

THESIS

LAKE STREET WEAVINGS

Submitted by

Kristen Bukowski

Department of Art and Art History

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Master's Committee:

Advisor: Thomas Lundberg

Kevin Kissell  
Emily Moore  
Erika Osborne

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## ABSTRACT

### LAKE STREET WEAVINGS

*Lake Street Weavings* is a series of five small woven textiles. Their colorful compositions are inspired by my surroundings and reflect the gridded American landscape. I am enamored by the relationship of these grids to woven structure. In this series, I transform colossal grids from our landscape into small woven textiles. I attempt to capture the character of my environment and translate these qualities into weavings. Through *Lake Street Weavings*, I hope to express my movement through the world as a complex matrix of place and time. The series is also exhibited with a large scale wall hanging, *Suspended Function*, and a woven accordion book, *Night and Day*. These additional works explore the same themes as *Lake Street Weavings*, while emphasizing scale in different ways.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF FIGURES

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2. *Above.* 11 ¾ x 4 inches. Handwoven cloth, warp ikat, embroidery. Linen, fiber-reactive dye, acrylic paint.
3. *Landing.* 4 ¼ x 4 inches. Handwoven cloth, warp ikat. Linen, fiber-reactive dye.
4. *Homage to Anni.* 6 x 4 inches. Handwoven cloth, warp ikat. Linen, indigo and fiber-reactive dyes, acrylic paint.
5. *Climb.* 5 x 4 inches. Handwoven cloth, warp ikat. Linen, indigo and fiber-reactive dyes.
6. *Landing, detail.*
7. *Above, detail.*

## LAKE STREET WEAVINGS

Through the airplane window, travelers see an abundance of circles and a network of intersecting lines draped over the American landscape. Walking through our cities, we also see these regular patterns on vertical planes, where windows often follow a gridded structure. *Lake Street Weavings* is a series of translations of this uniquely human environment into woven form. Grids in the American landscape and in architecture suggest textile forms to me. This series of small-scale weavings attempts to capture the ways in which I perceive my surroundings. As I draw inspiration from many experiences in this environment, the work becomes a matrix of abstracted views into my world. These woven compositions reflect multiple points in time, rather than singular moments. As Christian Norberg-Schulz writes, “To gain an existential foothold man has to be able to *orientate* himself; he has to know where he is. But he also has to *identify* himself with the environment, that is, he has to know *how* he is in a certain place.”<sup>1</sup> Through this series of weavings, I hope to convey a complex sense of place and time. These small textiles offer windows into my personal interpretation of the world around us through layers of colors and forms from my environment, as well as gestures from a more contemplative internal place. *Lake Street Weavings* respond to both the external and internal aspects of my time in this world.

When I first learned to weave, I was taught to draft patterns on graph paper. This is when I first became enthralled with grids. Grids are the underlying structure in woven forms because of the perpendicular structure of warp and weft yarns. Graph paper is ideal for designing woven fabrics within gridded parameters. After drafting my work on graph paper, perpendicular lines in our landscape became more apparent to me and read as woven forms. When I see grids in my

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, “The Phenomenon of Place,” in *Designing Cities: Critical Readings in Urban Design*, ed. Alexander R. Cuthbert (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 124.

environment, my mind effortlessly transforms them into ideas for weavings. As Anni Albers notes, “If the nature of architecture is the grounded, the fixed, the permanent, then textiles are its very antithesis. If, however, we think of the process of building and the process of weaving and compare the work involved, we will find similarities despite their vast difference in scale.”<sup>2</sup>

Starting with small, hand-held graph paper, I began to see larger and larger woven blankets in our world: in architecture, city planning, and aerial views of farmland. Landscapes often are draped with intersecting lines, which have become the inspiration for my work. In *Lake Street Weavings*, I transform colossal grids from our landscape back to the scale of graph paper or photographs. This more intimate scale can be just as immersive, like a book or a photograph.

Physical closeness is important in viewing this series of weavings: close proximity recreates the way in which we look at our landscape through photography, on the page or on a digital handheld device. I often use photography to capture images to contemplate further and to possibly reinterpret later. Frequently these are images of grids, but I also use photography to document inspiration for mood, form, or color. These images record my movement through the world and moments that catch my eye on any given day. According to Norberg-Schulz, “In general we have to emphasize that *all places have character*, and that character is the basic mode which the world is ‘given’. To some extent the character of a place is a function of time; it changes with the seasons, the course of the day and the weather . . . ”<sup>3</sup> I attempt to capture the character of my environment through photography and drawings, and ultimately translate these qualities into weavings.

