part 3

Glesrya

Introduction To Part 3

In Parts 1 and 2, I wanted to show how I had initially a rather unreflective view of my practice – my reflections were largely borrowed from other people's texts, although these stories sometimes did not match my experience. I casually described my weaving as time-consuming and slow, although I certainly also noticed early on that my own body hurt, that I got bored and frustrated at times when weaving. I saw this as an inevitable part of doing a kind of physical labour, but nothing I wanted to highlight too much. It felt silly to complain. I counted forward with the help of woven lines and knots in yarn pixels, I took strength in that it took x number of hours to weave x centimetres. The time it took became more important than the bodily experience, although in fact time affects the body in a rather monotonous exercise.

In Part 2, I discussed how being in contact with materials and weaving is crucial for my practice to feel meaningful, an insight gained through the absence of material contact that I experienced in my collaborative project for the Istanbul Design Biennial, when I also worked together with an assistant for the first time. And while collaboration is currently popular in the arts, I raise questions about how collaboration actually operates when bodily knowledge is central to the work – is collaboration even overused as a term to describe many experiences that are more likely commission? The disappointments and feelings of failure that were part of the project were overwhelming for me, but I regained control by turning away from collaborations and back to my own bodily knowledge.

Now that I arrive at Part 3, which comprises works that I made during the last full period of my PhD research in 2020 and 2021, I write about how I have stepped into my own practice with a deeper understanding. A small technical change, which I describe further below, has made my weaving faster, and with these new weavings I discuss how hand weaving a rya is not a slow medium per se, but a method of image creation in which the material and scale, together with the two-sidedness, match the sad, flowing, emotional images I want to make. The two-sidedness is toned down from the point of view that it is clear and time-accountable through its visible lines. But I no longer need to assure someone that there is an image in the fluffy hair that can be proven with a back – something that at first looked like a disappointment, but later turned out to be a step forward in development. This links to my early interest in where the image begins, an interest I stepped away from but have found answers to along

the way, as I started to gain a deeper knowledge of materials and realized that with the right materials I can push the motif further in the direction I want, and the security of having a readable motif on the smooth backside became less important.

I focus on what is relevant in a hand-weaving practice other than time and how knowledge that remains hidden until a shift occurs can generate deeper reflection. I hope to be able to offer an expanded understanding of my practice – and by extension craft practices in general – that considers more than just time. I find some support in certain phrases that I see repeated in texts about hand weaving and crafts. A common one is by the philosopher Michael Polyani: "We know more than we can tell".[161] I agree that knowledge in crafts never can be fully communicated, but I think that the discourse of arts and crafts needs greater critique of reliance on these casual, repetitive references. This quote is not about what I know; what I know is more in line with another way he uncovers ideas, namely that personal knowledge is not learned but discovered.[162]

If I repeatedly described my practice as slow (or not slow) without double-checking my bodily knowledge, I would remain forever limited to wordless, tacit knowledge, and I am not sure I would know more about my practice than I could say, because I would not even know that I knew. The development of skill, which is one aspect, comes from practice and from making mistakes and reflecting on them. I could continue my practice as I have always done, but then the reflection too would remain within a sphere of things I already know.

Polyani writes:

> We can assimilate an object as a tool if we believe it to be actually useful to our purposes, and the same holds for the relation of meaning to what is meant and the relation of the parts to a whole. The act of personal knowing can sustain these relations only because the acting person believes that they are apposite: that he has not made them but discovered them. The effort of knowing is thus guided by a sense of obligation towards the truth: by an effort to submit to reality.[163]

I made a little change that had a practical purpose: weaving faster. It was an appropriate decision of a practical nature, but I did not know what the relationship between the time saved and the result would be. Why had

I not woven like this before? Faster, easier and even *better*? I could have hired an assistant to reduce the time it would take to finish, but this was now out of the question. With a repetitive use of language, we reinforce ideas that hand weaving is perhaps not developed as an artistic method. The use of language contributes to contemporary weaving being placed in a romantic, anachronistic trap in which the body in work + time in crafts overshadows visual and/or conceptual expressions. I do not mean that the temporal aspects are irrelevant – on the contrary, in fact, but I wish that instead of limiting our focus there we would merge several parts into a more complex understanding: how does the visual expression relate to the body that weaves?

Repetition in technique and the temporal in technique appear in my works just as methods. But time through the body is related to the visual in my woven works. In this part, I use what I stubbornly opposed in the first (several) years of this project: that I should/could *experiment* with my artistic practice – try something new. In the end, I did. This connection became apparent when I accidentally (and skilfully) changed my weaving technique – to the technique called loose rya (*glesrya*). The speed of this technique is visible to me (wet, captured moments/conditions): the hairy side gets more air space and its material looks more droopy, while the smooth side becomes more abstract. Perhaps this way of thinking is clear to no one but me. At first I thought it would be a problem for me and my fascination with the two-sidedness, but soon I realized that the hairy side benefited. In this part, I will move towards a report on this development.

A Map Of Disappointments

After the tangible mistake I experienced in my collaboration with M, I got the feeling that it had happened before. I have done other things that have left me with the same feeling of disappointment or failure. My reaction has always been to forget and move on. None of these strategies is sustainable in the long run. I cannot forget; what I consider to be wrong comes back in all possible situations when I see the weaving, or someone asks me something related to it. I cannot move on without risking it happening again.

All these mistakes have taken me to where I am today. And I am very grateful for the mistakes I made in *Google Weaving Stop-time* and the disappointment I felt at not weaving my own contribution at first. I learned that was something I needed.

Some of the mistakes I have made over the years that I still think about as disappointments:

Fig. 53. Diagram of disappointments, 2021.

And some insights I gained through reading and understanding them:

Fig. 54. Diagram of insights gained through disappointment, 2021.

Writing by hand is part of my method in drawing. When I write by hand, I have noticed that I am more willing to use my own voice, without the influence of others. It becomes more honest. Writing down by hand what disappoints me in my practice engages me more because the body is involved – and thus the memory as well – and while I write on my watercolour stains, I can more easily see what I might do differently in the future. The hand/body involved in the handwriting is the same as the one involved in weaving. The hands typing on a computer do not have the same connection.

***Maxim 2011–2019* (2019–2020)**

In one of my latest works, *Maxim 2011–2019*, which I think has all the qualities I desire, there were no disappointments. I have learned that the place of fascination contains several components I can influence and do not have to implement in order to see what is less successful: the scale of the work, the appearance of organised threads, how a freer improvisation with colour on a large scale reinforces what I want, and that the personal connection to the image does something with the result.

Maxim 2011–2019 is a highly personal image, and this is important. The subject is my dog Maxim, who died during the time I was weaving it. He was old, so I knew it would happen. For many years I thought I wanted to weave this image. The dog has meant a lot to me and to my family, and especially to my partner. In this way, it is a kind of tribute to them, my partner and our children. I especially remember when I first showed the children the finished weaving and laid it out on our lawn. They walked around it, jumped and sat on it – like they were getting to *be with* our dog again. It was touching. Maxim was important, and in a way this weaving can be seen as a way to deal with the grief.[164] This function is also found in the work *At the Shore of Amygdala* (2015), for which I wove three portraits based on a decision that I was not sure I wanted to go through.

WHEN MOTIF, MATERIAL OR TECHNIQUE IS SUPERIOR TO THE WEAVING'S "FEELING" IT DOES NOT WORK. IN "ONCE I WANTED TO BE THE GREATEST" I MISJUDGED A GOOD SCALE FOR THE WORK, SO THE MOTIF DISAPPEARED IN THE FLUFF. IT WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT. IT WAS FUN TO WEAVE, AND THE COLOR SCHEME WAS GOOD, BUT I WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THE MOTIF WAS NOT VISABLE IN THE HAIRY SIDE. *

WHEN I DO NOT MAKE AN EFFORT TO FIND THE RIGHT MATERIAL. "CHILD PICKING COTTON IN UZBEKISTAN" HAS A BLUE SHADE THAT IS VERY DISTINCTIVE. I WAS LAZY AND TOOK A BLUE YARN I HAD A LOT OF AT HOME, IT WAS WAY TOO THIN AND WOOL-STICKY. THEREFORE, I TOOK MANY THREADS IN EACH KNOT. THE RESULT IN THE BLUE PART BECAME TANGLED AND THICK IN THE FINISHED RYA AND I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THAT. *

WHEN I DO NOT TAKE CARE AS MY DUTY - SUCH AS IN MY UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION WITH M's WEAVE WHICH I LATER FELT A STRONG NEED TO REWEAVE MY OWN VERSION OF. *

WHEN I WANT TO BE LIKE OTHERS. CRITICIZING THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY IS NOT AN UNUSAL TOPIC IN TEXTILE ART PRACTICES. WHEN I WOVE "RANA PLAZA" I DID IT WITH GOOD INTENSIONS, AND I AM ALSO HAPPY THERE ARE NO CLOSE-UPS OF PEOPLE EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE BOTH TEXTILE WORKERS AND RESCUE WORKERS IN THE IMAGE. BUT WITH I.E. "GOOGLE WEAVING STOP-TIME" I EXCEEDED THAT BORDER OF NOT DEPICTING PEOPLE IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS BY WEAVING A BOY AT A SEWING MACHINE, A PICTURE TAKEN FROM A SEARCH ENGINE ON THE INTERNET. DURING THE SAME PERIOD, ENGROSSED IN IMAGES ONLINE, I ALSO WOVE AN IMAGE THAT WAS SPREAD ON SOCIAL MEDIA OF A CHILD WHO DIED IN THE SEA WHEN HE AND HIS FAMILY HAD TRIED TO CROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN. THIS WAS A BIG MISTAKE, AND MY PRACTICE HAS NO CONNECTION TO THE IMAGE EXCEPT POSSIBLY THAT IT IS A CHILD, BUT IT WAS WRONG TO CHOOSE THE IMAGE OF THIS PARTICULAR CHILD. *

IN THE TRANSITION BETWEEN INNER IMAGE (VISION) AND RESULT (RYA) SOMETHING CAN BE LOST. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HAVE AN IMBALANCE BETWEEN CONCEPT, SIZE AND MATERIAL. THE BAD WORKS DO NOTHING BUT FILL THE WORLD WITH ONE MORE THING. *

MY STYLE IS MY PERSONALITY - WHEN A WORK FEELS WRONG OR EMBARRASSING, SO IT IS. ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS IN MY WORK "DEAD MIGRANT BOY" WHERE I FELT THAT I MADE A MISTAKE IN CHOOSING AN IMAGE OF A DEAD CHILD, THE IMAGE WAS ALSO UNBEARABLE TO LOOK AT WHILE WEAVING, SO I DID NOT SPEND MUCH TIME ON DETAILS BUT RATHER TRIED TO FINISH THE WEAVE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. IT WAS A MISTAKE NOT TO HAVE A LARGER SCALE OF THIS WORK *

REPETITION AS LAZINESS AND WITHOUT RISK-TAKING IS PROBLEMATIC AND TIME-CONSUMING WITHOUT SATISFACTION. WHY WEAVE MANY VERSIONS IF NOT EVERY ONE IS GOOD? "GENERIC-MIDDLE-AGED MAN" PLACES HERE, FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT I DID NOT LIKE THE IMAGE. *

WHEN VANITY COMES FIRST, COWARDICE COMES NEXT AND I LOOSE MYSELF. IN THE WORK "A MAN" WHICH WAS INTENDED AS A GIFT FOR ONKAR KULAR TO THANK HIM FOR HIS SUPPORT DURING THE ISTANBUL DESIGN BIENNALE, WEAVING THE WORK BECAME A BIT STRENUOUS BECAUSE I WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THE INTIMACY HAND-WOVEN IMAGES CREATE. IT IS COMPLICATED TO BE COMFORTABLE AND MAKE SOMEONE ELSE HAPPY AND AT THE SAME TIME FEEL FREE FROM DEMANDS. *


THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HAVING INVESTED TIME AND CARE IN A WORK THAT THEN DOES NOT LIVE UP TO EXPECTATIONS, IT IS A DISAPPOINTMENT BEYOND THE PROFESSIONAL: IT IS PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL. I SHOULD SPEND MORE TIME ON SKETCHING, CHOOSING MATERIALS AND SCALE.
SPEND MORE TIME UNDERSTANDING IF THE MOTIF IS RIGHT FOR ME AT THIS MOMENT.
WEAVING OTHERS' WORK (REWEAVE) REDUCES THE FEELING OF FAILURE. IF I IN THE FUTURE WILL WORK WITH AN ASSISTANT, I MUST CHOOSE PARTS THAT I CAN OUTSOURCE AND SAVE THE PARTS THAT I MUST DO MYSELF.
THE SUBJECT/MOTIF OFTEN DISAPPEARS WHEN THE SCALE IS TOO SMALL. THE COMPOSITION OF THE MOTIFE MUST FIT THE FORMAT. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE IS A MINIMUM MEASURE OF WHAT I THINK IS ACCEPTABLE FOR A FACE.
IN THE BOREDOM BETWEEN WEAVING BREAKS, I OFTEN TAKE A MOTIF I PREVIOUSLY MADE. BUT THIS DOES NOT ALWAYS HAVE A FUNCTION, QUESTION THIS BEFORE I MOVE ON. DO I HAVE TO WEAVE ALL THE TIME?
MAYBE I SHOULD START MAKING MY OWN SKETCHES?
BE AWARE OF WHAT AND WHERE I AM IN MY OWN CREATIVE PROCESS, OBSERVE WHEN I LOOK AT OTHERS AND FORGET MYSELF. LOOK PAST CURRENT CONCEPTS AND TOPICS.
MATERIALS IN THE WORK ARE NOT JUST COLOR. MATERIAL STUDIES ARE USEFUL (ALBEIT BORING - IT CAN SAVE TIME).
IF I KNOW THE RECIPIENT OF THE WORK, I MUST FIND METHODS TO STAY WITHIN MYSELF. EMBARRASSMENT IS NOT A GOOD FEELING.

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Fig. 55. The children sitting on *Maxim*, 2020, in our garden the day I saw it finished for the first time (and found I had made a mistake on the top).

Fig. 56. The children seeing *Maxim* installed for the first time. Maxim passed away seven months before this picture was taken and they were happy to see him again.

