UTFLÄKT PÅ DITT GOLV
(exposed on your floor)

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I have investigated the role of the weaver, from my own perspective as a weaver. I have discussed weaving in relation to function and painting, and how the weaving process and the collaboration with the loom have a great impact on what I create. I have found it difficult to believe in the future as a weaver, and with this project I wanted to find a meaning with weaving that I can lean on.

All five weaves are woven on the same warp, I call it a warp family. Every weave is a try and a failure to weave a rug. Instead they have all turned into different characters, portraying my ongoing struggle with, and love for, the warp.

I’ve come to the conclusion that for me the rug is a symbol for honesty in making, and that it’s function is to remind us about values that often are neglected. The visible process, the human presence, is then more important than aspects like functionality or perfection.

KEYWORDS
weaving, craft, the rug, weaving and painting, hand weaving, the meaning with craft, material language, the weaving process, contemporary weaving
INDEX

Abstract..............................................................2

Introduction
The rug- A love story............................................4
The real life- of a weaver........................................4
Intention, Research question.....................................6

Weaving and Function
The purest weave..................................................7
We can never be good weavers...............................9
Function of the weaver..........................................9
The art world and the language of weaving............11

Weaving and Painting
Weaving a painting...............................................12
Story of the gallery weaver.................................14

Warpfamily 1
The method of mistakes........................................15
A research question.............................................15
The tool, the drawloom.........................................15-16
Weave 1, amandine josephine 2020.......................16-17
Weave 2, Who was it that said,
I have been to hell and back?..........................19
Symmetry.............................................................19-20
Weave 3, Bakom stängda dörrar ........................21
Weave 4, Forna tiders tunga.................................23
Weave 5, Splash- l’origine du monde.....................24
A new canvas, amandine josephine 2021...........24
Weaving- a collaboration..................................25-26

A new warp family.............................................27

Conclusion..........................................................29-30

References.........................................................31

Image references..................................................31- 32

Appendix- Reflection
THE RUG - A LOVE STORY

In the summer of 2013, I fell in love with a kilim rug. I remember it like an ocean, that I needed to dive into. I was hit by the way it spoke to me, in an ungraspable language that in the same time filled my whole body with understanding and longing. *This was weaving. Vi stryker vår hand över våvarens tankar och känslor.* I understood that its language would never be mine, but it awoke the longing for finding my own.

As I was pregnant, and needed a financial plan for my future, I decided to devote myself 100% to weaving rugs.

The rug was not my first love, but the early modernists, Cezanne, Gaugain, Matisse, Van Gogh, Monet, the result of a visit to Musée d’Orsay when I was sixteen. What I care about is expressing myself through colors. I want to put them next to each other so that it almost hurts. In my body I still sense the rapid movements of the brush moving across the canvas. I’m starting to believe that I’m trying to recreate the hand’s impulsive movement in the weave. A modernist yearning, to capture the moment. But the weave is built in rows, I try to keep the feeling until I have reached the end of its movement. Time is preserved in the weft, the train of thoughts can never be hidden there.

I once was the worst weaving student. I have never cared about quality or accuracy. I have naturally bad patience and when I was young a tendency to become extremely bored. But making with my body wakes me up. That does not mean that I am pleasant as a maker. In my mind it is like someone hunting down a big animal and killing it with a spear. Well, this is when making is intensily good.

I have never done the boring parts, like technique- or color tests, I go directly big. I want the experience. To put myself in danger. It is like a hunt, trying to find ways to stand the slowness of weaving. To find a better way to express myself through the weave, or loose control over myself...

Once upon a time, I loved all my weaves, instantly a love affair. Or, is it just how I remember it? We hold the memories of our first striking art experiences closely. With more experience we lose that strong sensation. When you have lost it, what is left besides struggle? How to find the way back there? Through a deeper understanding find the simple, but brilliant, solution, which once just arose.

THE REAL LIFE - OF A WEAVER

I have never experienced being an artist without also being a mother of small children. I work in my studio between 09-16, Tuesday to Friday, if I’m lucky. On Mondays I work 15 hours as a personal assistant, a way to keep some financial independency.

When I came up with my financial plan, in 2013-2014, to become a rug weaver, I might have been naive, but I already knew that I could make rugs that people wanted to buy. In 2011 I started a collaboration with my friend Malin Dahlberg. We didn’t get any summer jobs so we started to handprint cushions and kitchen towels in the kitchen of my appartment, that we sold in the barn at my parents summer house in Fide, Gotland. One year later I dispalayed my first rag rugs there, and in 2013 we opened up another room for rag rugs. I have a feeling of relatives laughing at me, 3500 crownes for a rag rug...But the year after I started to sell my wool weavings there, people were willing to pay 15 000 crownes, in a dusty barn with broken windows and dead bats in my sisters cups (my sister is a ceramist). In 2016 I sold a rag rug to Nationalmuseum ”Jag mår illa av hantverk, men vill spy av konst” and one of the first rag rugs I made was publsihed in Lidewij Edelkoort’s trend bible. Another one was part of the big textile exhibition ”Textila Undertexter” at Marabouparken (2016) and Malmö Konstmuseum (2017). In 2017 I had a solo exhibition at HV Galleri and in 2018 I got to exhibit with Åsa Jugnelius at Olseröds Konsthall. In 2020 I won the Svensk form design price, Design-S, together with the weaving group Studio Supersju, that I founded 2016, and left in 2020.

