

To My Parents and My Wonderful Educators

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We weave the world around us through gestures, words, materials, among entanglements and intertwinements.

Our world is a tangled web of relationships, intersecting and crossing over in ways that don't necessarily make sense, even if that same disorder make the world interesting and lively. Things contradict each other, juxtapose, overlap, overshadow; they have gaps, they break, they fall apart. Streets, buildings, rooms, objects and people are in constant, often chaotic, conversation. The fabric of our world may just be different threads woven, sometimes tangled, together.

Walk through London. Buildings that haven't changed in centuries have seen people come and go. Stories whispered and shouted inhabit the brick, the wood, and concrete. Materials are witnesses, defined by the stories they have heard. Their destruction is tragic, and senseless, when we can create and evolve public space without building new. The metaphor of weaving is the most apt way to conceptualize this, maintaining a focus on humans, our built environments, and how the materially influence each other.

This essay is divided into seven chapters exploring the idea of storytelling through weaving; discussion and connection with materials; the ecological impact of building and its materials; the way that materials change space; how decoration and ornamentation adapt to space; how immaterial action changes the context in which we view space; and how the built environment can create sites for connection and community.

How is weaving a site-situated practice of making and inhabiting spaces? An exploration of weaving as a metaphor and weaving as a craft.

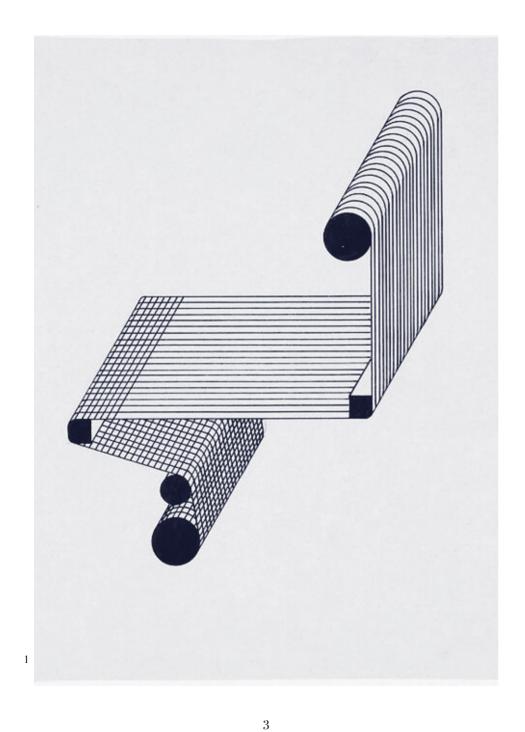
Weaving is both movement and connection. A series of movements resulting in interconnected, durable threads.

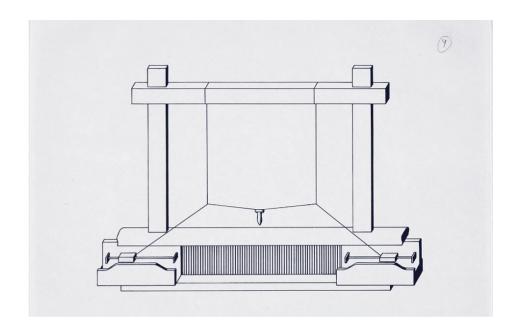
Everything is our world is in constant change and movement. There is movement in the way light changes throughout the day, in how seasons come and go, buildings are built and destroyed; in how whole populations migrate and immigrate and trends cycle through society. Nothing changes without movement.

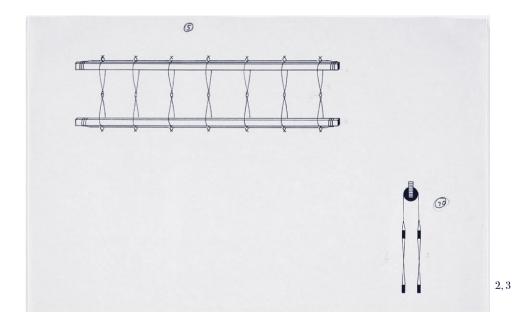
Change can be traumatic, but with every upheaval comes a new opportunity to reforge belonging and connection, as long as there is a willingness to embrace fluidity and versatility.

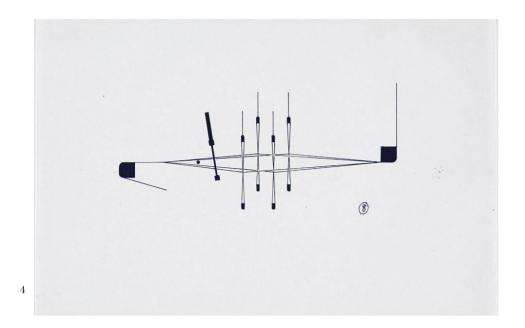
As a response to movement and change we respond with different ways of inhabiting and making.

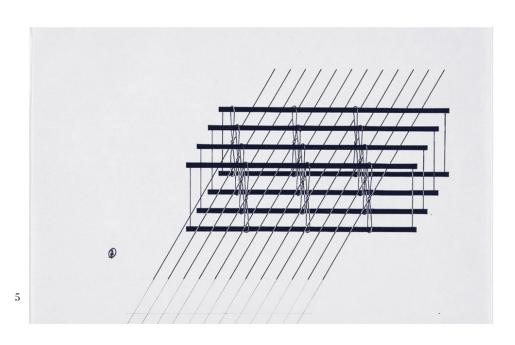
How humans, buildings and materials converse, relate and change is the crux of my context report.

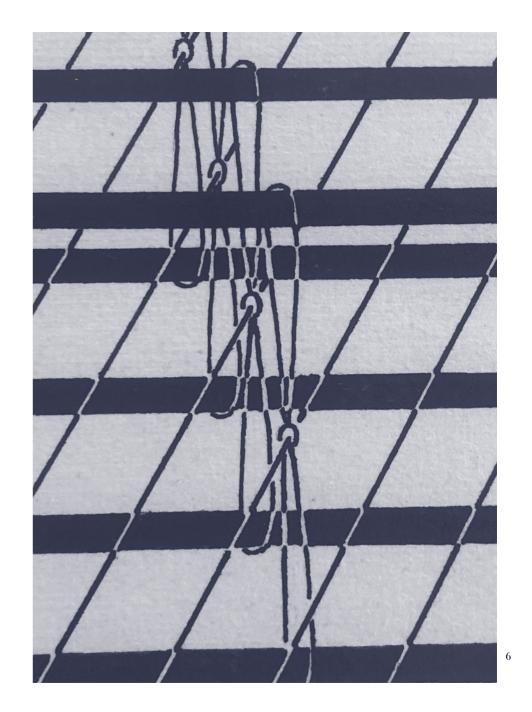


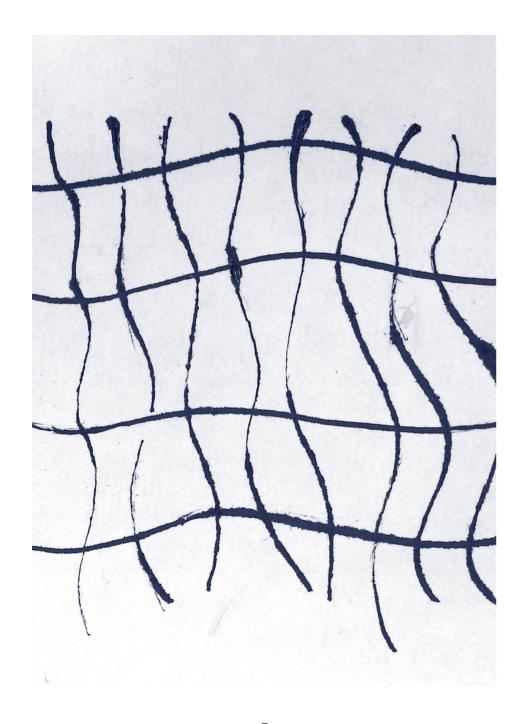












Weaving A Narrative

The threads that touch seem the same, but the extremes are distant, as when, often, after a rainstorim, the expanse of the sky, struck by the sunlight, is stained by a rainbow in one vast arch, in which a thousand separate colours shine, but the eye itself still connot see the transitions. There, are inserted lasting threads of gold, and an ancient tale is spun in the web.

