

Threaded Narratives: Women's Contributions to Fibre Art

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Abstract

This study explores the development process from tapestry art to fibre art and establishes a theoretical framework for future research on the incorporation of fibre materials into interior design and architectural design by female artists. The world of fibre art is a captivating blend of traditional techniques and modern creativity, showcasing a wide range of textiles, wall art, and contemporary forms. This paper explores the works of female artists showcased in two well-known exhibitions: the 'Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale' and the 'From Lausanne to Beijing' International Fibre Art Biennale. This paper seeks to shed light on the distinct perspectives and artistic expressions of women in the field by examining the fibre materials used by these artists and the conceptual depth of their creations. Women artists have historically encountered obstacles in achieving recognition and establishing their position in the art industry. Nevertheless, their artistic contributions have significantly influenced the discourse on art and gender. The selected exhibitions offer a chronological framework for studying the development of women's fibre art. This article offers insights into the various ways in which female artists utilise fibre as a medium of expression by examining their techniques, themes, and narratives. In the end, this examination will enhance our comprehension of the significance of women in the growth and progression of fibre art. It will also serve as a source of inspiration for future research, as well as recognition of their valuable contributions to this field.

Keywords: Arts; Fiber Art; Female Artists; Feminism; Gender.

Introduction

The art of fibre, tracing its origins back to the early 20th century and undergoing significant evolution in the late 1960s, has seen a comprehensive

exploration. In the 1970s, artists in this field started exploring different directions, pushing the boundaries of materials and ideas. This experimentation continued and reached its peak in the 1990s (Beckmann, 2024). This transformation was motivated by a need to differentiate fibre art from the conventional European tapestry art. It is characterised by the shift from a two-dimensional tapestry to a more expansive three-dimensional form. In addition, fibre art has broadened its range of materials to include more than just the traditional wool, silk, and cotton. Artists now incorporate unconventional choices such as hemp, chemical fibres, and metals (Zhang, 2022).

Throughout different cultures, fibre art has developed and changed over time, incorporating various influences and ideas to become a rich and varied artistic style. This evolving art form constantly renews itself through its expressive materiality and unique aesthetic. Throughout history, artists in this field have strived to enhance and perfect their works by utilising a range of fibre materials. They have not only preserved traditional weaving methods like knotting, stacking, hanging, and splitting but have also highlighted the versatility of fibres, incorporating techniques such as cutting and splicing to elevate the intricacy of their creations (Cui, 2023; Silberstein, 2015).

Throughout history, women have played a crucial role in the advancement of fibre art, a tradition that stems from their deep involvement in textiles. This historical and sociological intersection has been extensively discussed in academic circles. Embroidery, for instance, has long been linked to femininity in historical contexts (Rani et al., 2021). The impact of women's social roles, ranging from domestic weavers to factory workers involved in machine weaving, has greatly shaped their connection with fibre art. The Lausanne International Biennale has been a crucial platform for female artists in the field of fibre art. Since its establishment in 1962, the involvement of female artists has consistently grown, with women playing a crucial role in shaping the emerging tapestry movement. This trend indicates that fibre art could be a fitting medium for women, providing them with a significant presence in the artistic world alongside more conventional mediums such as Chinese painting, oil painting, sculpture, and ceramics (Furmanik-Kowalska, 2019; Yan, 2024).

Definition and Classification of Fiber Materials

Materials are of utmost importance in the realm of fibre arts, playing a critical role in the process of artistic creation. Fibre materials play a significant role in the realm of fibre arts, offering a distinct artistic backdrop and expanding the possibilities for showcasing these materials. Moreover, these materials are effective tools for artists to convey personal emotions. Since the emergence of Cubism, artists have transformed materials by imbuing them with personalised psychological meanings, thereby expanding the creative possibilities for viewers (Bray, 2023). According to Evans (2021), materials are regarded as the main form of communication in fibre arts. Artists utilise different material languages to create distinct fibre art pieces. In the realm of fibre arts, artists explore both traditional and non-traditional materials to achieve innovation and push the boundaries of fibre art. This integration of diverse materials enhances the versatility and adaptability of fibre materials.

The term 'fibre' in Chinese phrase explanation symbolises a material. Fibres typically refer to filaments, particularly those with small dimensions and delicate features, as well as fine fabric textures. Fibre is a subtle and often imperceptible state that can be challenging to observe or detect, yet it is capable of evoking a sense of presence in individuals. The term "dimension" in ancient Chinese language refers to the concept of a rope's meaning, which extends to the spatial directionality (Cui, 2020; Naseem, 2022).

