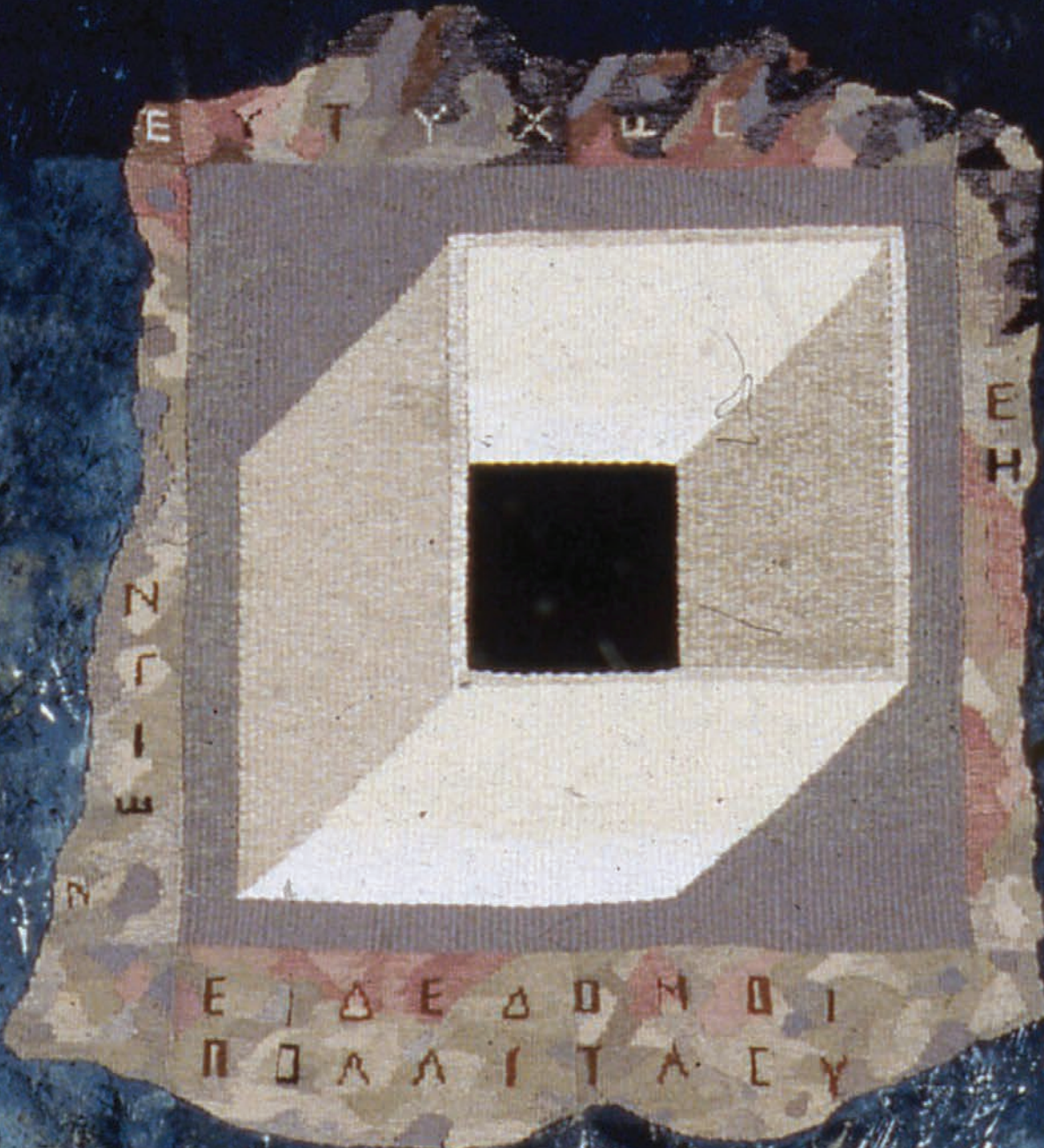


Diana Wood Conroy

An Archaeology of Woven Tapestry





Director's Foreword

For over five decades, Diana Wood Conroy has interwoven her passions for art, history, and education into an extraordinary career as an artist, archaeologist, academic, and mentor. In her eightieth year, this retrospective exhibition celebrates the vast richness of Diana's artistic practice and the interlaced worlds she has explored through her delicate weavings, drawings, and paintings.

Central to Diana's work is her deep reverence for the past and her ability to connect it with the present through her vivid textiles. Her tapestries embrace classicism and the repetitive patterns of Aboriginal art, inviting viewers to ponder the stories and histories embedded within each strand. With subtle mastery of tone and colour, Diana's weavings carry a profound gravitas that speaks to the weight of civilisations and knowledge inherited across millennia.

Yet Diana's art is not merely representational, but a way of synthesising and transmitting her processes of inquiry, observation, and making to others. Drawing has been an essential conceptual tool, with Diana taking up pen, pencil, and watercolour daily to give form to her artistic considerations before transposing them into fibre. Since the early 1990s, she has ingeniously combined drawing and tapestry into remarkable integrated compositions.

For Diana, art and life are truly inextricable, woven together much like the warp and weft of her tapestries. Her work is imbued with an infectious sense of wonder and the pure joy of creation she has embraced across myriad roles – as a committed artist, influential educator, avid researcher, and above all, a lover of knowledge.

Throughout her distinguished career, Diana has mastered the intricate interconnections between disciplines. Her archaeological expertise and insights into ancient textiles have immeasurably enriched her art. Likewise, her artistic sensibilities have shed new light on her material culture studies. Diana's generous spirit has also allowed her to become a pivotal mentor, supporting countless students and colleagues while elevating textile arts to the forefront of creative inquiry.

This exhibition presents a culminating selection of Diana's remarkable oeuvre, laying bare her intertwined worlds of classicism, indigenous cultures, and personal narratives through an array of tapestries, paintings, and drawings. For those who have learned from and been inspired by Diana, it stands as a testament to her enduring spirit of curiosity, creation, and the shared human experiences rendered exquisitely in thread.

We would like to thank Diana for sharing this enlightening exhibition with Wollongong Art Gallery and the community. We hope you take the opportunity to visit and explore the exciting world Diana has created.

John Monteleone
Program Director
Wollongong Art Gallery



A word from Kay Lawrence

During the last fifty years my friend Diana Wood Conroy has developed a distinguished, internationally recognised, career as a practitioner, scholar, and educator in the discipline of textiles, bringing her practice as an archaeologist and collaboration with First Nation's artists to enrich and expand the field.

This retrospective exhibition of her work *An Archaeology of Woven Tapestry* at the Wollongong Art Gallery presents a substantial body of textiles and paintings spanning many decades. Diana's life-long interest in the ancient world has enabled her to make connections across centuries and hemispheres, linking European myth to Australian place with its deep past of Indigenous inhabitation. Lately there has been a resurgence of interest in textiles internationally, with exhibitions of major figures from the 1960s and 1970s like Annie Albers, Magdalena Abakanowicz and Leonore Tawney being shown in major exhibitions in London and New York. In Australia too, textiles flourished in these decades with woven artworks commissioned for important public buildings in Sydney from artists like Mona Hessing, Jutta Feddersen and Diana Wood Conroy. Diana's exhibition provides a great resource for the groundswell of interest in textiles from young contemporary artists eager to incorporate the materiality, meanings and processes of textiles into their work.

Most significantly, a pioneering life in art-making is on display at the Wollongong Art Gallery, a life that has revolved around love for the beautiful art of woven tapestry, a love I share.

Emeritus Professor Kay Lawrence AM, South Australia.

A note from Craig Barker

Art and archaeology inform Diana's long relationship both with the Chau Chak Wing Museum and the University of Sydney through her involvement with the Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project in Paphos, Cyprus. This is an interdisciplinary project working on the archaeological remains of the theatre precinct of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed ancient capital city of Cyprus, Nea Paphos.

I have the great privilege to direct these archaeological excavations and have now worked alongside Diana for more than two and a half decades. In this role she has participated in many seasons of excavations, overseen the research and publication of significant Roman fresco wall paintings, and worked alongside Cypriot and international colleagues in the study of ancient textiles. Most importantly, she has facilitated new conversations between visual arts and archaeology through programs of artists' involvement in the excavations and through exhibitions of creative works in both Australia and Cyprus, both as a solo artist and alongside other artists.

Diana's exhibition *An Archaeology of Woven Tapestry* is shaped by insights from the excavation of the Hellenistic-Roman theatre, set amongst ancient mosaics in the mesmerising island of Cyprus. In her tapestries and drawings, these insights from that ancient Mediterranean world are placed into the living context of the Illawarra.

Dr Craig Barker

Director of the Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project
Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney



Portrait of the artist as if she were a forest 1



Sun and Moon. 1971. Woven tapestry, wool weft on dark blue wool warp. 1.02 x 1.35m. Collection John and Jann Wood.



The years of my marriage to Joseph were spent in a remote part of sub-tropical New South Wales, in an area of eucalypts and rainforest inhabited by marvellous birds and animals who continually invaded our never quite completed house. Bandicoots, koalas and goannas ventured inside, honeyeaters and bowerbirds flew in and out of the studio (delicate bits of shit in the wool baskets), small tree bats and green frogs lived in the eaves, not to mention a swarming variety of insects. 1993.

Left page: *Katabasis/Going down: Fragment with grapes and a roundel*. 1993. Gouache and gesso on paper with woven wool tapestry on cotton warp. 53cm x 1.19m. Artist Collection. Photograph Rowan M. Conroy.

Portrait of the artist as if she were a forest 2



Forest with rocks and birds. 1970. Woven tapestry in hand-spun and natural dyes. 90cm x 1.2m. Collection David Carment. This tapestry was the first tapestry I sold, bought by my art-loving Auntie Diana Carment. All the Carment tapestries have been hung in the family house in Mosman since the 1970s.



Belling studio 1984. Photograph Jennifer Steele.



Tree with lichen. 1980-81. Woven tapestry, wool on linen warp. 1.15 x 1.15m. Commissioned by Dr Delaforce, Coffs Harbour NSW. Artist Collection.



Forest circle with three trees. 1980. Woven tapestry wool on cotton warp. 1.1 x 1m. Collection David Carment. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.



Hill of leaves. 1982. Wool on linen warp. 1 x 2m. Collection Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania.