The intimacy present in many of my works, which I discussed previously in regards to the work *A Man* is also present in the *Maxim* rya, but in completely different terms. It was not difficult to be with my dog, and he is dead, and I miss him. I also "owned" the dog, and there is a different dynamic in making an image of an animal than a living human. In *A Man* I wanted to work my way through details in the human face that felt closer, such as the mouth and nose and especially the eyes. It was not so at all in *Maxim*, where my focus instead was a fascination with the dog's many colours. But these two weavings are also on completely different scales: *A Man* is one of my smallest works, *Maxim* the largest.

The weaving of my dog looks soft, airy. It's something I sometimes miss in the smaller works that are more compact and where the rough wool yarn takes up too much space.

There are longer spaces between the knotted rya rows than I usually do – about 15 cm compared to about 1-2 cm. This gives the rya a different quality overall. It is not heavy or dense, and the threads fall in a softer way than the thicker style I usually use. The size of the work affects both details and the whole. If we look closely, we see that what a rya, or any weaving, really is, as Anni Albers argues, is an organisation of threads.[165] This is fascinating in itself: the revelation, or reminder, that there are in fact only organised threads over one solid surface – and then the scale, which demands a viewing distance.

Fig. 57. *Maxim* at Kuben, Falkenberg, 2020. Rya and linen on linen warp, 250 cm x 400 cm. Photo: IDNAMADI.

Fig. 58. *Maxim*, 2020. Detail showing the variety of colours.

Translucency adds another level to the image: as light comes through, it gets blurry. Usually, the hairy part covers the bottom part of the weave as well as the plain weave into which the knots are woven. In this work I learned that I liked how the lightness of a huge woven work seemed to allow me to see the complete construction, and the material did not get hidden inside a dense pile of yarn.

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The scale in this work is a scale for myself, a scale for my own body. Working this big gave me a feeling of freedom – freedom to dare, to trust that it would work, even though in the studio I did not have space to step back and see it properly until the exhibition installation (Fig. 59). When I wove it, the image was so magnified that I did not really see what I was doing. When I wove what is the nose, for example, which is around 50 cm wide, it was just a multitude of dark tones, with hints of purple and blue. The scale also affects the emotional connection. When the image is so magnified, the making act also becomes more intimate and closer.

Fig. 59. Weaving *Maxim 2011–2019* in my studio, showing that is it impossible to get a full view of the work while weaving.

Fig. 60. My way of keeping track of the work as it was woven in several panels.

Fig. 61. Usually I do not make any drawings before weaving, but with *Maxim* I did because the work was so large and I calculated it would take me about one year until I could see the work finished and I wanted to get an idea of the proportions.

Two-Sidedness Toned Down

In *Maxim*, the hairy side is the one I emphasise, while the smooth side is barely discernible. The fact that the warp has different colors has an effect, but it is mainly due to the technique of loose rya. The two-sidedness and the "back" of the textile are still there, but they are absorbed by the front. Two-sidedness is no longer at the fore, but is found through my body's experienced making and in my memory of previous works. I know it is there. Its significance has not disappeared even though the two-sidedness is not visually as prominent.

Professor of psychology and philosophy Shogo Tanaka:

> Embodied knowledge is a type of knowledge where the body knows how to act. A simple and general example is riding a bicycle. Most of us know how to ride a bicycle, and we are able to do it without any deliberation. There is no need to verbalize or represent in the mind all the procedures required. The knowledge seems to be imprinted in one's body. The knowing-subject here is the body itself, not the mind. Or more precisely, it is the mind-body.[166]

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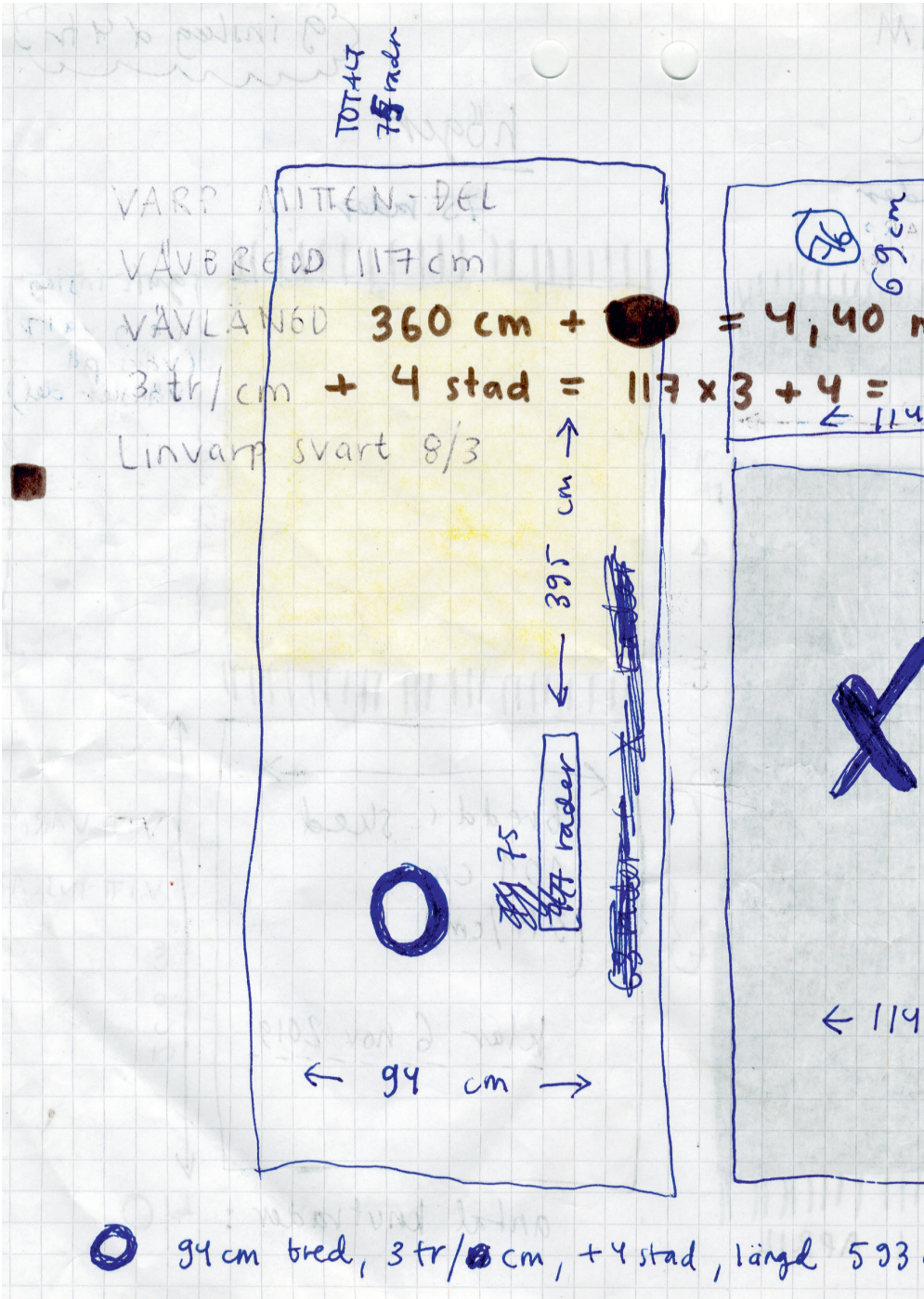
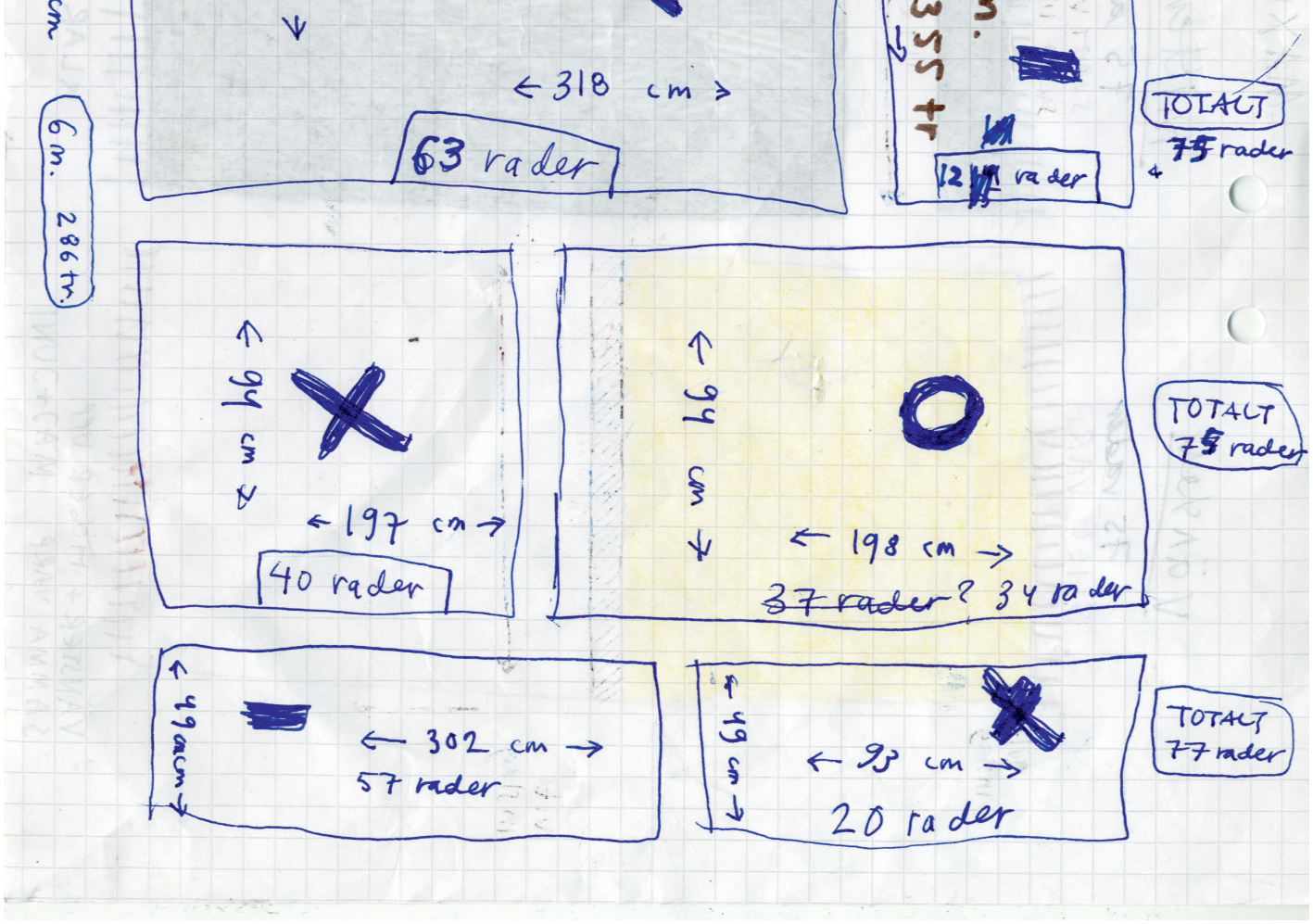

TOTALT 75 rader
VARP MITTEN-DEL
VÄVBREDD 117 cm
VÄVLÄNGD 360 cm +
= 4,40 m
3 tr/cm + 4 stad = 117 x 3 + 4 =
Linvarp svart 8/3
69 cm
395 cm
75 rader
94 cm
114
94 cm bred, 3 tr/ cm, +4 stad, längd 593


6 m. 286 cm.
← 318 cm →
63 rader
TOTALT
75 rader
12 rader
← 94 cm →
← 197 cm →
40 rader
← 94 cm →
← 198 cm →
37 rader? 34 rader
TOTALT
75 rader
← 49 cm →
← 302 cm →
57 rader
← 49 cm →
20 rader
TOTALT
77 rader

61

Embodied knowledge is characterized by the expert (the artist) who acts, makes judgments, without explicitly reflecting on any of the principles or rules involved. There may be reflection, but it occurs through my body. As an artist, I perform and use my skill, which I gained over time without too much focused attention. Embodied knowledge also represents a learned capability. The term embodied knowledge that Tanaka uses is derived from the phenomenology of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It focuses especially on the parts in which Merleau-Ponty discusses the *body schema* (*schéma corporel*) in *Phenomenology of Perception*.[167] Tanaka writes about body schema as something that "extends our bodily feelings and body awareness beyond the skin. It is through tools we often experience this kind of extension."[168]

In this sense I believe that the *Maxim* rya was amplified for me through the personal and emotional connection I had not only to the image but also to the whole story around it – being with a live, and later dead, creature – via my hands, materials and the loom. This dog had been with me and us through much of my career as a weaver. He came into our life before the children did. He came along on residencies both in Sweden and in New York. He belonged. Maxim's fur was even practically and materially part of an earlier work: in *At the Shore of Amygdala*, the work I made while on a long-term residency at Textile Arts Center in New York, I swept up the hair he shed (in deference to the other artists in a shared studio space) and felted it onto the outer edges of these three textiles. It was also a comment on the rya rug as a "dust-collector" – the main reason it was thrown out of Swedish homes after its peak in 1950s–70s.[169]

Being in the weaving is a fixed and predetermined labour, which gives me the contradictory feeling of escaping time. Being busy with something frees me from the responsibility of looking for something to do. Here I can state that the scale is related to time in a clear way, not only because a large work takes a long time to make, but also because the notion and the knowledge that it will take a long time also affects the body and reduces the idea that I will soon have to figure out what to make next.

To avoid other things is also partly to avoid the body. Physically, hand weaving is stationary – I am where the loom is. I stand in a special place, and even though I move a little, I am centred in this place. This site-specific part of hand weaving contributes so much to the contradiction that I can positively escape the body, like what I described as escaping time. I know where I am, and I know what I'm doing. This can be partly under-

stood from Tanaka's description of the body schema of how the physical body is extended and the bodily emotions are experienced through tools such as a shuttle and loom or materials such as yarn and thread – as though the body were somewhere else. However, this is only true until the point when some part of the body begins to become uncomfortable or to hurt. Then the body suddenly gets a total presence again, and a small struggle takes place regarding how much longer I can weave.

Maybe weaving is also a way to avoid thinking, avoid mourning and missing someone. When Hannah Ryggen's husband, Hans, died, she "worked constantly, perhaps to evade the full weight of her sorrow and loneliness".[170] Because regardless of the strength or the size of the grief, there is always something liberating about staying busy, avoiding other things, finding security in a repetitive handmade process.