I could never have guessed that I was going to be so successful as a weaver. But what does that success mean, more than it makes you contiunue? An escape room from the thought of how to pay the bills. For me it is difficult to believe in the future.

* We stroke our hand over the weaver’s thoughts and feelings.
Image 1. Amanda Nordqvist, Portrait of the weaver, 2020
INTENTION

The meaning with being a weaver is lost.

In the suite of industrialization, every weaver needs to find her/ his own meaning with weaving. It is tempting to bury your head in the sand and defend the importance of weavers, but with this project I want to find my own reason to keep on struggling with the weave.

What is interesting for me as a weaver is what I can do in the loom, in a restricted form, to get in touch with my own will and the feeling of ”honest making”. To find the energy where pleasing becomes irrelevant and threads and colors takes another meaning. I always strive to develop my understanding of weaving and its language. I don’t usually treat the weave as a symbol in itself.

In my heart I feel that the weave is purest when it can work as a functional object. But for me it is difficult to combine the qualities that make a weave functional with an interesting process.

I see this project as a part of a long journey, dealing with obstacles that come in my way, towards the ultimate goal: the functional rug.

*Can I reach the point where I don’t have to compromise with my creative process to make a functional rug?*
I question the meaning of being a weaver. I do not question the meaning of weaving per se, but the point of sacrificing all financial security for the sake of weaving. Sometimes the question is raised about the future of weaving education, including the lack of competent weaving teachers, they talk about starting a weaving teacher education. I think: *why should we even educate a lot of young girls to become weavers? How many competent girls’ future will be sacrificed for Sweden to be able to preserve its textile cultural heritage and knowledge? Because that is the established truth about the function of weaving in society, isn’t it?*

**THE PUREST WEAVE**

I am so old-fashioned in my opinions about manufacturing and consumption that when I read texts from the first half of the 20th century, it almost feels like I am reading my own thoughts, albeit well-formulated. But our time is much further away from the ideal society presented in these texts than the time in which they were written. A text that caught my attention is ”The way of craftsmanship” (1927) by Sōetsu Yanagi, where he discusses the function of the different kinds of craft (folk crafts and artisan crafts) in modern society. Yanagi argues that the beauty of craft lies in its usefulness, therefore the folk craft is *”the purest form of craft. The reason for this is artist-craftsmanship places utility second and tends to pursue beauty for its own sake, thereby breaking the laws of craftsmanship.”* He writes that “There is a beauty that emerges from individual art, but it is not the purest. In the case of a really great individual, the greatness lies in his having gone beyond his individualism.”

Anni Albers, whose texts I also appreciate and relate to, also believes that ”The good designer is the anonymous designer.” She makes it clair: ”The tablecloth that calls ‘Here I am, look at me’ is invading the privacy of the consumer.”

I strive for honesty in my work. I dislike what is artificial, that feels constructed, or that focuses on being cool or innovative. I do not want to experience an artwork as a translation of an idea. The weaving experience that I strive to achieve is when I really feel like myself, a pure feeling, a sense of honest communication. I do not know what this honest communication is, but I guess, me, it is precisely this aspiration that drives me away from the functional object of use.

For eight years I have tried to weave a rug, the better weaver I’ve become, the further away from the rug I end up. Is it so strange that I turn my gaze to art? But when I see someone else defining their work as a rug, it arouses my desire. It is I, who is the Rug. As the weaver Sara Elggren wrote to me ”I want to be with the handkerchief more than to use it.”

The rug is the goal, but why call it a rug when all the weaves I make are hung on the wall? As the critical person I am, it rubs within me. The object of use is a way of creating meaning, in comparison the woven art becomes superficial. The main characteristic of a weave is that it is functional, at the same time as it in its structure carries the story of what happened between the weaver and the warp in the loom. When we are tempted to touch it, we stroke our hand over the weaver’s thoughts and feelings.

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2 Yanagi. 1927. p. 169
4 Albers. 1966. p. 7
5 Sara Elggren, Facebook message to author, January 28, 2021
There is a longing for an object that is less like me, but it is drowned by the desire to develop in step with the weave. While I see myself in my weaves, it is a feeling that makes me think of the novel "Nausea" by Jean-Paul Sartre, there is no delight in letting the weave be your mirror.

Huis clos⁶, I’m looking at myself as a stranger.

*The book chronicles his struggle with the realisation that he is an entirely free agent in a world devoid of meaning; a world in which he must find his own purpose and then take total responsibility for his choices. A seminal work of contemporary literary philosophy, Nausea evokes and examines the dizzying angst that can come from simply trying to live.*

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⁶ Translation: Behind closed doors
⁷ https://www.adlibris.com/se/bok/nausea-9780141185491
WE CAN NEVER BE GOOD WEAVERS

I honestly do not think we can become good (anonymous) weavers in a society like ours, not from a global or historical perspective. Everything that is woven by hand in our country must be expensive, because it is expensive to live, as well as to sell, and what is expensive must stand out in order to be bought. "... The capitalist system launches us into a whirlpool of competition, we are forced to use sensational means to attract buyers." 8 It is the one who has the privilege of having contact with rich buyers who may have the opportunity to refine their craft. How beautiful aren’t the handwoven coats by Amy Revier? But they cost £4,800.00. 9 It can never be folk art, even if it in my worldview is reminiscent of the aesthetic ideals that Yanagi writes about.