The Unfurling Time of Making

You cannot think about the work of Diana Wood Conroy without thinking about time. This is not just because of the labour-intensive nature of her chosen medium of tapestry, but because her own biography seems to return us repeatedly to the different ways human cultures and practices understand time. Her initial training as an archaeologist and her subsequent work with artists on Bathurst Island and other First Nations communities in the Northern Territory have exposed her to two radically different temporal relationships: the archaeologist's perception of time as stratified and linear on the one hand and on the other how time in the cosmology of First Nations people operates as a continuous, looping present. To these I would add a third: the durational time of making, which in its slow incremental unfolding might act as an analogy for individual lived experience.

In Diana's hands, the ordering principles of archaeology and tapestry have provided a metaphoric framework for understanding the disparate and sometimes contradictory worlds which she has inhabited. Her project is not to homogenise them but to make her peace with them, giving each a voice and letting them speak to each other. In doing this, she positions herself as an observant and sensitive witness at the edge of the specific times and cultures of which she has been a part, always aware that she is standing on shifting ground.

Between 1992 and 1998 Diana made a series of works about the Shellal Mosaic, the remnant of the floor of a sixth-century Christian church souvenired by troops of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division after the second battle of Gaza in 1917. The Mosaic has been a major item in the Australian War Memorial's collection since its inception. At the time of her encounter with the Mosaic she had recently moved from Bellingen in northern NSW to the Illawarra. She had been investigating the landscape of her new home through drawings and paintings of the ground at nearby beach midden sites and in the rainforest on the Illawarra escarpment, mindful particularly of places where First Nations and European occupancy overlapped. The Mosaic was not her first experience of displaced classical artefacts: as a young student she had worked with the Nicholson Museum's collection of

antiquities in the University of Sydney, but in the Mosaic's displacement she saw a kind of resonance with her own.

One work in the Shellal Mosaic series seems to encapsulate Diana's major themes. *Katabasis/Going Down: Fragment with hindquarters of a rabbit* is a collage of watercolour, drawing and tapestry illustrating the formal motifs of the Mosaic. A series of arabesques unfurl across the work, painted sketchily in white gouache against a dark ground, each curve forming a roundel from which hang vine leaves and bunches of grapes. The sole point of colour in the work is a tiny tapestry element depicting a rabbit or hare leaping out of one of the roundels, its head and forelegs seeming to disappear into the blackness of the drawing that surrounds it.

The tapestry fragment floats on the surface of the work, its edges painstakingly lined up with the corresponding elements of the drawing. Into the fragment is compressed all the freshness and vitality of the original image from the Mosaic, rendered even more poignant by what is left out or missing. In this treatment we can read Diana's own history as an archaeological illustrator whose job it was to conjecture what a hypothetical whole might have looked like from the evidence of surviving fragments. But we can also read here an archaeologist's understanding of the operation of time on the material world: how most things slip into oblivion and what we see in museums are always fragmentary, simply the things that have survived.

The Shellal Mosaic has come to rest in a world unknown to its makers. To contemplate it is to imagine the uneasy ground it has occupied, mirrored in the dark painted surface of the work, which Diana has rendered even more complex by creating her painting over rubbings she took of the rainforest floor near a friend's house in Jamberoo. Here, then, she creates an improbable juxtaposition in which the fragmentary ground of the Mosaic is brought together with that of her home country, peopled by its indigenous occupants for millennia before the Mosaic floor was ever laid.

What holds the two together is the frozen leap of the rabbit, depicted first by the unknown makers of the Mosaic and painstakingly re-rendered over a thousand years later in the slow time of Diana's



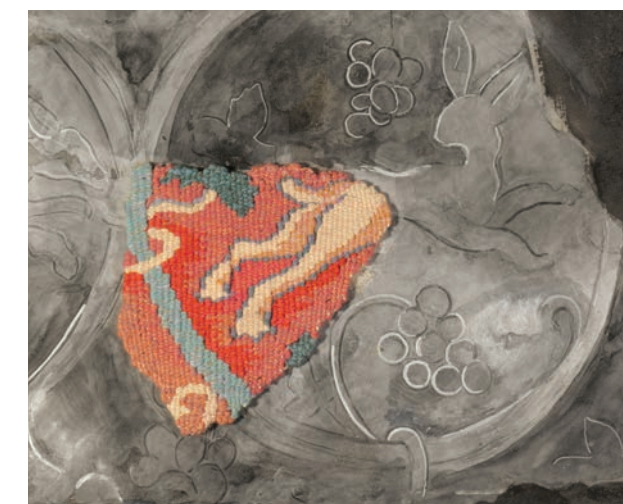
Left page: *Katabasis/Going down: Fragment with hindquarters of a rabbit*. 1993. Gouache and gesso on paper with woven wool tapestry on cotton warp. 53cm x 1.19m. Artist Collection. Photograph Rowan M. Conroy.

weaving. It seems to inhabit an eternal present, forever leaping from the time and place of Diana's loom into the inscrutable field of the past. Into the tiny fragment she has condensed the slowly unfurling time of its making: the rhythm of the shuttle between warp and weft, certainly, but all the incidental life moments that accompanied it: the pauses for cups of tea, the sound of birds outside her studio window, the thumping of her adolescent sons' feet overhead. Here we might read the way in which our subjective lives seem to take place in a capacious, continuously unfolding sense of the present, yet the span of each human existence is barely a blink in the eye of eternity.

The ancient Greeks used the term *Kairos* to refer to the timely or spontaneous moment for an action to take place. Significantly, one of its etymological roots is associated with weaving, where it is likened to the space created in the instant when warp and weft separate, allowing the shuttle to pass between. I cannot help thinking of the rabbit disappearing into that space in Diana's loom, seizing its decisive moment to elude capture through its leap forwards and backwards in time. I imagine it journeying into multiple levels of the past, perhaps encompassing the times of Diana's own history, when her father was stationed during the Second World War in what was then Palestine,

not far from Shellal. Even now, over thirty years from the moment she cut the little weaving fragment from her loom, the rabbit's journey still speaks to us as it leaps forward into our present and we gaze at it afresh, with our minds full of news images of the ruins of Gaza.

Anne Brennan
Canberra 2024

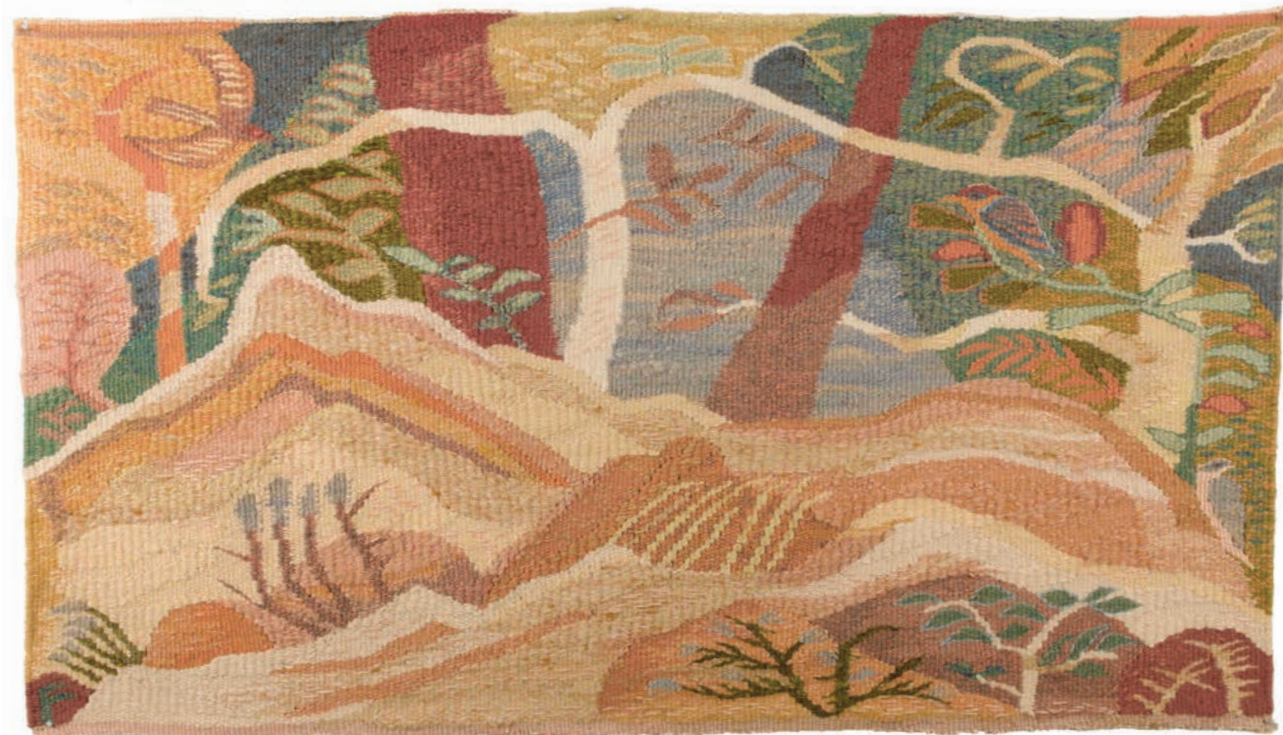


Detail: *Katabasis/Going down: Fragment with hindquarters of a rabbit*. 1993. Gouache and gesso on paper with woven wool tapestry on cotton warp. 53cm x 1.19m. Artist Collection. Photograph Rowan M. Conroy.

What is woven tapestry?

'Pick', 'thrum' and 'shed' were words I learnt with my first weaving teacher Ruth Hurlle at the Stanhope Institute London in 1969. From the beginning, the technique of woven tapestry enthralled me. At night after work in the British Museum as an illustrator, the small frame loom was brought out at the bed sitting room which we rented in Notting Hill Gate. The loom, the mechanism that supports the threads, is defined as a 'tensioning device'. The vertical warp is stretched tight across top and bottom bars, the picks or rows of weft are beaten tight through the vertical threads, often made up of coloured thrums or short ends of yarn. Tapestry weaving is made by a 'discontinuous weft', that is, the weft does not go in one arc across the fabric to each end or selvedge, it makes detours and subtleties twisting around in between the selvedge of the tapestry.

