

INTERWOVEN

Master Weavers
Community
Cross Cultural
Intergenerational

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About Interwoven:

Presented by the La Trobe Art Institute and Multicultural Arts Victoria, Bendigo Cultural Hub, Interwoven is a cross-cultural and trans-generational weaving collaboration. Part workspace, part exhibition, Interwoven brings people from diverse backgrounds together through the process of weaving. The project celebrates the work of the artist in the context of an overarching thematic framework that draws from research into the creative practices of the weavers included in the project.

The idea of Interwoven is as much about the techniques, knowledge and materials of weaving, as it is about encouraging people to pick up and weave threads of conversation, exchanging ideas between cultures and generations.

Regina Pilawuk Wilson, Sun Mat (Detail), 2008, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200cm. Private Collection. © Regina Pilawuk Wilson, courtesy Durumu Arts, Peppimenarti.

Before you visit:

- Research the artists
- Research these words: warp, weft, loom, shuttle, yarn, filling, heddle, shed, warp, sett
- Research weaving techniques – Durumu, Saouri, Karen, etc
- Bring with you an interesting topic of conversation to share, for example - something you left behind to be here and - something about yourself that will help us know and understand you better, perhaps about an interest, hobby or life experience - something you hope to experience or learn while you are here.

During Your Visit:

- What form(s) of weaving did you see today?
- What did you learn about that technique?
- Why do you think so many cultures continue to make things by hand?
- What is it about sitting together, making something that encourages conversation?
- Is there something someone shared about themselves today that you'd like to understand better or discuss further?
- Is there something about your experience here—an idea, a feeling, or a question—that you want to take with you and remember, or think about some more?

About the Master Weavers:

Ilka White makes fabric and sculptures and enjoys working with people in the community from a variety of different backgrounds. Her art-making and her approach to teaching is influenced by her experience of the natural world and her strong interest in world textile traditions (fabric making in other cultures) and the principals (rules) of sustainability.

Ilka has taught Weaving, Art and its History at University for 12 years and now teaches at the Handweavers and Spinners Guild and runs workshops right across the country. She has travelled throughout Australia and overseas making immersive work in response to country and leading arts projects in regional and remote communities.

Ilka’s popular classes reflect her love of the handmade and make contemporary use of traditional making methods. She is a great believer in the ability of beauty and creativity to lift the spirit.



When weaving, we need a set of strong, straight threads that hold the shape of the fabric and form its structure. These threads are called the **WARP**.

We also need flexible thread that can be woven over and under the warp threads, this is called the **WEFT**.

While the warp provides the essential foundation of the fabric, it is the weft that provides colour, pattern and interest.

There are many examples of objects, activities and places where a balance of structure and flexibility are required for success. For example, the architecture of the gallery is a rigid structure (like a warp) and the art and people within it are diverse and changeable (like the weft).

Aunty Marilyn Nicholls is a generational weaver (taught by her mother Letty Nicholls) and the only Victorian weaver practising the open coil technique. She is connected to fresh water and salt water Country of Dja Dja Wurrung, Barrappa Barrappa, Yorta Yorta, Watti Watti, Latji Latji, Yulpagulp and Ngarrindjeri.

Aunty Marilyn skilfully combines the characteristics of the grasses she weaves with her cultural and environmental knowledge to produce woven forms, mats and baskets.



The balance between structure and flexibility is one of the key themes of *Interwoven*.

What other examples can you think of where there is both a structure (a warp) and flexibility (weft)?

What would it be like if everything was structured like the warp?

What would happen if everything was flexible like the weft?

While people are weaving fabric in the *Interwoven* space their experiences and stories are woven together too.

Regina Pilawuk Wilson, a Ngan’gikurrungurr woman, was born in 1948 in the Daly River region of the Northern Territory. In 1973, Regina and her husband, Harold Wilson, founded (started) the Peppimenarti (meaning ‘large rock’) community as a permanent settlement for the Ngan’gikurrungurr people.

The community is located near an important dreaming site for the Ngan’gikurrungurr language group amid wetlands and floodplains at the centre of the Daly River Aboriginal Reserve, 300 kilometres south west of Darwin.

Regina says, “the weaving method is the same as the stitch used in weaving the warragarri (dilly bag), except bigger. The pinbin vine (bush vine) grows near the river and is stripped into fibres that are then woven onto the net. The syaw is used to catch fish, prawn and other edible living creatures in the creeks and rivers.”



Activities:

Warp or Weft?

In the *Interwoven* workshop space, try one of the structured weaving activities provided.

Next, try making something from the materials provided any way you like. What did you find?

Did you prefer structure or flexibility? What worked best for you?

Weaving Conversation

Work in pairs to make a weaving from any ‘weavable’ material. You could use ribbon or yarn, or experiment with natural and recycled materials such as grasses, strips of old fabric, or even plastic.

Bendigo Emerge Cultural Hub celebrates diverse cultures through creative activity. The hub provides opportunities for people of different cultures to come together and make art and experience the art of others. Emerge encourages participation in the arts through activities led by artists and community members that have come from refugee and Indigenous backgrounds.

The weaving on display in the gallery is the work of Paw Kyi Pai (pronounced poor-chee Pi). The artist is part of Bendigo’s Karen community and enjoys a close connection with Multicultural Arts Victoria’s Emerge Cultural Hub in Bendigo.



Create a strong warp - it could be rectangular or circular like the examples in the *Interwoven* workspace - secure it at both ends so that it is steady when you weave.

Now, take turns to weave.

The person weaving takes the role of the **LISTENER**, and the other person is the **STORYTELLER**.

Do you find it easier to talk to someone when you are working together?