Ovid, Metamorphoses 1

Humans are storytellers. We tell stories to make sense of what we experience, and share what we have witnessed and discovered with others. There are multiple ways to share narrative, including through materiality. Weaving is one way of doing it. This chapter looks at myths associated with weaving, weaving and language, and embodied knowledge and storytelling associated with materials and making. Weaving is a way of making language material. Materials can facilitate storytelling.

In Ovid's myth of Arachne, a young weaver boasts of her skills. So Athena, the goddess of weaving, challenges her to a competition. Both human and immortal weave tapestries depicting stories of gods and humans. But Arachne's was more skilled, when Athena sees this, she turns her into a spider. In Ovid's telling, "Arachne spreads through the towns and 'fills the whole world with talk.' The story transforms into gossip, tales and murmurings, while Arachne and her descendants weave their webs." ²

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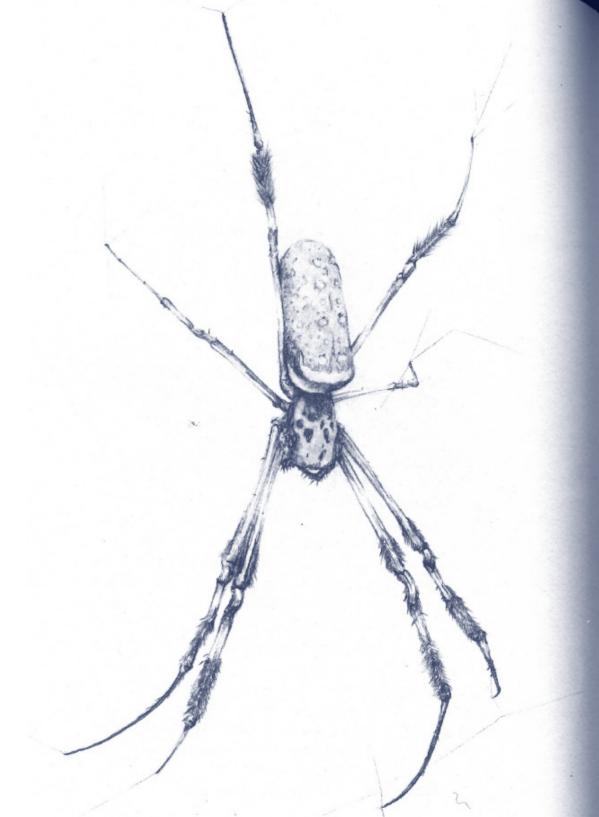


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Weaving and weavers in this myth connect the act of making and storytelling. The myth is intertwined with Arachne as a weaver, the weaver as a spider, and the passing down of stories. This myth relates back to the common metaphor Greeks used which compared weaving to storytelling and poetry.³ The myth of Arachne is carried over into English. The etymology of the word "Weave" comes from "wefan," which also relates back to the word "web," meaning to form by interlacing strands ⁴ Because Spiders are weavers, spiders become storytellers. Weaving, making, and storytelling are intertwined with every retelling.



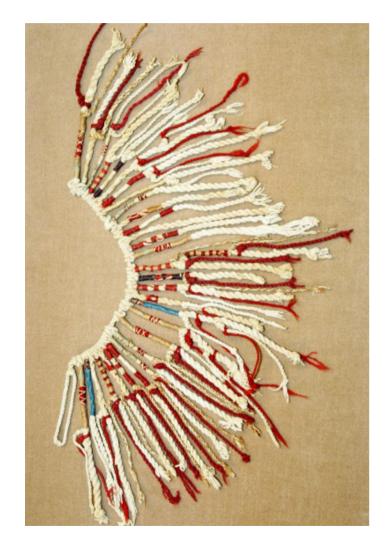
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Beyond stories, the correlation of textiles and weaving as overlapping with language and communication, is found throughout culture and history. The words "textiles" and "text" share the Latin root "texere," which means to weave, write, and to tell a story. In Mali, in the Dogon language, the word for cloth means the "word" and the weaver is "the one who makes the word". This is in part due to the way that we construct stories, weaving together different narratives and tying together different plot points. ⁵The complexities of communication echo through complex weavings and tapestries. A cohesive final result is achieved through understanding how different pieces go together, connecting overlapping sections and creating an entanglement of different elements.

Text-

Weaving has also been used as its own language, to disseminate symbols and knowledge. In Peru, the Inca's used knot-tying within weaving as a way of messaging and accounting. ⁶



Weaving and lang invites you to think but crossroads and narratives woven to of meaning, made

Weaving and language are so intertwined, it invites you to think of stories not as strictly linear but crossroads and intersections, with different narratives woven together to form a kind of map of meaning, made up of a jumble of histories, infrastructures, politics, stories, overlapping and influencing our material world. It's in the interstices and dead ends that some of the more interesting stories start to appear. When things don't quite align, when each person's interpretation is slightly different, a dialogue can

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become richer.

Material Stories

Weaving a Dialogue with Materials

The very nature of materiality is an entanglement. Matter itself is always ready open to, or rather entangled with the "Other". The intra-actively emergent "parts" of phenomena are co-constituted. Not only subjects but also objects are permeated through and through with their entangled kin. '7

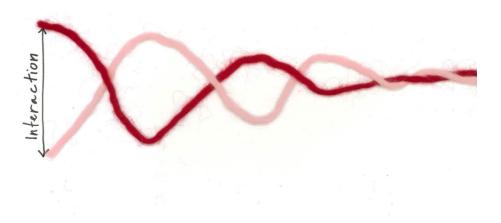
Karan Barad

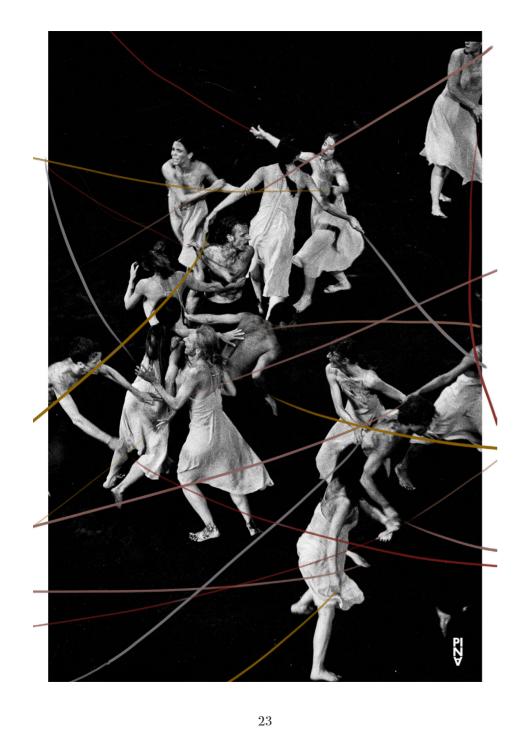
In Anni Albers' Material as Metaphor, Albers explores the possibilities of communicating with materials. Interacting with materials allows a connection to be formed between human and medium. Albers explains it as a dialogue. Learning a material's intricacies and nature is a conversation between the maker and their material rather than an act of pure will and dominance. After all, the maker is not the only one who has influence over what is made. A material is bound by its nature, which the maker starts to understand.