The composition of fibre materials can generally be categorised into two groups: natural fibres and man-made fibres, despite the addition of new materials over time. Natural fibres consist primarily of animal, plant, and mineral fibres. Man-made fibres consist primarily of synthetic fibres and regenerated chemical fibres. The various materials used by artists represent their distinct artistic expression, which is evident in the form, tone, and texture of the materials (Boudot & Buckley, 2022; Michna, 2020). Animal fibres, such as wool or rabbit hair, provide a warm and soft texture. Silk, also an animal fibre, offers a unique gloss that creates a visually stunning and elegant experience.

Female artists often demonstrate their unique femininity in material selection to express their viewpoints and positions. The fiber materials in the hands of women can

weave narratives and calls for specific themes. These fiber materials not only reveal the roles women play in society and their life experiences but also showcase their gentle and resolute strength in society. This study provides a detailed analysis and review of female artists in two international fiber art exhibitions, observing how they utilize fiber materials to create their works of fiber art ([Mishra, 2023](#)).

Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale

The Lausanne Biennale has not only observed the progression of fibre art, but it has also provided a crucial platform for women artists to showcase their skills. The global showcase has provided a platform for fibre artists to explore different materials and techniques in the field of fibre art for over three decades. An in-depth exploration of the distinct conditions of a particular historical era is necessary to investigate the influence of women artists in that setting. An analysis of the specific context of the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale could offer valuable insights into the evolving trends in women's fibre art ([Sheetz-Nguyen, 2023](#)).

Traditional wall art in Europe gained popularity by incorporating fibres like wool into fashionable patterns and designs. These artworks often featured elements from mythology, biblical narratives, and historical figures. The Revolution in Europe signalled the start of a new era in design. The 'Arts and Crafts' movement, led by William Morris, gained prominence in the art world. Morris advocated for the fusion of artistic skill and craftsmanship, emphasising the aesthetic appeal and functionality of industrial goods, as well as the public accessibility of art. This artistic ideology had a profound impact on the dyeing and weaving techniques of the period ([Haig, 2021](#); [Pohl, 2019](#)).

The emerging art movement in Europe and the United States expanded and enriched the traditions of arts and crafts. It shifted the emphasis from excessive ornamentation and industrialization to recognising the artistic value of skilled craftsmanship. The aforementioned concepts revitalised and improved traditional handicrafts ([Gerschultz, 2020](#)). The emerging tapestry art movement prioritised the preservation of traditional weaving techniques employed by skilled craftsmen and advocated for a naturalistic decorative style. The transition resulted in a shift in wall art,

moving away from imitating painting styles and towards embracing ornamental curved designs. This transformation had a significant impact on the artistic landscape of traditional murals (Day et al., 2018).

Jean Lurcat (1892–1966) played a significant role as the founder of the Lausanne Tapestry Biennale and emerged as a prominent figure in the field of tapestry art. In response to the changing social, economic, cultural, and technological context, modern art design has expanded its scope beyond meeting practical needs to include a more profound exploration of spiritual gratification. Lurcat advocated for the seamless integration of woven tapestry with contemporary art during the 1940s and 50s. Through innovative approaches to traditional materials and techniques, he significantly enhanced the expressiveness of tapestry art, thereby establishing a foundation for its future development (Ștefănescu, 2020).

In addition, Lurcat, along with Pierre and his spouse, who were prominent art enthusiasts in Switzerland, organised the inaugural tapestry art exhibition in the country. The exhibit received strong support from the local government, leading to the biennial organisation of an international wall art showcase. This endeavour greatly influenced Lurcat's subsequent artistic endeavours, imbuing his creations with the essence of the era and establishing the world's first museum dedicated to authentic wall art. The International Centre for Ancient and Modern Wall Art (ICAMT) was established in 1962 in Lausanne, Switzerland, with the support of the Swiss government and the French Ministry of Culture, based on Lurcat's suggestion. Lurcat is widely recognised as the leading figure in contemporary tapestry art in France.

The Evolution of Female Artists in the Lausanne Tapestry Biennale

From 1962 to 1969, European wall art was primarily two-dimensional until the first international Lausanne Tapestry Biennale. However, the tradition of art continued at the first Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale. While a majority of creations were focused on walls, some artists demonstrated notable innovations in their artworks (Cotton, 2015).