Part of the wonder experience in the work *Maxim 2011–2019* belongs to the fact that there is not really any image on the back (the smooth side), in contrast to my thinking on previous works, when the back was the key.

Fig. 62. The back of *Maxim*, 2020.

As I have noted earlier, this two-sidedness is something I have always highlighted and appreciated myself, as when the baby faces in *Serial Babies* look sad and tired on one side and then happy and alert on the other. I did not realize that *Maxim* did not really have a backside when I wove the work. The scale made it impossible to see the full piece while weaving, when only the 30 cm of materials between the beater and the heddles were visible. The first time I saw the completed and stitched-together work was when it was installed for public exhibition. I was not disappointed, as I might have expected, but rather surprised and pleased. There was something nice about the image that was so clear on the hairy side and almost vanished on the back. It did not reveal itself, because all the information was in the hairy rya, in the image. In my original PhD proposal, I asked, "Where does the woven image begin?" I did not really know what I was wondering at the time, but here, with the back absent, it became clear to me that this was closer to my interest, and that the importance of the two-sidedness lies in the making process rather than in the final result.

Historically, as long as the simple rya (*slitrya*) has been used as a blanket, the hairiness (nockorna) was turned downwards, towards the body.[171] In photographs we usually see a rya depicted with the hairy side, so it is

interesting that historian Vivi Sylwan states, as discussed in Part 1, that the smooth side is the right side.[172] This has to do with how it was used. It was a blanket that lay on a bed with the hairy side down (invisible to the viewer), and the "back" lay up all day on the bed and was therefore the visible pattern.

The dialogue with the historical rya is important to me for several reasons. One is that I want the connection to the blanket. A rya that originates as a blanket stands for security. But I myself have always had sleep problems – always been afraid to sleep, often worried I might stop breathing in my sleep. I was a night person for many years, although I really do not like being up late at night. I like to lie in my bed, and do not like to travel or sleep in strange places and unknown beds. I need all the aids to sleep peacefully: heat, sleeping pills, quiet surroundings and dark curtains.

Historian Glenn Adamson writes:

> When craft was invented, it was defined as inferior, passive, and limited. Yet it was also understood to be deeply necessary, and not just in a practical sense. Like the involuntary memories of a dimly remembered childhood that trouble Marcel in *Remembrance of Things Past*, craft simultaneously gives shape to our desire for continuity and reminds us of the actual, tragic discontinuity of our experience.[173]

I also feel this desire for continuity. To follow a history is to follow a history that I imagine from my current position, here and now in the spring of 2022. My weavings, like this thesis, are time documents. Weaving a *historical blanket* that has the pictorial motif of a portrait of my dead dog links me to a desire to be in something familiar, something ordinary and everyday. A fantasy about something timeless and a romantic idea about the past. At the same time, I use the weaving in another way: as a work of art exhibited in institutions, open to the public, far away from the purpose of warming the one who sleeps (or cannot sleep).

Due to the construction of a loose rya in the *Maxim* piece, it also has a somewhat strange communication with historical ryas due to its un-patterned back. I think it could have been used as a blanket for a bed (a very large bed!), since these often included minor flaws: "It is not uncommon for the yarn to run out in the middle of the process, and they continued with yarns of a different colour",[174] according to the catalogue from Helsinki Art Gallery's exhibition *Four Centuries of Finnish Rya*.

That is also part of my artistic method: when a yarn ends, I switch to a different colour. But I have developed a style where I use the last maybe ten threads to make a transition that I mix up with the new colour I will use. In this way, I avoid abrupt colour changes that can potentially affect the image, which I don't have time to fix or desire to risk. A visual flaw can be quite disturbing. If I point it out, people do not usually see it or understand what I mean; but to me as the maker it is a sign of sloppiness, and it bothers me.

The problem with a two-sided textile is that there is nowhere to hide your mistakes. To hide mistakes, I would have to show it against a wall. There is a loose textile hanging at the top of this work, it is my way of hiding a mistake in the textile. *Maxim* is woven in several panels that I have sewn together; I kept the motif in order by counting the rows of knots. But since I am a rather careless person, I forget, for example, to write down how many rows I have woven in a single-coloured field at the bottom of the textile before the pattern itself begins. This makes the whole panel longer than I have noted. Another reason for the skew may be that I have woven with uneven density, tightly or loosely, often as a result of irritation or fatigue. If I'm angry, I hit harder; if I'm tired, I cannot beat so hard. In general, I have been weaving so much over so many years that I keep an even stroke, but there are always exceptions, especially in a large format. Weaving something for one year means that I have been in many different emotional states during the weaving process.

In *Maxim*, the smooth side is obviously not the image. But what fascinates me is that I know the image is there. The two-sidedness is only toned down in the visual back of the viewer. For me as a weaver, there is no difference. The technique is the same, the knots that are folded behind the warp threads (the practical part of the two-sidedness) give the same experience as in any rya. For the visual back, the subject is not as visible, but it is there. The benefit of a loose rya is still that one can finish a large weaving faster without the motif suffering too much distortion.

Material Awareness

Weaver Hannah Ryggen writes, "The secret to the art of weaving lies not in the weaving technique, but in giving the tapestry life."[175] For many years, material meant just colour for me. I can see that I mixed different qualities, but there were no directly conscious choices. Instinctively, I chose

what fit in the image just for the moment and limited myself to what was easily available in large quantities. Colour and material for me are the knot that is tied down and forms a surface of colour and material.

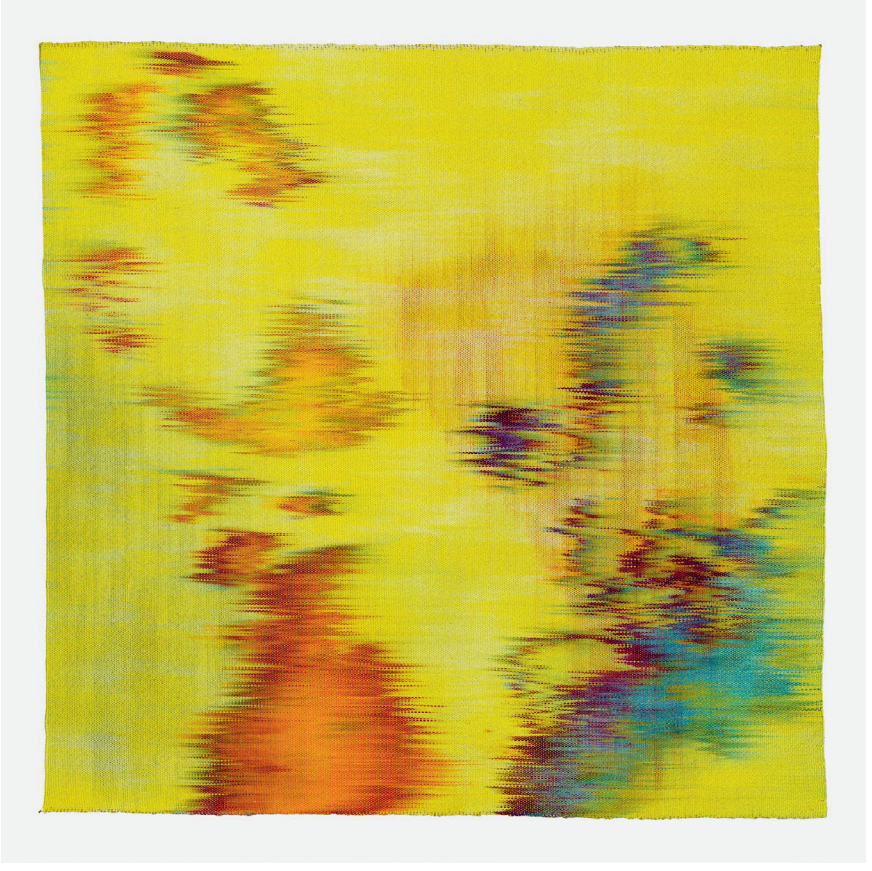
As discussed in Part 1, for me the knots are equated with the pixels in the images I start from. A greenish pixel on the paper under the warp, which meets two warp threads, means that greenish thread is tied in there. One pixel is unimportant. It is the sum of pixels that creates the image. This applies to digital images as well as woven ones. Can I say that the smooth surface of my weaving, the surface that is often identified as the back, is a pixelated surface? The pixelated surface is a thing for me, and this is where the translation makes itself visible. It has a different tempo than the hairy surface, where the action is. To talk about a pixelated surface is also to write in a contemporary context. American Craft Historian Glenn Adamson wrote in an Instagram post:

> One of the discoveries (for me) in co-curating OBJECTS USA 2020 was the work of Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson. Originally from Iceland (which she often evokes in her epic landscape compositions), she creates her weavings from pre-dyed threads, a technique akin to traditional double-ikat. This produces a slight blur, evoking a digital filter but entirely handmade.[176]

Fig. 63. Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson, *Based on a Photo, Small #1*, 2016. Painted woven work, 61 x 61 cm. Photographer: Tim Safranek. Reproduced with permission of the artist.

The fact that technique makes the image blurry in a way that resembles a digital filter is a parable that works well in our time, especially through Adamson's last comment ("but entirely handmade"). Viewers of the work read in information and knowledge based on the image technology many of us surround ourselves with daily. We read images through digital filters. It also indicates some ignorance in textile making, for textile technology existed long before the digital. It can be the digital filters that are reminiscent of textiles.[177]

Handmade can also mean *time consuming* compared to a digital filter, which is implemented in a second or two on any given digital image. Weaving is a surface-building activity[178] – it builds the pixelated surface, but also the structure of the entire cloth, not only the surface.



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Swedish artist Per Fhager explains that he needs to have an emotional connection to the images of scenes in the old video games he embroiders[179] in order to cope with the work. He said he played the games earlier in his life, and he re-plays the ones he stitches. For my part, I have not really thought this way before; I have thought that it was just weaving any image that was important, because it was the rya knots themselves that were most important to me. That was not true. My *Maxim* weaving came with a strong emotional connection, and in spite of the scope of the big work, I cannot remember getting tired of it at any time as has happened with other weavings.

The large, shaggy dog's head, with its hairy rya knots, probably reinforced my feelings for the work. It was not entirely unlike petting the dog when he was still alive.

For this weaving, I had access to different materials than for most of my other works. Whereas I usually choose quality and colour based on available ranges in factory seconds and yarn outlets, in this case I used much finer quality. Through a grant from the Danish textile company Kvadrat, I received a large amount of soft Norwegian wool with high gloss, and I used it in *Maxim*. I also had a batch of yellow Persian wool yarn with a very high gloss that I had bought in a second-hand store. A hand-spun linen, almost a hundred years old according to the giver, was also part of the material mix. Like many linen threads left over from finished works, this was mixed with the "drier" and harder wool yarn from Kasthall[180] that I usually use. The linen gives straight, sturdy threads that hang straight down without tangling into each other. It makes the hands less sore – it does not quarrel with the weaver like wool. And for some reason it works much better for *crying tears* than wool. What I am less happy with in the linen threads is the look on the smooth side: they do not expand to fill out like a soft and fluffy pixel in wool, but have a different angularity. They do not fill the space between the warp threads and the in-between weaving. It gets a bit airy here – something I like for the hairy side but not the smooth.

Fig. 64. Materials I got from Kvadrat, 2019.

Fig. 65. Weaving *Maxim* in my studio, 2019.

The contact with these materials in the process thus came with many new qualities and experiences. I think that also played a role in the emotional

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bond to the image during the process. My dog Maxim got better and finer materials. He got a different consideration than when I usually plough my way through the weaving with whatever materials I have at hand in the right colour. The material is an extension of the hands, a safe point between an unstable self and what is to become a physical, material object. With materials also come pre-existing colours. I do not take the time to do my own dying anymore, but collect as many shades as I can from various stores and brands and mix threads of different colours as I weave.

As part of the magnification of the digital pixels in this specific work, colours that were not visible to the eyes in a smaller version appeared. It is a technical aspect I cannot explain. But through the magnification, for example, a purple dot ends up in what is perceived as brown, or a pink one in what is perceived as black. This practical step of adding more unexpected colours in seemingly monochromatic fields influences the weaving process in a positive direction.

But if it seems wrong of me to talk about a *pixelated surface,* I can at least be sure that there is a hairy surface. And more than that: there are textile, tactile surfaces.

The hairy surface is associated with touch, with tactility.

Studio-note

The materials I use help me go on with my imagined conversation – conversations about the history of women's work and all kinds of stuff related to what happens inside a household – sleeping on a soft bed or picking up yesterday's hair from the shower drain. Images in fluffy resolution.

Seriality and notions of memory as a marker of biography are present together throughout my practice. Hanging threads can be compared with hairs. They are of course also hairs, and as British artist and researcher Heather Hannah writes, "Hair's characteristics, functions and associated meanings can also suggest somatic connections as it evokes nature and the organic."[181] A hairy surface in a figurative image (of a face, for example) can increase a bodily connection. Touching this surface offers non-verbal data:[182] the surface contains knowledge, as it does something with us to see and touch simultaneously. The hairy surface is part of the rya's entire construction. Weaving a rya implies making a hairy surface that is simultaneously part of other surfaces.

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I like to use long threads of different lengths in my knots, some absurdly long, sometimes several meters. The variation is important: short and long. They are mostly long in the lower half of the weave and shorter in the upper part. Otherwise, it will be heavy in the wrong place. The image should seem to be falling down, being pulled by gravity, so this has become my logic. The contours become less sharp with long threads, more like a wet painting. And then there are the eyes: they always have long threads surrounded by short ones. These are not any exact images I strive for, but vague, fluid.

I notice that I have a hard time talking about *material* here. My thoughts spread in all directions. Is it true that I have become more aware of materials? Pixels, time spent with weavings, the quality of the thread, long threads, hanging threads... everything seems to flow together. There is some kind of quality in material, this enormous subject field, that is reminiscent of bodily work: it is not possible to define what is good for what and when. In *Google Weaving Stop-time*, in the finished installation, I thought the amount and the variety of different kinds of material was overwhelming. I did not succeed in bringing it all together into a whole. Many had woven in wool, but not all. But wool is not an individual material; there is an infinite variety. The basic premise that it was woven and made of textile was not enough. I get a little thoughtful about how I may have avoided the subject of material all these years. I see my limitation, that I have bought yarn from my geographical area in the first place, and for me that yarn happens to be wool. The materials have gone under the radar a bit, been completely intuitive, without reflection. I have never tested a material before I have started with a new work. I cannot say that I did it in *Maxim* either. But because the surfaces are so large, I cannot help but see what it does for the whole.