FUNCTION OF THE WEAVER

One night a few weeks earlier, between warps, in the state of insights and hope, I woke up and wrote like a redeemed in the notes on my phone: Min strävan är inte att vara på ett golv, utan att uppmärksamma allt annat på våra golv. Att vi har dödat en själ. Jag förväntar mig inte att någon vill ha mig utfläkt på sitt golv, men ack, om så bara mitt högra hörn hade repeterats i en maskinell process... 10

In my note, I register two potential functions of the hand-woven rug of today. One, hand weaving in the spirit of Bauhaus as a way of creating qualities in industrial production that cannot be imagined, but that arises when working with the material in the loom. "A design on paper, however, cannot take into account the fine surprises of a material and make imaginative use of them." 11 It takes some courage and investment from companies for this to happen, especially since there is almost no industrial production of textiles in Sweden today.

The second is "to point the way as a compass does, rather than as a maker." 12 Because I do not think that my rugs are optimal as products, but if they were, they would probably not have aroused the same longing for that something else, a world with different values. "The presence of the artist-craftsmen is to serve as a bridge between this period and the next flowering of the art of the people." 13 Someone must be left who can point to the possibilities of what has already been discarded as outdated.

If the weaver is like a compass, how important is the fine craftsmanship really? Perfection and accuracy is strongly connected to status and tradition, it does not in itself mean that a fabric is perceived as beautiful or that it is functional. With perfection the weave approaches everything else in our society, the smooth comfortable surface. It is hard to think about weaving without thinking about its past, but what happens if we stop glorifying what once was, and instead try to take the weave with us into the future?

I’m thinking about in what kind of rooms people get to partake of and experience the hand-woven. What qualities does the hand-woven need to differ from its surroundings? I do not have many answers, but something I noticed from weaving so-called rugs, was that my weaves often ended up in group exhibitions. They were separated from each other and therefore they needed to be able to stand by themselves, to stand out among art and design objects. What I strived for in order to make the weave fit on the floor was not always what was advantageous in an exhibition.

The visible presence of humanity in the woven object, that is not necessarily pleasing, is one thing that can distinguish a weave from its surroundings. "The constricted threads, the necessary tension, the opposite tendencies, the void and the plenum arising from the making- all these animate the textile, leaving their imprint, the memory of a struggle." 14

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8 Yanagi, 1927, p. 174
9 https://www.bluemountain.school/hostem/collections/clothing?maker=amy-revier
10 Translation: My aim is not to be on a floor, but to raise attention to everything else on our floors. We have killed a soul. I do not expect anyone to want me blown out on their floor, but alas, if only my right corner had been repeated in a mechanical process...
11 Albers.1966. p. 13
12 Yanagi, 1927, p. 172
13 Yanagi, 1927, p. 170
"Here form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read - or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself." (Samuel Beckett about James Joyce)\(^{15}\)

Peter Dormer calls craft a practical philosophy and argues that "almost nothing that is important about craft can be put into words and propositions." Its values are demonstrated through practice, not language. "It makes craft difficult to write about or even talk about with clarity and coherence."\(^{16}\)

But I find it impossible to get around as an artist without being able to talk or write about my work, especially in a rather unestablished art form. In the encounter with the art world, a problem of communication arises. As the basic understanding of weaving among Swedish people is low, though filled with preconceptions, there is a big gap between the weaver and the non-weaver.

In "All about process" (2017) by Kim Grant I read:

Focillon conceived the physical artwork as a “graph of activity” that manifests the artist’s metamorphoses of matter. He insisted on the importance of studying artistic techniques because they allow the viewer to see "the heart of the problem, by presenting it to us in the same terms and from the same point of view as it is presented to the artist. . . .\(^{17}\)

I do not think this distance exists to the same extent between a gallerist and someone who works in an established art form. It’s difficult to feel misunderstood, and one way to get away is to try to work in a way that is easy to talk about, which is understandable to someone with other conceptual frameworks.

But for me weaving is like material-based poetry. Why would I weave something that I could express so much easier through words? Why weave something that could have been painted?

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\(^{15}\) https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/621502-on-turning-to-the-work-in-progress-we-find-that
\(^{16}\) Dormer, Peter.1997. The language and practical philosophy of craft. Dormer, Peter (ed.) 1997. The culture of craft. p. 219
WEAVING AND PAINTING

There is an attraction between weaving and painting.

The weaver longs for the painter’s free movement pattern, where ideas can be directly materialized and color can be placed freely where the painter so desires. While the painter envies the abstract language that comes so naturally while weaving.

The painter that paints on canvases, is dependent on the weave. But the weaver is in no need of painting to create a weave.

WEAVING A PAINTING

Weavers today often talk about painting and about themselves as potential painters, (don’t be surprised if you stumble upon a text about me when I say: Being a weaver is like secretly being a painter, or similar). There are also painters that have become weavers, like Brent Wadden and Ethan Cook, that call their weavings paintings. But what does it do to the understanding and investigation of the woven language when it gets explained as a painting? I thought weavings talked about somethings else? Why weave if it’s paintings we want?