One such example is Red Abakan (Figure1). The fourth International Tapestry Art Show featured a standout piece. Magdalena Abakanowicz, a notable female artist

from Poland, created the artwork in question. It was skillfully woven using sisal, effectively incorporating the material's thickness and rough texture. Abakanowicz's decision to suspend the piece in space resulted in a transformation that offered viewers a fresh perception of freedom. The colour red is associated with passion, energy, revolution, excitement, blood, and violence. The Red Abakan is constructed using red sisal that has been dyed and woven with metal supports for suspension. Sisal is a material that is initially soft, fragile, and brittle. However, it gains toughness and strength when twisted into strands, connected into threads, and woven into sheets. "This marked a significant departure from traditional wall art, symbolizing its expansion into broader spatial dimensions" (Song, 2015).



Figure 1: (Red Abakan) Magdalena Abakanowicz.

Jagoda Buić is a notable artist who introduced tapestry into space in a subtle manner. The artwork titled "Structural Triptych" employed wool as its main material, resulting in spatially extended visual effects. Buić's work "Wounded Pigeon" (Figure 2) utilises abstraction to convey a diverse and aesthetically pleasing composition, while also evoking strong emotions. Buić's artwork challenges traditional boundaries by integrating fibre work into natural or constructed surroundings, thereby introducing fresh concepts (Jefferies & Weinberg, 2020).



Figure 2: (Wounded pigeon) Jagoda Buić.

During the period from 1962 to 1969, the Lausanne Tapestry Biennale showcased a variety of artists who either adhered to traditional styles or ventured into new

experimental territories. During this era, contemporary materials and methods were used for the production of installation items. The committee overseeing the biennale actively promoted innovative techniques and concepts, leading to the incorporation of tapestries as independent decorative elements in modern art, distinct from traditional paintings (Coxon, 2022).

As stated in the fourth International Tapestry Biennale:

In the past, tapestry may have been displayed in an art gallery or considered a form of pastiche. However, art has recently gained renewed significance, potentially due to its ability to explore new ideas and perspectives on sleek surfaces, or as a response to society's desire to add a more compassionate layer to the harshness of the modern industrial era (Erica, 1997 p.61).

This quote highlights the evolution of tapestry from being purely decorative objects in art galleries to becoming vibrant forms of artistic expression. The resurgence of tapestry is credited to the art world's exploration of new sources of inspiration and the exploration of different dimensions on flat surfaces, potentially representing a shift away from conventional artistic mediums. Furthermore, it implies that in a time characterised by the prevalence of steel and concrete, there is a collective desire to incorporate a fresh sense of humaneness into the urban environment. Wall hangings are proposed as a means to accomplish this revitalization of culture and art.

From 1971 to 1979, a series of four highly regarded global tapestry art biennales took place, expanding the influence of tapestry art from Europe to the international stage. The transition provided an opportunity for numerous fibre artists to exhibit their talents. A diverse range of art pieces encompassing various subjects were showcased at the recent biennale. In addition, it uncovered a range of new trends and phenomena that are likely to inspire future artistic endeavours. The seventh edition of the International Biennale of Tapestry Art garnered attention from 800 artists hailing from 64 nations, solidifying its growing importance in the art world. Researchers have noted a steady increase in the number of exhibited artworks, highlighting the success of the event (Laffer, 1960-1986).

In this era, tapestry art showcased a remarkable diversity compared to previous years. Designers have progressed from traditional wall decorations to more expansive

spatial arrangements. This transition represented a move away from merely replicating complex designs to exploring deeper into personal thoughts and expressions within the field of tapestry art.

The artwork *Contact* by Francesca Grossen, an accomplished artist, showcases a captivating ceiling-suspended piece that presents intricately knotted ropes, creating a mesmerising illusion of weightlessness. Grossen examined the concept of knotting by drawing parallels to the process of linking alphabetic letters. She observed repetitive patterns in the ropes and interpreted them as symbolic representations of handholding in lines, finding meaning in these patterns. She used fundamental knotting techniques to create sleek fibre sculptures with a contemporary aesthetic, appreciating the artistic freedom and fluidity of the weaving process.



Figure 3:(Contact) Francesca Grossen.

The piece depicted in Figure 4 is titled *Pagoda One Mountain*. It is intricately woven into a pyramid shape and carefully positioned on the ground. This artwork was showcased at the 8th International Biennale of Tapestry. The artist skilfully employs the interplay of positive and negative space and light to achieve a harmonious pattern, elevating the conceptual significance of the artwork beyond its utilitarian value.



Figure 4: (Pagoda One Mountain) Naomi Kobayashi.

Sheila Hicks is a notable artist who draws inspiration from the work of those who came before her, while also pushing the boundaries of her craft. She applies her

knowledge of knitting to the design, expressing her emotions in a fresh manner. Sheila explores the intricate art of ancient Peruvian weaving, drawing inspiration from the weaving techniques of the Tasco Indians. She also delves into the profound spiritual significance that fabric holds.