Tim Ingold through his his writing argues that human connection is created through the process of conversation and interaction, rather than finding points of similarities, likening it to creating knots of intersection. Connection is formed through the process of getting to know someone, not the mere discovery of their existence. 9 In the case of the maker and the material, the process of making allows for learning about the material rather than learning from the final product. This dialogue between maker and material expands our ideas of what can be made. The maker is no longer limited by surface level concepts that can be understood solely by consuming. An embodied knowledge is formed through the act of making, which then allows for curiosity and experimentation.

CORRESPONDANCE







Through materials, humans express embodied knowledge, and the act of configuring them also produces an interpretation of the world.

"We are also bodies which are infrastructures for minds, for processing food into energy, into thought, through the hand and back out into materials. We are tools for measuring and manipulating a world into a habitat, one of human proportions. Via food via stomachs via hands, knowledge is built into materials, materials are taught how to think as things, and with things we think and do again, round and around." ¹⁰

Materials are not just tangible, tactile, static things. They contain history and stories even if we are not aware of them. We pass on knowledge through materials, we live in a world through materials, we also have discussions with materials, especially once we interact with them to make and create something else. When we start learning about and through materials, we start to have conversations rather than giving orders.





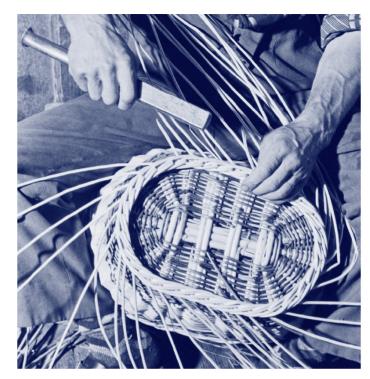
Through the act of doing, making, and interacting with a material you start to question things about it. Here is a personal example, in taking up knitting, I got interested in yarn- in how it was sourced and produced, and why certain types of fiber were better at achieving certain effects. Through making, I got curious about materials and the systems of producing these materials. Through knitting I now have a bigger understanding of the world. For example, wool from Iceland is coarser and warmer because it has adapted to weather in Iceland. Or, when I was struggling to find many British wools, I was talking to a shopkeeper who explained that for many sheep farmers, even though they have to shear their sheep, the processes to sell wool is to costly for them to consider.

Even hobbies, have a wider context. Ask anyone who is interested in woodwork about their chosen materials and wood, which species they prefer to use, what is difficult to work with, where something comes from. Ask people about the materials they use and they will be able to tell you, because honing in on a craft is not just the skill of making, it is also knowledge of the material. Indirectly, through making, people embody their knowledge about a craft and its materials.

"Making then, is a process of correspondence: not the imposition of preconceived form on raw material substance, but the drawing out or bringing forth of potentials immanent in a world of becoming." ¹¹

We make and in return we discuss and learn with materials.

Furthermore, a technique is not just a way of doing. It also relies on knowledge passed down through people and materials "According to the anthropologist Pierre Lemonnier, a technique involves four elements: "A material on which it acts, objects, gestures or sources of energy and specific representations." ¹² It's almost pointless to talk about weaving as a technique without talking about the chosen materials of a project. You can't talk about those materials without talking about the why and how of your choices, and the knowledge associated with materials then lends itself to talking about gestures and actions.



The connection between humans and materials may not be completely physical. Artifacts come with memories, even if they have been lost to time. There's knowledge associated with everything that is reproduced and retold. By looking at materials we are constantly learning about our own actions and choices, our memories, our histories, and our languages.

Weaving is a process of conversing and making with materials. Allowing people to situate themselves within a wider web of knowledge.

A Tapestry of Waste

The Ecological Impact of Building & Weaving as a Response

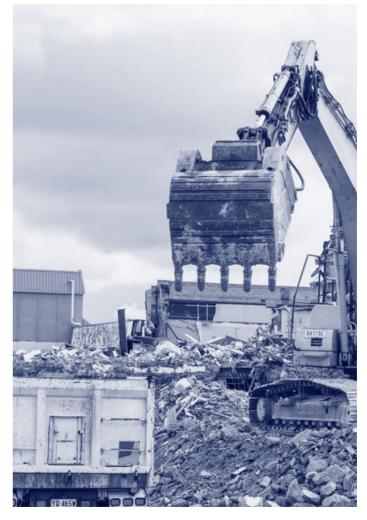
"The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction." ¹³

Rachel Carson

What is the ecological impact between space, people, and materials? The emissions from a building a house can vary from 15-100 tons of C02 ¹⁴. For reference, a car produces around 4.2 tons of C02 from everyday use. ¹⁵ Building emissions include transportation emissions and the footprint from creating such building materials as lumber, concrete, and brick. In a globalized supply chain, Materials go through multiple countries and suppliers, making it harder to trace back their source. Thus making it harder to source sustainably and ethically. ¹⁶ Concrete, a popular building material, is responsible for 7% of the world's carbon emissions. ¹⁷ So building new has large carbon impacts.

Alongside the emissions produced from building, demolishing buildings is also wasteful. In 2016, 62% of all waste in the United Kingdom was demolition and excavation waste. Why are so many buildings demolished that were supposed to last forever? Because it's cheaper to destroy and rebuild. The processes and infrastructure for renewal and refurbishment don't yet exist at scale. People are unaware of the maintenance that buildings require, Since too often, we prioritize destroying and building anew rather than adapting. But it's only working with pre-existing structures that we can approach an idea of permanence,

both in materials and the spaces they create. The lifespan of a concrete building is about 50 years. ¹⁹ But concrete is supposed to last forever. This is an egregious misuse.





Ironically, adaptability is only meaningful within an overall context of durability. And we should honor durable materials by learning how to repair and take care of them. No object can fulfill its function forever, or forever remain in the same context in which it was produced. While textiles are not particularly long-lasting like clay, they are flexible and easy to repair and refit through methods like darning, patching, hemming, and altering. Darning is a way of reweaving into a soft textile piece to re-create structure. This allows for additional materials to be incorporated, and fixed quite easily. Materials like glass or ceramics are rigid and fragile, and difficult to repair on site without replacing pieces completely. In expanding a definition of permanence, we should include an emphasis on materials that are easier to repair and maintain, like textiles.

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Given the numerous techniques to extend the life of textile products, some listed above, we should include textiles and weaving into any discussion of building with and around pre-existing structures. Weaving has always been a viable way of creating space. Some of the first homes were tents used by nomadic people because textiles were versatile and lightweight. ²⁰ Weaving was used as a way of building fences and roofs with abundant materials. It is a technique that allows for versatility in materials and form.

Now this versatility and adaptability can be used in new ways in spaces. The artist and researcher Hella Jongerius has experimented with weaving by looking at the ways textiles can become structures in themselves. This had already been done in basketry, though it had to be done by hand.