“How explaining [the weavings] as paintings makes sense to me,” Wadden says. “It’s more dealing with the history of painting, less the history of weaving and textile art. I’m an untrained weaver; someone who is traditionally trained would do things a lot differently.”

How could a weaving be a painting? Weaving is not bound to everyday craft or a specific aesthetics. Weaving is very diverse, it is endless. It is almost like you could be the only one in the world doing something, because of the variety of threads and techniques. For me, calling a weavings a painting is to admit to a very narrow perception of what a weave could be, and also to abstain from formulating its today and future. In an interview with Leonore Tawney in Craft Horizon from 1957 I read that “She has been accused by a few weavers of being not a weaver but a painter…” It seems like that when a woven work becomes art, “we” don’t want to accept it as a weaving anymore, it has to be called something else.


Image 7. Ethan Cook


19 Hoff, Margo. 1957. Leonore Tawney: the warp is her canvas. Craft Horizons November / December 1957 (Volume 17, Number 6) p.15

STORY OF THE GALLERY WEAVER

The artist Ethan Cook started as a painter. His interest in the canvas led to the desire to weave it himself, to "take away the barrier that paint presented." In a video posted by Patrick De Brock Gallery on YouTube, he explains "I wanted to make a painting out of color, but I didn’t want to use the paint." What he weaves is colorful plain weave, sewn together like a patchwork. The work looks like his paintings, it deals with color composition, but without paint.

What Ethan Cook and many other weaving artists represented by galleries have in common is that they stretch their weaves like a canvas. Their weaves can no longer be folded or draped over a chair, sewn into something else, they can not function as fabric. The framing makes the weaving easy to look at, while the unframed weaving is more like a body that you have to relate to. Can you touch it? Feel its heaviness? What does the other side look like? You want to dig into the details.

But how could we tolerate "äcklet i känslan av den lealösa tygbiten."? ("The disgust in the feeling of the limp piece of cloth.")

Anni Albers also framed her woven artworks, that she called pictorial weavings. They were interesting from both a technical and artistic perspective, and the framing would encourage you to look at the details in the weave. Framing also can be interesting from a weaver’s perspective.

What would today’s woven paintings be without their frames? Many times they are dependent on it to be read as art. A question to myself: why don’t I just frame my work to get a better chance on the art scene?

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20 Youtube, 2019, Ethan Cook in the studio. Patrick De Brock Gallery. .www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vtl2MgRO00 Time: 1.15
21 Sara Elggren, Facebook message to author, January 28, 2021
THE METHOD OF MISTAKES

One of the primary achievements Focillon ascribes to the artist as a hand maker is the ability to exploit the accidental (…) The artist “takes advantage of his own errors and of his faulty strokes to perform tricks with them . . . he never has more grace than when he makes a virtue out of his own clumsiness.”

I guess there are two very different types of weavers. One that is striving for not making any mistakes, and the other who deliberately tries to create situations where mistakes, the accidental, will occur.

In an interview with Brent Wadden I read that he "changes looms every year or so, in part to make sure that he doesn’t get too good at what he does." A way to be able to keep doing the weavings/paintings that he does, without losing the energy in the work, I guess.

I am also very driven by the mistake, but in another way. I always strive forward technically, to develop my understanding of weaving and its language. By developing you can continue to be a "beginner", if that is what we are after: the beginner’s energy. But it is not that I am very interested in technique, it’s a way to put myself in an unknown territory. In the same manner I do not make any sketches before I weave, the idea is abstract and in my head, more like a phrase than an image. I force myself to be in a situation where I do not now anything about the future, and I have to believe in the decisions that I take.

Willem De Kooning said his paintings had “layers of mistakes buried in them,” but in the weave the mistakes are lined next to each other. An intuitive process, a constant problem-solving, where I try to handle the mess I just made.

A RESEARCH QUESTION

During my first year at the master I was moving away from the idea about the functional weave, aiming for the art scene, comparing weaving to painting. After a while I started to feel like something was missing, maybe it was the honest relationship to the technique. What was even the point with weaving? When I came to the conclusion that I was going to give the rug an honest try, I felt hopeful again. Maybe I could really manage to weave a functional rug after all… I decided to investigate if it was possible for me to combine functionality in a rug with an artistic process, technical exploration and an efficient working schedule.

THE TOOL, THE DRAWLOOM

Since I started this master I have been weaving on a drawloom. The drawloom enables a much freer image composition, a perceived escape from the grid, but it doesn’t mean that I can control every thread. With freedom new struggles arise. I usually customize warps for every weave, making only one piece on every warp. When using the draw loom you have to add about 1,5 meters of yarn in the end of the warp, that you can’t weave. For me this would mean waste material for thousand of crowns on every piece. Starting the second year I realized I have to make a long warp, to save money and time.

To make a long warp is in fact normal for a weaver. I borrowed the term warp family from an interesting lecture about Anni Albers’s working process by Karis Medina, aired by New York Textile Month 2020. By studying Albers pictorial weavings Medina has found out how Albers’s visibly different weavings derive from the same warp. Looking at her weavings like this brings me closer to her work and an understanding of her process.

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22 Grant. 2017. p 91
23 Balzer, 2016
24 Grant, 2017. p. 125
But what happens to the process and the ideas when the warp needs to function for several weaves? How do I decide what to set up?

