



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE
FOR CRAFT AND DESIGN

“ Cloth is a universal material. Everyone uses it, everyday, in many different ways, for warmth, protection, as a covering, for decoration, for health and safety, from birth till death. ”

Liz Williamson

Education Kit

LIZ WILLIAMSON | TEXTILES

Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft
Collaboration between Concept and Technique



Liz Williamson: Textiles
 Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft



Now in its fourth year the *Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft* series has become one of Object's most important annual undertakings. It represents our commitment to celebrating the achievements of the most influential and iconic figures within the Australian crafts movement. Each year we plan to present a solo exhibition of new work by artists whose mastery of skill and contribution to the sector is worthy of broad national recognition.

An important objective for Living Treasures has been to tour each of the exhibitions to regional and metropolitan venues across Australia. With valuable support from the Commonwealth Government through the Visions of Australia program, the Liz Williamson exhibition will be toured extensively by Object to Tamworth, Bathurst, Grafton, Gladstone, Noosa, Ararat, Adelaide, Devonport, Canberra, Coffs Harbour, Albury, Lake Macquarie and Melbourne.

Liz Williamson is an important protagonist in the story of the contemporary crafts in Australia and a great champion for textiles in particular as an artist, designer, teacher, advisor, curator, advocate and mentor. She has developed important teaching programs, advised on government policy and funding, contributed to the governance of several craft and design organisations (including Object) and perhaps most importantly inspired, delighted and comforted thousands with her wonderful woven works.

Steven Pozel
 Director
 Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design

Liz Williamson in her studio
 Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Grey edge 2008 detail
 Wool, cotton
 28x200 cm
 Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Liz Williamson: Textiles

Collaboration between concept and technique

Teachers Notes

The on line education kit aims to inspire students and teachers to explore the work of Liz Williamson and the world of contemporary and traditional textiles. The kit has been developed for Stage 5 Textile Technology and Stage 6 Textiles and Design, Visual Design and Visual Arts students and includes activities, questions, research topics, design projects and links to websites.

As a pre visit activity students and teachers can enquire into the ideas, practices and sources of inspiration for Liz Williamson's work. The education kit is intended to help students focus on particular features of Williamson's pieces shown in the exhibition by looking, reading, answering questions, sketching and annotating examples.

We hope that students will be inspired to extend their understanding by creating interesting textile designs and written responses to the suggested projects.


Throughout the kit you will find references to symbols, they refer to;



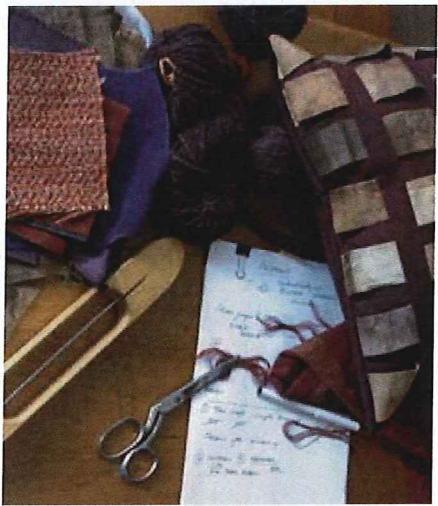
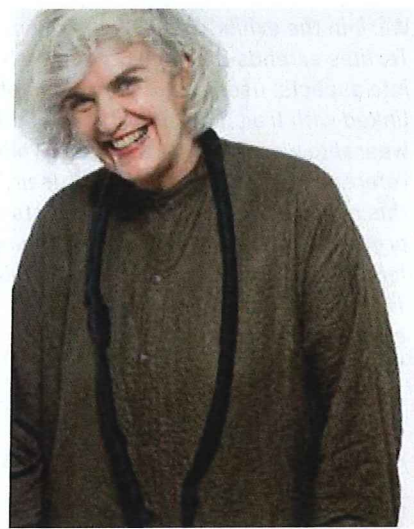
Enquire
Investigate/research before you visit



Experience
The exhibition through questions and activities



Extend
Your knowledge by further research, making, creating and designing.