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With bigger industrial looms, three-dimensional weaving, which is structurally strong and lightweight, can be produced more efficiently. For Jongerius weaving textile-concrete hybrids becomes a way of limiting the amount of concrete used and transported, which in turn limits the amount of emissions needed to transport heavy materials.²¹

Weaving is a way to mitigate the ecological impact of making and destroying buildings. It is both a form of repair and a new way of looking at building.



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Weaving Together Space

Adapting Space

"I came from a family of repairers. The spider is a repairer. If you bash the web of a spider, she doesn't get mad. She weaves and repairs it".

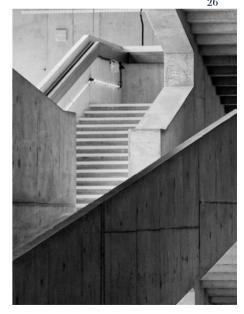
Louise Bourgeois



Materiality has a part to play in culture and its artifacts. Vernacular architecture made with local materials has often dictated regional styles, creating the character and texture of a city. Such as the darker granite used in Aberdeen's built environment or the sand mixed clay in Somerset ²²

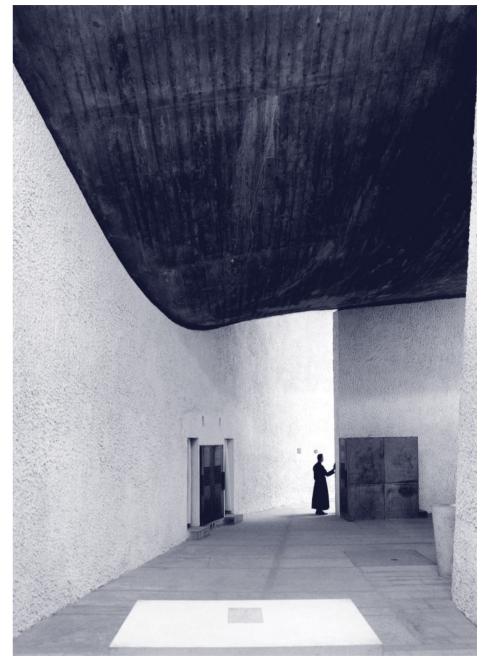
Materiality changes the atmosphere of a space. Think of a brutalist building versus a log cabin. Neither is better than the other but they have different atmospheres, obtained with different materials, concrete versus wood. Creating different appearances, different feelings, textures, temperatures, and smells.





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Materials and buildings have a conversation with each other in a way that may seem intangible, but the choice of materials allows us to create boundaries and borders within and around what we once might have considered a neutral space. Things like heat and cold, light and darkness, softness and hardness, inside and outside, change the experience of the people within and around a structure, creating a conversation between immaterial elements and the spaces in which they exist. "Corbu himself called the interplay shafts of bright daylight, darkness and shadows 'visual acoustics" 23 This then creates different experiences for people in a space, which affects them in different ways. For example: "Behavioral scientists have found that a room with daylight flooding from windows set at right angles to each other will increase serotonin levels and - in many cases - provide its inhabitants or users with a more positive attitude." ²⁴ Spaces and materials, and their allowances, shape the way people experience a space.



In vernacular architecture, textiles have always held an important function in changing the nature of a space. Even the entire dwelling isn't made up of textiles, Their addition creates different interplay in light and shadow, temperature and tactility.

In Architecture without Architects, in exterior spaces, textiles were used to create shade and corridors, delineating spaces and influencing movements. ²⁵



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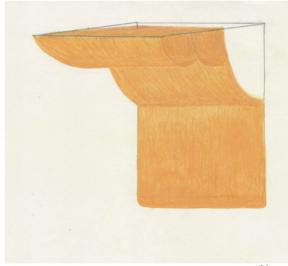
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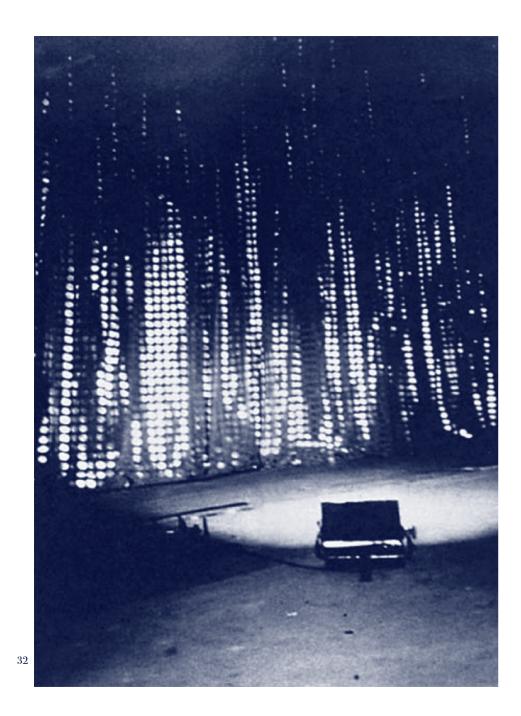
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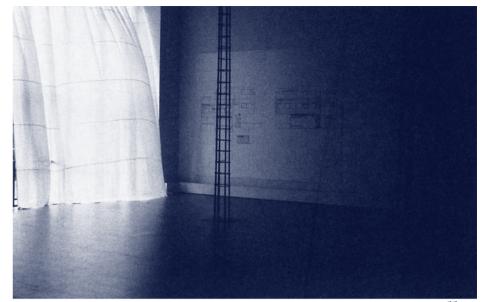




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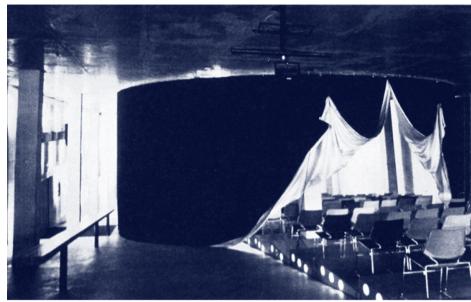
In interiors, The Clothed Home re-introuces Polish traditions of using textiles to regulate temperatures before homes were heated to show hoe textiles today can adapt to different climates and seasons in the present. Blinds and window coverings limit the amount of sun coming in the summer. In winter, thick fabric is used to drape down from the ceilings lowering the height of the room. Which minimizes the amount of heat that escapes, creating a way of adapting permanent spaces with seasonally changing shells. ²⁶ The Clothed Home shows how people can change their spaces according to temperature. Looking at textile history to create techniques to be able to adapt to a climatically unpredictable future in a more impromptu way, using textiles which can be put up and taken down accordingly.





Changing spaces through textiles adds another dimension to making space that you may not necessarily imagine with Just line plans and CAD drawings, but certainly sense in person. Designing with textiles necessarily goes beyond the static plans for a building. Petra Blaise uses textiles and drapes to change space through textiles in a way that is flexible and moldable. The textiles are scaled up and have influence on the space and how it is perceived, allowing space to be divided in different ways, blurring the definition of inside and outside because the line of demarcation is fluid.

Blaise does this by playing with transparency, reflection, scale and movement through drape and fabric. 27



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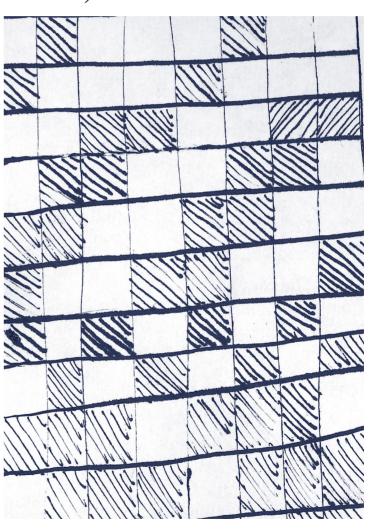


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Textiles are a way of creating atmosphere within a pre-existing space. Adapting to spaces to allow people to inhabit and make in a simple way.