Facebook message to Amanda, November 2, 2021. “I thought, for example, that weaving, unlike painting, requires a lot of preparation, which in itself encourages a clear idea, since the preparatory work requires some kind of idea (determining technique, materials, set-up). How do you then turn the warp into a white canvas (which in itself is anxiety), but still an opportunity for intuitive creation. Because the weave does not have the same direct movement as the painting, and if you do not have a colored warp, it also does not have the same encounter between colors, which for me is what creates energy in painting. ”

WEAVE 1. "amandine josephine 2020"
Amanda Nordqvist (a co- student) and I discovered that we had similar interest concerning textiles, painting and the art scene. We decided to make a collaboration to start up the last year. Amanda painted a big fabric that I was going to use as rags and I made some weavings for her to paint on. I let the idea about how to work with her fabric decide the organization of the pattern for the whole warp. That means that I had to adapt the following weaves to having mirrored sides and a meeting-point in the center.

When I started to wind the warp I had no idea about how to dye the warp chain, but while I was doing it I came up with a plan about how to organize the dyeing.
Amanda’s fabric, that worked like a sketch that guided me, was not long enough for the whole weave, so in
the middle it’s like an overdose of my struggle, me inventing idea after idea to come to the other side and
find relief in the sketch again.
Finishing the weave I thought I already had answered my research question: No. What I saw as functionality
in a rug, which is a combination of its size, material and technique, but also the right balance for lying on the
floor, felt impossible to combine with an interesting process.

![Image 17](Image 17. Amanda Nordqvist. amandine josephine 2020. 2020)


When I looked at this first weave I felt disgusted by my presence in it. The parts that deals with Amanda’s
fabric were beautiful, but the middle has disturbing shapes. I felt a disgust for my self, longing for something
that *does not show my intestines* ... It is one thing to be oneself in the moment of weaving, another to look at
it in retrospect. One wishes that one’s purest self looked in a different way.

As you will see when you follow my warp journey there is always a striving away from what I just
did, and then longing back. It always takes a while to adjust and distance yourself to what you have done.
Weaving is being very close to the material, you get engaged in the details. To roll out the weave for the first
time is like the chock of having been very close and intimate with someone new, and then see it in full scale,
all its parts at once.
I don’t draw sketches before I weave, and at this point I had the feeling that I also wanted to get rid of the idea, if possible. How much of the flow and feeling of language lies in working with the body and how important is the initial translation of the idea? Can I, like Anni Albers says, listen to the threads? I started to weave without a plan. It led to that I spend so much energy on trying to understand what to do next, and halfway I was considering to cut it off. A thought came to my mind: Who was it that said, I have been to hell and back? And somehow this gave me lust to continue. Varje inslag i väven är en strategi för att orka slutföra. (Each shot in the weave is a strategy to have the strength to complete)

SYMMETRY

Sometimes it may seem like weaving is mainly about being meticulous and to have good patience. I think my weaves look like they do and have evolved in the way they have done because of my lack of patience, or more kindly expressed: thanks to a desire to constantly create change. My patience is so much better now than when I started to weave. I even notice it when I am out running: my brain tells me to continue, once it told me to give up. That’s how I feel when I’m weaving, being in the moment and trying to imagine the joy of finishing. With moments of freedom and passion.

I was happy when I stumbled upon this formulation by Leonore Tawney. I felt a resemblance.

Often halfway through a tapestry especially when it is a big one, the desire to destroy it is almost overpowering. The struggle is like the climbing of a mountain. When one is halfway up it is almost as hard to go back as it is to go forward, but the desire to see and feel what is at the top finally carries one onward.

Image 20. Josefin Gäfvert.”Who was it that said ‘I have been to hell and back’?” 2020

Image 21. Josefin Gäfvert.”Who was it that said ‘I have been to hell and back’?” 2020

26 Albers, 1966. p. ?
27 Hoff., 1957. p. 18
Even if my patience get better, for me becoming a better weaver also means that my ideas become harder to realize, partly because they’ve become more time consuming. Working with something that takes a lot of time and also cost a lot of money makes you aware of the consequences of failing. Why care so much about evolving, when like it feels like it might take me further away from being understood? There are attractions from the world outside that sometimes distracts me. Things that seem easier, that you might earn money from. But when I come back into the loom I loose the strategy, I forget about money.

The main reason that I think I am not suited to make rugs is its need for symmetry, without it a rug doesn’t fit on the floor. A weave with an evolving process works better up straight, on the wall. If a weave looks better on the wall, it feels wrong to place it on the floor.

I am not so fond of symmetry though. As a weaver I am interested in breaking the symmetry. I think something like the weaver Richard Landis:

*He decided early in his career to embrace the "tyranny of the loom," but to challenge it, too. The loom is designed to facilitate repetition, but Landis recalled, “I realized that repeats added no information and had to go. I began searching for systems that would deliver total variation and surprise."*

28 The organization of the pattern that I made in order to work with Amanda’s fabric would be perfect for someone who would like to make a big symmetrical form. But how can I hide or distort the symmetry?

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All this struggle, a lost faith in the rug, made me think about when weaving, and creating, was easy. Sometimes weaving can be experienced as intense and fast, like your weaving body is trying to keep up with your thinking brain. But lately, it has felt slow. As a result, I started to romanticize painting. Painting är en lockelse som stör relationen till bruksföremålet. *

I never thought that I was a genius, didn’t understand that it takes time to find you own language in a technique. When I met weaving 2009, it felt like an art form free from expectations, a place to flourish. Being a weaver was like being a painter, but I didn’t have to be a genius. Could I use my energy as an amateur painter to give energy to my developed skill? Use painting like painters sometimes use weaving? Maybe painting also could be a method to break up symmetry.