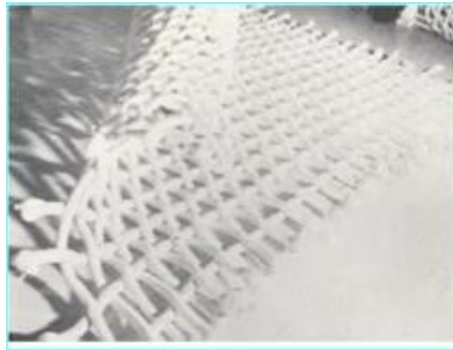


Figure 5: (Arc-en-Barrois) Sheila Hicks.

Sachiko Morino, a Japanese female artist, employs thick ropes in her artwork "In Bound Air" to construct an imaginary cube within the space. The design creates a space-like effect by using ropes, providing the audience with a novel visual experience. The use of ordinary ropes enhances the perception of unlimited power within the space. This paper aims to analyse the unique manifestation from three perspectives: physical, spatial, and functional. It will also explore the underlying meaning and value associated with it. According to [Song \(2019, p.144\)](#), Morino perceived space as a powerful entity, and her artwork reflects her profound comprehension of the concept of emptiness. The artist's works primarily feature natural forms and employ modern design techniques to create artistic and engaging compositions. This creative idea aligns with the current advocacy for environmental consciousness.

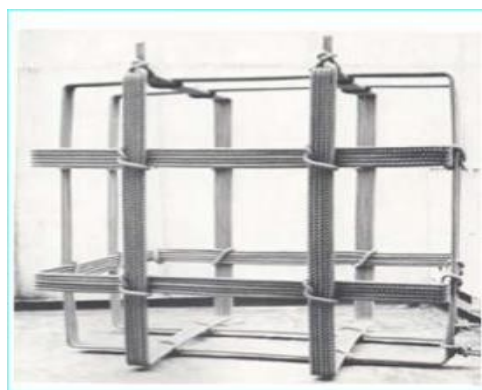


Figure 6: (Bound Air) Sachiko Morino.

The Japanese artist's contemplation of material attributes revitalised the

Lausanne International Tapestry Art Biennale. The art of tapestry has evolved to an unlimited form as it explores the unique properties of fibre materials.

An in-depth analysis of the artist's works reveals a notable transformation in the interpretation of 'tapestry' during that era. This represents a deviation from the traditional approach to decorating walls. Tapestry has become a significant element in modern design as an ornamental technique. This item not only functions as a decorative object but also carries profound cultural and philosophical significance. The relationship between mediaeval tapestry and walls has been intricately connected, with architecture, aesthetics, and social interaction playing crucial roles. Wall art has become an important aspect of contemporary art. The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale has significantly elevated the prominence of tapestry art in the art scene. However, this method encounters several challenges, such as effectively combining the theoretical and conventional aspects of wall art, incorporating traditional culture into modern design, and determining the range of fibre material uses, among other obstacles (Yan, 2020).

1981-1995: Lausanne's global tapestry art shows in the 1980s exhibited significant variation. Some creations maintain traditional weaving techniques, while others are avant-garde art exhibitions in a new era. Artists from different countries have gained recognition in the global art scene by demonstrating a deep understanding and theoretical exploration of fibre materials. They have successfully utilised and exhibited the significant potential of fibre art.

The quality of the eleventh biennial wall hanging exhibition showed significant advancement in 1983. Since then, each biennale has featured a unique theme, including Fibre to Space, the 12th edition focusing on Textile Sculpture, and the 13th edition showcasing the global Fibre Art Returns to the Wall exhibition. Fibre artists incorporated their understanding of global cultural diversity, living conditions, and societal issues into their creations, with the goal of adopting a contemporary and localised approach. Fibre art's thematic representation has led it down a unique trajectory, with its evolution continuing to accelerate. Artists are no longer satisfied with traditional visual arts such as painting and photography. This method aims to investigate a broader artistic significance, influenced by materials and technology.

This exhibition showcases fibre art that explores the perception of space through

the body, aiming to deepen artists' understanding and experience of the environment and space. This artistic approach seeks to incorporate art into daily life and promote public engagement in activities. These explorations focus on the properties of fibre works of art and their unique fascination as a special material.

Lenore Tawney's *Cloud Labyrinth* (Figure 6) is constructed using conventional yarn and displayed in a suspended manner to the viewers. The presenter aimed to foster meaningful engagement and connection between the audience and the artwork, thereby safeguarding its authenticity. This approach offers viewers a fresh perspective on space and the interplay between individuals and their surroundings.