Who's Afraid of Decoration?

Women, Textiles and Decoration



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Women. textiles. and decoration ^{28, 29} always seem to be intertwined in discussion with one another, even if much contemporary design shies away from ideas of decoration and styling. Historically, decoration has been diminished because of the role of women. In the essay, Ornament and Crime by Adolf Loos, Loos Argues that ornamentation in objects allows them to be out of style quicker and thus easily discarded. He also "situates applied arts and ornament in a homologous relationship with femininity and degeneracy."³⁰ But decoration needs to be included as an integral part in creating spaces, not a mere afterthought. Not only is decoration part of the transmission of culture, it is a part of adaptable design that allows individuals to change the spaces that they inhabit.





If textiles were once the first architectural structures, dating back to Paleolithic times, ³¹ they eventually transitioned to become materials primarily used for decorating. ³² In the process, they took on the connotation of craft, womanliness, domesticity and ornamentation, and assumed a lesser position than the nobler form of "Pure Architecture."



Textiles have for a long time been considered as domestic women's work. ³³ Historically, weavers were predominantly women, but as we remember from chapter one, they were also the makers of meaning and storytelling. Even in religion,

weaving was associated with the feminine, the deities of weaving have been female or feminine deities.³⁴Because of this, weaving was diminished as a medium and the utility of textiles becoming a background, viewed as an addition to an existing structure, merely decoration.

So much of the beauty of textiles can be found in their base characteristics: they are lightweight, versatile and easy to transport. In "decorative" items, they add to the function of the object and are part of what makes an object adjustable and mobile. From the more long-lasting elements like window shades and wallpaper, rugs and upholstery, transforming through light, colour and













texture, to the more frequently-changing items like sheets and towels, to the practically ephemeral, like table mats, napkins, clothing even, textiles can radically change the identity and purpose of a built space.

There's an intriguing temporal quality to decorating. Allowing people to change their minds and adjust to spaces differently without putting in too much money or time. However, decoration is important in the role of design and use. There is no point in solely functionality, because then whither the culture, and everything that it brings? There's an interesting intersection in which an object is no longer solely functional but also has a certain form. Form, which is a product of the culture, history and environment, doesn't need to be thought of after function.

Decorative objects generally have a long history of crafts and storytelling, allowing a sense of place and belonging in certain spaces. ³⁵ Tapestries, for example, are used as a way of storytelling. The Bayeux Tapestry, is an example of medieval narrative needlework which was used as a form of history book for illiterate people. ^{36, 37}



In the arts and crafts movement and then the British studio pottery, a rejection of industrialization, ornamentation was used as a way of romanticism, using nature and place to ground their philosophy in their objects.

38 The objects that litter inside, tell stories of the outside.







One aspect of decoration is that it could be considered a kind of empty consumerism, beholden on trends and fads. There is an important point with the idea of trend flows and disregard. Something that is still impacting our wasteful consumption. However, it is unfair to say that decoration has no use. In many ways it's a way of communicating through spaces and objects. What may seem trivial to some is in fact the way someone relates to a space and makes it theirs. I don't think anyone is going to stop stylizing and decorating so why not make it have a dual purpose. Which leads me to my next point, decoration allows a space that has been produced as a blank slate to be bespoke within existing structures. Which allows for more buildings with less materials. If the idea of a house or building is functionality only, thinking only about the structure and not what will fill these homes, then the principal idea misses a large aspect of adaptability in space.



For example, In The Clothed Home, which I discussed in a previous chapter, provides an interesting view on how decorative textiles such as rugs, curtains, bed voiles, can also be used as a way of controlling the temperature in a space. We can use textiles to adapt and change aspects in our home without over designing anything, making multiple uses of decorative items. Adapting when needed, adjusting a home to the seasons through textiles.

For a long time decoration and textiles have been considered feminine and thus overlooked, however it is an important way of inhabiting and making space.



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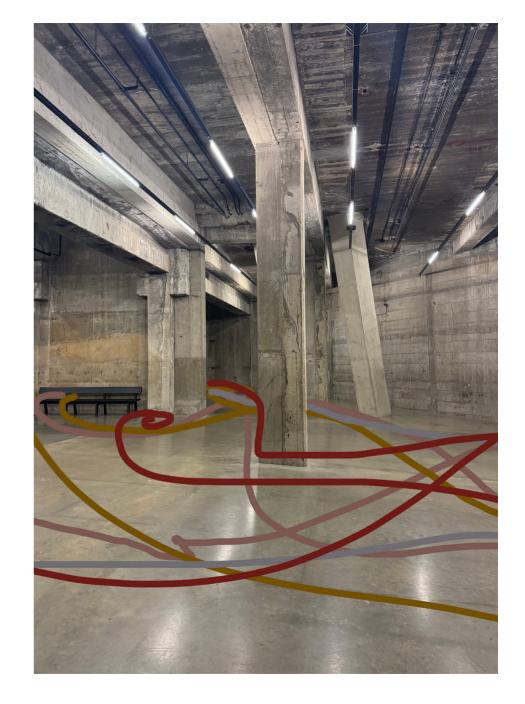
Inhabiting and Making

A Form of Weaving the Contexts of Space

"I weave. I un-weave. I reweave. I mend each torn hour".

Louise Bourgeois

Things that are meant to be long lasting are rendered impermanent and obsolete due to human abandonment. Deserted spaces and structures become ghost towns. There is a continuous back and forth between the permanent and ephemeral; as immaterial, fleeting, and impermanent movements, gestures, and rituals endow built space with resonance and symbolism, making long lasting associations. This chapter is going to focus on immaterial actions as a way of changing contexts surrounding spaces.



Movement map of the Tate Modern

The context of a built environment is constantly changing. Adapting spaces to keep them occupied and used is necessary. Adaption happens in both material ways and in how people live and inhabit spaces. Broader contexts influence social behavior which changes how people utilize spaces. Take the millions office buildings that emptied out during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Companies went online and stopped seeing a need for offices, at least temporarily, As people moved their work to their homes. ³⁹ Social change turns into spatial change in times of housing and cost of living crises, 40 Making now-empty office buildings seem like a waste of space that could be transformed for housing, schools, or other institutions. Factories turn into artist lofts and then into upmarket flats in a churn of gentrification in neighborhoods like Soho in New York City and downtown Los Angeles. The change of space is reflected in the change in a neighborhood which is due to the change of people inhabiting the space.

The built environment and the people living in it reflect each other. Webs and networks made and intertwined can be destroyed or changed, but they can also be rewoven by people inhabiting space. Is the act of weaving ever finished?

The built environment should be long lasting. More and more, materials used in buildings are permanent. But given the added meaning that comes with human use and living, is a structure ever fully finished?



