



TAPESTRY'S GLOBAL REACH

One of the first ATW tapestries destined for an international home. It hangs in the Aotea Centre, Auckland. *Aotea Tapestry*, 1991, Robert Ellis, woven by Irene Creedon, Chris Cochius, Anne Kemp, Marete Tingstad, Irja West and Iain Young, wool, cotton, 11.5 x 6.4m, in situ at the Aotea Centre, Auckland.

IMAGE BY JOHN GOLLINGS

The ATW is an international leader in contemporary tapestry — one of only a handful in the world for the production of contemporary, handwoven tapestries. During four decades the workshop has focused on establishing and building an international reputation through commissions, exhibitions, residencies and exchanges and, since the early 2000s, via its Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection.

Since its inception the ATW has been a national and an international organisation, encouraging interaction between Australian and foreign artists. More than 500 tapestries have been woven and displayed in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Canada, the United Kingdom, India, Canada, the USA, France, China, Japan, Switzerland, Germany, Mexico and Brunei, and these extraordinary accomplishments across 40 years represent many compelling stories.

The workshop's founding vision was informed by Scotland's Dovecot Tapestry Studio (established in Edinburgh in 1912) through its then director and master weaver, Archie Brennan, who had been asked to advise on the structure and feasibility of the new enterprise. Not surprisingly, regular exchanges of weavers and ideas have continued between the two organisations ever since.

Fortuitous timing and determination combined to secure the workshop's first major commission. In April 1976, as weavers were being sought and trained, an inquiry came through Craft Australia: Canadian artist Alan Weinstein, who had won a public art award, was searching worldwide for workshops and master weavers capable of creating a suite of four large tapestries to hang on a vast wall in the Saskatchewan Centre for the Arts in Regina, Saskatchewan's capital.

Not yet having woven a tapestry, the ATW grasped the opportunity and advised Weinstein of its existence and ambitions. Keen to demonstrate the workshop's collaborative approach, weavers selected a section from a photograph of Weinstein's design and sent two woven samples showing different ways in which his work might be interpreted. Weinstein was impressed, and the new Australian workshop was suddenly in the running for an international commission and, by late 1976, negotiations had confirmed it.



Weinstein, who had collected samples and quotations from long-established workshops around the world, said: 'It was self-evident when we compared the quality and interpretation of the Australian work with other samples. The Australian sample was unique in that the weavers managed somehow to capture both the spirit and intent of my work.'

This interpretive mastering of an artist's painting, print, photograph or design in imaginative and innovative ways has been happening ever since in scores of commissions for a wide range of tapestries. A recent example is the 2015 commission for British artist Keith Tyson's *Gordian Knot*, a circular tapestry with experimental 3D forms woven in cotton and wool.

Wide visions

By the end of the 1980s the workshop could claim to be a unique national organisation and was recognised as a world leader in contemporary tapestry, with its work being exhibited in several overseas centres and acquired by international clients. This was due in large part to inaugural director Sue Walker's vision and research. She had travelled throughout the 1980s, showing tapestries and forming significant connections with artists and galleries in world centres. By the 1990s she was achieving particularly positive results in New Zealand, London and Singapore.

New Zealand artist Robert Ellis's monumental *Aotea* tapestry, commissioned for the new performing arts centre in Auckland, was on the loom throughout 1990. The largest single tapestry the workshop had produced to

date, it was woven on a new 8m loom custom-made by American John Shannock. Ellis made several trips to the workshop, interacting with the weavers and encouraging them to reinvent his design, a gouache on a half-metre piece of board.

Further New Zealand projects followed, notably *Festival*, designed by Gordon Crook, and a group of 18 small maritime tapestries woven for the Dowse Art Museum.

The workshop's links with the UK were strengthened through the 1980s by John Lewis, then its London representative, and Rebecca Hossack, cultural development officer with the high commission at Australia House in London, who were enthusiastic supporters. In 1995 Hossack promoted *The Stuff of Dreams*, an ATW exhibition at Australia House that had been shown at Heide Museum of Art in Melbourne and then toured to Denmark. The scale and ambition of the works attracted large crowds and resulted in the acquisition of Martin Sharp's *Terra Australis* for permanent display in Australia House.

The scene had been set for this success by an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1993, which had been extended for four months and had culminated in the acquisition by the V&A of five small tapestries from the show.

Walker often visited Singapore and, assisted by Brett Martin from the Australian high commission there, met key figures in Singapore's art world, including artists, collectors, architects, benefactors, political figures and arts bureaucrats. As a result, the ATW gradually became well known in Singapore, and secured its first commission in 1993, the spectacular *Celebrating the City*, designed by local artist Simon Wong. Subsequent tapestries included *Shall We Say Three Trees*, 1997, based on a painting by Jeremy Ramsay and, in 2001, Eng Tow's *The Big Picture — A Convivial Gathering of Elements*, which was hung in the foyer of Singapore's Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

In 1999, two significant projects were undertaken which were facilitated by LaSalle College of the Arts in Singapore and supported by the National Arts Council of Singapore and Arts Victoria. The first was a monumental tapestry by Australian artist David Larwill, *Celebration*, 1999, his first, which attracted particular interest at home and in Singapore. It was commissioned by the Victorian government as a gift to Singapore's new Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay arts centre.



FAR LEFT HRH Prince of Wales, a fervent supporter of traditional crafts, gives the royal seal of approval to the ATW during his visit in 2012.