Fig. 66. A drawing of how I think of threads being pulled down by gravity in a balanced way. I emphasise eyes and mouth often, but it can also be the shoulders in a portrait like this, 2020.

On Seeing Time In A Weaving

One myth about hand-woven textiles is that the viewer can see how much time has been spent on the work. How can it be seen? Is it in the number of knots or rows in a rya? Or is it in the level of detail in the figurative motif or the structure? Is there an overall feeling that the work has *quality*? Is it simply because it is *handmade*?

As a weaver, I am sometimes also a viewer, and see other peoples' work at exhibitions or in teaching situations. Other spectators who see my work may also be weavers, or artists who work in a different material, and sometimes the viewer completely lacks prior knowledge of textiles. Of course, there are many variations here, and it would be foolish to try to make this list of types of viewers complete, but I will focus on a few perspectives.

In the autumn of 2020, I had a conversation with Finnish researcher, designer and visual artist Hanna-Kaisa Korolainen,[183] who works with various materials and techniques such as tufted objects, jacquard weaving and ceramics and glass. I had written a post on Instagram about how everyone always asks, "How long does it take to make a rug?" and she had replied in a comment, "It happens all the time!" Korolainen made many good points about the discussion. "A rug is one time in space", she said, which is similar to my assertion that hand weaving is an experience of many "nows", and she said that she did not like the term "slow" at all. She said, "With textiles I can fail. In ceramics some works are more demanding, and I cannot leave them for 12–18 hours without them being affected or destroyed, but textile works I can leave."

But even though Korolainen thinks, as I do, that the question of how long things take is annoying, we must both admit that we also raise this question when confronted with other people's work. Recently my friend Sharon was visiting my home, and she looked at some of my works. She has no experience of weaving, and she herself is a pastry chef. When I asked her why she wanted to know how long it would take to finish, she simply said, "I just want to know." Hanna Kaisa Korolainen and I are spectators with our own experience of weaving; Sharon is not. We all wonder because time is an important part of our understanding of what we encounter. But at the same time, time is not important at all, because we really want to talk about something else. A work will not automatically be good because it takes a long time.

I remember the first time I saw Gun Nordstrand's weaving depicting the Gothenburg riots (Fig. 67). It was a bustling motif, colourful and expressive as a weaving, but what caught my attention was that she had written text with a black marker on the finished weaving, and reinforced certain contours and parts of the faces. Then my thought was that she did it to save time, because weaving letters is difficult, especially if the scale of the piece is not huge. I wonder about several things: perhaps she was a "child of her time", in tune with political movements that expressed themselves

through questioning norms. Perhaps it was appropriate then, as an act of rebellion, to write directly on top of the precious handmade object. Or perhaps there were also technical difficulties. Or did she think it was boring to spend a long time on letters? I would have thought so.

Fig. 67. Gun Nordstrand, *Skotten i Göteborg,* 2002. Tapestry, detail. Courtesy of anonymous private collection.

But why do we sometimes say that? Can it be seen to have taken a long time? On the one hand, I think it is meant as a confirmation, a valuation, a compliment. This is something of an expected comment. Because when in crafts do we hear the opposite: "That must have gone very fast!"? It is not so nice to be fast; fast is sloppy.

Cilla Robach quoted her grandmother as saying that no one sees how long time it took, only how well done it looks.[184]

The term *sloppy* craft was coined in 2007 by Art Institute of Chicago artist and educator Anne Wilson. The term was her response to the purposeful, rather messy technique used by her student Josh Fought in his politically motivated textile works.[185] The term was later popularized by curator and writer Glenn Adamson in *Crafts* magazine.[186] The term Sloppy Craft gained traction with some practitioners, who quickly and carelessly lent it status. The quality was not measured in technical quality – that was not the goal, because high-quality craftsmanship stands for more traditional values.

Am I sloppy enough? I asked myself early in this project.

This topic came to mind when looking at a sizable fiber art exhibition in Oslo in 2017, *Ode til en vaskeklut, hymne for en tiger*, in which weaving artists (my definition) Aurora Passero and Ann Cathrin November Høibo showed works. It struck me that both artists' work, long familiar to me, showed a development towards a *sloppier*, more accidental execution than what I had previously seen.

Passero and November Høibo, both women living and working in Norway and educated in fiber art at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (among other institutions), both born in the 1980s, have international resumes and make a living from their art. Both have been on my weaving art map ever since my undergraduate exchange year at the Oslo Academy in 2009.

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Both artists make non-figurative works: Passero's works are usually thin, draped pieces with grading areas of colours from hand dyes. They are woven in nylon. Her hanging installations have qualities of paintings (here I follow a tired and typical track of elevating painting above woven textile). In this exhibition she was represented with work loosely woven in un-dyed polyester. Norwegian artist Ann Cathrin November Høibo makes proper but quite loosely woven tapestries presented with the warp ends lightly knotted, mainly in a white or beige base with different colour fields. She leaves the hanging warp threads at the bottom in *inappropriately sloppy* bundled loose knots. At this exhibition, she showed a solid yellow textile that was hardly woven at all, almost only a warp with a few wefts that made it possible to define it as a grid (Fig. 68).

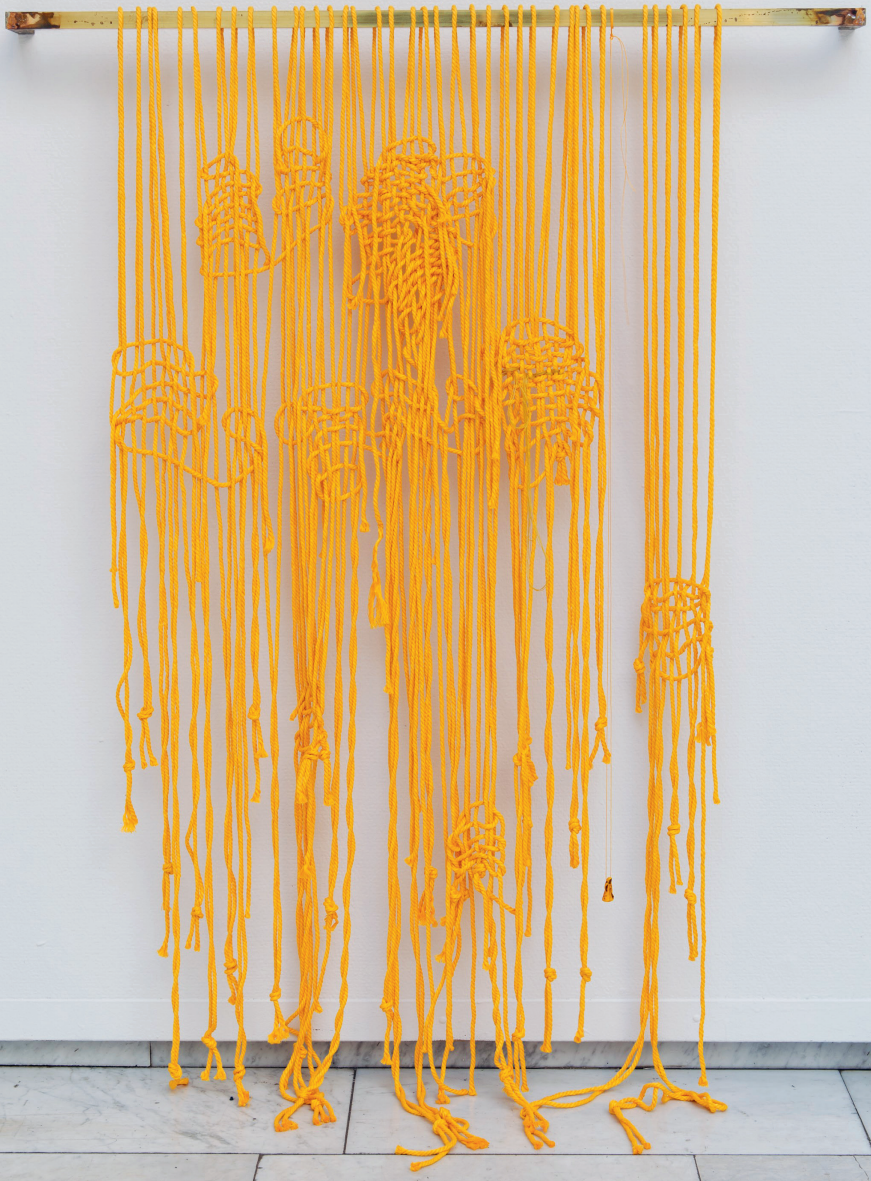
Fig. 68. Ann Cathrin November Høibo, *Sønn*, 2017. Cotton and wool weave on brass hanger, 150.0 x 100.0 x 8.0 cm. Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo.

The need to be highly skilful in using materials may have excluded some artists from expressing several ideas in craft materials, but other ideas, usually framed as social critiques, can be effectively expressed in these same materials using less skilful manipulation of materials and tools. At the same time, the handmade object – usually functional, made through the virtuosic manipulation of materials and tools – is often subject to exclusion from art institutions on the questionable assumption that more skill implies less intellectual content.[187]

Is Passero and Høibo November's sloppiness the key that admits woven textiles into the fine art scene? My own works, I think, are somewhat sloppily executed, in that I do not think they will survive forever. But in style: not sloppy. I wish I could do sloppier, but I do not know how.

Feminist artist and craft scholar Janis Jefferies has noted the risk inherent in working with craft materials for (women) artists based on the historical relationship between textiles and feminine stereotypes related to domesticity and obedience. As Jefferies reminds us, for a woman artist to "return", as it were, to a prescribed traditional role in the minor arts (the decorative, craft and domestic arts), which was generally less conducive to fame and financial gain than a career in painting or sculpture, can be seen as a step backwards from a feminist point of view.[188]

One familiar textile cliché is that the back of the textile is more interesting than the front. *Back* refers to the space where threads are tangled and tied



and knotted, opposite of *nice and neat*. This cliché originates from the fact that woven art is not far enough from what our grandmothers did for her children to have a decent life (like making blankets). We want the intimacy connection of the textile history, yet we are so caught up in it that we can't stand the closeness and seek independence. This could mean that a sloppy aesthetic is progress for a female artist weaver, a step away from the burden of history and a way to avoid expected behaviour. As a maker I fear doing a bad job. It would be a living nightmare if an artwork were to collapse or get unintentionally sloppy during a show.

For textile artists and weavers wishing not to be compared with crafters in sloyd, a sloppy aesthetic can be functional, at least as a feminist strategy. Another aspect to take into consideration is time – the value of time. Weaving by hand, like other crafts, demands time. Isn't sloppy just as time-consuming? Doesn't it takes as much time to weave a tangled web as any of my works? I base that preconception on the fact that when I weave is very predetermined because I follow a pattern – the small decisions I make are just in the choice of colour, which takes perhaps a few seconds. But I imagine that improvisational weaving or tying would be more time-consuming, taking time to choose colours and make decisions about the composition as it develops.

Glenn Adamson notes that, "The lack of evident skill somehow implies the presence of concept."[189] There is a limit to how skilful we can be in our practice. My own works would have nothing to gain from technical sloppiness. If I didn't make the rya piles properly, they would just fall out.

The body and the rya knots sink into the past while weaving, and it is never perceived as a movement in time but as a dip in the present. The time in the weaving belongs to the body. In the weaving process, it is the body that performs different steps at different speeds.

French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes:

> The past does not drive the present into being, nor does the present drive the future into being; the future is not prepared behind the observer, it is planned out in front of him, like the storm on the horizon.[190]

I derive my relationship to weaving, and the time it takes to perform, from my body. I have a feeling of what is coming in the weaving but not an exact

plan. The body has its limitations, the hands have their limitations, and I weave and tie at the highest speed I can without losing focus. If I lose focus, the activity gets worse and is perceived as slow and frustrating – which probably leads to me taking a break from my loom.

> Past and future voluntarily withdraw from being and pass over to the side of subjectivity, to seek there not some real support, but rather a possibility of non-being that harmonizes with their nature. If the objective world is detached from the finite perspectives that open onto it, and if it is posited in itself, then all that can be found throughout it are "nows". Moreover, these nows, not being present to anyone, have no temporal character and could not succeed one another. The definition of time, which is implicit in the comparison made by common sense, and which could be formulated as "a succession of nows," does not merely commit the error of treating the past and the future as presents, it is in fact inconsistent, since it destroys the very notion of the "now" and the very notion of succession.[191]

The body does not weave slowly, but rather, as furniture designer Andreas Nobel writes in his 2014 dissertation, "many crafts seem to be performed at a high pace and by certain movements and gestures, and the generated kinetic energy in each step of the process generates energy for the next."[192] I recognize it from my weaving, especially in moments where I begin to think, "I am tired" or "I'm starting to get pain in my hands". This is probably, on closer inspection, both what I instinctively think and a feeling that I have lost focus and rhythm, which makes the weaving slower, and the motivation drops.

And with lost motivation may come mistakes. Earlier Per Fhager, the embroiderer, said how much he did not want to waste time correcting mistakes.[193]

If the weaving is described as an activity that goes slowly, it probably testifies to an attitude towards the making held by the practitioner (or the outsider who describes the weaving) – a subjective description that reveals how they want the practice to be viewed by themselves or by others. Because from within the practice, the process like it could more accurately be described as a sequence of "several nows" rather than as slow. Several nows can take place over a longer period of time or, as Ekdahl observed in

a chat about time in weaving between the two of us on Instagram: "not a long time, but ordinary time, which sometimes lasts a long time".[194]

Through the metaphor of time as something that passes or flows by (like water), Merleau-Ponty explains that "Time presupposes a view upon time. Thus, time is not like a stream; time is not a fluid substance."[195]

As a weaver, my time-defining events are experienced through my body: I weave. For me, it has always been a mystery how a finished textile can be described by the fact that it was woven slowly and by the assertion that that the slowness is preserved in the final form of the finished object.