* Painting is an attraction that disturbs the relationship to the object of use.

Since I started weaving I have painted fabrics to use as rags, but I have always liked my wool- weaves more. I think this way of working is problematic if my goal is to find honesty in weaving and be true to the technique. Why is the image woven? Can poor image-making be hidden in the weave as a cool idea? Like an uninteresting weaving can come across as art if it’s framed. I thought painting would liberate me, work as a sketch to follow. And it was fun, but what I see now is a competition between the warp and the painted fabric. The warp that I loved and wanted to show, the painting that fills no purpose if it is hidden. A woven image always takes over, because of its linguistic status, it is understandable for us. The backside feels comforting, while I need time to accept the front.

Image 22-23. Josefin Gäfvert. 2020
WEAVE 4. FORNA TIDERS TUNGA

Everyone is in love with the warp
The unwoven warp portrays the dream of the finished weave. While warping, the weaver is still in total control, putting the threads and colors in a pleasing order, like painting stripes on a canvas. Dressing the loom is joyful when having a beautiful warp and everyone who helps praise the warp. Hope for beauty is in the air.

Let's just try to keep the beauty of the warp.

WEAVE 5. SPLASH- L’ORIGINE DU MONDE
Final spurt. My daughter is sick, we make a collaboration in my studio. I want to have fun, weave fast and make it as big as possible according to how little warp there is left. I feel free and when finishing, finally a sensation of satisfaction occurs.

A NEW CANVAS “amandine josephine 2021”
I pull through the rest of the warp, so it gets half the size, re-thread the heddles and weave a new canvas for Amanda.

For me the interest in working with a weaving ends when it’s taken out of the loom. It would feel dishonest to paint on it or add something afterward. My interest lye in dealing with the restrictions of the loom. But I am also interested in why I am provoked by artist that paint on weavings, what is their motive? I guess I have ideas about what pureness is in weaving, that I am interested to challenge. There is a difference in working with the weave as a symbol, or working with it as a thing in itself. I don’t think I could engage in painting on my weave, but Amanda knows how to do that. She can make my shitty weaves into something beautiful. I think it is exciting to collaborate, to put less pressure on yourself and do things you wouldn’t normally do.
**WEAVING- A COLLABORATION**

Weaving in itself is a collaboration. The weaver can blame the loom and the material, or hide behind the technique. That way, there is an opportunity to be brutally honest. And courageous. The different actors in a collaboration doesn’t need to be perfect, what is important is how they work together.

In Isabella Ducrot’s cahier Text on Textile I read about some metaphors connected to weaving and the role of weaving in language. I think this is fascinating, how the relationship between warp and weft has stimulated the fantasy of people in all times all over the world. The tension between the warp and the weft, were the warp is strong and the weft is slack evokes thoughts about the contrasting components that build our world and society.

Normally in a rug, the warp is strong and covered by the weft. But I have always been interested in the relationship between threads, the meeting between warp and weft, and letting them be equal. In the double weave, there is a relationship between two wholes, allowed to be both strong and weak.

Maybe this equality between warp and weft doesn’t go with my desire to make a rug, but I’m starting to feel more open-minded about what a functional rug could be like.
The rug could be an agora, a gathering point, for strong threads. There is so much material gathering there, it’s an opportunity to give a lot of material value. Every weave is a beginning and an end. It is a whole life in there. A place that has a built-in language, while its tactile qualities erase the distance between the body and the art. When we touch it, we stroke our hand over the weaver’s thoughts and feelings.
A NEW WARP FAMILY

In the first warp I had the feeling that I did everything that I didn’t want to do. When I look at the weavings now, I see that several actually even could work as rugs. This is very inspiring to me.

I have been very hard on myself. In this next warp I want to thread it so I can create smaller block patterns, that combine randomness and awareness into an abstract and asymmetrical image, with a lot of play between the layers. I think I learned a lot from the mistakes I made in the first warp, where the shaft point threading was forcing me to adapt a lot. To get a better flow, I want to be able to make decisions without standing at my stool and looking at it from a distance all the time. I want this new family to relate to the first. I’m thinking that I can use pieces from the rugs, or the whole rugs, as sketches for smaller parts in the rugs to come.
CONCLUSION

Can I reach the point where I don’t have to compromise with my creative process to make a functional rug?

Weaving is something that is different from thinking. It has its own language, which does not correspond to the grammar of thought. Between warps, when I’m not in the loom, is a time when lies about weaving are constructed. I forget about the power of the process and the tyranny of the loom. That is when I start longing for, and believing in, the functional rug.

That’s why I, in the beginning of this last year was convinced that I was going to weave rugs, and now when I again prepare a new warp I think "now I know how to do it!". It may seem strange that I strive to weave a rug, when I could direct my production towards the more profitable art world. It is this inner conflict that confuses me as a weaver, and perhaps causes me to end up in the middle of worlds. A place, which I would have no problem with, if it wasn't for my economy. I live with the feeling that weaving has ruined my chances for a good life.