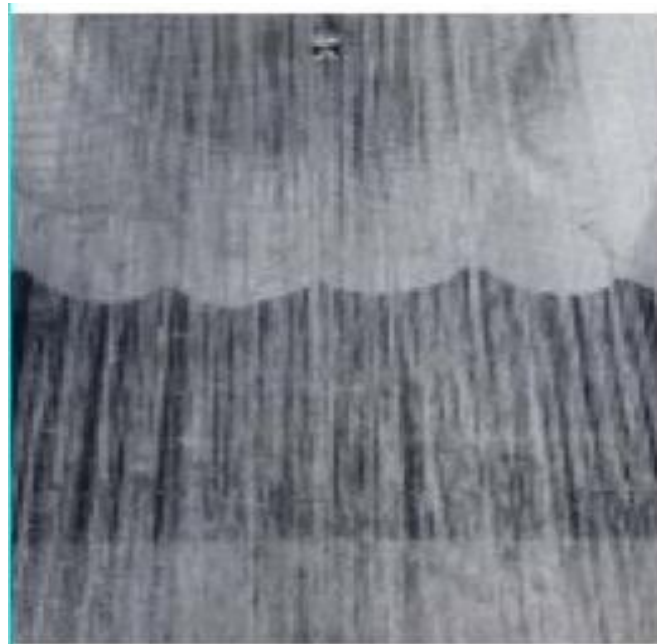


Figure 7: (*Cloud Labyrinth*) Lenore Tawney.

As Song (2019) explains in Gerhard Nordl's words, "We should have a dynamic understanding of the space environment and engage more people through activities such as reading and dancing" (p. 146). The concept of fibre space provides a versatile and unrestricted perspective on the world. The exhibition featured artists who explored the concept of fibre space, offering a fresh perspective on its definition.

Sachiko Morino is recognised for her artwork *Bound Air*, and her other piece, *Futurity City* (Figure 7), demonstrates her emphasis on spatial comprehension. She appears to be replicating the phenomenon of *Bound Air*, where the air is organised in a structured manner. The author asserts that buildings should facilitate movement and interaction, rather than serving as enclosed spaces.

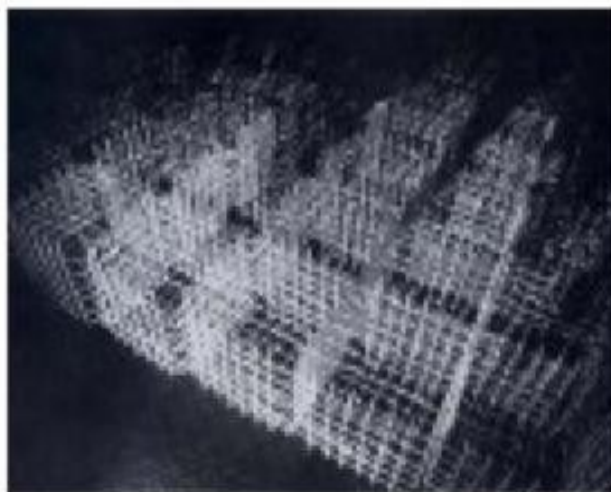


Figure 8: (Futurity City) Sachiko Morino.

Rebecca Medel, a female artist, skillfully incorporates yarn into her fibre artwork titled "Window with door through infinite corridor (Figure 8)." The artwork features latticed, multi-layered doors that are hung and unintentionally stained, creating a visual representation of a passage. Both artworks utilise fibre as a medium to convey the notion of space in a distinctive manner. The artists employ unique creative methods to emphasise the individual interpretations and perceptions of space. Through the use of fibrous materials, they showcase the diverse and intricate nature of language within a unified theme.

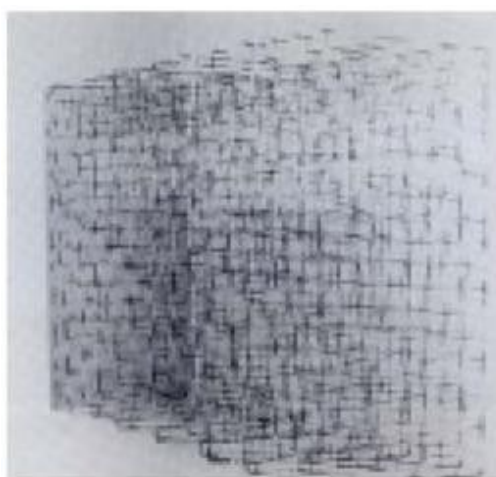


Figure 9: (Window with door through infinite corridor) Rebecca Medel.