Education kit developed and written by Annette Mauer, Learning Coordinator, Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design.
Design: Iris Sovierzoski
Photography: Ian Hobbs

Prototype from 'Loop' series worn by Liz Williamson, 2007, Cotton, leather, 118x18cm, Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Williamson's studio work table with cushion cover, weaving, plant dyed materials, yarns, notes and tools, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, as part of the To Furnish the Future project, 2007
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

The Living Treasures series is presented by Object in collaboration with Craft Australia and ACDC, the network of Australian Craft and Design Centres.



Liz Williamson: Textiles has been supported by Craft Australia, the University of New South Wales College of Fine Arts, the University of Wollongong and by Object's National Exhibitions Strategy funded by the Australia Council. The national tour of the exhibition been supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of Australian cultural material across Australia.



The creation of this education kit was made possible through the generous support of the John T Reid Charitable Trusts.

Liz Williamson: Textiles

Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft

Work in the exhibition *Liz Williamson: Textiles* extends the ongoing research into aspects, uses and qualities of cloth linked with traditions of textiles in both wearable wraps and wall pieces. While referencing disintegration and repair, this new work incorporates concepts of protection and the enclosing, wrapping, folding and layering properties of cloth. These ideas are represented in the exhibition by several series of woven, tubular forms comprising the *Loop* series; all with distinctive structures created by using the very different inherent material properties. Notions of containment and protection are also presented by a series of large wall based container shapes, evoking connections with holding, carrying and storage.

Liz Williamson



Above: Works from the 'Loop' series 2007-8
Woven in cotton, rayon, silk and leather
Various sizes
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Far Left: Model wearing 'Loop'
from the 'Loop' series 2007-8
Woven in cotton, rayon, silk and leather
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Left: Dark D'oyley from the domestic
damask series,
Cotton, rayon
94x104cm
Collection: Tamworth Regional Gallery
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Biography

Liz Williamson grew up on a farm in Central Victoria; a place that continues to play an important influence on her work. The landscape and the life in rural Australia are expressed in the importance that Williamson places on making and repairing everyday clothes and tools. After completing a degree in economics, Williamson left Australia, travelling for some months through Asia. After four years away she returned home through Greece, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India and Sri Lanka bringing samples of textiles with her. During the 1960s and 1970s many people became interested in traditional textile techniques such as tie-dying, batik and embroidery.

In 1977 Williamson enrolled in a two month introductory weaving course and found that she was fascinated by the logical and technical aspects of weaving. Between 1978 and 1980 she enrolled in a studio textiles course at the Melbourne College of Textiles and in 1980 took a tapestry weaving course. Between 1981 and 1983 she enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts (Textile Design) at RMIT.

Williamson initially worked as a freelance designer designing wool upholstery fabrics, however her interest in making woven textiles to be worn became a major concern. Creating one-off wraps and scarves allowed her the freedom to explore ways of integrating design, techniques and ideas.

From 1997 Williamson was making textiles to be worn but she was also interested in the appearance and history of cloth that had been changed through wearing. Repair through the process of darning, the role of memory and the passing on of skills informed her practice. At the same time she renewed her interest in jacquard weaving and began weaving photographic images of darns into the cloth.

In the early 2000s Williamson developed new relationships with communities in Asia such as the Milanangan Group, a weaver's cooperative in East Bengal, India and the Craft Resource Centre in Calcutta. Williamson contracted them to weave scarves for her.

Her latest works involve new forms such as loops and sacs that express ideas about protection and containment.