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<sup>2</sup> Anni Albers, “The Pliable Plane: Textiles in Architecture,” in *Anni Albers: Selected Writings on Design*, ed. Brenda Danilowitz (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 121.

As a thoroughfare, Lake Street, which runs east to west along the south perimeter of Colorado State University, has a very disrupted character. In the years since moving to Fort Collins and working at Colorado State University, my world has been inundated by the continual construction projects on campus and in the city. As these projects hindered my movement through physical space, I contemplated their presence in my environment. Stopped at broken pathways marked with the beauty of orange woven plastic fencing, disrupted movement through space became more important to me. As Sol Lewitt argues, “Regular space might also become a metric time element, a kind of regular beat or pulse. When an interval is kept regular whatever is irregular gains more importance.”<sup>4</sup> The irregular beat created from construction worked its way into much of my early work in graduate school.

Recently, my eye has turned more to the clothes of construction workers. Fascinated by neon yellow-green safety vests, I began to use this color in much of my work. The brightness of this chartreuse calls for attention. It can be found on a selvage edge of each piece in *Lake Street Weavings*. Although this vibrant hue seems so synthetic, it is also found in nature, as seen in chartreuse lichen on Arthur’s Rock, overlooking Fort Collins. I find it interesting that this color exists in these two very different, neighboring environments. This was not immediately apparent to me, however. I often have very unfiltered, intuitive reactions to color that I connect with later through my weavings.

The importance of color in my work is also linked to the process of dyeing. While weaving offers meditation and structure, wet processes allow for chance to enter my work as well. To immerse material into dye or bleach fosters an exciting element of surprise, especially

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<sup>4</sup> Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art (1967),” in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists Writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 990.

with the use of resist techniques such as ikat and shibori. Compared to weaving, dyeing is fast and messy. I use the energizing prospects of color to fuel quick and spontaneous decisions in my work. All the threads in this series are hand-dyed with colors inspired by my environment: with blues and purples from sailing trips; greens, golds, and reds from my garden; and chartreuses from lichen and construction. The dissection of colors from the world and the aspect of play involved in the dye process create layers of interpretation and improvisation in my work. Like the neon yellow-green in human construction and the natural landscape, colors in this series of works often comes from many separate moments in time, creating a layered, woven map of my environment.

Points of contradiction interest me in this mapping, such as lichen and safety vests or the human grid and the natural landscape. These dualities often seem to balance each other, creating something much more complex and interesting than their individual roles. As contradicting points intersect, perceptions of my position in this environment arise. Norberg-Schulz argues that “man *is* an integral part of the environment, and that it can only lead to human alienation and environmental disruption if he forgets that.”<sup>5</sup> *Lake Street Weavings* represent my role in the world and my environment. I claim my place in the world through this series.

Speculating on the world and my environment, I make choices while I am weaving. The process of weaving is meditative for me and much of my imagery comes out of this reflective space. In this internally contemplative mindset, I work intuitively with my materials, often creating images from the moment instead of from the source photography I intended to use. Albers asserts, “We have plans and blueprints, but the finished work is still a surprise. We learn to listen to voices: to the yes or no of our material, our tools, our time. We come to know that

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<sup>5</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 126.

only when we feel guided by them our work takes on form and meaning, that we are misled when we follow only our will.”<sup>6</sup> I too often feel guided by my material and the process of weaving. Albers also argues that experimentation “can result in the fulfillment of an inner urge to give form and to give permanence to ideas . . .”<sup>7</sup> Creating structure also satisfies me in my process. Weaving is building; fabric is constructed with lengths of thread. A woven piece of cloth is a strong, durable material, and yet it is made of thread, which is often very fragile. It feels good to start with something so singular like thread and to create something with strength and body. *Lake Street Weavings* relate to my environment in a similar way. The small, singular weavings represent a larger world and a matrix of many places and moments in time. The series represents my place in to the colossal grid of the American landscape.

*Lake Street Weavings* examine the world through a weaver’s eyes. Everything woven consists of a gridded structure of warp and weft yarns. Grids are also part of environments inhabited by humans. In our landscapes, grids wrap over valleys and hills; they are not flat. Grids respond to and have impacts on their environments. Through *Lake Street Weavings*, I also respond to these environments. The translation of grids in the landscape into woven form is indirect in this body of work. I abstract many moments in time into singular weavings through the use of line and color. This layering of ideas, of various points in time, allows me to express my movement through the world as a complex collection of places and times. As Anni Albers says, “we must come down to earth from the clouds where we live in vagueness, and experience the most real thing there is: material.”<sup>8</sup> In *Lake Street Weavings*, I am able to communicate abstract ideas of place in woven forms.