To see time in the weaving is to overcomplicate our thinking.

British sociologist and academic Barbara Adam, an authority in the field of time studies and reflexive social theory, writes:

> It is not within our gift, however, to reverse processes. The arrow of time reigns supreme. Humans may slow down the process of decay and ageing, fix the transient world in concepts and theories, art and artefacts, but they cannot undo their actions. Reversibility has eluded them: ageing and entropy are facts of life and material existence.[196]

That there is time in weaving is not something I question. I cannot unweave my works. They have been made over time. What I do not agree with is that we can see time, as in the expression "We can see that she has spent time on that". We can only see that over time I have put time, effort, knowledge into my work – time I have not put into anything else meanwhile. I do not want to say that I have spent time on it, because everything takes time (scrolling on my phone is also something I spend time on); I would rather say that I have a specific knowledge used in time.

How Can Hidden Knowledge Be Discovered?

My example goes via *Maxim*, which for practical reasons became a loose rya in technique, which did not directly worry me because the scale was so large. It was a balance between clarity, size and speed. But what I did not know was that I would like the texture and the feeling more because it became light. I passed this on to new works but now I did not know if the smaller scale would work with a motif in loose rya.

There is no conserved time in a weaving. *Maxim* has something in common the weavings of my own children, which I will describe below, that is a marker for my artistic development. These are important works for me: they have the artistic quality I strive for. The time they took to make is not relevant, because they are not representations outside my own life – they belong in the close circle, they develop in themselves during the weaving process, the dog died but instead grows in memory. The subjects in the weavings are involved in both the practical construction through materials and in different ways during the weaving process, and they all have their own growth that takes place in parallel. The children have now grown bigger than the ryas depicting them. The textile of *Maxim* is huge, as it needed to be – it needed a hugeness to fill up the emptiness. The advantage of loose rya as a slightly faster technique keeps pace with life with children.

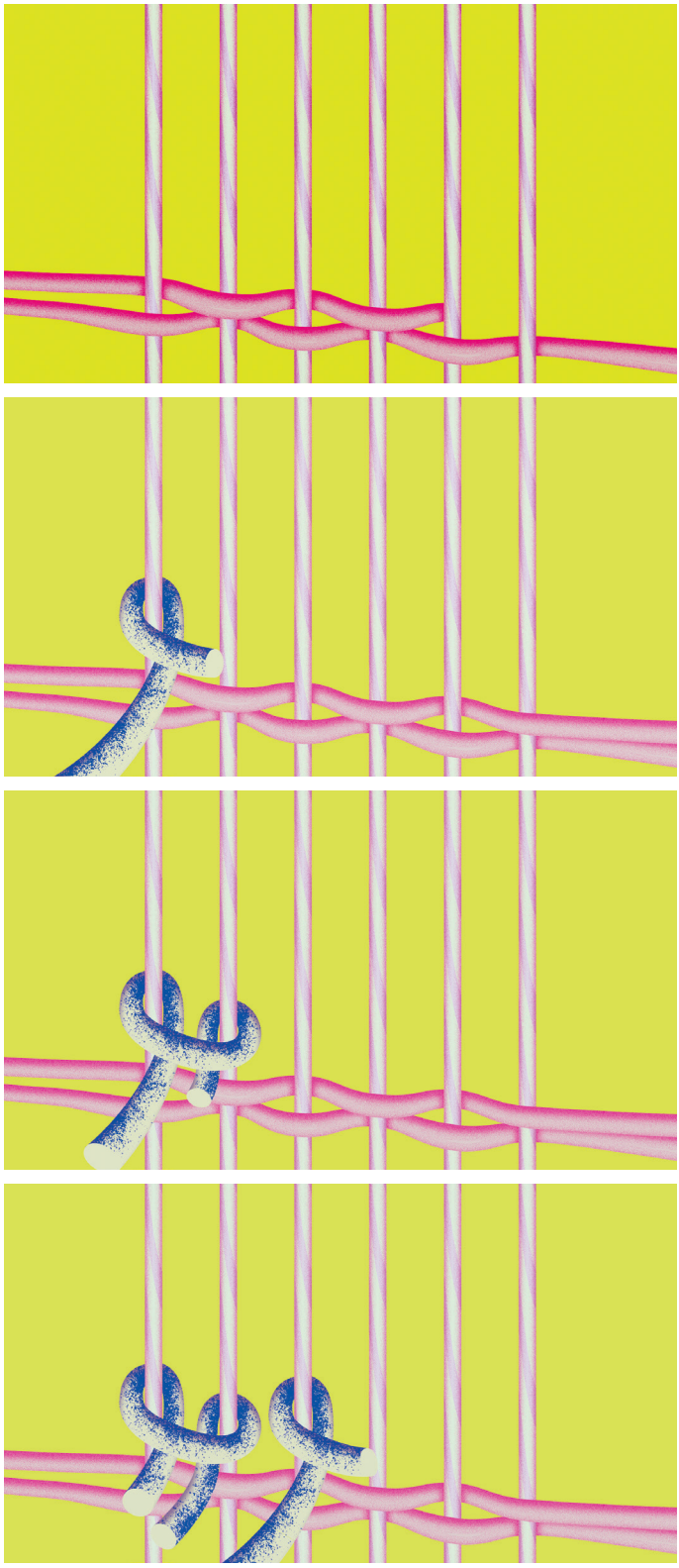
Animation *No Hands* (2020)

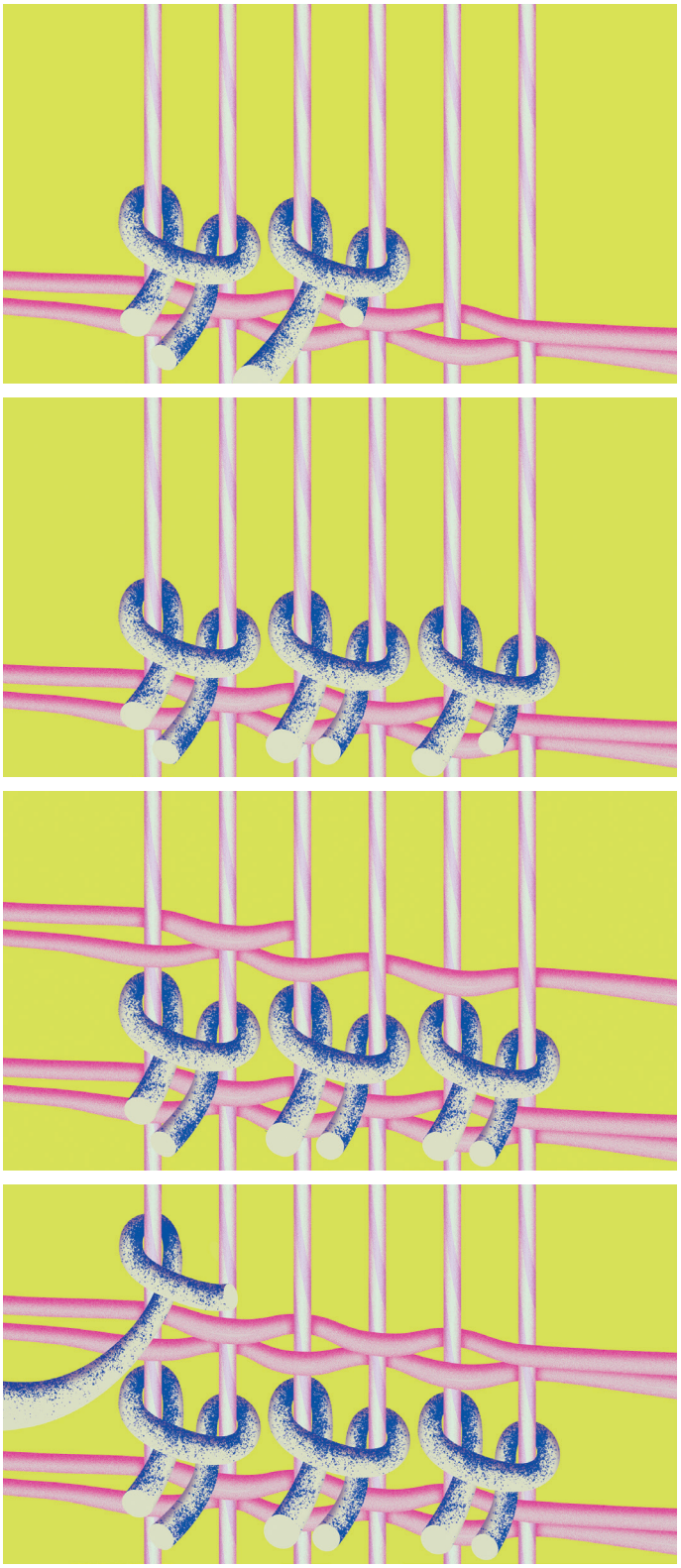
Fig. 69. *No Hands*, 2020. Still images from an animation film made together with Siri Hagerfors for my exhibition at Rian Design Museum (2020). The images show the way rya knots are tied into the warp in sequence without any hands being visable. For further interests it is available to watch on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP3hda6Q7b8

***Dino 5 Years, Bernhard 2,5 Years* (2021)**

"Are you going to pin me under the warp?"[197]

In 2021, I started to weave a series of four works depicting my own children, two for each of them. I wanted to do this because I had seen in *Maxim 2011–2019* how much more satisfaction I got from the weaving if I had a personal connection to the image. I felt less frustrated if I enjoyed spending time with such an image. I took photographs of my children and printed them life-sized on paper. I decided on a neutral solid colour background (black) to highlight the contours of a body in full figure. They had to choose their clothes themselves, but I spent a lot of time finding yarn that matched the clothes they had chosen. The scale of the weaving I chose is about their own size, so when the rya was ready and assembled it would be about the same height as the children themselves at the time of the weaving.





It is fascinating to see how the children also have a bodily experience of the weaving. I wove these two pieces, *Dino 5 Years* and *Bernhard 2.5 Years*, inside our house, and every evening they were involved in the weaving and saw how it grew. Their enthusiasm sometimes overshadowed my work. I thought about how difficult it must be to weave for someone else – that is, on commission, a bit like in M's situation in relation to me (though there is a difference in these relationships: my own children are small children and M a young adult man). I thought about how difficult it is when someone else is supposed to be satisfied and pleased with the result.

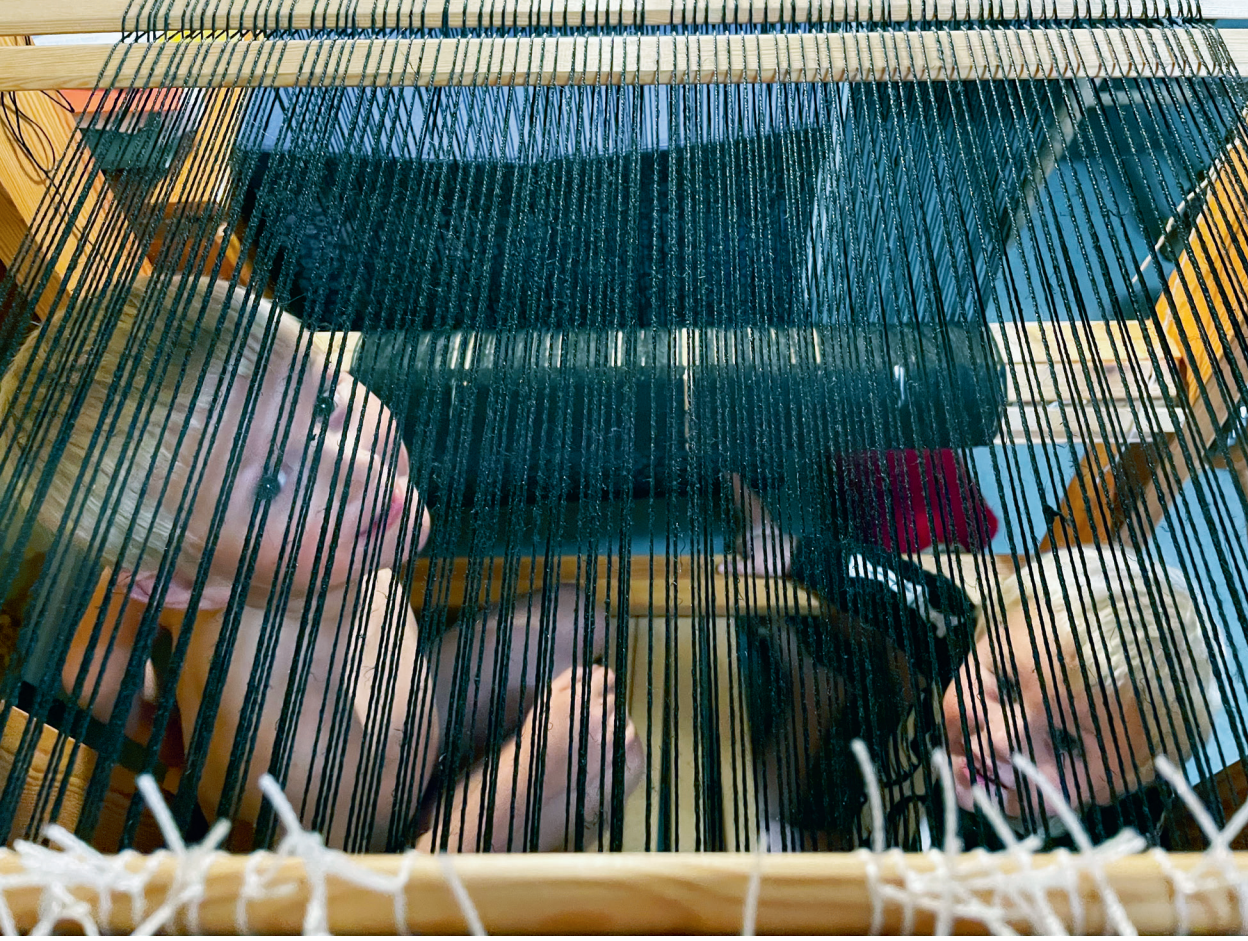
Fig. 70. Dino and Bernhard playing under my loom as I weave the work depicting one of them, 2021. Reproduced with permission of the children.

Fig. 71. Detail of the work *Bernhard 2.5 Years*, 2021.