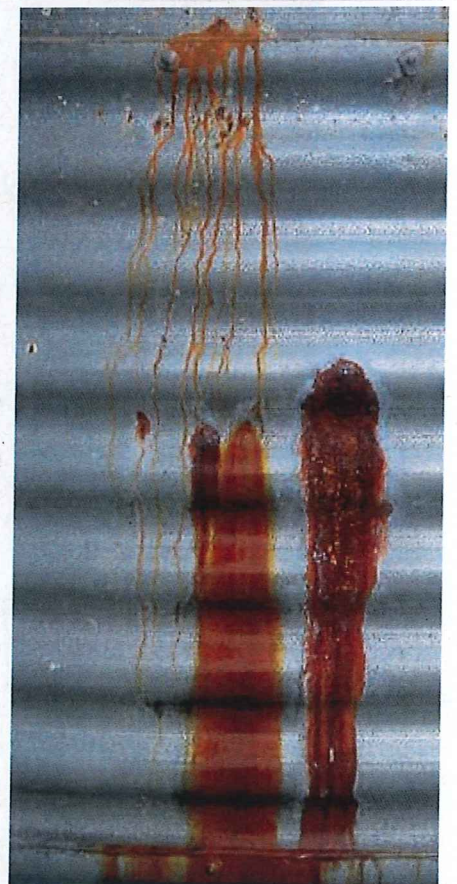
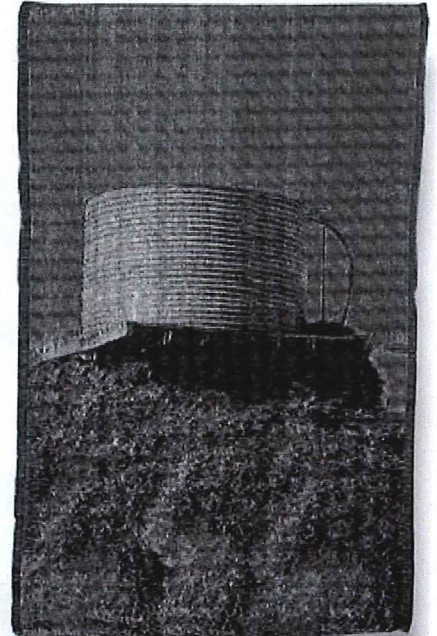
In the book that accompanies this exhibition Grace Cochrane concludes, *Liz Williamson continues to evolve intelligent variations of her contemporary weaving processes, while researching thoughtfully into past practices and traditions that inform her work. She presents us with new ways of understanding and enjoying the many meanings and associations that woven textiles can bring with them.*



Above Right: Tank from the 'Convey' series
Cotton, linen, 62x103cm
Collection: Wollongong City Gallery
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Right: Rust Image from Lochinvar series
Photographer: Liz Williamson

Above: Williamson's first weaving; a small tapestry intended for a bag, using hand-spun and paint-dyed Lochinvar wool, woven in Castlemaine on a two-shift table loom.
Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Cultural Traditions

Williamson's work has been influenced by a number of cultural traditions that span both place and time.

During the 1970's Williamson travelled to Greece, Turkey, India and Iran where textiles are integral to the culture and way of life. She collected a diverse range of samples from dresses to shawls.

Williamson has also been interested in samplers. These small textiles, popular between the 17th century and the early 20th century, were a means of recording stitches and patterns and formed an important part of a young woman's education.

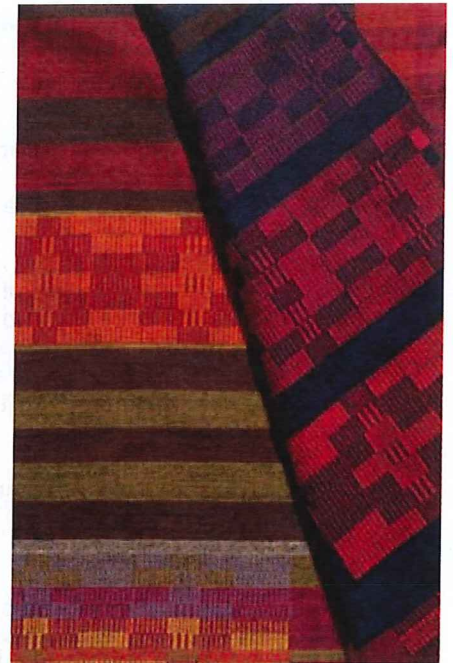
“In the 1990's Williamson began to construct works influenced by West African Kente cloth, in which fabric is woven in strips and pieced together by hand stitching.” Grace Cochrane