The loom itself is a notional shelter, like a child's drawing of a house. The weave builds up like a wall, from the bottom up. The fabric is a dense, firm structure, with the image embedded in it through the actual crossing of warp and weft. The opening between the vertical warp and the horizontal weft is called a 'shed'. The weft describes a form by making its own distinctive mark, such as small ridges or tiny holes, which occur as the weft thread turns to make the shape you want, always in relation to the other shapes. A tapestry weaver has to think in terms of the negative spaces around the positive subject. I explored techniques derived from carpetmaking such as



soumak ¹ and knotted pile that give a three-dimensional sculptural quality to a tapestry. Weaving my own images through the rhythm of the interlacing warp and weft became the pattern of my life.

Making tapestry is slow: this exhibition represents at least ten thousand hours of weaving.

Architects Noel Bell-Ridley Smith were commissioned to build an underground chapel in 1983 by Pastor Norman Armstrong and the then Revival Life Centre (now Revival Church) at Penshurst in Sydney. The tapestry was paid for by a member of the congregation in memory of his late wife. When Paul Sharrad rediscovered the existence of the tapestry in 2023 it was hung in the church hall. After hanging for 25 years or so in the apse of the church, above a baptismal pool, it was removed to enable the installation of digital screens and sound. In 2023, people remembered playing under it as children forty years ago. *Creation* was a memory of 'mille fiori' (thousand flowers) 15th century European tapestries.



Top: *Creation* 1983-84 in studio. Woven tapestry in wool on linen warp with silk inlay. 2.5 x 3m. Commissioned for the Revival Life Centre, Sydney, through the Sydney architects Noel Bell-Ridley Smith.

Bottom left: Portrait of Diana weaving *Creation*. Jennifer Steele 1984. Analogue slides re-mastered digitally by Rowan Conroy.

Left page top: *Tree with rocks*. 1981. Woven tapestry, wool and silk on cotton warp. 90cm x 1.5m. Collection Jane Munro. Photograph Rowan M Conroy. Centre.

Left page bottom left: *Desert near Ewaninga with two parrots*. 1985. Wool tapestry on linen warp. 1.17 x 1.73m. Collection Liz Jeneid. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.

Left page bottom right: *Arid lands*. 1981. Woven tapestry, wool and silk on a cotton warp. 1 x 1.4m. Collection Jane Munro. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.

¹ Soumak is a type of flat weave which is looped around warp threads to form a plait-like effect. It can be a strong and thick weave, outlining and defining the main motifs in a tapestry. The technique derives from Central Asia.

Colour as presence: Architectural commissions 1972 – 1988



The Glory of the Lord. 1973. Woven tapestry, wool on linen warp 2.7 x 2.7m. Collection Menzies College, Macquarie University. The photo shows *Glory* in Bellingen with Joseph Conroy who designed and built our home in the forest on North Bank Road. The house in fact acted as a loom for the big tapestries, attached to beams and sheltered by the roof. Commissioned by architects Noel Bell and Ridley Smith for the Dining Hall at their newly designed and constructed Menzies College at Macquarie University, Sydney.

Tapestry commissions: Noel Bell Ridley Smith Architects

From 1972 until 1985 I worked for the architects Noel Bell and Ridley Smith, North Sydney, who designed buildings for the fast-growing centre of Sydney, a city brimming with new projects of an international scope after the opening of the Sydney Opera House in October 1973. I was one of many weavers such as Alexander Ian Arcus (1943-2022), Jutta Feddersen (1931-2021) Margaret Grafton (1930-2004) and Mona Hessing (1933-2001) who had commissions in NSW of large woven works to offset the glass and steel constructions and give an ambience of warmth and richness through natural materials and the work of the hand. Through the architects NBRS as well as architects Emile Jansen and Aldo Moratelli I received many commissions for public and private tapestries. Tapestry weaving had become welded to modern architecture, first through its revival in the Bauhaus (Germany) and France in the early 20th century, followed by new tapestry workshops evolving, for example, in Poland, the UK and the USA. In Australia the Victorian (now Australian) Tapestry Workshop was established in 1976. Unlike the workshop model, I was an artist/weaver doing all the designing and weaving by myself in my own studio. For the fast-growing universities in Sydney I made a tapestry *Flower Circle* for the Student Union in the Merewether Building at the University of Sydney in 1972, followed by *Glory* at Menzies College at Macquarie University in 1973.



Life at The Clearing (in Bellingen) was an example to me of how to pursue your art and live frugally. Diana, who'd worked as an archaeologist, was now making tapestries, and Joseph painted and drew landscapes of coastal bush and forest. Through most of the 1960s they'd lived overseas, in Greece, Italy, and England; and the way they cooked and lived, the books on their shelves, reflected this experience. Diana was featured in a National Geographic from 1969, diving down into the Mediterranean to make accurate line drawings on a slate, of a Roman cargo ship, with its scattered amphorae. After diving and drawing all day she had to cook for the men. 'Ah well, it was the Sixties,' she told me recently.

In this house they'd built, Diana made her own bread, and yoghurt, and used the tiniest scraps of left-over soap in a mesh shaker to froth up the water for washing the dishes. After the space was first made waterproof and habitable, we sat under a Tilley lamp at night, until the electricity came a year later.

Tom Carment, *Womerah Lane: Lives and Landscapes*, Giramondo, 2019.



Diana making *Glory*. Photograph Jennifer Steele.



Flower circle. 1972. Woven tapestry, wool on cotton warp. 1.63 x 1.63m. University of Sydney Union Collection, Merewether Building, now in Verge Gallery. Photograph Bernie Fisher.



Tom Carment. 1976. *Diana weaving*, ink on paper, 37 x 40.5cm.

Three water tapestries



Nature is to the female artist as the female body has been to the male artist
Lucy Lippard ²

Our world goes to pieces; we have to rebuild our world.... the new comes about through exuberance and not through a defined deficiency... We learn patience and endurance in following through a piece of work. We learn to respect material in working it.

Anni Albers, Weaver, 1961. ³



All the older commissioned tapestries shown here have echoes of many voices embedded in their fabric. *Waterlily pool with egrets* hung on the wall of psychiatrist Dr Delaforce's consulting room in Coffs Harbour for 25 years.

The Kalucy tapestries from my sister Libby, husband Ross and their daughter Megan, as well as those of my brother John and his wife Jann and from my cousin David Carment, have hung for decades in their houses, and have seen generations of children and grandchildren.



Top: *Edge of the sea*. 1986. Woven tapestry on cotton warp. 90cm x 1.80m. Collection Megan Kalucy.

Bottom: *Pool with barnacle rocks*. 1987. Woven tapestry, wool on cotton warp. 96cm x 1.58m Collection Libby and Ross Kalucy.

Waterlily pool with egrets. 1984. Woven tapestry, wool on cotton warp. 1.05 x 2.2m. Commissioned by Dr Delaforce, Coffs Harbour, Collection Rowan and Emma Conroy. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.

² Lucy Lippard. 1984. In Estella Lauter. *Women as Mythmakers: poetry and visual art by twentieth century women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

³ Anni Albers, 1961. *On Designing*. Connecticut, USA: Wesleyan University Press. 30, 33.

Islands: Andros, Greece



Zagora landscapes. 1973. Top left: *Terraces*. Top right: *Dawn*. Bottom left: *Pigeon house*. Bottom right: *Side of a mountain*. Woven tapestry of local hand-spun wool, with soumak, twill and pile elements, on wool and cotton warps. Four selvages. Each 28 x 20cm. Artist Collection.



*It came to me while drawing pottery fragments today that I should begin weaving in the evenings. I found wool thread in a shop in the main town Chora, of muted natural colours of ochre, rust, indigo and cream. The "everything" (Pantapoleion) shop had steel nails to hold the warp on an unwanted rectangular wooden frame I found in the storeroom. Journal entry, Zagora, Andros, 14 June 1973.*⁴

Left: 1973 Diana drawing a geometric krater or wine vessel in Menites, at the excavation of Zagora, Andros, Greece. Photograph Sydney University.

Islands: Bathurst Island, Northern Territory



*We walked along the strait to the airstrip before sunset listening to the distant rhythm of beating hands and wailing voices from Paru. Smoke from the campfires was drifting above the mangroves, water an unblemished blue, lapping on pink pebbles. I set up a warp for a bush tapestry. Journal, Tiwi Design, Bathurst Island. 26 May, 1974.*⁵

Left: *Nguiu bush*. 1974 Woven tapestry, wool on cotton warp with soumak. 1 x 1.13m. Woven on Bathurst Island, 1974. Collection Rowan and Emma Conroy. Photograph Rowan M Conroy. Top right: *Ceremony*. 1974. Detail. Woven tapestry with coiled elements, wool on cotton warp. 90 x 75cm. Collection John and Jann Wood. Woven on Bathurst Island. Bottom right: *Tree*. 1974. Woven tapestry, jute and wool on cotton warp with soumak. 1.15 x 1.15m. Woven on Bathurst Island NT, 1974. Photograph Rowan M Conroy. Artist Collection.



⁴ Diana Wood Conroy. 'Antipodeans and the hidden weaves of antiquity'. Special issue of *Journal of Australian Studies* on 'Insulario e Isolario: Mediterranean islands', edited by Luisa Percopo. 2014, 297, 300.

⁵ Diana Wood Conroy with Bede Tungutalum. 2022. *Tiwi textiles: design, process and making*. Sydney University Press.

A fibrous organic world: coiling and entangling



I have a growing interest in fibre omnipresent in the whole organic world around me, the fibre in the plants and cells of our bodies... as the basic element constructing the organic world... the tissue of plants, leaves and ourselves, our nerves, our genetic codes... We are fibrous structures.

Magdalena Abakanowicz,
Polish artist, 1913-2017. ⁶



Top and bottom right: Hogarth Galleries Sydney, 1975 solo exhibition. Australia Council grant. Photograph Joseph Conroy. Two analogue slides digitally remastered by Rowan M Conroy.

⁶ https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/nov/20/magdalena-abakanowicz-tate-modern-london-re-view-every-tangle-of-thread-and-rope?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

Top: *Universe* 1975. Woven tapestry, wool on linen warp, with soumak elements. Exhibited in solo exhibition at Hogarth Galleries Sydney 1.28 x 1.34m. Artist Collection. Photograph Bernie Fisher.