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<sup>6</sup> Albers, “One Aspect of Art Work,” 26.

<sup>7</sup> Albers, “Work with Material,” 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 6.



Figure 1. 3:00 p.m.



Figure 2. *Above.*



Figure 3. *Landing.*



Figure 4. *Homage to Anni.*



Figure 5. *Climb.*

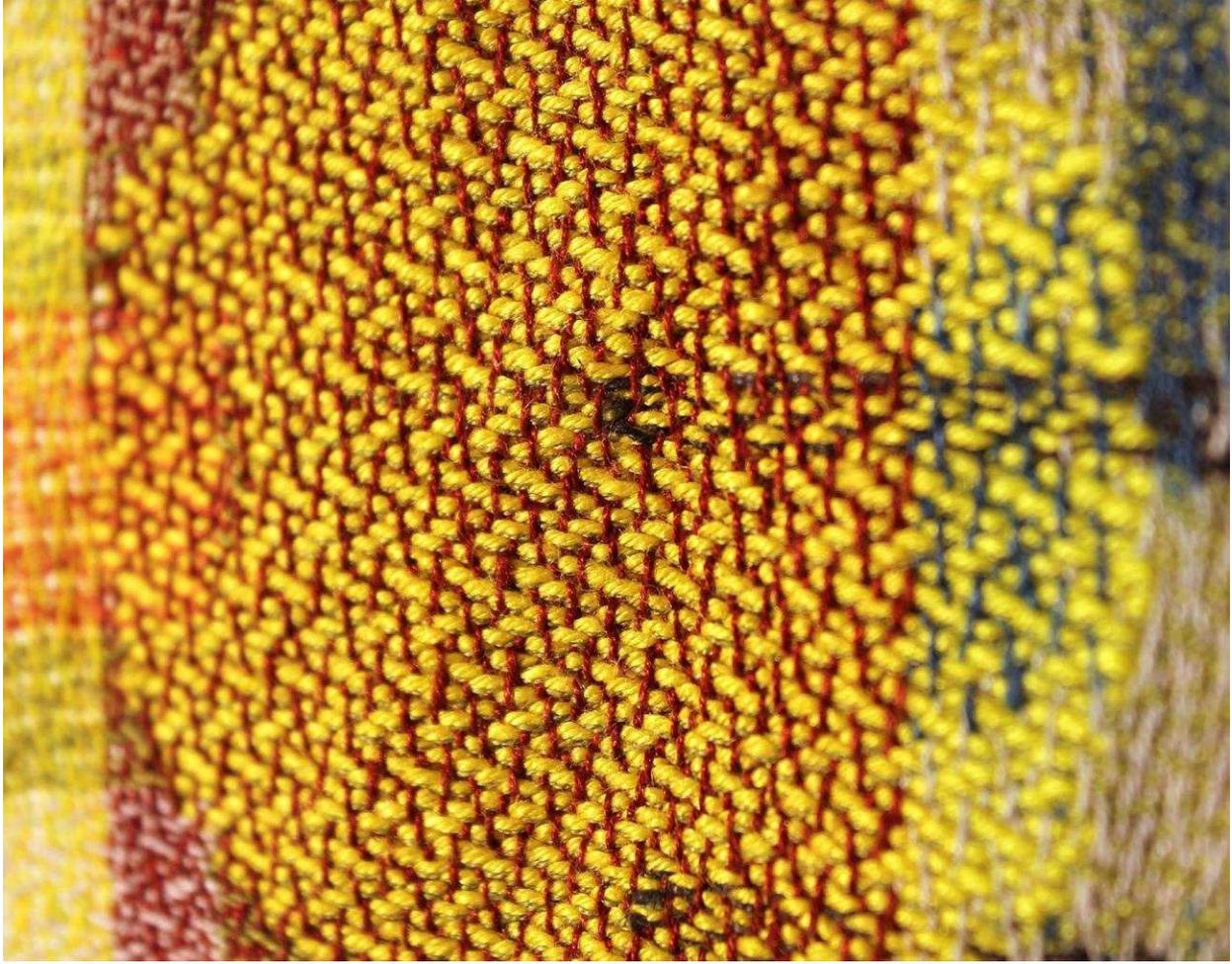


Figure 6. *Landing*, detail.



Figure 7. *Above*, detail.

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