Looking at the trends of the Lausanne International Biennale, the term 'tapestry' no longer applies in the show's evolution. Song (2015) made it clear that:

Before the 1960s, we would not particularly emphasize the wall, let alone the wall as the theme, because all the tapestry is naturally hung on the wall, this is where it

belongs. Nowadays, however, artists have gradually liberated fiber works from walls. (p. 16)

The 13th International Fibre Art Show featured artists who, despite the theme 'Back to the Wall', did not imitate traditional wall art. Instead, they incorporated personal interpretations of walls. The artwork 'Back to the Wall' emerged as a prominent feature of the biennale, as artists creatively explored the connection between walls and fibres, resulting in vibrant reinterpretations.

Kiyoko Kumai, a Japanese female artist, created a 10-meter wall artwork titled "Whispers of the Wind" using wire and cotton thread.



Figure 10: (Whispers of the Wind) Kiyoko Kumai.

The international stage showcased the works of Chinese female artists Shi Hui and Zhu Wei, Shou, in this exhibition. The work demonstrated the incorporation of Western weaving techniques while retaining the characteristic depth, density, and spiritual essence of Eastern traditions.



Figure 11: (Shou) Shi Hui&Zhu Wei.

During the final exhibit, the fibre artist found that using only the term 'tapestry'

was not enough to adequately describe the artwork on display. The Lausanne International Tapestry Art Biennale was subsequently renamed as the Lausanne International Biennale - Contemporary Fibre Art Exhibition. Throughout 16 exhibitions, artists have consistently produced art pieces that deviate from conventional wall hangings, showcasing a unique appeal through their deep exploration of traditional textile materials and weaving techniques. The inclusion of wall hanging art in the realm of modern and contemporary art is a result of the dedication and hard work of artists.

The Profound Influence of the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale

The closure of the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale is attributed to complex reasons. Fibre art, as a nascent art form, should not perish due to its departure from contemporary art, but rather find its place within the realm of contemporary art. The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale consisted of 16 exhibition stages that showcased the progress and innovation in the field of fibre art. Each exhibition was distinct in its era and history, demonstrating a bold and innovative approach that consistently pushed the boundaries of traditional conventions. The experimental spirit, referred to as 'the spirit of Lausanne' by critics, continues to be highly regarded in the art world through various fibre art exhibitions (Cotton, 2015).

The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale offered significant support to female artists in terms of materials and language. The platform promoted critical reflection on language transformation and change, innovative exploration of fibre materials and technologies, and enhanced engagement in personal expression of thoughts and emotions by artists. The exhibition aimed to encourage artists to explore and express the essence of fibre art from various perspectives. The exhibition served as a unifying force, connecting artists, communities, and historical periods.

The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale had a significant impact on the development of fibre art in Europe, the United States, and various Asian countries, showcasing its wide-ranging influence. In recent years, there has been a global emphasis on this innovative and rapidly evolving discipline. Despite the conclusion of the last exhibition in 1998, the field of fibre art remained undeterred by Lausanne's closure. Subsequently, motivated by the 'spirit of Lausanne', multiple fibre textile exhibitions

were initiated. The exhibitions both preserve traditional wall art weaving techniques and foster the growth of modern fibre art with an open and free approach.

From Lausanne to Beijing – International Fiber Art Biennale

From 1996 to 2000, the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennial experienced a four-year period of stagnation. In response to the growing prominence of fibre art on both international and domestic scales, fibre artists expressed a strong desire for a platform that would facilitate mutual exchange and exhibition opportunities, similar to previous exhibitions (Pan, 2023). According to Lin (2008), "China has been a textile country since ancient times, and the Chinese people have always had the tradition of using fiber materials for artistic creation, and even today there is still no lack of enthusiasm" (p. 20). In Western countries, fibre art precedes modern art and painting as a distinct category, and it has become a part of modern and contemporary art. Compared to other countries, China's fiber art enlightenment and development occurred relatively late.

In 2000, Tsinghua University's Academy of Fine Arts organised an international fibre art exhibition called 'From Lausanne to Beijing.' This exhibition served as a significant extension of the Lausanne International Tapestry Art Exhibition. The focus of this exhibition was to uphold the time-honored weaving techniques while also pushing the boundaries in terms of materials, methods, and innovative artistic expressions in the realm of fibre art. Thus, during the inaugural 'From Lausanne to Beijing' International Fibre Art Biennale in 2000, artists from various parts of the globe came together to sign the 'Beijing Declaration' in a united effort to safeguard the cherished sanctuary of all fibre artists. The detailed declaration content is as follows:

“We met in Lausanne, and today we meet in Beijing.