Bottom: *Bush tangle*. 1978. Woven wool tapestry on linen warp with coiled wrapped elements in jute and wool. 61 x 54cm. Artist Collection. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.

Heavy with texture

I wanted to make work that was heavy and rich in texture, like a piece of land with the teeming intricacy of heath country, traced by animal footprints. This tapestry came about after drawings made in Minnie Waters, northern NSW.



Top: *Heath country*. 1978. Woven tapestry in irregular shape. Wool in linen warp with wrapped elements and pile. 1 x 2m. Collection Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston.

Bottom: *Bellingen Forest*. 1977. Woven wool tapestry on linen warp with wrapped elements. 1.06 x 1.78m. Collection David Carment. Photograph Rowan M Conroy. Right: *Urunga Paperbark forest*. 1978. Detail. Woven tapestry, wool on linen warp with wrapped elements in jute and wool. 82cm x 1.87m. Artist Collection.



Left: Detail. *Bellingen bush tangle with banksia cones*. 1978. Woven wool tapestry on linen warp with wrapped elements in jute and wool. 83 x 68cm. Artist Collection.

Right: *Banksia*. 1979. Woven wool tapestry on cotton warp, with pile and wrapped elements. 75 x 25cm. Collection Rowan and Emma Conroy. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.



Archaeology: sites of war and loss in the ancient Mediterranean and Australia



Archaeology becomes a metaphor for the process by which personal and cultural identities are pieced together out of fragments and memories of the past.

Sue Rowley, *Crossing Borders*, 1995. ⁷

These pieces *Tenuous evidence: Shellal Mosaic* and *Sarajevo* made in drawing, photocopy and tapestry are derived from images of a sixth century mosaic from Shellal, a site east of Rafa and south of Gaza not far from the present Israeli Egyptian border. After the 1917 Battle of Gaza Australian soldiers laboriously extracted the mosaic, already damaged by serving as the floor of a gun emplacement captured from the Turks. The removal was done under the guidance of antiquarian Reverend Maitland Woods, Senior Chaplain to the Mounted Desert Corps.



The large mosaic was once the floor of a church and was more than nine metres by six metres in size. Now hanging vertically in the Australian War Memorial Museum in Canberra, it sits beside other antiquities acquired in World War 1, including the funerary bust of Hagar, holding a spindle and the keys to her house, from Palmyra, 2nd century. ¹⁰ The Shellal Mosaic had a profound effect on me when I came across it around 1991, with its fragmentary twining vine enclosing images of abundance and fertility, reminding me of my own forest tapestries.

Diana undertakes to abolish boundaries between mediums of drawing, weaving and watercolour, making a fluent translation between cultures and sequences of objects... Such subtle innuendo gives her work a highly spiritual quality.

Evelyn Juers, 1993. ¹¹

Tenuous evidence: Shellal mosaic. 1992. Detail. Collage of photocopy of Shellal Mosaic with rubbings of bush, and a fragment of woven tapestry in wool on linen warp, on Arches paper. 2.15 x 2.1m, tapestry fragment 65 x 40cm. Artist Collection. Photograph Lesley Goldacre. ⁸

⁷ Sue Rowley. 1995. In *Crossing borders: Contemporary Australian textile art*. Curated by Christopher Leitch and Sue Rowley. Toured USA 1995-97. Wollongong: University of Wollongong, 36.

⁸ Exhibition 1995 *Crossing borders: Contemporary Australian textile art*, op.cit.

⁹ Made for *Sarajevo*, an exhibition curated by Vivienne Dadour. Ivan Dougherty Gallery, University of NSW, Sydney. Reviewed by Evelyn Juers. 1995. 'Where were you when the war was on? Where are you now?' Review of 'Sarajevo'. Art Monthly Australia.

¹⁰ The Australian classicist AD Trendall, whom I knew in Athens in 1966, lucidly documented the Shellal mosaic: A.D Trendall. *The Shellal Mosaic and other classical antiquities in the Australian War Memorial Canberra*. Foreword by General Sir Harry Chauvel. Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1973.

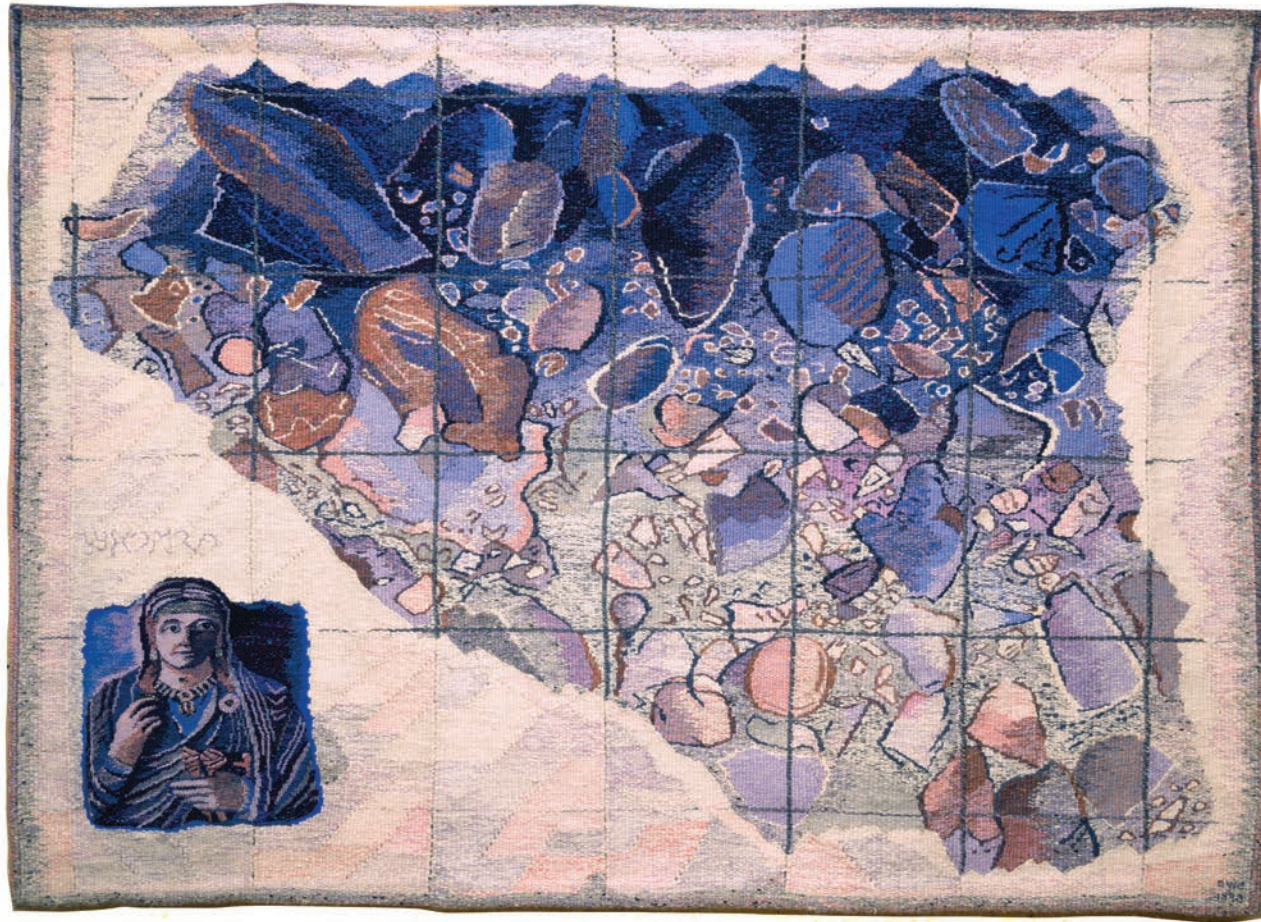
Top: *These by the Hellespont lost their glorious youth*. Woven tapestry fragment of wool on linen warp, mounted on canvas with acrylic and gouache. 44 x 182cm. Derived from an inscription on a plaster cast of a memorial to those lost in the Persian Wars 480 BC, Australian War Memorial Museum, Canberra.

Bottom left: *Enemy, Ekthros*. 1997. Woven tapestry fragment of wool on a linen warp, mounted on canvas with gesso and gouache. 44 x 60cm. Centre. 1997.

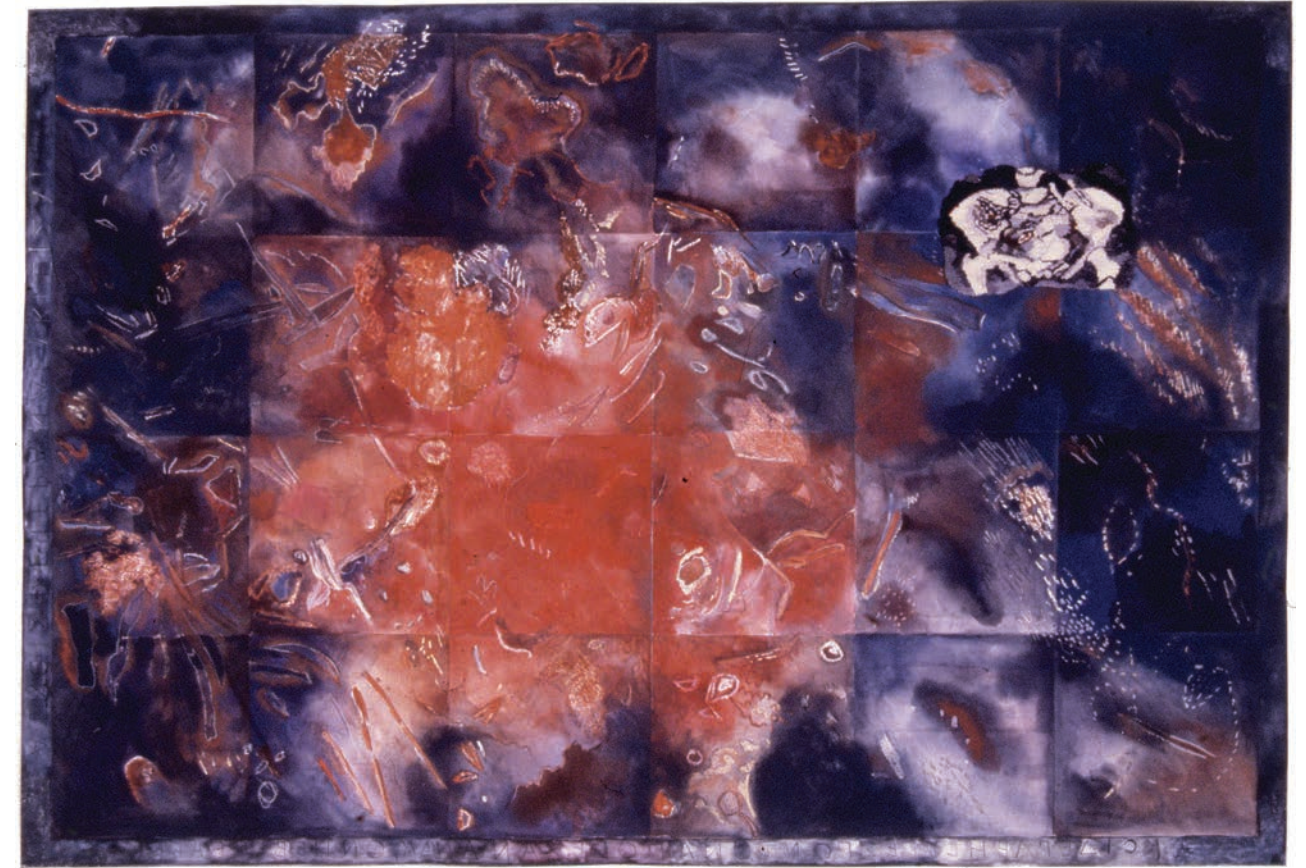
Bottom right: 1997. *Fragility of Love, with two women from Palmyra*. Woven tapestry fragment of wool on a linen warp, mounted on canvas with gesso and gouache. 44 x 60cm. In *Sarajevo* exhibition. ⁹ Artist Collection.