Right: Ceremonial textile from Ghana West Africa Known as Kente cloth Asante people Alamy

Below: Embroidery Sampler by Mary Williamson, sister of Williamson's grandfather Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Cultural Traditions



Above: Sample, woven in wool for *Covers* commission 1987, 40x80cm, Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Above Left: *Iban* weaver weaving Pau-kumba, warp *ikat* cloth on a back-strap loom, during the Weaving Cultural Links symposium, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia 1988 Photographer: Liz Williamson

Identify some of the important characteristics and techniques used to create one or more of the following:

African *Kente* fabric, Japanese *Boro* cloth or *ikat* weaving.

Which feature of *Kente* cloth liberated the size of the Williamson's weavings?

Research the history of samplers, their place in recording stitches and patterns and their historical importance to a girl's education. www.exemplum.co.uk/history.html

Find some examples of samplers at 'online resources' of the Powerhouse Museum Website. www.powerhousemuseum.com

Locate a work in the exhibition that shows an influence of textiles from other cultures. See if you can locate a work in the exhibition that incorporates lace pattern.

Consider the similarities and differences between lace and weaving. Are there any other works that have lace-like qualities?

Identify works in the show that demonstrate the influence of samplers.

Compare and contrast a textile by Williamson and one made by traditional weavers from India, Iran or Turkey. Collect images of some of these traditional textiles and annotate them. Make reference to the materials, patterns and textures. Design a textile based on embroidery patterns.

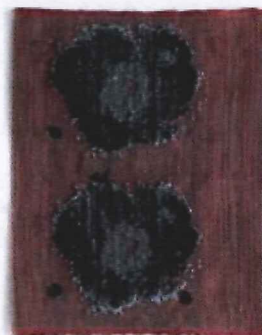


Disintegration and Repair

Worn and Worn/ Visible and Invisible

Liz Williamson's interest in fabric that has been altered in some way, either through time, by wear and tear or through the process of repair, can be traced back to her early life in country Victoria. As a farmers wife her mother darned hessian wheat bags, blankets, clothes and socks. The experience of darning as part of the weave process has also inspired her to explore the impact a darn has on the surface of the cloth and how a darn can become an embellishment rather than an invisible mend. Williamson's weavings, based on scanned images of mended clothing (sometimes done by her mother), chart the alterations in the life of textiles.

Williamson has also noted the ways in which fashion designers have also been interested in the decorative role of darning and patching.