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Weave and Re-Weave

One aspect of dwelling is to care for and preserve the places we inhabit. The book Material Reform ⁴¹ describes two different ways of preserving buildings. First there is the contemporary mode, which considers a building finished when construction is complete, and posits that any additional work needed is due to poor craftsmanship or design. A notable example is the rise of council estates being demolished due "design faults" and "lack of maintenance". 42 Then there's the historical mode, meant to preserve a building in a certain period of time, as if frozen in amber. An example of this is grade-listed buildings. Neither mode of looking at buildings views them as continual projects, with contexts, forms and functions that are ever-evolving and adapting. This way of viewing buildings is supported by cultural and legislative infrastructure which views building as a singular act, finished when construction is complete, and not as a way of inhabiting. ⁴³



This idea is echoed in Arachne's myth and in *Gossamer Days*, In which Eleanor Morgan describes the monstrosity that people see in the spider, whose work is never complete. The act of making is never complete. ⁴⁴ There is never one final object. Just moments and snapshots of

something in the making. There is not one thing to preserve, rather the act of making is observed and remembered without needing an artifact. There is a general dislike of something that is not finished, but in reality, everything is in constant movement and change because there is ever-changing life inhabiting it. "While the continuous making of webs is essential to a spider's life cycle, for a culture that values the fixed and completed object, it is horrific." ⁴⁵ While people don't appreciate buildings as being a constant work in progress, they are. So people who inhabit these buildings are in the constant process of taking care of and making.



Like how a spider constantly weaves its web and a bird makes its nest, people constantly create and recreate the spaces they inhabit.



Fig. 2.25. A Grey-capped Social Weaver (Pseudonigrita arnaudi) looks out the bottom entrance of its roofed nest, which is thatched of dry grass stems, Kenya.



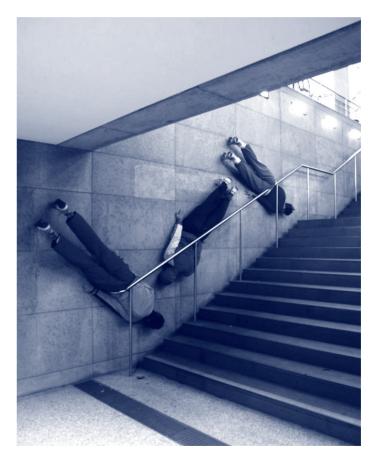
Fig. 2.26. A Sociable Weaver (Philetairus socius) holds a long straw for building, southwestern Africa

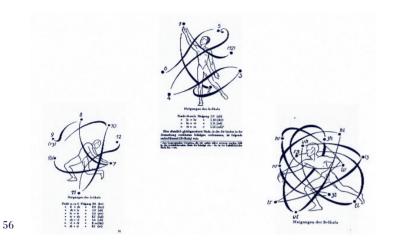
Weaving: Interpreting the Threads of Our World

The idea of impermanence allows for change. Allowing things to be temporary and provisional allows people to continue to make and experiment and explore different dialogues without rigidity. Within the idea of impermanence is a conversation and tension with the permanent. How do we weave ourselves in between what is already existing? Through fleeting acts, we reflect our own interpretations of the world around us.

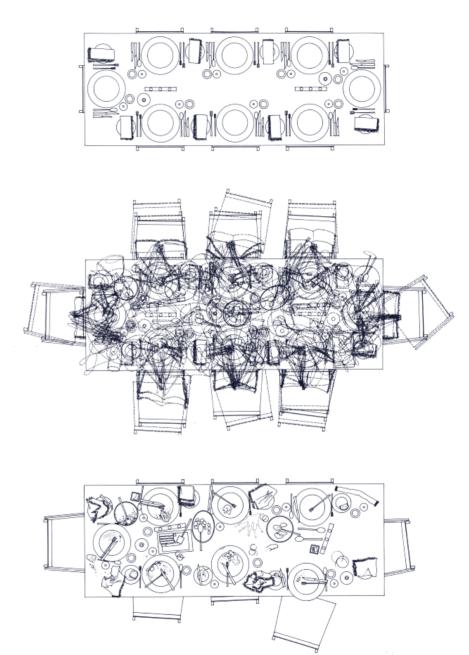
Buildings are permanent, but the things people do inside them, how they act, create and inhabit are contingent, relative and ever-changing. "Do material changes to the internal space of this building (which change its affordances, which changes the social configurations and textures that coalesce around it) ripple out into its environment? When does something inert, hollowed become something improvisatory? When bodies that are predisposed to improvisation enter into it." ⁴⁶ This is an interesting point on the dynamics of space, buildings and its material aspects influence the way people interact with space. But a space changes because people use it and adapt with it. Bingham-hall echoes what anthropologist

Tim Ingold concludes, that in producing things, humans effectively produce themselves.⁴⁷ Production is a way of interpreting the world, but what is produced affects how we interpret the world. Spaces get changed by human use. Spaces influence how people interact within and with a space. This all reflects an interpretation of the world. It's a never-ending cycle.





Interaction with space is what keeps it relevant because it continues to reflect present contexts rather than being in a state of stagnation. One way of inhabiting is through creating rituals, which are lasting even if they are immaterial. Sometimes, spaces lack human character. Which can also be seen in the way drawings of spaces are produced. Such as plans and CAD models which can look too polished, artificial, and sterile. A provocative counter-example comes from architect Sarah Wigglesworth's drawing of her Straw House. In it, She explores different snapshots of a dining table, mapping the ways of movement around it. It is a space in which the focal point is the movement of the inhabitants, not the object itself. These fleeting acts create an association with how the space is used. Allowing impermanent movements to influence permanent structures.



A building may be an object, but the act of building is habitual. It happens everyday through small actions and rituals, as simple as setting a table and sitting down at it to eat. Through rituals, you create symbols that carry forward designation, like how a room becomes a dining room.

People act differently in spaces demarcated by rituals. According to Richard Sennett, an urbanist and sociologist, rituals are formed out of three things: rituals depend on repetition for their intensity; rituals transform objects, bodily movements and words into symbols; and then finally the expressions used in rituals emphasize the

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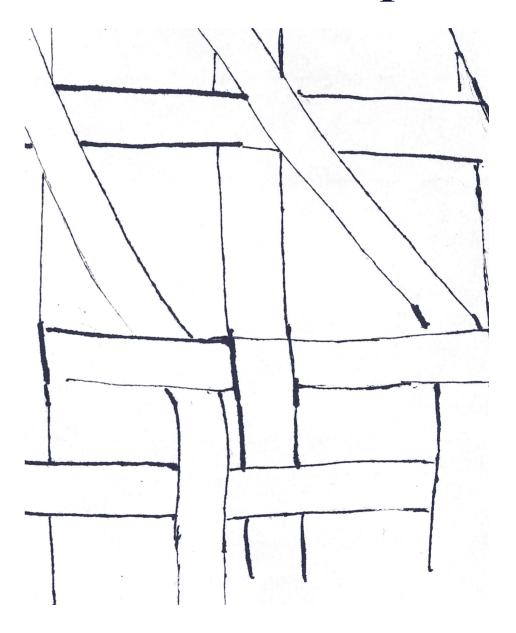
importance of a ritual. ⁴⁸ Within this theory there is the idea of creating, a way of producing ourselves and the places around us. Finding a point to fit within a web of networks. By creating spaces and inhabiting them, we create rituals which in turn create symbols within a space. Building and making are acts of assembling and reassembling based on what surrounds us. It is a form of weaving, connecting immaterial acts to the material world through inhabiting.