¹¹ Evelyn Juers. 1993. 'Landweaving,' *Object*: 42-43.

A peopled past: grounds of being



Her only desire: Fragmentary site with a lady from Palmyra. 1993. Woven tapestry, wool, silk and metal thread on cotton warp. 1.45 x 1.95m. Photograph Rowan M Conroy. Collection Rowan and Emma Conroy.



Ground, Lake Mungo with a fragment of tapestry of a woman's pelvis. 1994-95. Gesso, gouache and acrylic on paper mounted on canvas. 1.05 x 1.75m. Artist Collection.

'Her only desire' is a reference to the fifteenth century Unicorn tapestries in Paris which have an unknown woman in each of them set in a *mille fiori* background of 'a thousand flowers'. One of the tapestries included the ambiguous text 'A mon seul désir', to my only desire. The inner context for these gridded drawings is the feeling I had with the disruption of life and home in Bellingen for a new life in Wollongong. I perceived that the order and repetition of the grid kept the abyss at bay, as Lucy Lippard points out in relation to Eva Hesse's work. The site and its objects documented a great loss, so that my little loss was encompassed in the greater one. Renowned Canadian tapestry weaver Ann Newdigate once said to me, 'The woman from Palmyra is a self-portrait.'

When I first visited Lake Mungo in 1993 with my family I was well aware of its momentous

place in Australian archaeology. The arid land seemed to contain intimations of lost generations. I drew fragments of bone and shell that were scattered on the surface of the sand dunes. In *Ground, Lake Mungo* the image of the pelvis of a woman with the unborn bones of her child came from an archaeological photograph of early medieval London, and is not Indigenous. The text around the border is from the 5th century BC plaster cast of an inscription in the War Memorial Museum in Canberra: 'These by the Hellespont lost their glorious youth in battle... They brought honour to their homeland, so that the enemy groaned as it carried off the harvest of war, and for themselves they set up a deathless memorial of their courage'.¹²

Another tapestry of the inscription, on page 23, was made for the exhibition *Sarajevo*, curated by Vivienne Dadour in 1997.¹³

In tapestry the intersecting warp and weft structure the representation of images. In archaeology the measured grid gives meaning to the anarchic site, to the inert traces of history. The rational traditions of Europe impose grids of houses, fences, roads and buildings on the stretching immensity of the original Australian landscape. My mind is formed by European images, but recognises the vestiges and shadows of quite another past.

Diana Wood Conroy, 1992. 'The Document', Conference *Distant Lives/Shared Voices*. Łódź, Poland.

¹² The poet Christopher Brennan in 1932 suggested purchasing a plaster cast from the National Museum in Athens of the famous marble inscription commemorating the dead in the Greek-Persian war around 480 BC. to place in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The Hellespont of that war is close to the tragic site of Gallipoli, where many Australians died in World War One. The cast was finally acquired in Athens by director John Treloar and was displayed in the public gallery of the AWM in 1954. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C158711>

¹³ Catalogue *Sarajevo*. 1997. Curated by Vivienne Dadour. Essay by Joan Kerr. Ivan Dougherty Gallery University of New South Wales.

Mothers

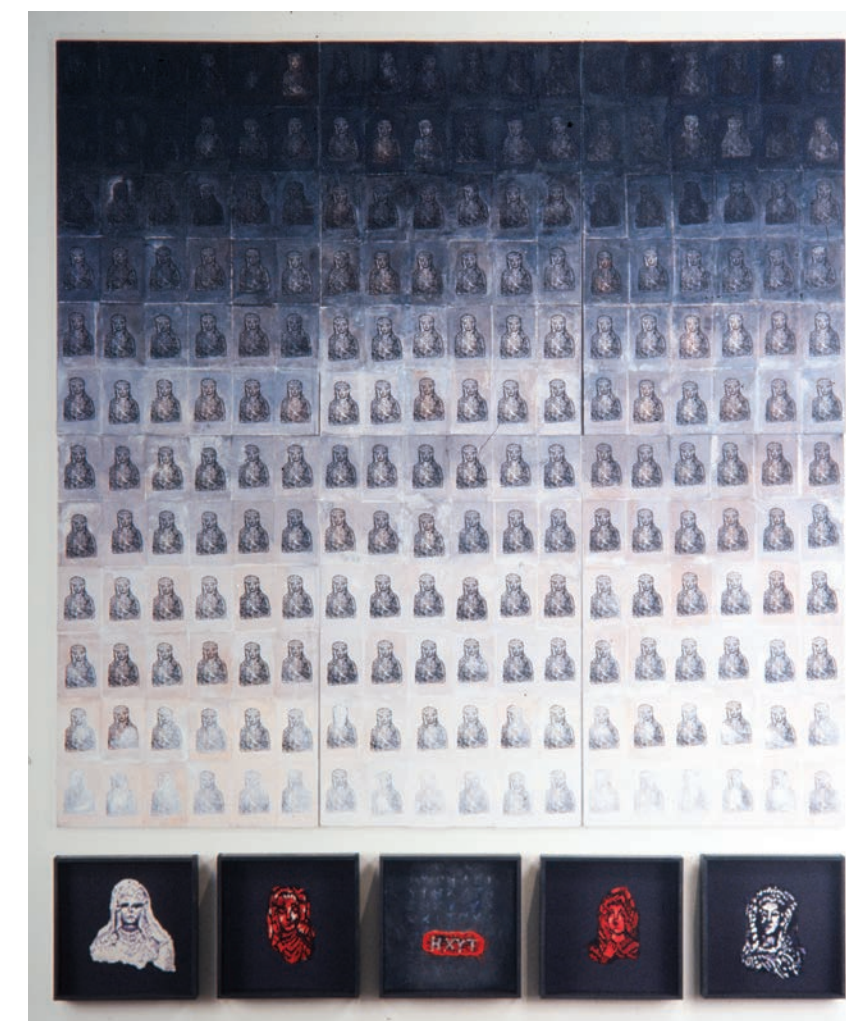


I documented shell and stones in a drawn grid at the Murramarang headland ancient midden site on the south coast of NSW, when staying with Liz Jeneid at Bawley Point.

The images of the women come from the Australian War Memorial Museum bust of a woman from Palmyra.¹⁴ The abandoned sites of Indigenous people on the Illawarra coast, became all the more resonant to me after being with the Tiwi, still living on their country. The complexity of a language and of ritual may vanish without a trace and is not reflected in the remaining fragments of the material culture. The broken bits of shell and bone, the stone tools on the Illawarra sites give little indication of the intricate culture in which the Dharawal people were immersed.

She thinks of all the women in her family stretching back and back and she realises she doesn't know their names... wherever she goes she takes with her these queues of lost women.

Drusilla Modjeska, 1994.



Fate and fortune: Ancestors. 1995. Silk-screen on cotton sheeting, indigo and ironstone pigment on plywood. Each of 6 panels is 91 x 61cm. Right: Detail from *Fate and fortune*. 'Bust of a woman'. 1995. Woven wool tapestry on linen warp with metallic thread, mounted on black cloth in black painted box. Tapestry is 11 x 7.5cm, in box, 33 x 33 x 12cm. Artist Collection.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Exhibition 1995. Archaeologies: Structures of time with Sharon Marcus*. Portland Oregon, and Sydney.

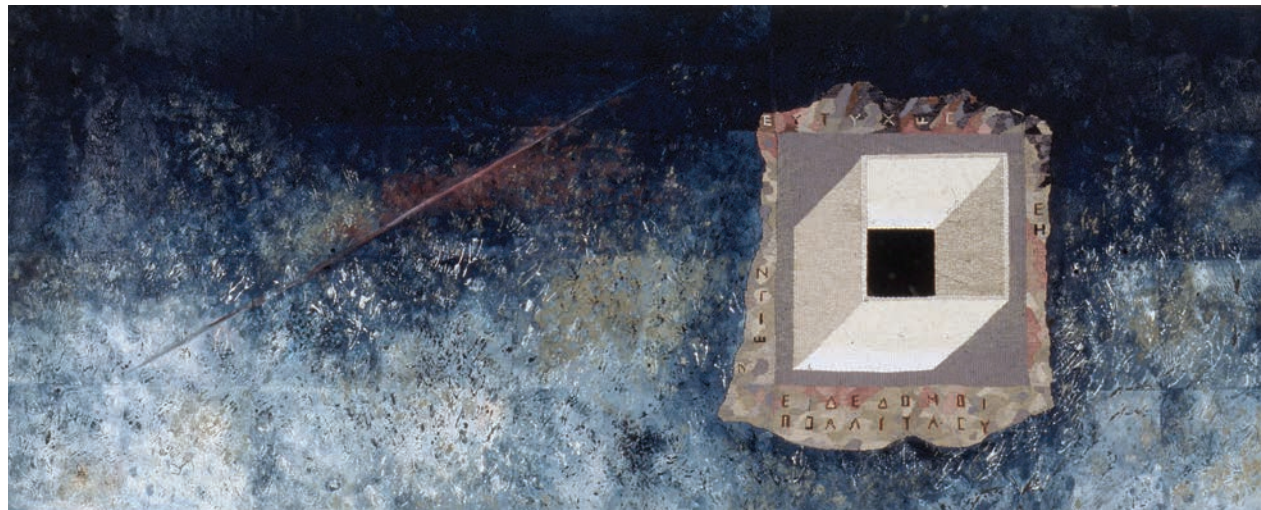
¹⁵ *Exhibition 1996. Below the Surface*. A contemporary textiles exhibition resulting from a collaborative curatorial process. Goulburn Regional Gallery.