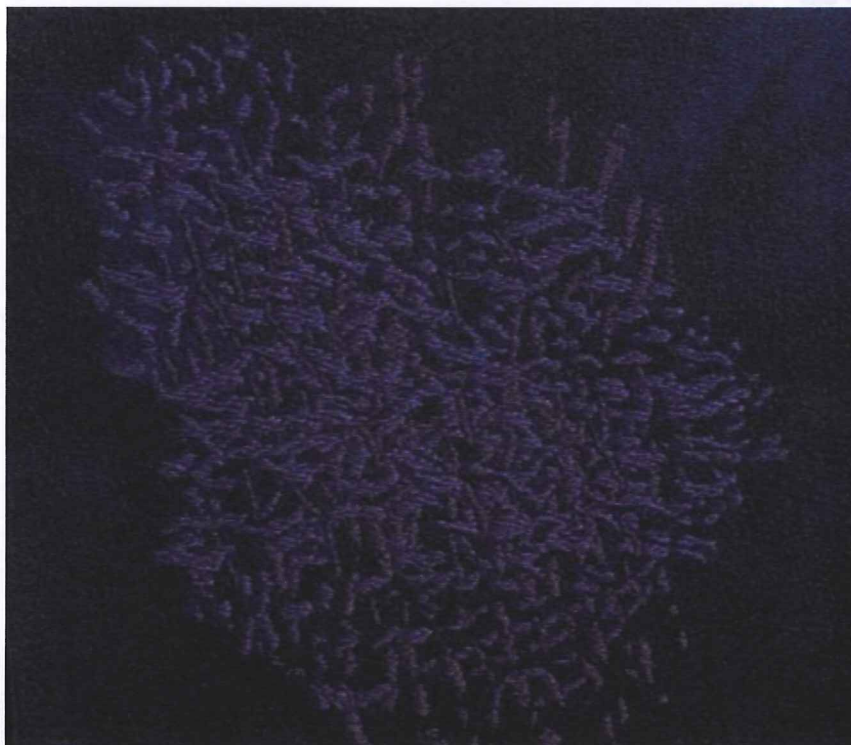


“Although invisibility is implied in the notion of darning, the very act of darning makes the darn visible.” Liz Williamson

Below: *Blue Inside*, 2004
Cotton, linen, polyester
65x65cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Left: *Velvet Darn* 2001
Silk, cotton
25x20cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Bottom Left: *Velvet Darn* being woven
AT Fondazione
Arte della Seta Lisio, Florence, Italy 2001
Photographer: Liz Williamson



Disintegration and Repair



“Current concern for sustainability and recycling has witnessed the appropriation and extension of the worn, the patched and the darned...”

Liz Williamson



Far Left: *Darned Stocking*, c.1980's
Photographer: Liz Williamson

Left: *Worn* [detail] red/ brown, 1998
Wool, wool blend
46x215cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Darning: Creating a bridge from the past to the future. Write about this idea or create a piece of cloth or clothing that expresses this concept.

Do you own clothes that have been passed down repaired or reused? How have they been changed? What significance do they hold for you? Reconstruct a piece of old clothing to create a new garment.

Look at the work by Dorothy Caldwell in her exhibition *In Good Repair*.

Textile Museum of Canada
<http://www.textilemuseum.ca/exhibitions/>

In our throw away age the idea of repair and darning offers us an opportunity to reassess the meaning and value of mending and reuse. Look at the contemporary idea of the worn, darned, patched work in fashion.

Research 1970s darned and patched jeans. Other designers such as Tsubi and Sass and Bide have played with embellishment through patching, ripping, tearing and darning.

The works with darning patterns have been created on a jacquard loom and referred to as jacquard. Look up the history of jacquard and explain how jacquards are made.

Investigate the relationship between the jacquard loom and early computers.

Read about an exhibition that was held at Museum of Craft and Folk Art San Francisco, CA, USA; *Ragged Beauty: Repair and Reuse, Past and Present* <http://www.absolutearts.com/artsnews/2004/08/20/32297.html>

Find a work in the exhibition where the darn pattern is used. How did Williamson transfer the pattern to the loom?

Find some works that might express the idea of disintegration and repair. Explain how Williamson has achieved this idea.

Many of the 'darned' works are very subtle. When you enter the exhibition what was your initial reaction? Go up close and reassess your initial response. How do the works reveal themselves to you?

Containment and Protection

'Coverings for the Body and Soul' ■■

In her newer work Williamson considers the protective character of cloth and an interest in the different ways woven objects can be defined. Since the 1980s she has worked with plain weave and double cloth; a technique in which two layers of fabric are woven at the same time. Williamson is now using her double cloth weaving process to create flexible tubular forms woven in rayon, cotton, silk and leather.

Williamson is also exploring the idea of containment by weaving 'sacs'. The 'sacs' act as containers but can be displayed as sculptural wall objects.