Like in *Maxim*, I wove more sparsely, this time not because it was big work that I wanted to finish before a certain time, but because I had learned that the weave does not need to be so dense. With *Dino* I wove the face more tightly in one part of the weaving, but the rest of the body is woven loosely. I put a lot of focus on the material and the length of the material – on what I wanted to emphasise. The arms and hands would be long, as well as parts of the face. I wanted to access a *zombie* effect, or something like the creepy main character in the horror movie *The Ring*. With a black background, I succeeded. For the first time, I was actually not surprised by the technical result. I had followed an idea and executed it, and it went as planned. But the appearance of the woven image surprised me, as always. This way of working was repeated in the rya *Bernhard 2.5 Years* and the two weavings that followed so I could make them into a little group.

More than anything, the place of wonder is the most important thing, and a physical place created by fibre materials that build up the structure. The discovery that I did not have to weave my rya so densely has meant the opposite of what I assumed: although the smooth side of the textile becomes more abstract, the two-sidedness is emphasised more, the hairy side of the rya falls more clearly and the materials are emphasised. In my work I see this as the woven image that cries more when made in this way.

Despite my educational background in traditional weaving at a Swedish community college, I had what I want to call a material ignorance – not total ignorance, but rather a reluctance to look at materials as part of knowledge in hand weaving. I was rather limited in my decisions about choosing materials and was conservative about what I would weave with.



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I did not question the knowledge I had gained from my preparatory education in weaving at a community college and from weaving books. These followed the traditional descriptions: linen is traditionally used in warp, the wefts are of wool and the rya knots are usually made of wool, though other materials can be used.[198] It was something I accepted and did not question.

Coming back to the material awareness, the reason I did not think about this any more was partly a lack of knowledge (and interest) in the material. My interest was in image creation, and I related to the material only as a colour. The material used to build the image always came in second place, if that. I thought the image content came first; I saw material as "colour". I wove for many years with any cheap yarn I could find to save time. But why? What is a textile without its material?[199] This strategy was successful in some cases, a failure in others. It was always a gamble: I had no control. In retrospect this may seem silly, perhaps even a waste of time. This train of thought might appear ironic to craft artisans for whom the choice of material may be the first and most valued decision made, and craft is organised and spoken about through materials first – textiles, ceramics etc. – and only thereafter in terms of technique – woven, stitched. With *Dino 5 Years* and *Bernhard 2.5 Years*, I incorporated what I had learned in *Maxim 2011–2019*: how different yarn qualities affect the image created, how the material behaves in motion, how material creates the tears of crying pixels I am looking for. In connection with these experiments, I have acquired knowledge over time about materials that I have not previously seen that I had. This is a combination of learning to be present in the weaving (no longer letting my thoughts wander away when I weave and instead paying attention to what I'm doing and how) together with a developed reflective ability through writing and drawing that has made it possible for me to be present.

Fig. 72. *Dino 5 Years*, 2021.

Fig. 73. *Dino 5 Years*, 2021.

Fig. 74. *Bernhard 2.5 Years*, 2021.

Fig. 75. *Bernhard 2.5 Years*, 2021.

Fig. 76. *Bernhard 2.5 Years*, 2021. Photo: Sebastian Waldenby.

Fig. 77. *Dino 5 Years*, 2021. Photo: Sebastian Waldenby.

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Bridging Bodily Knowledge

Although I speak from within my specific practice of hand weaving ryas, I am convinced that over-simplified and romantic language is frequently applied to many different types of craft. I think an important part of developing the crafts discourse is to identify these inaccuracies and formulate language and communication that takes the practitioner's bodily knowledge into consideration.

I have shared my methods and experiences and used myself as an example. Sharing experiences from within one's own practice is an invitation to a meeting few others usually attend. It is a way of sharing what happens between the maker (weaver), the material used, the expression that takes shape and the technique that is explored and used.

We practitioners can take command of our stories and tell them through the language of practice.

When knowledge is not corporeal, I believe that theorists and historians deepen their analysis of the knowledge of the practice that fits into the discussion. Each researcher occupies a different position with a different contribution to make to knowledge. Theorists and historians have specialist skills that practitioners often do not have the time or the aptitude to develop.

A good example of someone who has done that is American scholar Elizabeth Wayland Barber. She took to weaving a "replica of a piece of plaid cloth lost in a salt mine in the Austrian Alps some three thousand years ago", which she had seen at the Natural History Museum in Vienna. Wayland Barber had been studying ancient textiles for almost a decade already, and two months after seeing the piece of textile, she began trying to reproduce it at home on a loom, using a diagram to understand its pattern. It took a long time to set up the striped warp, since all stripes had uneven numbers, so there was no easy rhythm to follow, and the preparation required concentration to make it mimic the original as closely as possible. When she finally started weaving, a new annoyance came: the weft was thin and consisted of only four picks before she needed to change colour.

> I had done the replica backwards! If my weft had been warp, its sets of four threads would correspond to what I knew to be the structure of the warp on the ancient loom, as well as to the twill pattern. Thus the cloth would have been easy to warp up.[200]

If a fragment of a textile is tattered on all sides, it is difficult to see in which direction it is woven. Wayland Barber writes:

> It was another lesson to me that the process of recreating ancient artifacts step by step can shed light on the lives and habits of the original craftworkers that no amount of armchair theorizing can give.[201]

Nuances and details in practices and techniques, often invisible (tacit) even to the performer herself, can be crucial for a fuller understanding. And she asks later, "Among the thousands of archaeologists who have written about pottery or architecture, how many have actually tried to make a pot or build a building?"[202]

Wayland Barber's problems were of a technical nature, but one consequence is the risk that knowledge based on a discovery could be incorrect. In the same way, I think about the claim that weaving is a slow and time-consuming medium.[203]

Sometimes texts about craft feel like a long chain of repeating references (I'm not innocent of these writing habits myself). But a chain reaction of recurring references, ideas or perceptions that cement hand weaving as a slow medium, for example, holds back development and the space for other critical reflections. One way to instead encourage development and looking forward may be to invite the experience of practitioners more fully into craft discourse. Illuminating what hurts, what is boring, or what goes fast can cast a technique or method in a new light and expose new shadows that may be worth exploring.

As a scholar, Elizabeth Wayland Barber found valuable knowledge through a mistake she herself made. Those who cannot or do not want to set up a practice themselves may at least hear from the practitioner's perspective if they do the preparatory work, which reflects and communicates insights and knowledge.

Fig. 78. *Maxim*, 2022. In an exhibition at Nääs. Photo: Sebastian Waldenby.

Fig. 79. Looking at *Maxim* together with my children, 2020.


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Conclusion To Part 3

In this chapter, I presented how I have investigated what is more relevant in practice than the time/slowness described from the outside, even though time is constantly present in all parts and therefore should make space for what else may be relevant, such as materials, scale, image content, image topic and final installation. I was wondering how hidden knowledge can be discovered.

By developing my own practice and experimenting with a faster type of rya weaving (loose rya, or *glesrya*), I found that I made room for more awareness and attention to materials and their colours and textures instead of measuring hours in woven rows (to meet internal or real deadlines). In the loose rya technique, the two-sidedness (the back) becomes less important, and the clock-like lines in the textile become fewer and do not trigger time reading in the same way as my previous works did. I also do not feel the same need to show these works with both sides visible, partly because there is no physical slowness to emphasise but also because the time is toned down and given less importance.

Through this change in my practice, I have become aware of how much in practice is hidden knowledge even for myself. This knowledge can be discovered, among other things, through an honest review of the mistakes that have been revealed in one's own practice. By *mistake*, I mean not the technical ones, but rather those that appear only as something inconvenient or wrong.

This part of the thesis has significantly fewer words than the previous parts; instead, I want to highlight the development with images such as photographs and diagrams. Because even though I point out that written reflection is important for communication, it also became obvious to me that the creativity I had lost during the years in the doctoral programme came back when I felt an artistic development with my new approach to weaving. In the last year, I have been weaving a lot, and with a completely different ease than during the convulsive time when I sought answers about time in weaving in other´s voices.

161 Cf. K. Niedderer and K. Townsend "Designing Craft Research: Joining Emotion and Knowledge", in *Design Journal*, vol. 17 (4), 2014, pp. 624–48.
162 Polyani, *Personal Knowledge*, p. 64.
163 Ibid., p. 63.
164 I recommend contributions on mourning and textiles by researcher and textile artist Birgitta Nordström, e.g. B. Nordström, "In a Room of Rites – Cloth Meeting Human", licentiate thesis, Gothenburg, University of Gothenburg, 2016; or *I sin linda* (*Swaddling Cloths*) (2010-2011), with Marianne Davidsson.
165 Albers, On Weaving, p. 53-62.
166 S. Tanaka, "The Notion of Embodied Knowledge", in *Theoretical Psychology: Global Transformations and Challenges*, Concord, Captus Press, 2011, p. 149.
167 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, pp. 100-103.
168 Tanaka, "The Notion of Embodied Knowledge", p. 154.
169 Snidare, *Ryamattan*, p. 6.
170 M. Paasche, *Hannah Ryggen: Threads of Defiance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019, p. 233.
171 Sylwan, *Svenska Ryor*, p. 72.
172 Ibid., p. 72.
173 G. Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, p. 184. In quote Adamson refers to Marcel Proust *In Search of Lost Time; Remembrance of Things Past* was the first translated title.
174 Helsinki Art Gallery's exhibition: *Four Centuries of Finnish Rya*, 2020.
175 K. Lindegren (ed.), *Hannah Ryggen – bildvävnader*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet Stockholm, 1962. My translation from: Hemeligheten i vävekunsten ligger icke i det vävtekniske, men i detta å ge teppet liv.
176 G. Adamson (@glenn_adamson), Instagram, Feb 21, 2021. No URL available (I read later his account was shut down at some point). Accessed on Feb 21 2021.
177 Or "technology" can be defined different – as a loom or needle as Ezra Shales suggested in a conversation with Jessica Hemmings, http://www.norwegiancrafts.no/articles/how-things-get-made.

178 T. Ingold, *Lines*, p. 63.
179 R. P. Columbus, "Pixelbroderaren", in *Hemslöjd* 1, 2021, p. 49.
180 A Swedish rug company.
181 H. Hannah, *Women Framing Hair*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 205, p. 7.
182 Richard Sennet writes, "It has seemed that touch delivers invasive, 'unbounded' data, whereas the eye supplies images that are contained in a frame", in *The Craftsman*, p. 152.
183 Hanna-Kaisa Korolainen, 9 October 9 2020, on Skype.
184 Robach, *Slow Art*, p. 15.
185 E. Cheasley Paterson (ed.), *Sloppy Craft: Postdisciplinarity and the Crafts*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, p. 4.
186 G. Adamson, "When Crafts Get Sloppy", in *Crafts* no. 211 March/April 2008.
187 E. Cheasley Paterson and S. Surette, *Sloppy Craft: Postdiciplinarity and the Crafts*, p. 7.
188 J. Skelly, *Radical Decadence: Excess in Contemporary Feminist Textiles and Craft*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, p. 53.
189 G. Adamson, "When Craft Gets Sloppy", in *Crafts*, no. 211 March/April 2008.
190 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 434.
191 Ibid., p. 434–35.
192 A. Nobel, *Dimmer på Upplysningen – text*, form och formgivning, p. 73, my translation.
193 Cf. K. Darlaston, "The Loom as a Stage for Performing the Social and Cultural Meanings of Craft and Making", PhD Thesis, University of South Australia, 2011. This thesis also has a nice section about wondering what she should do with mistakes (concentration lost because the public interrupted her weaving to speak to her – which was, ironically, the whole point of the project).
194 Ekdahl, Annika (@ponnymami) "Inte lång tid, men vanlig tid som pågår länge…", Instagram, 1 February 2021. URL not available because we both have a private setting on our accounts (accessed 1 February 2021). Reproduced with permission of the account holder.
195 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 433.
196 B. Adam, *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*, Cambridge, Polity, 1995, pp. 18–19.
197 Said my son Dino in our house, June 2021, after I had told him I wanted to weave him.
198 See Sylwan, *Svenska Ryor*, pp. 56–58.
199 Cf. Albers, *On Weaving*, pp. 44–47.
200 Barber, *Women's Work*, p. 23.
201 Ibid., p. 23.
202 Ibid., p. 24.
203 Worth noting that dress historians regularly recreate artefacts to understand them better, so this is not particularly unusual.

Conclusion

This research project examines a recurring focus on time and slowness that I have encountered over years in connection with my hand-weaving practice in the Scandinavian technique of rya. The routine, unreflective use of *slow* and *time* began to look to me like a blockage, and the overuse of the word slow was making the writing and discourse on weaving tiresome. It seemed to me that the word itself had a built-in *kindness* that made it impossible to question. I find there is a tension between perspectives that describe from the outside and those that come from inside practice. Time and slowness are also sometimes accompanied by a romantic idea of weaving as a cosy medium executed in pleasant, self-chosen solitude. From my experience as a weaver I find it hard to relate to this image of weaving.

During the course of my doctoral studies, I first started to pay attention to and later collected observations about how hand weaving and crafts are described in a small sample of exhibition essays, journalistic articles, social media posts, academic papers and books, as well as anecdotes I have heard that associate craft with time and slowness.

This type of anecdotal example is seen as influential and guiding. An anecdote, according to Mike Michael is "an openly ambiguous textual form: combining the real and the constructed, holding them in tension".[204]

The tension here tells me that claims about the preconceived slowness of weaving have elements of romantic fantasies of how we want it to be. "An anecdote reports an episode, but by virture of being a particular interpretation of that episode can go on to influence subsequent events."[205] I mean that repetitive concepts such as slowness further block understanding and that these repetitions do not refine thinking and forward-looking discussions.

I could have undertaken a different type of research; this part has its limitations as it has not been systematically examined, for example by searching databases. However, my intention has been to highlight a few examples in the beginning to present them as a perception, from my point of view, of a general tendency.