Top: *Murramarang*. 1995. Pencil, indigo gouache and gesso on Arches paper mounted on canvas. 1.28 x 1.88m. Artist Collection.

Bottom: *Mothers*. 1997. Woven tapestry fragment in wool with a linen warp, mounted on canvas with gesso and gouache. 60cm x 1.2m. Collection Lee Astheimer, Tasmania.

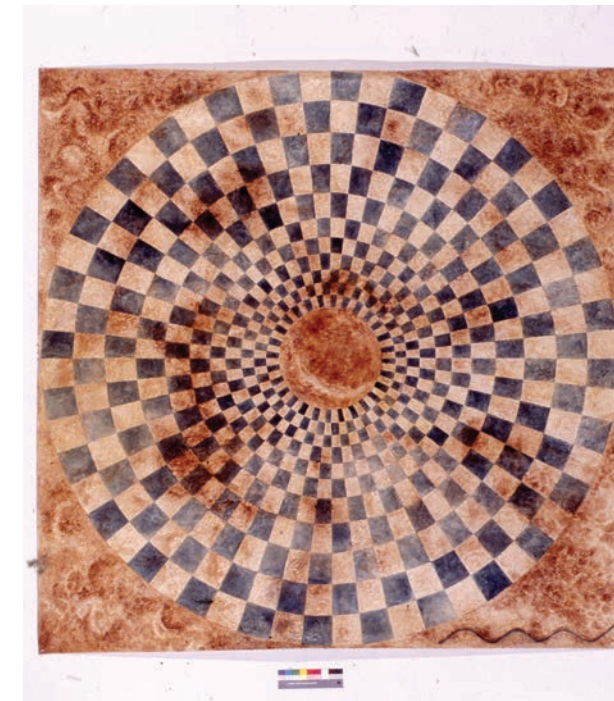
A response to Lake Mungo



The World Heritage Site of Lake Mungo demonstrates the deep time frame of the peopled past of Australia, beyond 40000 years. It has become something of a sacred site for white Australia.

Lesley Head, 2000. ¹⁶

Through my link with Lake Mungo in western NSW, and with help from colleagues Sharon Marcus, Kay Lawrence and Valerie Kirk, in July 1997 a group of 32 artists from Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK, Poland and Scotland participated in a 10-day retreat to Lake Mungo. This resulted in notable exhibitions, and *Lake Mungo Revisited* toured Australia after a wonderful seminar and opening at the Goulburn Regional Gallery, through curator Jennifer Lamb, in 2000. The seminar included scientists Jim Bowler who had unearthed the ancient skeletal remains in the 1970s, and geo-scientist Lesley Head.



Like archaeological survey, tapestry is a gridded means of recording and preserving cultural information. At such it seems an appropriate form for presenting a layering of ideas.

Jan Irvine, 1992. ¹⁷

As both an archaeologist and an artist, each discipline influencing the other... Diana Wood Conroy's work brings together two poles of interest - European archaeology and the artistic response to Australian antiquity - by juxtaposing two visual codes for reading site: a Roman mosaic maze from Paphos, and remote sensing satellite maps of Lake Mungo.

Jennifer Lamb, 2000. ¹⁸

Top: *Vanishing Point*. 1997. Gouache and watercolour on paper. 65 x 1.1m (framed) Collection University of Wollongong. Photograph Bernie Fisher.

Bottom: *Unwritten country with a fragment of a Roman mosaic*. 1998. Woven tapestry fragment in linen and silk on canvas with acrylic and gouache. 1 x 2.5m. Collection of Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania. Exhibited in *Origins and Perspectives: Australian Textile Art*, Łódź, Poland, (Craft Australia).

¹⁶ Lesley Head, 2000. 'Lake Mungo in space and time'. *Lake Mungo revisited*, catalogue, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery (and travelling across Australia in 2001). 2-7.

Top: *Two Grounds: Lake Mungo*. 2000. Ochre and gouache on gesso on canvas 1.8 x 1.81m. Artist Collection. A mosaic from a sixth century basilica in Paphos is laid over an Australian ground.

Bottom: *Naming: Lake Mungo*. 2000. Woven tapestry in linen, with gouache and gesso on canvas. 120 x 120cm. University of Wollongong Collection.

¹⁷ Jan Irvine, 1992. 'Observations of the Land'. *The Art of the Object: Contemporary craft from Australia*. Sydney: Crafts Council of Australia, 10-12. Touring Uruguay, Brazil and Chile.

¹⁸ Jennifer Lamb. 2000. *Lake Mungo revisited*, catalogue, Goulburn Regional Gallery. 10.

Labyrinth and whorl



The theatre of Ariadne. 2001. Gouache, gesso and graphite with Woonona earth pigment (coal-wash) and tapestry fragment in linen, wool and silk, on canvas. 1.78 x 1.84m. Collection Flinders University Museum of Art.



By means of a thread, Ariadne helped Theseus through the labyrinth of Crete to kill her brother the Minotaur. After being abandoned by Theseus in Naxos, Dionysos carried her off as his bride. Dionysos was the god associated with all the rituals of theatre, and the theatre plan is like a labyrinth.

The theatre of Ariadne was inspired by the mosaic labyrinth in the Roman House of Theseus not far from the Paphos theatre excavation, but is painted in earth pigments of the Illawarra. As I explore my own archive and remember the vital women who passed on knowledge of textiles, I understand her story may have resonances for the present, when the sign of thread may be potent again.

A mosaic is a surface compounded of discontinuous pieces and its character reflects first and foremost the nature of the materials from which it is made.

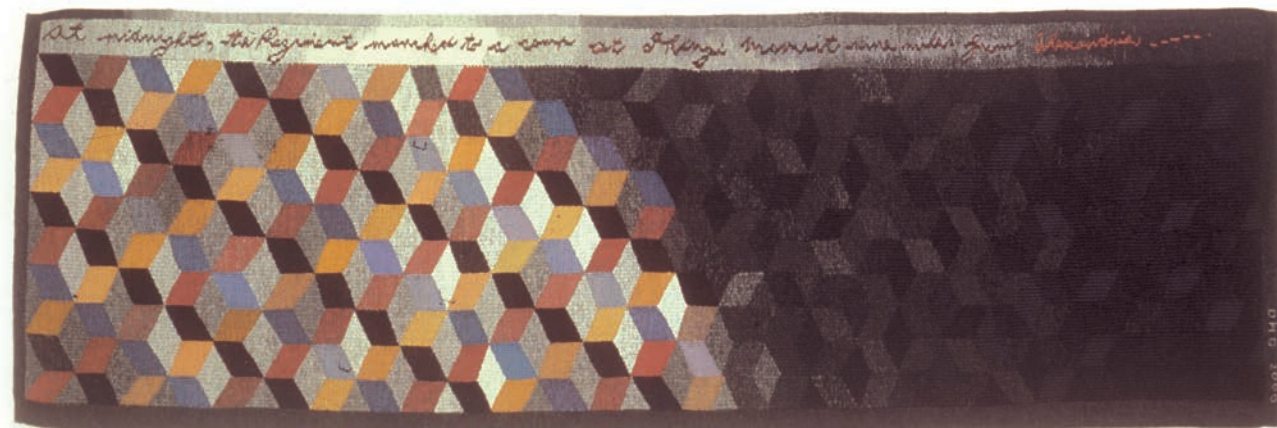
Katharine Dunbabin. ¹⁹



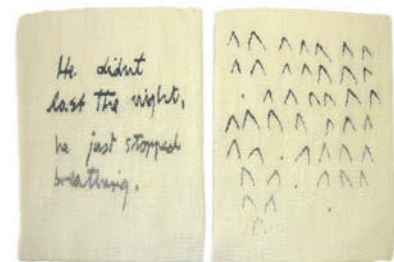
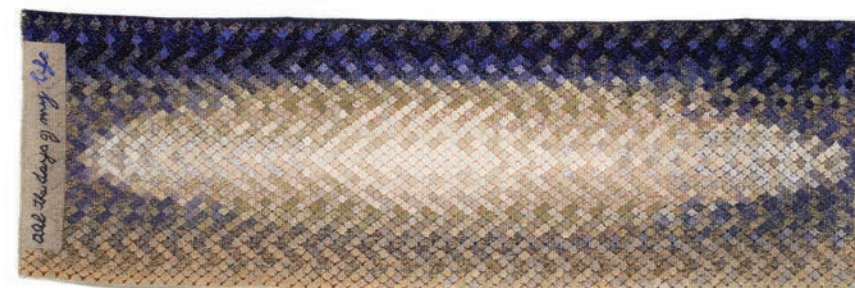
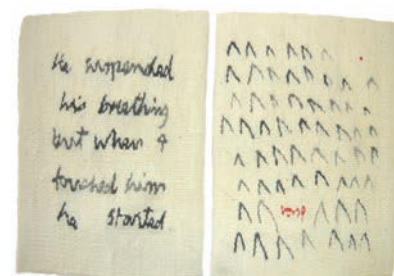
Whorl with a fragment of tapestry. 2018. Tempera with Australian ochres and gouache on board with woven tapestry of wool, silk and linen. Artist Collection. 60 x 80cm.

¹⁹ Katherine M D Dunbabin, 1999. *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 279. See also Wikto Andrzej Daszewski. 1977. *La Mosaïque de Thésée*. Nea Paphos vol. 2. Centre d' Archéologie Méditerranéenne de L'Académie Polonaise des Sciences. Editions Scientifiques de Pologne, Warsaw 1977.

