



Barbara Sawyer, Large Red Weave (detail). From the Barbara Sawyer Archive at University Archives and Special Collections Centre, UAL. BSY/3/3/1/1 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Woven Expression: Narrating Stories through Patterns

Alexandru Balgiu, Claire Barber, Srabani Ghosh, Egle Jauncems, Yelena Popova, and Patricia Tavares, with objects from the Barbara Sawyer Archive

3 – 9 July 2023

Preview: Monday 3 July, 6 - 8.30pm

Opening hours:

Monday - Friday, 11am - 8pm

Saturday - Sunday 11am – 5pm

Woven Expression: Narrating Stories through Patterns is an exhibition curated by **2022/23 MA Curating and Collections** students at Chelsea College of Arts, UAL, in collaboration with the **Archives and Special Collections Centre (ASCC)** at London College of Communication, and **Chelsea Space**.

Patterns are a universal element, forming a projection of experience which extends into an infinite field. They serve as an instrument to interpret and perceive the world. *Woven Expression* investigates patterns as a language, within diverse mediums, to demonstrate its communicative capabilities in the context of contemporary art.

The exhibition takes inspiration from the archive of British weaver and educator **Barbara Sawyer** (1919–1982), who taught at Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts for over 30 years. Sawyer's textile works have recently been catalogued at the ASCC. In dialogue with the archival material, the works of six contemporary artists – **Alexandru Balgiu, Claire Barber, Srabani Ghosh, Egle Jauncems, Yelena Popova, and Patricia Tavares** – expand on the communicative dimensions of patterns through sculpture, installation, sound, and writing.

The patterns demonstrated in Sawyer's work were methodically annotated and unpacked in her sketchbooks and teaching notes. Reflecting on this, *Woven Expression* looks at how patterns can be used to capture, document and respond to specific memories, histories and experiences. Textile patterns have traditionally embodied language, poetry, and singing, encoding symbolic meanings in the arrays and colours of warp and weft. While Sawyer's archive offers extensive examples of patterns in weaving, the exhibition expands beyond textiles, investigating the application of patterns in various media across contemporary artists' practices.

Alongside the exhibition, a panel discussion with artists **Raisa Kabir** and **Ghfar Tajmohammad** will explore the themes of identity and personal and political histories. An Instagram live talk with designer **Alexandru Balgiu** will introduce his practice and his work on the publication as an artistic extension to the exhibition. The curators of the exhibition will lead daily curatorial walkthroughs, offering insight into the artworks and ideas of the show.

Alexandru Balgiu is an American graphic designer who delves into concrete poetry and the integration of language, writing, and design. Balgiu has developed Designing Writing as a patterned approach to weaving a more comprehensive form of meaning-making. He will respond to the exhibition through his unique artistic lens of Designing Writing.

Claire Barber is a British artist who explores the interplay between textiles and the environment in her art practice. In her recent project, she integrates individual

experiences and perceptions of the surrounding environment into her process of stitchery in collaboration with Gavin Osborn, a musician. By identifying metronomic frequencies across various elements, she creates distinctive embroidery patterns resembling maps.

Srabani Ghosh is an Indian visual artist and sculptor, based in London. Ghosh tells the stories of transregional and cross-cultural encounters within her works (India and Europe). She applies patterns that represent her heritage to the experiments of large-scale fluid forms and diverse narrative focuses, also with expansive approaches in terms of ceramic and paper media.

Egle Jauncems is a Lithuanian artist who currently works and lives in London. Jauncems' visual analysis revolves around found imagery, textual fractions and overheard conversations. Later, she transforms these fragments – through the act of painting, drawing and stitching – into objects. In the process, she weaves different threads to create a poetic sphere between the rational and the irrational, the modern and the primitive.

Yelena Popova is a Russian artist who works and lives in Nottingham. Popova works with diverse media (painting, video, and installation), and uses semiotic patterns and materiality to explore cultural intersections under capitalism and industrialisation. She also implicates a sense of internal equilibrium within her work.

Patricia Tavares is a Brazilian artist based in London. She delves into mediums and techniques grounded in feminism and a contemporary perspective to reinterpret her personal family memories and cultural identity. In response to the exhibition, Tavares will weave an artwork using textiles cut from women's clothing. Through this engagement she aims to explore and unveil the narratives intrinsic to women's experiences.

The **Barbara Sawyer Archive** is open to the public. A sample of the Archive can be consulted online at <https://digitalcollections.arts.ac.uk/collection/?code=BSY>. The Archive can be viewed in person at the **Archives and Special Collections Centre** at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. For further information, please visit <https://www.arts.ac.uk/students/library-services/special-collections-and-archives/archives-and-special-collections-centre> or to book an appointment please email: archive-enquiries@arts.ac.uk. Follow on Instagram @ual_archives

Curated by:

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to: Gaia Giacomelli, Lynton Talbot, Jacqueline Winston-Silk, Zoe Buckberry and Gavin Osborn.

Ends

Press Information

For further information, images or to discuss interviews please contact:
Karen Di Franco or Gaia Giacomelli at Chelsea Space via email info@chelseaspace.org

Notes to Editors

- **Images and further information** are available upon request.
- **Note on language:** warp and weft are the basic constituents of all textiles; respectively, the horizontal and vertical threads on a loom that are crossed over and under each other to make cloth.
- **Hours:** Wednesday – Monday - Friday, 11am - 8pm, Saturday - Sunday 11am – 5pm
- **About: Chelsea Space** is a public exhibiting space, sited on the Millbank campus of Chelsea College of Arts, where invited art and design professionals are encouraged to work on experimental curatorial projects. See: www.chelseaspace.org
- In copy please refer to **Chelsea Space** and not 'The Chelsea space.'
- **Chelsea College of Arts** is one of the world's leading art and design institutions.
- Located at Millbank, next door to Tate Britain, Chelsea specialises in Fine Art, Graphic Design and Interior and Textiles Design. Since its origins in the 19th century, the College has produced many of the greatest names in the arts, including: Quentin Blake (illustrator and author) Ralph Fiennes (film and stage actor), Anish Kapoor (sculptor), Steve McQueen (artist), Chris Ofili (artist), Alan Rickman (film and stage actor), Alexei Sayle (comedian) and Gavin Turk (sculptor).

Operating at the heart of the world's creative capital, **University of the Arts London** is a vibrant international centre for innovative teaching and research in arts, design, fashion, communication and the performing arts. The University is made up of six Colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Art. Renowned names in the cultural and creative sectors produced by the University include 12 Turner prize winners and over half of all nominees, 10 out of 17 fashion designers named British Designer of the Year, more than half of the designers showcased in London Fashion Week and 12 out of 30 winners of the Jerwood Photography Award.