One interesting thing for me has been to see how I myself have been influenced by this tendency and how I have thought of and described my own practice in a way that seems generally accepted. My unquestioning acceptance of the explanation that weaving is a slow craft limited by ability to recognise that other significant aspects of my practice were

unnoticed even to myself. I present my perceptions here as a series of personal reflections and a journey through various concerns. My bodily experience is just one example, which is both a weakness and a strength of my research – a weakness because I cannot lean on a lot of answers that point in the same direction; a strength because I myself can check whether something is honest and true. How this has influenced and later changed my way of working and reflecting is the main point of my thesis. I have wanted to understand why I am so often asked how long it takes for me to weave my works. The frequency of this question has prompted me to examine, and ultimately question, descriptions of hand weaving as slow and time-consuming. In my professional experience, claims such as "Weaving is a slow medium" or the question "How long did it take to weave?" move in a diffuse terrain that has come into focus through this thesis. It is diffuse because time is always both within us and outside us at the same time, evenly and constantly, but perhaps extra visible in hand weaving, where the materials used have become (for some perspectives) a substitute for time.

I have highlighted how my conception of crafts such as hand weaving does not always match the bodily knowledge I have of weaving through experience. That knowledge includes conditions such as frustration, boredom and irritation, as well as joy, curiosity and fascination. It is less common to hear of the weaver's bodily perspective in academic discourse, but I believe offers a useful contribution to understanding the value of contemporary craft. This research is thus motivated by what I see as incomplete knowledge, where my contribution consists of understanding my own practice, with transparency through my own knowledge development. When someone from outside, someone who is not herself a practitioner or weaver, uses the language of slowness, it is easy to assume a lack of bodily knowledge is contributing to a general misunderstanding. This is often the case, but what explains the instances when practitioners themselves offer the same explanations? When even I offer such an explanation? My interpretation is that a lack of reflective ability has contributed to me borrowing common descriptions without verifying them against my bodily knowledge and experience. Openness can mean vulnerability; imitating others can be a way to make sure I do not express myself in a way that may seem silly. What is lost is honesty and perhaps something that is closer to the practitioners' experience.

This research focuses on time in my own weaving practice, but also aims for an openness to see and understand what happens from within the

practice as a depiction of an artistic process. Over time, I have come to understand that I do not know everything about my own practice. In fact, I know much less than I had imagined. By carefully looking at what I do when I weave, as well as using media such as film and drawing along with notes to support my thinking, I have captured details and nuances that were previously hidden from me. The idea of weaving being time-consuming or slow is part of a public image in which, for various reasons – ignorance, laziness, lack of reflection, lack of bodily knowledge – weaving is (sometimes) presented as slow.

My practice sees meaning in aspects other than just time or slowness, and I find that my quest is always a search for the fascination I find in the technique's two-sidedness and a space of curiosity in both the weaving process and when viewing the finished rya. Despite this, time and slowness are usually the focus from perspectives outside that of the practitioner. According to my own experience, time is experienced entirely in the weaving process, not the product, so I ask why it often is found by others in the finished object when these are described and discussed in a exhibition context. By discussing the two-sidedness of my practice, I have tried to get a grip on familiar statements and questions about time that I have heard and that have come into focus in discussions about crafts and hand weaving in a contemporary context.

As my own knowledge has expanded, so has my attitude. At the very beginning of my practice of rya weaving, I took a kind of outside position regarding time. I talked about time in the same way I had read and heard others discuss the topic. But above all, my fundamental assumption was that there was no knowledge in weaving beyond the technical. I have come to understand that to speak of weaving as a "slow medium" is to exclude the weaving body. "Weaving" has replaced "weavers" in such a statement, so is it the weaver who is slow? A body is never just slow. Different steps in handmaking practices take different lengths of time. But as an experienced weaver, I weave as fast as I can. I am not saying that weaving is not a slow medium. Instead I claim that it is not so important that it needs to be at the centre, or a headline, or the only point of interest. When the weaving body is allowed to be made visible together with technique, beyond language but through experience, I can understand that anyone who wants to know how long it takes for me to weave an object does not have access to the full spectrum of meaning a rya communicates. The viewer sees material but has no lived experience of weaving my rya and therefore has no connection to all the "nows" of the hand-tied rya knots.

The pairing of time and weaving feels so repetitive that it risks blocking the way for other discussions. In many sectors, crafts continue to experience a low status. *Slow time* has become a value, and therefore it seems to be argued that craft should continue to be described as slow in a positive sense. But I have a hard time seeing what such a statement has to do with the weaving itself; it is rather a discussion about the position of the craft in the art world or perhaps the economic conditions of individual practitioners. I think it is a greater problem that knowledge is hidden even for practitioners ourselves – that we do not know enough about our practice (to the extent it is possible), and therefore discussions written by other people who have no practical experience may miss valuable details or nuances.

Through my misinterpreted quotation of the Swedish philosopher Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen[206] that the practice (or practitioner) does not want to sit and wait to be rescued by any theory (or theorist), I have found strength in daring to trust that the practitioner (practice) knows most about herself and her practice. I have not focused on challenging the balance of power between theory and practice, but it has become a part of this project precisely because I have kept the practice so close and tried to let it have the largest space in my research process. And in that I believe that much of my contribution lies in the example from my own practice, the hope that it is possible to challenge craft discourse, to shift focus from technique alone and involve the body's knowledge without that discourse having to be about only one or the other.

Styrfart, or steering speed, is a fantastic word in Swedish meaning the minimum speed needed to maintain balance. If resistance can be seen as one of my central driving forces, I would say that it is the field between two points – part of me wants to rush through the action, and parts restrained by time, the rhythm of the practical hand weaving. In Swedish society today, slowness and personal time are considered scarce goods. Anyone who has the opportunity to practice a craft such as hand weaving can be portrayed in a romantic glow, which I now realize I have, at times, contributed to keeping alive. I have heard myself pointing out the time investment, and to some extent the slowness, of weaving, and although I did not say it actively, I have not always contributed to questioning this perspective. Rather, through my silence I may have even contributed to a continuous mystification of hand weaving and time.

I believe that the identity of weaving as slow hinders an accurate description of hand weaving in its entirety. A focus on time contributes to a con-

tinued view of weaving as an art form steeped in notions of (domestic) craft, where it does not always need to belong. I would rather see woven images as part of a general visual art but without ignoring its origins. A rya is historically a blanket for the bed, but the historical category does not prevent it from being allowed to develop and belong in new domains. The alleged slowness of weaving becomes a problem when it is juxtaposed with other art forms. When the association of weaving with slowness is amplified and romanticized it can even contribute to a category of its own that may then be difficult to break away from.

My first question of the investigation was: From an outside perspective, hand weaving such as rya is often described as slow or time-consuming, and strenuous and demanding, but what bodily knowledge about time sits within the practice?

In Part 1, I discuss how time is a real wrestling match, a practicality, a challenge in grumpiness and stubbornness. Weaving time is no different from any other time.
Hand weaving does not have only one tempo. Weaving is not a slow medium without a slow body that performs the work, and a body involved in a hand weaving practice constantly changes in speed. I understand that weaving can be slow for several reasons that I too have experienced:

- My body can at times be slower than usual due to fatigue, aches, pregnancy and a lack of concentration.

- If I weave a part of the image that is more detailed – that is, in many different colours – it can be perceived as slower than in a single-coloured part. But the opposite can also be true: a single-coloured part can be perceived as slow because it is boring and frustrating to create.

- If I do not really feel like spending time with the subject or motif, if I have no emotional connection to it or have no interest in it, I can experience weaving as slow.

- Rya weaving can be experienced more slowly if the rows of knots are dense, with a smaller proportion of intermediate plain weaving, simply because it is more technical work.

This list is not complete, but also time bound. What is correct today does not have to be correct tomorrow. The further the understanding gets away

from the single-track assertion of slowness, the more irrelevant such an association becomes. Weaving is not a slow medium in its entirety; only parts or episodes can be called slow, and sometimes speed is not even relevant.

Serial Babies (2016–present) is a series of ryas in the same motif, a smiling child, who on the hairy side in the textile looks miserable and sad. In this series I looked for other relevant phenomena that keep me interested in weaving ryas. Central to this is the crying effect of the long, loose threads. Over the years, I have learned to influence the motif through the placement of colors and varying lengths of unwoven yarn. Black long strands of yarn in the eyes become tears, red areas on the cheeks or mouth become like dripping blood. If the subject has hands, these can have longer threads to be associated with something that flows out of the image. I am looking for a moving and living state, something wet, something that leaks and comes alive from a still bottom.

In conversation with Swedish weaver Annika Ekdahl, intimacy was revealed as a strong presence in the weaving. Working so closely with someone's face or some other motif gives weaver a bodily connection to the subject. Embroidery artist Per Phager described how he needs to have an emotional connection to his motifs, otherwise it would be unbearable to spend 300 hours with them. The time it takes is therefore not important as time but is instead linked to the artist's own desire and interest in the work. Spending time with a work is fascinating but, like me, Phager learns from experience to avoid mistakes. To correct things that go wrong has no element of fascination. Rather, it is seen as a waste.

My second question was: A craft like hand weaving is typically a solitary practice; how can bodily knowledge of time be understood in cases of collaboration?

Since my research has led me to the realization that the time in hand weaving depends on the body that weaves, a weaving collaboration must be understood based on the different bodies involved. In collaborations, as in my collaboration with the several weavers in *Google Weaving Stoptime* (2018), time was more visible in the interpersonal, the messy, the communications, the misunderstandings, the explanations, the coincidences, the intervals, the delays. These conditions gave me the feeling that the project was time consuming, and the weaving in it was easier for me to see and anticipate than for the participants I collaborated with.

In Part 2, I reflect on how time was not at all in the centre emotionally of *Google Weaving Stop-time*. When I put the time into other things besides weaving, as I did in my collaborative project, the result was a feeling of failure, something I could only repair by spending my time weaving my own version of my assistant's work (*Textile Labour*, 2019). My bodily knowledge, I understood, must be activated for my practice to have any meaning and purpose.

My third question was: How can hidden knowledge in craft practices be discovered?

Through reflections in Part 3, it turns out that time belongs in the body together with materials and images, something I understood in all its absence through my collaborative experience. When, by coincidence (ironically to save time) I began to weave in a slightly faster technique (*gles-rya* or loose rya), I freed up time and attention to understand other parts of my practice that had previously been hidden from me. I never really reflected on materials in practice, even though for ten years I have had a professional practice as a weaver that for the most part consists of me touching and working with textile materials. The hidden knowledge of the practitioner was illuminated in my own practice when I understood that much of my own ideas had been imitations of others' perspectives rather than grounded in my own experience. Here my hand drawing activity became a method of writing about practice. Writings born out of drawing taught me that I do not consider weaving to be a slow medium at all, and that I understood weaving was not slow when I allowed myself to involve the body for reflection and not just stare at the material and the woven textiles.

According to sociologist Nick Crossley:

> Human bodies exist in two dimensions. We are our bodies (being) but sometimes perceive them as an object that we possess (having) and which we might experience.[207]

In my weaving practice I am my body, and not at all divided between body and mind. But when I face the seemingly innocent question of how long it took me to weave, I understand that I possess a body – a body that has accomplished something of a large scale over a long period of time. The questioner looks at me and at what I have made and uses it for her own ideas and prejudices.

Crossley introduces Drew Leader, who elaborates in "The Absent Body"[208] upon the notion that the human body has its own blind spots and departs from the position of the human body as a sensuous and perceptual-action system. Crossley writes:

> However, we do not ordinarily experience sensations. Rather, by way of sensations we experience a world around us. As I stare at my computer, for example, I am having sensations but I do not perceive sensations. I perceive the computer.[209]

Freed from the idea that weaving was a slow method made it easier to modify the way I weave and adopt the loose rya technique, and I could then handle and even celebrate a larger scale (*Maxim* 2019–2020) without the fictitious burden I had inherited and unconsciously absorbed that it was laborious and time-consuming work.

Crossley again:

> My fingers know where to go without my having to look or search, but I could not discursively describe where individual letters are without looking or following my fingers. My knowledge of the keyboard is practical, pre-reflective and embodied.[210]

When I weave with my body, it is in my body that time belongs. I am my body weaving (slowly or quickly), the finished rya seen by another does not have access to that perception of time and the time it took is not relevant.

Leader writes:

> From the most visceral of cravings to the loftiest of artistic achievements, the body plays its formative role. Yet this bodily presence is a highly paradoxical nature. While in one sense the body is the most abiding and inescapable presence in our lives, it is also essentially characterized by absence. That is, one's own body is rarely the thematic object of experience. When reading a book or lost in thought, my own bodily state may be the farthest thing from my awareness.[211]

My weaving body is not in focus for my attention – not until it makes its presence felt through pain, for example. The textile grows in step with the work, but it is the body that experiences time. The textile is not a living thing.

The knowledge presented in this project cannot be read from my woven objects, but through the reflection that has taken place in connection with making. My most important insights have been gained through drawing, which has led to writing. Drawing by hand found its place in my exploration rather by chance. In the winter of 2020, I was on sick leave for depression for two months. I started drawing without goals and meaning to distract my brain. As a child I drew a lot, first freely and without the need for confirmation, but with age I became more sensitive to other people's reactions, and drawing moved towards a state of *drawing nicely*. It was inhibiting, and I instead started following the lines in existing pictures so that my drawings of horses and houses would be as realistic as possible. Just like in painting-by-numbers, the effect became a slight skew: a happy mouth easily turns sad if just a dot of colour gets misplaced. Sometimes I could fool others that I had drawn the picture out of my imagination. At the time, during the period of sick leave, I remembered this – the place in my inside, where I really wanted to extract images from already existing ones, but now as an adult without the need to please others.

The drawing that took place during my doctoral studies began with me drawing my textiles and soon developed into pictures from the experience of weaving these textiles. The drawings were not only pictorial but depicted important places in the threads, how knots are tied, how I see the textile on the loom, how the back is experienced even though it is not visible when I weave. The drawing helped me not only to sit and wait to be rescued, but from what? Time? Theory? Instead of passively waiting for my overcooked brain to cool, I moved with it – moved with the depression, the time, the reflection and the joy of my practice. When I later returned to work, I found a source to write from: many of the drawings contain words that I could use as a starting point. In this way my drawing practice has functioned both as a starting point for a writing process and a way to visualize ideas, turning into a resource for my research project in its entirety.