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The Fabric of Space



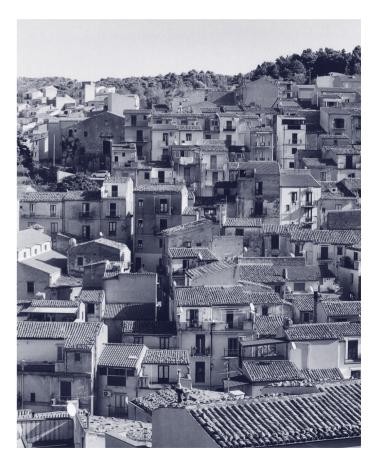
In this chapter I'm going to explore this idea of knots as a way of describing points of community in a space in which it is increasingly harder to form them. According to philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's thinking "The physical spaces of the city are the theatre for the everyday life, and this, in turn, changes our sense of belonging. Being part of the city is not determined by ownership or wealth but by participation." ⁴⁹

The Fabric of the City

The metaphor of knots is an apt one to describe the forming of a community through open systems and intertwinement in the built environment.

The metaphor of weaving applies to cities, bringing together elements of space to create an urban landscape. Richard Sennett describes the nature of a city using weaving as a metaphor: "fabric, texture, grain, knot: these four words, derived from weaving, describe the character of plans, both at the large scale and at particular points and places in the plan. 'Fabric' means the warp and woof in a design, the pattern form created by tying buildings, streets and open spaces to one another. 'Grain' could be thought of as the intricacy of the pattern, the width of streets, the relation of interiors to exteriors, the skyline heights likened to the

thickness and colours of threads. 'Texture' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'grain', but it more particularly refers to the mixture of uses and the relation of formal to informal activities in a plan. 'Knots' is my own coinage for places in the plan. In weaving, a knot can tie together the threads in a fabric, but nubbly or big knots can also ruffle the fabric's smooth surface, creating tactile emphasis.



So too in a city, knots are made of everything from a vest-pocket park to a centrally placed statue or fountain — anything that has a distinct character in itself" ⁵⁰ We can apply this to space as well, not just the larger urban environments.

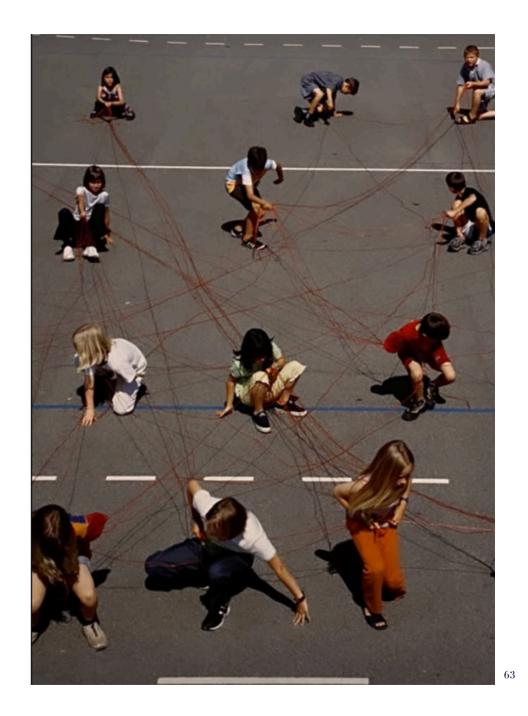
In another sense. Tim Ingold, defines human connection as knots formed out of lines of communication. Seeing humans as lines, he argues that to create human connection, people join their lives, the lines forming a knot of connection. ⁵¹ Not only cities but also human connection can be likened to the metaphor of weaving. To achieve this connection it is an act of weaving together different lines. We find points of intersection. We fold over onto each other, creating a piece of textile, or a connection between people.

Spaces are woven by people, creating places with rich fabric. Richard Sennett makes the argument that there is a difference between cité and ville. Ville is the built environment, the physical, concrete space. Cité is a place that people inhabit. It only becomes a place through the people who live there. A cité is made in part by allowing for its system of design to remain open. In a cité, people interact with their environment in ways that suit them. Even if the best urban planner opted for a top-down approach and tried to dictate how they wanted people to behave in space, people end up using spaces as they will.



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The Erosion of Spatiality & its Social Fabric

It's useful here to discuss the erosion of spatiality. Spatiality is socially produced space. As Jan Patočka, a philosopher, writes "There is a fundamental difference between being in space as a part of it, alongside other things, and living spatially, being aware of being in space, of living in space... A merely corporeal being can exist in space, can relate to space, nonetheless the lived spatiality of our body cannot consist in objectively geometric relations as thing." ⁵² Spatiality is made through inhabiting in a conceptual sense within space.

One of the reasons for the erosion of spatiality is that now many spaces have a closed aspect to them. For example, POPS (public open spaces) such as parks and plazas, are now increasingly owned and managed by private actors. This limits how accessible these spaces are because actions can be restricted or monitored. ⁵³ This could in part be attributed to a global hegemony, with its unified, cohesive, singular way of seeing things. Companies, institutions and governments create the visions of the places which we inhabit.

One thing associated with the erosion of spatiality is the idea of non-places. Places, such as airports and malls, were created in a way to copy and paste design without acknowledging local history, location and customs. ⁵⁴It's a part of bigger global politics that impacts individuals' day to day. It allows corporations to move anywhere, very easily, and retain the identity of their branding. The flexibility and nomadism that multinational capitalism promotes does violence to vernacular. ⁵⁵ The Apple Store's aesthetic has become part of it's brand. It doesn't matter what country you're in, once you enter the Apple Store you're in their world with their products, instantly recognizable. There's no need for curiosity about the unknown or messy or different. There's no point of reckoning or need to work to find a point of connection.







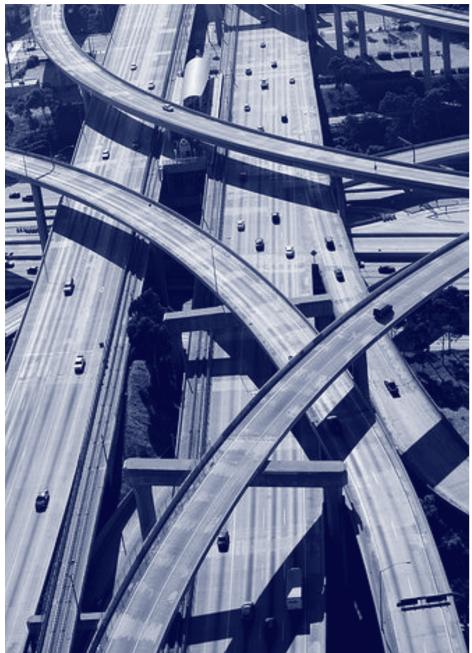
Culturally, the erosion of spatiality has resulted in a pastiche of spaces marked by nothing; such as airports, malls, golf courses and retail chains in which these places could be located anywhere in the world. Neighborhoods and the culture linked to them seems fleeting and meaningless. When community and culture are intertwined, they move together meaning a loss of culture is a loss of community and vice-versa. It's hard to create when there are no spaces to be able to create. What's the point of creating something if no one can interact with it? If it doesn't offer a point of reference in a wider discussion? Space is a site for negotiation.