Williamson's wraps and scarves speak directly to our bodies. They enclose, enfold, and cover; keeping the wearer warm and protected. "In a sense they require the body for completion; they are meant to be worn" Grace Cochrane

Far Right: *Sac no. 1*, 2008

Leather, silk dyed with black henna, polycotton
46x37cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Right: *Sac no.2*, 2008

Leather, silk dyed with black henna, polycotton
46x37cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Below: Wraps from the *Twist* series, 2003

woven in high twist wool, wool, 40cmx240cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

In the Round works I've used a double cloth structure, where two layers are woven at the same time, one on top of the other. The loom is set up so that you have two warps woven to give two layers of cloth. The weft is inserted in a circular manner – woven into the top layer, then the bottom layer, top and bottom repeated. ■■

Liz Williamson





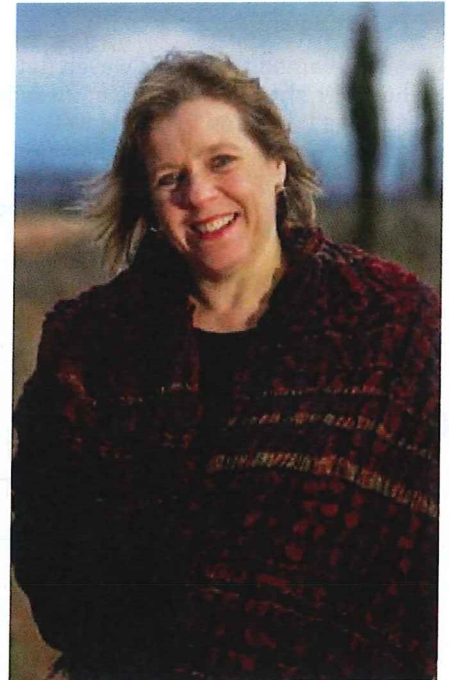
Containment and Protection



Jacquard- Woven wrap from the 'Water' series, 2000, Woven wool blend, cotton and rayon 60x240cm , Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Works from the 'Loop' series, 2007-08 Woven in cotton, rayon, silk and leather, Various sizes, Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Susie Beaver Wearing a Land wrap [1995] Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Williamson was familiar with the 'Wagga rug' or 'Waggas'. These blankets originated through connections to the wheat growing and milling activities of the town of Wagga Wagga. Discarded flour and wheat bags were used in the making of these covers. Look at the following websites to find out more.

<http://discover.collectionsaustralia.net/nqr/wendy.php>

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=9595>



Find and sketch two different works that express the notions of protection and enclosing.

Consider the function of the photographs in the exhibition. What do they tell us about the relationship between the wearer and the garment?

Write down the titles of the works that incorporate sacs or the ideas of containment. Draw one and list the materials used.

Comment on the nature of these materials and how they might differ from traditional sack materials.

Draw a "loop" OR 'round' piece and note the materials used.



Investigate other forms of wrapped or enclosing garments. Consider the Indian sari or South American poncho.

Find other words for wrapping. What do these words conjure up in your mind?

How does wearing a wrap or scarf differ from wearing a coat or jumper? Think about how you put it on your body, how it changes form.

Consider the relationship between the wearer and the wrap and design a garment that covers and protects.

Rhythm

Pulsating and flowing

All Williamson's work is woven flat however she uses a range of threads such as Lycra and nylon, as well as fine worsted wools that shrink at different rates in the finishing process, creating distinctive crushed, crinkled and textured surfaces.

Many of these works refer to the undulations and landforms found in country Victoria.

“The rhythm of the striped pattern echoes the rhythm of the weaving itself: the click-clunk of the loom, and the action of hand, foot and shuttle, a rhythmic dance between loom and weaver.”