By now, it is evident that we are part of a shared vision that originated in Lausanne and is still thriving in Beijing. We are all dedicated to fostering connections, but our efforts extend far beyond simply linking 'Lausanne to Beijing'. We will establish the groundwork for the future, construct a future that is both remarkable and harmonious, enhance our understanding of one another, collaborate closely, and exchange the knowledge and skills of artists from around the globe.

We strongly support the idea that fostering connections between artists from different parts of the globe will greatly contribute to the advancement of fibre art. In order to achieve this goal, we suggest creating the International Beijing Biennale of Fibre Art. This exhibition will be organised by a committee of artists who are dedicated to preserving the legacy of fibre art.

As we bid farewell to the 20th century and welcome the dawn of the new century, let us come together and embrace the 21st century with our passion for fibre art. From Lausanne to Beijing Artists at the International fiber Art Exhibition 2000 October 25th, 2000" (2004, p228).

With the guidance of the Beijing Declaration, artists from around the world have been dedicated to promoting international fibre arts, fostering the internationalisation of art and design education in China, and enhancing collaboration between domestic and international art schools and artists in the field of fibre arts. Their collective goal is to establish a platform for academic exchanges that bridges the gap between traditional weaving crafts and modern fibre arts. It is a process with deep historical connotations. "This is not just a simple definition of geography, its deeper meaning goes back to the cultural dimension, stretching from Lausanne to Beijing, not the end of Lausanne, but the continuation of Lausanne's innovation" (Song, 2019, p. 154).

Since its establishment in 2000, the International Fibre Art Biennale has witnessed a consistent growth in the number of artists and artworks taking part. The 2002 biannual showcase presented the works of 150 artists from 15 nations. This exhibition aims to preserve the essence of Lausanne and encourage artists to work together in creating a sacred space for fibre art. The number of participating artists in the fifth biennale of 2008 was three times higher than the inaugural biennale of 2000. At the 2012 seventh biennale, a remarkable display of 307 art pieces from thirty-seven countries was presented, covering an impressive area of over 5,000 square metres. As of 2021, the programme has expanded to include more than 50 venues worldwide, spanning across six continents. Over time, more and more artists became aware of China and the International Fibre Art Biennale, known as 'From Lausanne to Beijing'. As a result, this exhibition has become one of the most influential in the world of fibre arts.

Female Artists in 'From Lausanne to Beijing – International Fiber Art Biennale'

This exhibition will provide an international platform in China, promoting the development of Chinese fibre art and offering a broader stage for Chinese artists, including numerous talented female artists. Due to its ability to convey women's distinct life experiences and values, fibre has emerged as a prominent medium for female artists in the realm of contemporary art.

Upon examining the fibre works of Chinese female artists showcased in this exhibition, it becomes evident that as conceptual art and avant-garde art continue to evolve, numerous domestic female artists have started to liberate themselves from the confines of traditional art. They are actively venturing into uncharted territory, exploring fresh ideas and innovative modes of artistic expression.

In the realm of artistic expression, female artists have embraced traditional weaving techniques while infusing their work with a more direct and visually striking representation of fibre materials. Simultaneously, these artists push the boundaries of fibre material application, exploring its diversity and conveying concepts with greater intricacy and depth.



Figure 12: (Solar term series) Wu Fan.

Wu Fan, the artist, has been a part of this exhibition on three separate occasions. The artist utilises fibre materials to convey the sculptural aspects associated with nature, including plant stems, leaves, seeds, and more. Through this exploration, they delve into the connection between humanity and the natural world, expressing the inherent beauty of life and the strength of vitality. The Solar Terms series utilises natural fibre twine and cotton rope as its primary creative materials, showcasing an abstract expression of plant elements. The artist created symbols that represent the different

seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, based on the characteristics of weather and images, without relying on solar terms. For instance, in the fibre work *Grain in Ear*, it depicts the period when cereal crops are grown. In the piece, the objects enclosed within tadpoles symbolise seeds. In the spring equinox, the branches of willow leaves are struggling to grow outward. As major heat sets in, the air swirls with rising temperatures. The start of summer is characterised by lush, tree-lined landscapes. The artist skillfully portrays this solar term by depicting layers of buds and leaves. Planting and blossoming, this is the beginning stage of life, but also the most dynamic phase. Artists have their unique methods of expressing the joy and vitality of life.