The writing has sometimes felt like I am trying to capture something that is constantly changing, even though it also seems to be repetitions of previous ways of thinking and working. I am talking about small shifts that are barely visible. I influence my practice by examining my practice. There are no clear answers, rather a wonder about what comes next. Writing has been a new way for me to express myself. Writing is therefore playing with already existing expressions. Here, experience plays a big role. In this way, it has reminded me of learning to weave. What kind of

art I hoped to do during the research project has never been my focus; it is an area I have treated with silence, apart from my initial idea that I would weave one and the same motif in repetition, which was my plan for *Serial Babies* (initiated in 2016 and still in progress). This idea testifies to an early misunderstanding and lack of experience with what a research investigation would do with my practice. When the project started, I started with what I already knew: weaving figurative ryas. It took several years before my reflective writing began to focus on the body and the experience of time inside the weaving practice.

The knowledge of the practical weaving is primarily knowledge for myself and my practice. In this way, the objects are also answers to questions I did not know I had or had not previously learned to ask myself. The significance of my discoveries through my own studio practice is a shift of focus. A medium, a technique or method in crafts should be understood based on its circumstances. Weaving is too broad in the variety of techniques, execution, use and purpose to be stamped with a single marker. According to my understanding of the origin of weaving – through a weaver's body – weaving may not have been slow in the past either. I think the term slow is an indication of nostalgia and a romantic approach and a fantasy from a time when things were "made by hand". To stop naming weaving as a slow medium is to look into the future rather than sticking to the past. The hands have their limitations, as does the loom I work on, but I do not necessarily mean that limitations need to be understood through the pace at which something is feasible.

This work began in 2016, almost six years ago. The work itself is to be seen as a time document. Everything changes over time. It almost feels magical to look back on something as small as my total misunderstanding of why so many people asked me about time and to realize that it took so many years to discover that that misunderstanding was based on my own ignorance. The project has changed in six years from the initial phase in which I placed time outside myself and struggled with not being able to explain something I knew in any way. When I put the understanding of time in my own body, it was as if, to borrow from ceramicist Caroline Slotte, I turned on the light and saw that I stood in the middle of the room I had always been in:

> While I have been speaking, the room has become full of light. I can move around freely. There are still some areas of shadow left, as always in a room, but in the open areas there is no longer

> anything to stumble on. I can either stay here or move on. The room now belongs to me.[212]

The sometimes contradictory elements of this thesis reflect the artistic reality, where what is true today changes and is called into question tomorrow. Through this research I reflect as a weaving artist. I offer my artistic knowledge through this writing to writers, artists who write, researchers and curators an example of a different perspective.

Recommendations for further exploration

I recommend further research into repeated myths and clichés about handmade practices that stick and spread.

In my latest woven works, that of my dead dog and those of my own children, I move away from the idea of weaving as a slow medium. The alleged slowness was destroyed in my own language. Partly because I no longer felt bound to how I had used the technique with rya, I spared it out, I allowed the back to be less accountable than before, and I was firmly rooted in the motifs. The myths and clichés about the time-consuming work no longer had a central place.

Now that I have expanded my understanding of my hand-weaving practice, I have created a space around my reflective ability and I intend to continue exploring recurring claims about how crafts are created. I picture, even if it is beyond my own bodily knowledge, that ceramics and metal, other textile techniques, and other crafts that exist around the world have similar over-simplifications attached to them just as hand weaving does.

A feminist perspective on the body would have given more dimensions to this project and is something I expect to explore further. The feminist perspective is not so prominent in the reflections I have presented here, but I have read and been inspired by authors such as Iris Marion Young, Luce Irigaray and Ann Cvetkowich, and their work has shown me ways I imagine I could continue to work in future from a feminist perspective that begins in the body. In my thesis, “the body” is a particular one: my own, pregnant, later a mother. Early in the project I wanted a feminist analysis, but this way of academic work was too foreign to me at the time and I needed to start in what I mastered. Theoretical feminism has been too far removed from my practical reality; now I can see that what I also

wanted was not to be overshadowed by theoretical analysis. I did not want to get more lost than I already was. But now that a basic understanding of the practice has been established, and the myth of my hand weaving practice has been questioned and described from a new perspective, I see it as the next step in examining the myths surrounding crafts and which bodies they are projected and propagated through.

204 M. Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature: From Society to Heterogeneity*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2012, p. 14.
205 Ibid., p. 14.
206 Lappalainen, "Att reflektera över det som ännu inte sagts", p 69.
207 Crossley, *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*, p. 2.
208 D. Leader, *The Absent Body*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990.
209 Crossley, *Reflexive Embodiment in Contemporary Society*, p. 79.
210 Ibid., p. 80.
211 Leader, *The Absent Body*, p. 1.
212 Slotte, *Closer*, p. 5.

Jag handväver figurativa ryor. Rya är en traditionell skandinavisk vävteknik som har en inbyggd dubbelsidighet där materialet tycks tryckas ut ur en textil botten som ger mina figurativa vävar intrycket av att de gråter eller faller ut. När jag väver har jag fingrarna i en trasslig underjord utan att jag riktigt vet vad som gömmer sig där nere. Forskning genom min egen ateljépraktik har fått mig att ifrågasätta en offentlig bild av vävning som en tidskrävande eller långsam praktik och varför temporalitet tillskrivs det färdiga föremålet, samtidigt som jag hävdar att det bara upplevs i tillverkningsprocessen.

Mina forskningsundersökningar har sitt ursprung i den återkommande frågan jag får om hur lång tid det tar för mig att väva en rya. Denna fråga har fungerat som bränsle i sökandet efter de frågor som förtydligar bakomliggande tankar om hantverk och tid. Jag har valt att ta upp frågan utifrån den praktiserande kroppen, kroppen som väver, min egen.

Syftet är att undersöka och utforska tidsupplevelser inom en handvävningspraktik för att förklara hur idén om vävningen som tidskrävande eller långsam är en produkt av en romantisk syn på handarbete jämfört med min egen inställning. Samtidigt som det också är en praktisk verklighet av upplevelsen i ateljén.

Forskningen har delvis präglats av det som den svenska filosofen Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen beskriver som *formuleringsarbetet*: att möta något vi ännu inte namngett, men för den delen ändå inte vill fånga i ett språk[213]. Med ledning av hennes diskussioner har arbetet syftat till att formuleras utan att förminskas. Projektet och min konstnärliga praktik sätts in i ett samtida hantverkssammanhang; ett sammanhang inom vävning med föregångare som Anni Albers (1899–1994), Hannah Ryggen (1894–1970) och Maria Adlercreutz (1936–2014) kvinnliga konstnärer som inte längre är vid liv men ändå levande och relevanta i den samtida textila diskursen. Dessa konstnärer ställdes också inför frågor om tid. Albers och Ryggen fokuserade inte i huvudsak sitt arbete på det tidskrävande utan talade snarare om innehåll och material, medan Adlercreutz lämnade efter sig mer romantiska uttalanden om vävning.

Flera samtida konstnärer som väver bilder, bland dem amerikanska Erin Riley och svenska Annika Ekdahl, används också som språngbrädor till min egen förståelse, båda konstnärer förknippas inte sällan med begreppen långsamhet, intimitet och upprepning när deras praktiker och verk diskuteras. Sociologiprofessorn Nick Crossleys undersökningar kring ett

reflexivt förkroppsligande har fungerat som inramning och har gett en förståelse för hur jag reflekterar över min eget förkroppsligande, och har gett insikter om hur svårt det kan vara att förändra kroppen i förhållande till yttre påståenden.

Den vävande kroppen besitter kunskap som är delvis språklös. Ironiskt nog kan den kroppsliga kunskapen om en handgjord praktik upplevas som dold för en själv. I mitt fall började ett skifte med nya insikter bli synliga först när jag började förstå att jag själv upprepade ett språk om min praktik som inte stämde överens med vad min kropp upplevde. I stället blev min dolda kunskap mer synlig när jag började rita för hand, vilket i sin tur genererade en metod att skriva fram min kunskap.

I del 1 ger jag en djupare bakgrund till mitt forskningsintresse för tid genom min egen praktik och från min erfarenhet som handvävande konstnär. Jag visar med exempel hur vävning ibland beskrivs som långsam och tidskrävande, ofta med ett språk som uttrycker ett positivt värde. Även om dessa samtida vävar ofta förknippas med tradition och historia, matchar dessa begrepp ofta inte min uppfattning som utövare. Det är dock ett vokabulär jag själv har använt. Jag hävdar att den kroppsliga kunskapen om tid som kommer inifrån praktiken ofta inte stämmer överens med dessa beskrivningar.

I del 2 delar jag med mig undersökningen av en annan sorts erfarenhet i min praktik – ett samarbete – där jag lärde mig att samarbete var en mycket mer komplex erfarenhet i praktiken än i min förutfattade föreställning. Här reflekterar jag över ett projekt där en grupp på tjugoåtta vävare arbetade tillsammans, alla från sina egna ateljéer och hem på flera platser runt om i världen, som en del av den 4:e Istanbul Design Biennalen. I projektet *Google Weaving Stop-time* (2018) arbetade jag i min egen ateljé tillsammans med en assistent, och jag delar med mig av hur detta ledde till insikter om vad en vävande konstnärlig praktik betyder för mig, och undersökte om kroppslig kunskap kan eller inte kan delas genom denna typ av samarbete.

I del 3 diskuterar jag min praktiks utveckling och hur detta har informerat min förståelse av tid och dubbelsidighet som en del av min reflektion över mitt eget praktiska arbete. Här presenteras hur jag har undersökt vad som är mer relevant i praktiken än tiden och långsamheten som beskrivs utifrån, även om tiden ständigt är närvarande i alla delar. Genom att utveckla praktiken och experimentera med en "snabbare" typ av ryavävning;

glesrya, fann jag utrymme för större medvetenhet och uppmärksamhet på material och deras färger och texturer i stället för att mäta timmar i vävda rader (för att möta inre eller yttre deadlines).

I den avslutande diskussionen går jag igenom de kombinerade reflektionerna och de förvärvade insikterna och föreslår riktningar för framtida steg i detta forskningsprojekt inom området konsthantverk. Jag uppmanar konstnärer och praktikledda forskare att reflektera kring sin egen praktik, eftersom mycket av det som pågår i ateljén ur vävarens perspektiv fortfarande ofta är outtalat.

Undersökningen har lett mig till insikten att påståendet om att väva som långsam inte tar hänsyn till kroppen som väver. Påståendet exkluderar den vävande kroppen. Långsamhet kopplad till handgjorda metoder bidrar till en romantisk syn på samtida hantverk. Jag tar med mig min erfarenhet av de olika berättelserna utanför min praktik och min kunskap och erfarenhet inifrån den och väver ihop de två till en berättelse. Detta hjälper till att lyfta fram dold kunskap i praktiken och ger nya perspektiv och insikter om handvävning.

I min forskning har jag kombinerat mitt skrivande med flera ryaprojekt gjorda de senaste åren (2016–2022) strukturerade utifrån ett personligt perspektiv kring mitt intresse för reflektion över konstnärliga praktiker, min kropp i görandet och de figurativa ryavävar jag skapar. Dessa insikter, och denna berättelse, gör kunskap om min egen handvävningspraktik när den verbaliseras inte längre bara personlig, utan tillgänglig för och delbar med andra.

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Erfarenheten av ett grundligt reflekterande över min egen konstnärliga process gjorde att jag hela tiden fick syn på nya delar, och att jag på så sätt kunde uppmärksamma hur jag själv höll fast vid upprepande påståenden som inte visade sig stämma överens med min kroppsliga erfarenhet.

Med ett sådant tillvägagångssätt förstår jag att det finns andra aspekter och komplexitet i den handgjorda processen som jag vill undersöka vidare, och många myter och klichéer än enbart långsam tid som håller sig fast och ostört låter sig sprida sig vidare. I mina senaste vävda verk, de av min döda hund och de av mina egna barn, rör jag mig längre bort

från idén om vävningen som ett långsamt medium. Den påstådda långsamheten försvann i mitt eget språk. Dels för att jag inte längre kände mig bunden till hur jag hade använt tekniken med rya, jag lät baksidan vara mindre ansvarig för att motivet skulle synas och kunna tolkas av en betraktare än tidigare och jag var stadigt förankrad i motiven så som jag ville se dem.
Myterna och klichéerna om det tidskrävande arbetet fick inte längre någon central plats.
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Ett feministiskt perspektiv på kroppen hade gett fler dimensioner åt projektet och är något jag föreställer mig kommer att fortsätta för min egen del. De är inte så framträdande i mina reflektioner, men jag har läst och inspirerats av författare som Iris Marion Young, Luce Irigaray och Ann Cvetkowich, deras texter har visat mig på sätt jag föreställer mig att jag skulle kunna fortsätta ett framtida arbete med ett feministiskt perspektiv som börjar i kroppen. Kroppen i mitt arbete som presenteras är en särskild sådan: den gravida, senare mamman. Tidigt i projektet ville jag ha en feministisk analys, men det sättet att arbeta på var för främmande för mig vid den tiden och jag behövde börja i det jag behärskade.
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213 Jonna Hjertström Lappalainen. Att reflektera över det som ännu inte sagts. In *Methodos – Konstens kunskap, kunskapens konst*, Magnus William – Olsson (ed.), 63–84. Stockholm: Ariel Förlag, 2014.

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Google Weaving Stop-time, 4th Istanbul Design Biennial, Salt Galata, Istanbul, Turkey, 2018 (travelled to other venues: Luma in Arles, France, 2019 and C-Mine, Genk, Belgium 2019).

Crying pixels, TransformArt Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia, 2018.

The Art of Labor, San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, San Jose, US, 2018.

Young Swedish Design 2019, ArkDes, Stockholm, Sweden, 2019-2020.

Screens, GIBCA Extended, Galleri Konstepidemin, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2019.

Breaching Borders, 16th International Triennial of Tapestry, Lodz, Poland, 2019-2020.

Ett mayhem av ryor, Rian Design Museum, Falkenberg, Sweden, 2020.

Vid strandkanter, vägrenar, utkanter, Fiberspace Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden, 2020.

Once I wanted to be the greatest, Galleri Revolt, Borås, Sweden, 2021.

Hundar och barn, Nääs, Sweden, 2022.

Longing: woven strands, woven stories, Swedish Institute, Paris, France, 2022.

Samtidigt, duo with Swedish artist Kenneth Abrahamsson, Halmstad Museum, Halmstad, Sweden, 2022.

For all to see, Havremagasinet, Boden, Sweden, 2022.

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Fig. 80. *Serial Babies*, 2016. Rya in wool on linen warp. Reversed side of the works on the frontcover.

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