Clare Bond

Right: Field[detail] quilt from the 'Land' series, 1996

Wool, wool blend, metallic thread

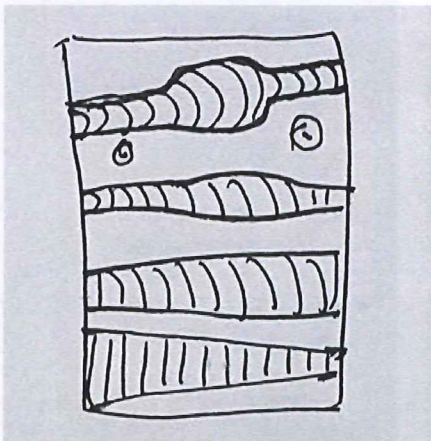
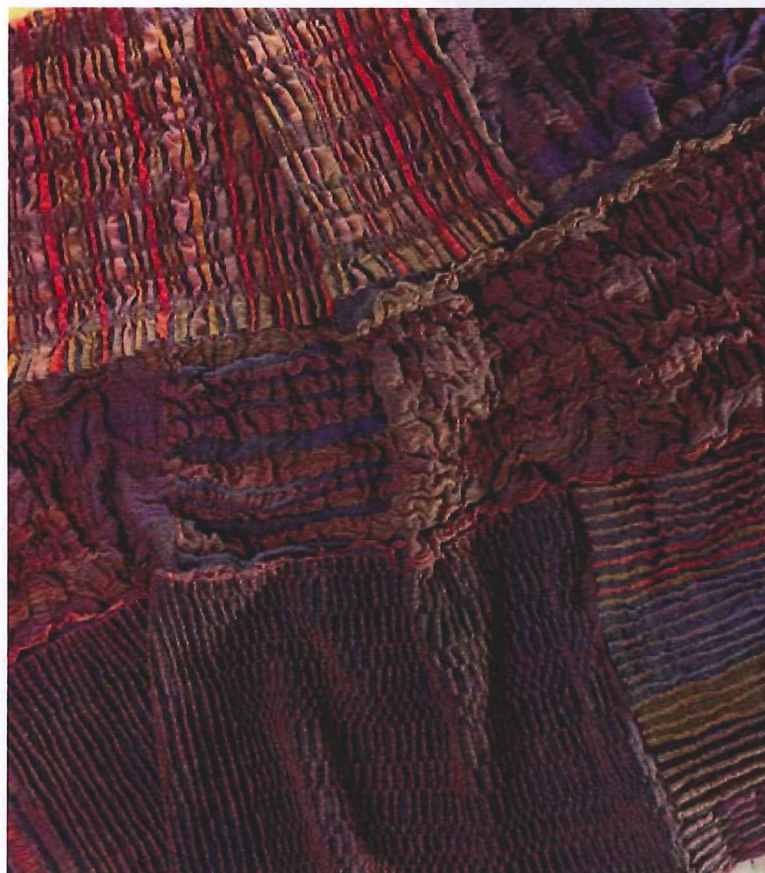
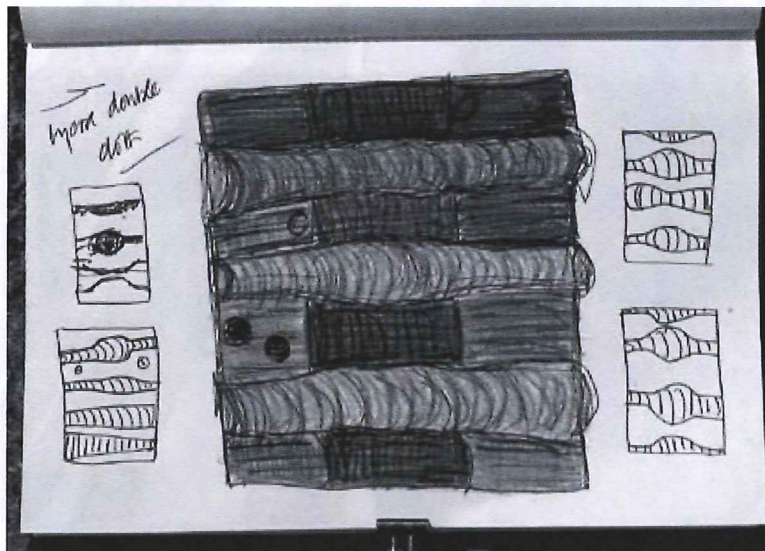
145x120cm

Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Double layer sketch, 1994

Top & Bottom Left: Williamson's sketches for a double-cloth work from the 'Land' series

Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Rhythm



Above: *Fold* 2003
Wool 46cmx180cmx5cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

“ [In] Liz Williamson’s woven aerial landscape, in fine wool and a discretion of lycra threads...her topography ripples and buckles and pleats, crinkles and creases... ”

Evelyn Juers

Top: *Undulations* [detail], 1999
Wool, wool blend, nylon monofilament
100x240cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Research a variety of weaving processes. Consider materials, dyeing, threading.