The fibre works of artist Ouyang Geili are examined in the context of gender. The artist posits that the physical and psychological differences between male and female artists result in distinct perspectives on the world and unique modes of expression. The *Pregnancy Series* represents the artist's contemplation of existence. Life is characterised by simplicity and directness. All living organisms, ranging from cells and microorganisms to human beings, undergo the life cycle of birth, ageing, illness, and death. The pregnancy series incorporates two symbols: 'leaves' and 'tadpoles'. The tadpoles move swiftly and energetically in the leaf-filled rapids. The artwork's depiction of 'tadpoles' symbolizes women's inclination towards emotional devotion, whereas the representation of 'leaves' signifies their state of happiness. When selecting fibre materials, it is advisable to opt for wool, cotton, or hemp, as they effectively convey the essence of femininity.



Figure 13: (Pregnancy series) Ouyang Guili

The Influence of the Two Exhibitions on Female Artists

Both exhibitions have had a significant influence on the field of fibre art, and it can be said that the collection and evolution of numerous works in both exhibitions have played a role in the swift advancement of fibre art. While it was initially men who started the exhibition, a careful examination of these chapters reveals the significant contribution of female artists to fibre art (Jones, 2016).

In the realm of fibre art, female artists are constantly pushing the boundaries and enriching their distinct femininity. Their work reflects a fervent embrace of ethnicity and a profound care for the family, as their values gradually influence all areas of women's interests. "Feminist artists are exploring new ways to counter male-dominated exclusivity", Huang (2017) said, "Feminist artists are exploring new ways to counter male-dominated exclusivity". They are interested in discovering art forms that capture the unique experiences and values of women, while also embracing and honouring the diversity of gender. The art of fabric weaving plays a vital role in this process, as it is closely associated with femininity. Female artists utilise various fibres in both shows, highlighting their importance. Materials like cotton, hemp, silk, and wool, along with techniques like weaving, knotting, and embroidery, are commonly utilised by female artists, distinguishing them from their male counterparts.

The dominance of men in traditional painting and sculpture has long been recognised, reflecting their unique position in artistic expression and thinking. Fibre arts have had a strong association with women since the textile age, throughout history. The representation of gender and cultural traits of women has been historically associated with fibre, ranging from traditional roles such as men ploughing and women weaving, to the expression of women's red culture, to the participation of female workers in the textile industry. There exists a distinct art expression and value system that is fundamentally divergent from that of men. Female artists who took part in two significant fibre art exhibitions shared their perspectives on topics such as identity, society, and family with the public. Simultaneously, there has been an increase in the participation of female artists in these two international fibre art exhibitions. The ongoing progress of female artists is evident in the continuous development and evolution of two fibre art exhibitions. This not only enhances the status of fibre art in

the art world, but also strengthens the voice of female artists in this field.

The essence of beauty resides in emotional and spiritual connection. Throughout history, women have played a significant role in the development of textile production and fibre art. This process has involved a gradual accumulation and refinement of skills, resulting in a deep integration of emotion and spirit. Fibre art has expanded its possibilities for creative expression as a distinctive art form. Female artists employ a combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology to produce a collection of iconic artworks, resulting in a distinct feminine aesthetic viewpoint and a deep comprehension of female beauty.

Conclusion

The Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials offer female artists the chance to utilise fibre materials and express themselves without constraints. Artists have effectively dissociated tapestry art from its utilitarian and ornamental aspects, prioritising the exploration of tapestry art and its evolution into fibre art. Female artists demonstrate their meticulous attention to detail in both the selection of fibre materials and the texture and presentation of these materials. Fibre art is utilised to represent their perception of the world, communicate personal narratives, and closely observe minute occurrences. This process cultivates a distinct aesthetic perspective and a profound understanding of the beauty of women.

Throughout the history of art, gender difference has been a persistent issue that cannot be ignored. [Cao \(2014\)](#) has argued in research that: "historically, changes in the status of women in society determine the degree of progress of human civilization. Therefore, recognizing the influence of women in fiber art can help us better complement the full fiber art landscape" (p. 144).

Simply put, fabric has elevated fibre art to a prominent position in the art world, with a compelling narrative that is greatly influenced by female artists. Their contributions form a distinct framework for the creation and understanding of fibre art. Female artists have crafted a collection of timeless masterpieces, showcasing their exceptional understanding of the world around them. Women's innate and exquisite nature, when paired with fibrous materials, showcases their remarkable insights into

society. As society continues to evolve, it is crucial to delve into the multitude of interpretations and transformations it entails. We must strive to gain a comprehensive understanding of the worth and influence of women, while also embracing the rich perspectives that female artists contribute.

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