If what I really wanted was to weave a rug, I could have done it. In a way, I always opt out the rug, in favor for the process. The rug is more like a point, to where I strive, but not necessarily want to reach. Anni Albers was fascinated by the skill of the Peruvian weavers, while I have always felt a strong attraction to the Moroccan (Berber)rugs, where the weave is in development until its end. There you find my love for the rug, in the impact of that energy. So, the rug becomes a symbol of the pure weave, something reminiscent of striving for an honest language, and not to be lured by superficialities and clever constructions. Finding what for me feels like an honest relationship with weaving should be the right way to go, whether it leads me to the rug, art or something completely different.

As a weaver, I seek the unknown. I deliberately try to put myself in unknown territory to force myself to trust in the process. I see weaving as a collaboration. The weaver can blame the loom and the material, or hide behind the technique. That way, there is an opportunity to be brutally honest. And courageous.

Normally in a rug the warp is covered by the weft, but I have always been interested in the relationship between threads, the meeting between warp and weft. This meeting is in fact a meeting between colors. That is the joy with weaving, to experience the meeting when it occurs in the loom, something that can be seen in the details. But it can also be frustrating, as the colors always mix. The movement in the weave is always a reaction to what just happened, there is always a striving forward, nothing like the Greek myths where you can unweave your mistakes.

The better weaver I’ve become, the more time-consuming it has become to work with the unpredictable. I like when it goes fast. Sometimes speed is not linked to time, but rather an experience of pace. The long warp that I set up at the beginning of the project was a double weave with wool in one layer and linen warp in the other, adapted to fit the collaboration I did with Amanda Nordqvist where her painted fabric became rags for my weave. What I see as the biggest struggle in this project is the organization of this warp, with its pointed threading, that gives the weave its reflected sides. This works best if you want to work with large pattern shapes. I always strive away from symmetry and repetition, so for me this was difficult. As I do not sketch, I had to spend a lot of time standing on my weaving stool, trying to get a grip on how to continue the form to the end, to get a balanced weave. It was a lot easier to weave the last two weaves, that are smaller.

But the process should not necessarily be easy, however, energy is required to be able to weave, to make those decisions that give the work its force. While I sometimes wanted to take a break from the extended possibilities in the drawloom, I also began to crave for the free movement of the painter. I think it is nostalgia, a kind of escape behavior, glorifying the time when creating was easy. Glorifying the beginner’s energy. As if I were a middle-aged man who could not help but be attracted to the young artist girls, with their dramatic mood swings and tangled hair. A difficulty to accept that these women are getting older, that they are maturing and developing their distinctive character. They can not be required to have the energy of
youth, but their power deepens. As if it was behind a heavy velvet drape. Once a summer wind that gets hold of a curtain.

Many painters have also been attracted to weaving. It is often those who are easy to find, through galleries. In the examples I give, the fabric is treated like a canvas, it refers to painting. I think it is good that weaving is noticed, but at the same time I think it is sad if it is mostly highlighted without the properties of a fabric. It doesn’t want to be touched.

*The meaning with being a weaver is found.* In the suite of industrialization, the weaver is needed to serve as a compass, to give hope, about a new way of dealing with objects. The human presence in the weave, where the train of thoughts is visible, where the mistakes can never be forgotten, where progress and change lead you forward to something that you could never have imagined. This intimate portrait that the rug is, is not as embarrassing for the viewer as for me as a weaver. The rugs are *my* enfants terribles.

Opportunities exist, but are rarely taken. We see the lonely brain’s shortcomings in creating, without the body and the cooperation with the tool. There is no innate meaning with perfection. A hand-woven object can be functional by just being there. Perhaps it is rolled up and rolled out, like in a ceremony when we want to feel something other than a smooth surface. When the wisdom of the aging woman is sought after, even though her buttock has become crumpled and uneven. When we long for other values.

Weaving is a struggle, but it is worth it. It’s everything around it, that is hell.
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Image 3. Josefin Gäfvert, ”Bakom stängda dörrar” (detail), 2021. Double cloth woven on a drawloom.. Wool, cotton, linen. 175x 125  cm.


Image 5. Josefin Gäfvert ”Road to baby” 2017, Photo: Dennis Liljebäck 2017

Image 20. Josefin Gäfvert."Who was it that said 'I have been to hell and back’?”2020. Double cloth woven in a drawloom Wool, linen. 160x125 cm.
Image 21. Josefin Gäfvert."Who was it that said 'I have been to hell and back’?”2020. Double cloth woven in a drawloom Wool, linen. 160x125 cm. Process picture
Image 22-23. Josefin Gäfvert. 2020
Image 37. Josefin Gäfvert. 2021 Image from studio when preparing för warpfamily 2

Appendix images.
APPENDIX
REFLECTION

THE EXAMINATION EXHIBITION

My idea for the examination exhibition was to place the weaves in a way that would make the visitor move around them, come close and get a bodily, intimate experience. The fronts of the weaves were placed in different directions, so to be able to see the front of every weave you had to go to the other side of the room. I understood that to the visitor it wouldn’t be obvious what was the front and the back of the weave. By putting the weaves in front of each other, working with the depth of the room, I made it impossible to see all the pieces by just standing still. I hoped that this way of hanging could activate the visitor to pay more attention to details and think about how the weaves are constructed. The backsides were given an important role in the exhibition.