Investigate felting and look at how Williamson has incorporated it into her work.

Look at earlier works by Williamson and see if you think any refer to the landscape.
<http://www.craftaustralia.com.au/LivingTreasures/20071104.php>



Find a work that is reminiscent of a landscape and note the complex layering of techniques. Write about the techniques and materials Williamson has used.

Consider the elements of contrast and unity. How has Williamson created interest in her works? How are the different elements unified into one design?

Take into account the notion of innovation in Williamson’s work. Find works that incorporate innovative processes.

What type of dyes has Williamson used to colour the works?

Find a work that juxtaposes opaque dense woven forms with translucent fine areas of weaving.

Think about the way Williamson works the edge of her scarves and shawls.

Sketch a work emphasising its rhythmic qualities. How has rhythm been created?

Look at the video. Think about the notion of rhythm in the making of the textile pieces.



Create a textile that expresses one or more of the following terms; puckering, distorting, distressing, fraying, layering, wrapping, folding, looping.

Design a woven textile based on your local environment either natural or built.

Create a rhythmic pattern from a piece of music and transform this into a dyed, stitched, folded or woven textile.

Woven in Asia

Williamson developed a relationship with the Milanagan Group, a weavers' cooperative in East Bengal, India. She designed a range of scarves to be woven and marketed as 'Liz Williamson: Woven in Asia'. The Milanagan weavers reinterpret her designs, previously made from wool in to fine silk threads or a combination of wool and silk. The scarves and wraps are then brought back to Williamson's studio to be finished in her usual manner. This way the individual identity of her work is retained.



“Since 2001 I have been involved with several development projects in Asia working with skilled weavers in Vietnam, Cambodia, India and Pakistan. The aim of all these projects has been to revive, revitalize or recreate traditional woven textiles for income generation purposes, enhancing the quality of life for the weavers and their families.”

Liz Williamson



Bibliography:

G. Cochrane, *Liz Williamson: Textiles; Living Treasures: Masters of Australian Craft* Craftsman House, Sydney, Australia, 2008

C. Bond, *Reverberations: Pulsations in Liz Williamson's Woven Textiles*; Fibre Arts Magazine Vol. 27, No.1, Summer 2000, pages 30-34

Top: Namgyal Rinchen from Bhutan, and Shudangshu Basak from West Bengal, India, examining one of Williamson's textured wraps, Unesco Vital Traditions Workshop, Hanoi, Vietnam. 2001
Photographer Liz Williamson

Bottom: Weavers studying cloth during the scarf-weaving workshop in Lhasa, Tibet, 2007
Photographer Liz Williamson

Woven in Asia



Above: Woven in Asia textured scarf, woven in wool, silk and elastic, 2006
174x240cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs

Left: Woven in Asia scarf from the 'Band' series, woven in wool and silk, 2006
174x240cm
Photographer: Ian Hobbs



Consider the social aspect and the importance of weaving for particular cultural groups. This website explains the importance of weaving to East Timorese women.

<http://www.etwa.org.au/weaving.htm>



Find some works that have been woven in Asia. How do they differ from the works Williamson has woven herself?

What is similar to the works she weaves herself?



"Computerised designs make it tough for Chirala weavers"
southasia.oneworld.net/Article/computerised-designs-make-it-tough-for-chirala-weavers
Read this short article and summarise the problems facing traditional artisans with the introduction of new technology.

Consider the problems Williamson might face in organising the weaving of work outside the studio.