The Father



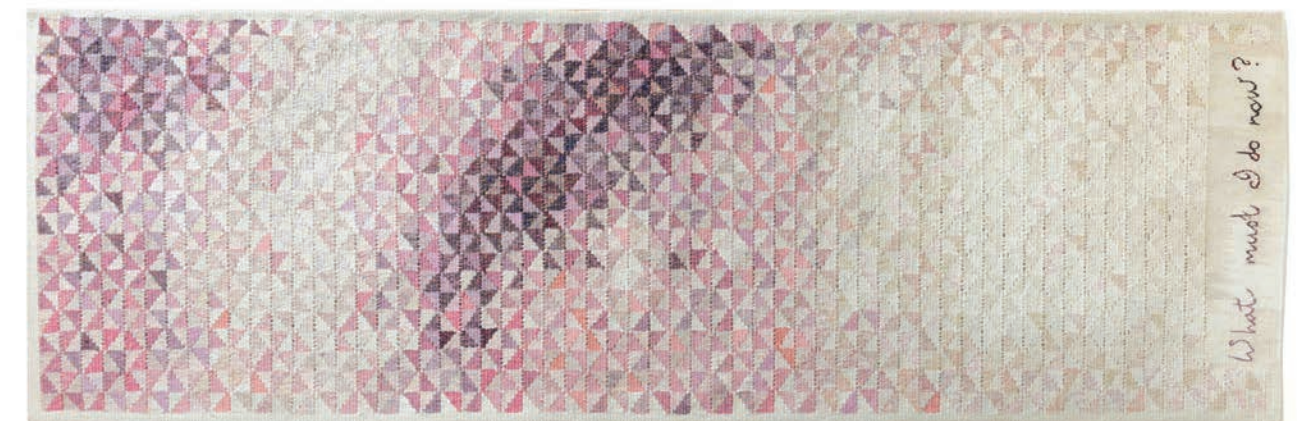
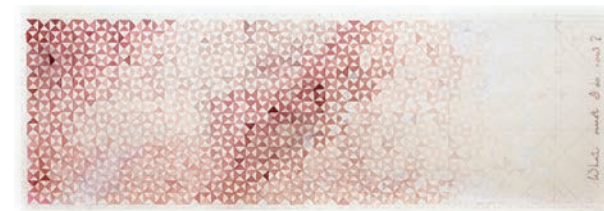
My father was a gunner in the desert west of Alexandria, Egypt, with the Australian 5th Field Regiment in 1941, just before the decisive battle of El Alamein. Even battles are about pattern, and perhaps, the loss of pattern. The idea of reworking the tesserae, or tiny tiles of lost 'mosaic' carpets here perhaps, to be rewoven in another millennium, and another hemisphere resulted in the tapestry *Alexandria*. Roman mosaic floors known as 'carpets' had intricate patterns similar to woven carpets. All tapestry weavers are dominated by issues of translation: often from drawing or painting, and in my case, from mosaic.



The ancient process of weaving tapestry mimics the rhythm of the breath: in, out, under, over.

Belinda von Mengersen, 2011. ²⁰

Documents of time



I wove this tapestry over more than 400 hours in 2013 with a time-lapse video camera focused on the loom and the weaver. As I sat to weave, I turned on the camera, and turned it off when the session ended. My son Rowan Conroy edited the long record back to a few minutes so that the weaver becomes like a frenzied spider, making her web.



The text says 'And what will I do without her, what will I do?' from Marilynne Robinson's 2004 novel *Gilead*. Derived from an *opus sectile* mosaic pavement from Soli, a 6th century church in Cyprus, where pilgrims made their way on their knees to the altar, the tapestry is a reflection on my beloved mother, Marion Carment Wood, who died in 2014, after I had cared for her daily for 6 years.

Top: *What must I do now?* 2013. Watercolour on paper. Cartoon for tapestry. c. 60 x 85cm unframed. Collection Ararat Regional Gallery Collection, Victoria. The answer to the question, what must I do now? put to me by a good old man in his last months, could be in attending to the patterns we make.

Middle: *What must I do now?* 2013. Woven tapestry, wool, silk and linen on cotton warp with hand-spun wool and alpaca by Elizabeth Kalucy. 60 x 180cm. Collection Ararat Regional Gallery Collection, Victoria. Photograph Rowan Conroy.

Bottom: *Earth Archive: Soli*. 2017. Woven tapestry, hand-spun wool, silk and alpaca with metallic threads dyed in pomegranate on a linen warp. 163 x 62cm. Exhibited in *Weaving Culture*, Pafos European City of Culture 2017, Cyprus, curated by Efi Kyprianidou. Artist Collection.

Top: *Alexandria*. 1999. Woven tapestry, wool on a linen warp. The text 'At midnight the regiment marched to a camp at Ikingi Mariut nine miles from Alexandria', is in the handwriting of my father David Roy Vernon Wood (1916-2008) 65cm x 2m. Collection University of Wollongong. Photograph Rowan M Conroy.

Left: *Documents of breath 1,2,3*. 2010. Woven tapestry, hand-spun wool on linen warp. Three paired works, each 28 x 20cm, framed 54 x 66cm. Artist Collection.

Right: *All the days of my life*, 2009. Woven tapestry. Wool, silk, linen and cotton on a linen warp. 60 x 180cm. Collection University of Wollongong. Photograph Rowan M. Conroy. Each diamond segment of the pattern is a day in a life, remembering my father.

²⁰ Belinda von Mengersen, 2011. Exhibition Review. 'Breathing Space: Liz Jeneid, Diana Wood Conroy, and Stephen Ingham.' *Textile Journal* vol. 9, issue 2, 249. (246-253.)

Texts and tapestry

Textile' is derived from the same source as 'text', the Latin word *texere* to weave. As a writer and compulsive keeper of hand-written journals, words and phrases become woven into the tapestries.



Earth Archive 2. 2016. Woven tapestry of metallic yarn, wool, and linen on cotton warp. 24.5 x 24.5cm. Artist Collection.

This is an image from a small fragment of ancient textile discovered in a Cypriot tomb and viewed under a scanning electron microscope. The remnants of crossing threads no longer contained any textile material but had become a fossil made of elements of earth (GE in Greek), stone residue and organic traces. *Elements* group exhibition, shown in the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne and travelling in the UK and USA.



Lost: Zimiousthai. 2015. Woven tapestry, cotton and linen on cotton warp, painted with ash and gesso. 30.5 x 28cm. Artist Collection.



Ash: Kapnousthai. 2015. Woven tapestry; linen and cotton weft on cotton warp. 30 x 30cm. Artist Collection.



Tears: Klaumata. 2015. Woven tapestry; linen and cotton weft on cotton warp. 30 x 30cm. Artist Collection.



Pomegranate: Roia. 2015. Woven tapestry, hand-spun wool dyed in pomegranate dye, on cotton warp. 30 x 30cm. Collection Denise Russell.
All four mounted on gesso panels 60 x 60cm.



These small tapestries of leaves were woven in 2023 and were derived from diaries and drawings written in Yirrkala, NT in 1994-95. They were shown in an exhibition curated by Valerie Kirk called *Plant Stories*, with a group of tapestry weavers for Canberra Botanical Gardens. They remind me of my earliest work in this exhibition, *Sun and Moon* 1971.

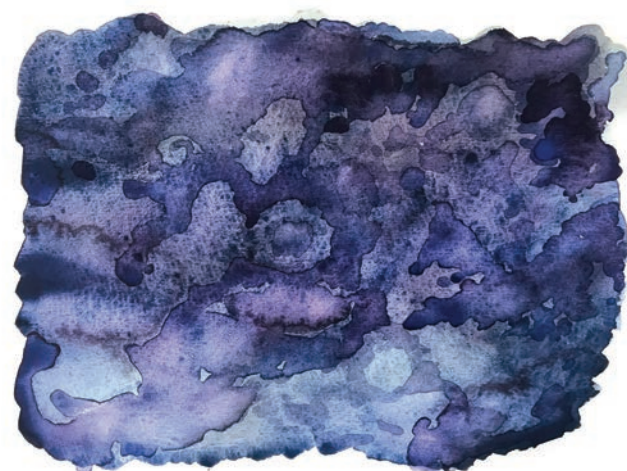
Left: *Yirrkala garden: The child gave me this leaf; Finding dye plants while little Ruby sleeps under a palm*. 2023. Two pieces. Woven tapestry, silk, wool and metallic thread on linen warp. Each 35 x 20cm. Artist Collection.

A grid of time: the daily watercolour



42 days in Covid. 2020. Watercolour and coloured pencil on paper. 42 pieces, from 24 March to 4 May. Each 15 x 21cm. Private Collection.

Since 2005 my everyday watercolour practice marks the passing time, and is presented in a calendar, a grid. Throughout my life as a weaver, the spontaneity and luminosity of watercolour and gouache have accompanied my tapestries. I position the watercolours looking out at the Illawarra, resonating with Dharawal and settlement history, often taking in Mediterranean artefacts on my table that are little facsimiles of objects from tombs or ancient levels of destruction.²¹ Watercolour is like dye and stains paper as if it were fabric.



'Fabric of the night sky', Day 25. 17 April 2020. Detail of *42 Days at Home*. Watercolour on Canzon paper 15 x 21cm.

²¹ Watercolours from the COVID lockdown are documented in <https://dianawoodconroy.squarespace.com/covid-19-journal/>

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Biography Diana Wood Conroy



Diana Wood Conroy drawing at the Sydney University's Paphos Theatre Excavation Project, May 2023. Photograph Kay Lawrence.

1944 Born Sydney to Marion and David Wood, the oldest of four siblings, Elizabeth, John and Virginia. Married to Joseph Conroy from 1969 - 1993. Nicholas born 1976, Rowan 1982. Married Paul Sharrad 2008.

Education, work: 1960 Southampton Art School UK; 1962-1966 University of Sydney BA Hons (Archaeology) Research Assistant, Nicholson Museum; 1966-67 Illustrator, British School of Archaeology Athens; 1968-70 Archaeological Museum Florence Italy and British Museum London. 1969 Learnt tapestry with Ruth Hurlle, Stanhope Institute London. 1974 Project Officer Bathurst Is, NT, 1996 Doctor of Creative Arts University of Wollongong (UOW). 1995, 2002 Visiting Fellow at Goldsmiths College University of London. 1991 Appointed Lecturer Visual Arts; 2006 Professor; 2012 Awarded Emeritus Professor Visual Arts on retirement. 1996-2023 Artist-in-residence Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project.