It happens to me now and then that people say that they prefer the backside. I guess it is because it often is left “unfinished”, it is a rawer version of the front. In this project the backsides functioned as something comforting for me, while I needed time to accept and be able to stand the fronts. Maybe because the back is less private to me, it is just a coincidental outcome of the choices I made on the front.

Some days before the installation of the exhibition I put my weaves up on the wall in the corridor and took photos of them. That was a depressing moment, realizing that my work looked really small on the white huge wall, and that they didn’t look good together. I felt a bit secured by the fact that my work was going to be placed in the middle of Vita havet, because then I could work in different depths and use the fronts and backs together, as I also did. But still while hanging the exhibition the first time I was still a bit ashamed of my work. I wasn’t ready to see all the fronts at once.
THE EXAMINATION

I don’t think the examination raised so many questions, it was more of a nice conversation. It was mostly about the process of weaving. I thought that I was going to get more questions about the hanging. Like, why are they hanging? Why are some of them more “finished” than others? And maybe something about my choice of hanging construction. I think that these thoughts reflect what I was doing just before the exhibition, things like taking decisions about how to finish the edges of the weaves and making channels on the backs for the hanging.

I chose to finish some of my weaves in my conventional way, with fringes, and left some of them more raw. The reason for that is that I wanted to make the best choice for every piece, not treating them as a series, but rather as characters in a (warp) family. I also know that non-weavers often appreciate loose threads, to see the raw material, and I am interested in reaching out to people. But I wouldn’t make that kind of a choice to please someone else, it was my own will. Maybe it speaks about my journey, once again giving up the hand-woven rug. Or how I began to understand, or accept, the role of the rug in my process.

I didn’t experience that the finishing of the weaves influenced if people liked them or not, people choose their favorite based on other criteria.

What I learned from this exhibition was that it wasn’t obvious for the visitors what was the back and the front, which isn’t a problem, but it is a bit boring if people don’t see the fronts at all because they expect that there is only one view point. In a group exhibition people might not take the time to investigate so much, and this kind of hanging could work better in a smaller space. Personally I liked the energy walking in-between the weavings and meeting them up-close.
IN- BETWEEN EXHIBITIONS

Before the examination I had prepared the second warp family, so after the examination I could just start to weave. I got the same space in the Spring Exhibition as in the examination so I really wanted to have one or two new weaves to put in the exhibition, to create some tension and excitement in the hanging process. I didn’t want to repeat the same hanging, because for me repeating something means doing something again with less energy.

During this period I also had an exhibition together with two other weavers at Konsthall in Årsta. Seeing my weavings in this totally different setting made me like them more.

I think that one of the difficulties with being a weaver is to understand where I belong. I oscillate between the idea of doing more functional based work and being an artist. This confusion makes it difficult to take confident decisions. I guess this is the theme of my work during this master. Some days before the building of the spring exhibition I just realized that I think that I in my heart am a gallery artist. Easier to think than to realize, but this insight gave me an idea about how to hang the spring exhibition.

THE SPRING EXHIBITION

In the spring exhibition I wanted to give every weave space. Instead of making it into a bodily experience I wanted it to be a more visual one. In comparison to the first warp family the two new weavings felt raw and messy. I started to call them ”käftsmällar” (slaps in the face) after a tutoring with Bella Rune. I wanted to make a more conventional, well-balanced line of Warp family 1, every weave on the same height and with the same distance in-between. The two ”käftsmällarna” would be like two punches, bam bam, messing with it and adding some energy to the installation. I let them be like they were, fresh from the loom. I made some test knots to tie them to the stick, and put it up like that. Warp family 1 now seemed much more sophisticated than before.

The ”käftsmällar” could also be seen as enlargements of the weave behind them, (”Who was it that said ’I have been to hell and back’?”), like it was zoomed in.

I’m very pleased with putting the frontsides in the same direction this time, but I think it was the contrast with the last two weaves that made it work. I enjoy being able to sit and look at something for a long time, without needing to interact. But the two ”käftsmällar” also created a nice gap where you could stand and feel close to the weave.

It became a very pleasant exhibition in Vita havet with all the colors and materials, almost too pleasant and playful. For me my work is more about struggles, about trying to deal with life. They are colorful, but not happy. Two weeks before the spring exhibition when I exhibited the same weaves at Konsthall in Årsta in a very different space, the weaves looked almost animal- like. The space influence the experience of the work a lot. That is good to remember.

I think that I could have written a better text for the exhibition and I would have liked to have the titles of the weaves present in the space. When we were going to hand in the text I didn’t know if I was going to be able to make any new weaves, so I couldn’t really write about the warp families. I think that it would have been good with that information, because people seems interested in how things are made. The information that the 4 weaves in the back come from the same ”settings”, even though they look so different, is adding a lot of understanding to the work.

One thing that always can get better is the hanging construction. This is something I might need to do in collaboration with someone that works with metal or wood.

I have a lot of things to think about when it comes to how to continue. My goal is to try to work more in cohesive series, because I’m tired of running all the time. I always want to continue forward, develop the idea, but maybe that could be done in a less dramatic way.

1 Now they are titled: ”Storm och saknad” I&II
PICTURES FROM THE SPRING EXHIBITION

"Storm och saknad" I & II in front of "Who was it that said 'I have been to hell and back'?"