Knots: Points of intersection and **Stopping**

Even in their design there's no point of stopping, of forced end points and knots where community is formed through physical space. For, design theorist, Victor Papanek, "The function of a community is to act as a goal not as a passage point, an end not a means, a stop not a flow, a place to arrive not for driving through. This is why nearly all good cities exist where traffic was bound to stop: at the base of mountains or at their top; on the bend of rivers, the shores of lakes or oceans" ⁵⁶

One example that emphasizes Papanek's point in the built environment is schools and corridors. In Eric Klinenberg's book *Palaces For The People*, he uses the example of dropping off points and spaces to congregate in schools as a way for parents to meet each other. Essential for forming a community within the school. He asserts that to achieve this, having spaces where parents can linger, such as corridors or playgrounds, creates these stops. He states that at some schools parents have to leave as soon as they drop their children off, limiting the amount of time parents have to meet each other. ⁵⁷





On the other hand, on the city scale, some urban design decisions create a lack of stopping points like Los Angeles, where I grew up. The freeways of Los Angeles are isolated from any buildings or markers, sheltered by tall walls on both sides. They are supposed to be in constant movement, except when they're not and you're stuck in traffic, without connection between a series of individual cars sitting in nothingness. These examples create a closed system, where it is brands, corporations, governments making decisions about place and space. On the city scale, globalized hegemony creates an idea that promotes the idea of neat villes, than chaotic cités. They are easier to manage and set up and then replicate elsewhere but lack points for organic interaction and creation.

Movement within space can be designed. This influences where there are points of intersection and points of crossover to form community. The knots of human connection help create the fabric of a city.

Places of organic community are increasingly harder to find and less accessible. With this erosion of spatiality, where nothing seems to have a unique identity there is a loss of culture.

In a social sense, having discussions and conversations is important for our relationship to the spaces and places in which we live. This is where places that hosts social gatherings are important.

There's already been so much discussion about third spaces. Opinion pieces and questionnaires in newspapers such as the Atlantic ⁵⁸, Vox ⁵⁹, The Guardian ⁶⁰, the BBC ⁶¹ just to name a few. Third spaces are where you go between work and home, where people feel comfortable. ⁶² These can be places such as bars, playgrounds, cafes, churches. These places are vital for points of community, because there is less formality than in a workplace but less intimacy than inviting someone in your house. These are places for cheap and easy socializing that connect different demographics in a given area. These spaces seem to be slowly disappearing or becoming less accessible. ⁶³

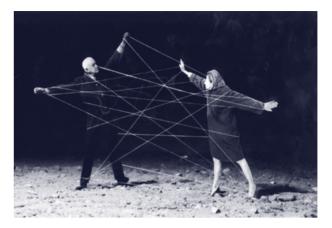
Third spaces, in a sense, act as knots in a city: points of intersection for community. These places are especially important when we think about socializing in a more democratic way. Public space doesn't need a membership, you don't need to be in the same social circles or have prior knowledge of anything. Lots of the places are made to make a profit. A popular tactic is to keep people moving.

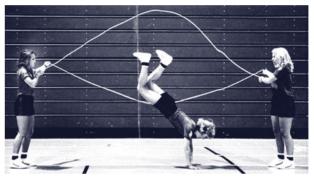
Coffee shops with no seating, like Blank Street coffee, set up shops in small storefronts where the rent is cheaper because there is nowhere to linger.



Eric Klinenberg bemoans the disappearance of social infrastructure in cities, and argues with that, people are more lonely, with not just effects on a person's psyche but also physical health and emergency responses within communities. In part this is due to the lack of public spaces which people can go to and meet new people. He calls them palaces for the people: commons, gardens, libraries, schools, community centers, pools are all touched on as places that are rapidly being forgotten to a community's detriment. ⁶⁵ This lack of funding is in part a result of a long series of privatisation and austerity measures. Creating ways of adapting spaces is necessary when the notion of space and community is fading in cities.

The urban fabric is made up of intersections, allowing community. Creating knots and fabric within space. People and space are intertwined to create the urban fabric of the city.







Conclusion

The way spaces, people and materials interact with each other is in constant flux. It's constant weaving, it's constant making. They're influencing each other in a variety of ways.

We need to adapt to space and allow for space to adapt to us, to promote genuine interaction and the learning that comes from those interactions. Space and how it is used is constantly changing. The contexts in which a space exists are constantly changing, and so the way people interact with a space is constantly changing.

Weaving is an old technique that still has importance and relevance. There are historical and vernacular forms of incorporating weaving. There are new innovations in weaving. Weaving is not just tactile, it is also a way of creating which goes beyond textiles which makes it very interesting to use in different design disciplines. In this context report, I've used weaving in three ways. The first, as a material in which its nature allows for adaptability to fit in a variety of contexts. The second, as technique and way of making, weaving as an act of assembling and intertwining different elements. The third, as a metaphor exploring the way people use the language of weaving and as a way of storytelling.

This context report is an assemblage of different references and ideas that have grounded my ideas and thinking. Using weaving as metaphor and technique as a way to look at the ways we interact

with materials and space. This is a starting point of which I want to base my studio practice on but also reflects the way I view my design practice. I want to design for pre-existing structures, contexts, and objects. Allowing for my designs to have a life outside of what I intend for it. Spaces, materials, people, and the stories that they tell are a constant source of curiosity for me.

We weave our own worlds around us. We produce our interpretations of our surroundings; constantly making, learning and changing.

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- 40. Furnishing fabric, silk damask, 1923, British, by Warner, of Gainsborough Silk Weaving Co. (V&A Museum, London)
- 41. A fragment of woven wool, compound and plain weave. Egyptian, probably ca.AD400-700.(V&A Museum, London)
- 42. Tapestry Woven Linen, 400-599, Egyptian (V&A Museum, London)
- 43. Detail from Bayeux Tapestry showing Bishop Odo rallying William the Conqueror's troops at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.
- 44. Woollen furnishing fabric 'Tulip and Rose', designed by William Morris for Morris &
- Co., possibly woven by Heckmondwike Manufacturing Co. or East Anglian Weaving
- Co., Heckmondwike or Macclesfield, 1876 (V&A Museum, London)
- 45. Bernard Leach (1887-1979), Two tile panels (Christie's)
- 46. 1981 Ikea Catalogue
- 47. The Clothed Home, Lisbon Architecture Triennale, 2022, photo SImone De Lacobis
- 48. Dzieduszycki Palace, Zarzecze, 1920s-1230s
- 49. Soho 1970s, Soho Memory project
- 50. Louis Vuitton store, Soho, Stephane MURATET Via Glossy Magazine
- 51. Spider Web Claire Kail via Instagram
- 52. Spider in Amber, creator unknown
- 53. Spider Web, Claire Kail via Instagram
- 54. Photo of Birds Nests, Claire Kail via Instagram
- 55. Bodies in Urban Spaces, created by Cie Willi Dorner
- 56. Labanotation, "male scale", Choreutik, 1991 p. 159 (I took this image from "Rudolph von
- Laban, Sketches of the Scales", Traces of Dance, 1994, 32
- 57. The Disorder of the Dining Table, Sarah Wigglesworth
- 58. Woman in Black, oil on canvas, 2014, Elisabeth Mcbrien
- 59. Unknown photo source
- 60. Gratteri, Italy, Alexis Doyle, 2024
- 61. Heathrow Embroidered, Ben Stringer, 2023
- 62. Knots by Pablo Pastors, Plant Magazine, 2024
- 63. Photo from Claire Kail Instagram
- 64. Fitzrovia Open Space + Public Realm Strategy, Urban Movement
- 65. Apple Store, Apple
- 66. Santiago, Chile. Photo by: Benjamin Grant
- 67. 105 and 405 Freeway Interchange, photo by: Andrew Meyers
- 68. Soho Blank Street Coffee, Blank Street
- 69. Unknown Photo source
- 70. Unknown Photo source
- 71. Al Hurwitz, Programs of Promise: Art in the Schools (Houghton Mifflin, 1972)