Selected architectural commissions with Noel Bell Ridley Smith 1972-1988. 1985 Revival Life Centre, 1976 St Andrews House Australia Square; 1975 and 1981 National Capital Development Commission Canberra, 1973 Macquarie University, 1972 Sydney University. 1971 NSW State Planning Authority.

Other commissions. 1989 George and Kirsty Negus; 1981, 1985 Dr Delaforce, Coffs Harbour; 1987 Macquarie Resort Hotel.

Selected solo or two-person exhibitions: 2018 and 2015 *Island and Shadows* with Liz Jeneid, Red Point Gallery Port Kembla; 2010 *Breathing Space* WAG with Liz Jeneid; 2001 *The Painted Wall*, Creative Arts Gallery UOW; 1992 *Images Vestiges Shadows* with Lindsay Duncan, WAG, 1993 *Unwritten Country* Long Gallery UOW; 1995 *Archaeologies Structures of Time* with Sharon Marcus, Fire Station Gallery Sydney; 1988 Taree Regional Gallery; 1975 Hogarth Galleries, Sydney; 1967 Exhibition of silk-screen designs at Incontro degli Stranieri, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy.

Local Group exhibitions since 2001: 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023 Finalist WAG Flow exhibition; 2018-2023 Illawarra Association of Visual Arts (IAVA); 2011- 2022 annual *International Women's Day* exhibition Project Space Wollongong; 2006 *Sonic Architectures* with Brogan Bunt, Diane Epoff Goodman Stephen Ingham UOW Gallery; 2011 *Who has the amphora handle?* UOW Gallery; 2013 *Intersensorial Threads* UOW Gallery; 2017, 2018, 2001 *Staff Show*, UOW Gallery.

National Group exhibitions: 2023-2024 with Bede Tungutalum *How it all began*, Cross Art Projects Sydney and Library and Archive Darwin NT; 2019 *Take Time* Craft ACT Gallery, Canberra; 2018 *Place: Artists Books* UOW Library and six venues; 2013 *New Acquisitions* Ararat Gallery Victoria; 2001 *Lake Mungo Re-visited*, Goulburn Regional Gallery, touring 3 states. 1999 *Drawn in Form*, Brisbane City Gallery; 1997 *Sarajevo* Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, and touring; 1996-98 *Below the Surface*, Goulburn Regional Gallery, toured 5 states; 1994-1996. *Texts from the edge: tapestry and identity in Australia*, Jam Factory SA, toured 4 states,

Sydney group exhibitions: 2012 *Vitrine*, Nicholson Museum University of Sydney; 2009, 2008 *Shapes of Longing and Searching for Asphodels* Charles Hewitt Gallery; 2009 *My Place*, The Rocks; 1998 *Out of Oblivion*, touring Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong; 1996 *Images, Vestiges Shadows*, MacLaurin Hall Sydney University; 1986 *The Rug* Craft Australia Gallery; UNSW Textiles 1982.

International Group exhibitions: 2024 *Journeys to Cyprus*. Australian High Commission, Paphos and Nicosia Cyprus; 2021 *Artists and Archaeology*, website <https://www.imagesandshadows.org>; 2018 *Tapestry Touring International Online Exhibition, Elements and Colour* UK; 2019 *Liminescence* Bath UK; 2019 *Walking narratives* The Point, Nicosia Cyprus; 2017-2018 *Homage to George Seferis* Pancyprian Museum Nicosia Cyprus; 2017 *Travellers from Australia: Artists and archaeologists in Paphos*. Powerhouse, Paphos, Cyprus; 2017 *Weaving as Meditation: Weaving Europe*, Pafos17 European City of Culture, Paphos, Cyprus; 2016-2017 *Elements ANU School of Art/ Australian Tapestry Workshop*, UK, USA; 2016 Helen Adams, www.textilecurator.com; 2013 *Down South: Tapestry in Australia* curated by Sara Lindsay for the American Tapestry Alliance; 1998 *Origins and Perspectives: Australian Textile Art*, Łódź, Poland (Craft Australia); 1995 *Structures of Time* with Sharon Marcus, School of Art Gallery Portland, Or. USA. 1994 *The Art of the Object* (Craft Australia), touring South America.

Tapalinga Rug Workshop, Bellingen with local weavers Ann Streckfuss and Jennifer Gifkin 1984-1988, 90 rugs woven.

Selected publications: 2022 with Bede Tungutalum: *Tiwi Textiles, design, making, process*, Sydney University Press; 2018 Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy and Hazel Clark (eds) *The Handbook of Textile Culture*, London: Bloomsbury; 2007 *The fabric of the ancient theatre: journals from Cyprus*, Moufflon Books, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Selected acquisitions: University of Wollongong Art Collection; Flinders University Museum of Art SA; Ararat Regional Gallery VIC; Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania; Waseda University Japan; Australian Institute of Archaeology Athens.

Website: <http://dianawoodconroy.squarespace.com>

Acknowledgements

My great thanks to the professional acumen and enthusiasm of Wollongong Art Gallery and all their staff, especially to Program Director John Monteleone, exceptional Senior Curator Louise Brand, insightful communicator Publicist Vivian Vidulich and energetic Alinta Maguire who have guided the complex assemblage and mounting of tapestries. I am most grateful for the resources that WAG has put towards *An Archaeology of Woven Tapestry*. An enormous thank you to Anne Brennan for her thoughtful and moving essay in the catalogue, and to Kay Lawrence AM, Emeritus Professor Janis Jefferies and Dr Craig Barker for speaking at the opening.

I would like to acknowledge all the generous lenders of work: Lee Astheimer in Tasmania; Rev. Dr Peter Davies of Menzies College Macquarie University who after persistent searches found their 1973 tapestry rolled up in a kitchen storeroom; Senior Pastors Grant and Michelle Hobbs of Revival Church Peshurst NSW who had cherished their tapestry for forty years; Ararat Regional Gallery; Flinders University Museum of Art SA; Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston Tas.; former Directors of Wollongong University Art Collection Professor Amanda Lawson, Guy Warren AM and current manager Philippa Webb; Tesha Malott of Verge Gallery Sydney University. Much appreciation to my ever-supportive family for the loan of their tapestries: David Carment AM, Elizabeth and Ross Kalucy, OAM and AM, John and Jann Wood, Megan Kalucy and Rowan and Emma Conroy. Thanks to Tom Carment for his inimitable drawing of me weaving in 1976 and for his vivid writing about the Bellingen years. Many thanks both to Denise Russell and Liz Jeneid for unfailing friendship and lending tapestries, and to Jane Munro, a friend and supporter since we were 11 years old, for lending her tapestries. Thanks to acute photographers Jennifer Steele and Lesley Goldacre. Collections come into being through passionate curators. My thanks to curator and artist Valerie Kirk AM, artist Sara Lindsay, my former teacher Emeritus Professor JVS Megaw, Adelaide; to Glenda Adams, Launceston; Anthony Camm, Victoria; and Vivienne Dadour among many others. My sons have helped me unstintingly. Nicholas has provided digital expertise. Greatest thanks to Rowan who has used his vast knowledge of analogue and digital photography and video to document the work. My husband Paul, extraordinary editor, is a fulcrum and a rock, unearthing clues to lost tapestries.

My wonderful circle of artist friends and writers has provided an informal advisory committee, commenting acutely on how to present work from many eras.

Special thanks to Kay Lawrence, Jacky Redgate, Anne Ferran, Anne Brennan, Liz Jeneid and gallerist Jo Holder who all gave cogent advice. Madeleine Kelly discovered the hidden-away 1973 tapestry in the Verge Gallery Sydney University. Pilar Helmers searched intensely, if unsuccessfully for the lost tapestry from St Andrew's House Sydney Square. Another circle of artistic friends supports me in Cyprus: Ruth Keshishian, Arianna Economou, Stephanos Stephanides, Mary Plant, Efi Kyprianidou and Haris Pellapaisiotis.

Many of the tapestries have come into being through people now departed. Joseph Conroy who built all my looms died in 2019. My mother Marion (1917- 2014) and father David (1916 -2008), who provided me with a memorable childhood and education, pervade this exhibition. David and Tom's mother Diana Carment, who died in 2006, encouraged me in my tentative early years. Professor Sue Rowley (1948 - 2016), gave me warm friendship and great opportunities. Artist Alexander Arcus (1943-2022), encouraged my plans for the WAG exhibition. Yolngu artist from Yirrkala NT, Dr Banduk Marika AO who died in 2021, a longstanding friend, fiercely instructed me on the essential importance of weaving. Many artists from the Tiwi islands NT now long gone, imprinted me with ways of making art in relation to Country.

Deepest appreciation goes to universities that have given me access to the world. Early studies with Emeritus Professor Alexander Cambitoglou AO at the Nicholson Museum, Sydney University were transformative. At the University of Wollongong I received research grants throughout the years, from the Faculty of Creative Arts and the Vice Chancellor Gerard Sutton. Life-giving Australia Council grants in 1974, 1975, 1992, 1995 and 2003 made crucial collections of tapestries and drawings possible. The Sydney University Paphos Theatre Excavation Project in Cyprus from 1996 has given me a window into the great ancient cultures of the eastern Mediterranean. I thank Emeritus Professor Richard Green OAM and Dr Craig Barker, Directors of the excavation, with all my heart.

Finally, I acknowledge all the wisdom of the First Nations people whom I have known and worked with over many years, the Tiwi artists, particularly Bede Tungutalum, Yolngu artists in Yirrkala NT, the Ngarrindjeri people of the Coorong SA and the continuing presence of the Dharawal in the lands of the Illawarra.

DIANA WOOD CONROY - AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF WOVEN TAPESTRY, 8 JUNE - 1 SEPTEMBER, 2024

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Unwritten country with a fragment of a Roman mosaic. 1998. Woven tapestry fragment in linen and silk on canvas with acrylic and gouache. 1 x 2.5m. Collection of Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania. The Greek inscription, from Kourion in Cyprus, says 'this house, much venerated'.