LEFT *Celebration*, 1999, David Larwill, woven by Georgina Baker, Sue Batten, Merrill Dumbrell and Irja West, wool, cotton, 2.85 x 4m, in situ at Theatres on the Bay, Singapore. **IMAGE BY JOHN GOLLINGS**

BELOW *The Big Picture – A Convivial Gathering of Elements*, 2001, Eng Tow, woven by Sue Batten, Merrill Dumbrell, Miranda Legge, Laura Mar, Gerda van Hammond and Irja West, wool, cotton, 1.88 x 6m, in situ at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore. **IMAGE BY JOHN GOLLINGS**





This project also supported a ten-day artist exchange which saw three young artists from Singapore – Ian Woo, Salleh Japar and Chng Chin Kang – join Melbourne artists Geoffrey Ricardo, Peter Walsh and Merrin Eirth. Included also were Kate Derum with some of her students from Monash University, and weavers Sue Batten, Grazyna Bleja and Katia Takla from the workshop.

In 2005 an ATW exhibition, *The Art of Collaboration*, was mounted in the spacious new galleries of the Singapore Tyler Print Institute. It included *Celebration* and all the other ATW tapestries in Singapore collections.

Although Singapore was the main centre of the workshop's activity in Asia through the 1990s, it also explored other Asian markets. In Japan, Malaysia, India and China, ATW staff gave lectures and held workshops,

contacted artists and galleries, and established networks. However, some of the most important connections in Asia resulted from two large projects.

Mappamundi, designed by Indian artist Gulammohammed Sheikh, was commissioned in 2004 by the Tapestry Foundation of Australia to be part of its Asian Artists' Collection. Destined to hang in the Asialink building at the University of Melbourne, Sheikh's large tapestry attracted great interest during its many months on the loom. The artist visited the workshop, bringing to the weavers a deeper understanding of the culture that inspired his work.

The other large commission, *Open World*, designed by Hong Kong-born John Young, was woven as a gift from the Victorian government and the State Library of Victoria to Nanjing Library in the Chinese province of Jiangsu.

LEFT The first tapestry to join the Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. *Lumpu Lumpu Country*, 2004, Daisy Andrews, woven by Irja West and Louise King, wool, cotton, 1.9 x 2.3m. Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian embassy, Tokyo. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE

BELOW *Pwoja Pukumani (Body Paint Design)*, 2005, Pedro Wonaeamirri, woven by Milena Paplinska and John Dicks, wool, cotton, 1.2 x 2.3m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian embassy, Beijing. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE

The embassy collection

In the early 2000s an opportunity arose to commission a tapestry for the Australian embassy in Tokyo. This was the first tapestry to be placed at an Australian overseas mission, and was the beginning of a significant and continuing program.

The Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection, funded through an initiative of the Tapestry Foundation and with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, places large-scale Australian-designed and made tapestries in selected embassies. Under the program tapestries are lent from the foundation's permanent collection to an embassy and may on occasion be exchanged between embassies. Each tapestry is based on a design by an Indigenous Australian artist, with the intention of selecting unique images that are distinctly Australian but accessible to international audiences. The foundation was acknowledged in 2008 for this key project, winning the AbaF Giving Awards, Victorian section, in conjunction with the ATW.

Daisy Andrews' *Lumpu Lumpu Country*, 2004, was the first tapestry in this program and it hangs at the embassy in Tokyo. *Lumpu Lumpu Country* captures the drama of a landscape with its cliffs and valleys, wildflowers and blazing red earth carpeted by purple flowers. Andrews,





LEFT *Creek Bed*, 2009, Elizabeth Marks Nakamarra, woven by Pamela Joyce, Chris Cochius and Louise King, wool, cotton, 1.82 x 2.72m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian embassy, Paris. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE

BELOW *Kimberley Under the Stars*, 2008, Trevor Nickolls, woven by John Dicks, Milly Formby and Louise King, wool, cotton, 1.34 x 2.9m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian embassy, Washington DC. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE

RIGHT *Ngayuku Ngura (This is My Country)* 2010, Nyankulya Watson, woven by Louise King, Amy Cornall, Emma Sulzer and Caroline Tully, wool, cotton, 1.81 x 2.73m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian embassy, Rome. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE



whose paintings, drawings and prints are memorials to her homeland — comes from the remote Aboriginal community at Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and belongs to the Walmajarri people.

In 2005 the project's second tapestry was commissioned and now hangs in the dining room of the embassy in Beijing. The workshop sent work by three artists for consideration by the ambassador, who selected *Pwoja Pukumani (Body Paint Design)* by Pedro Wonaeamirri. The geometry of the design and the limited colour palette — ochres, in particular — made this work very suitable for translation into tapestry. Wonaeamirri, whose paintings are based on traditional body painting motifs, was born on Melville Island, the larger of the Tiwi Islands off the coast of Darwin.

Untitled (Detail from Kiwirrkurra Women's Painting), 2007, the third tapestry to be funded, hangs in the foyer of the Australian chancellery in New Delhi. The final artwork was selected from a shortlist by then high commissioner to India, John McCarthy. As the workshop was unable to borrow the

large original painting, project leader Cheryl Thornton viewed the painting in Sydney and made colour matches with samples and Pantone cards. The design is a detail from the original, which was painted in 1999 by a group of 17 women from the Kiwirrkurra community on the border between the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The fourth tapestry, Trevor Nickolls' *Kimberley Under the Stars*, 2008, was based on a painting of an expedition to Warmun in Western Australia in 2002. It hangs in the embassy in Washington, DC. While the painted surface has a definite texture, the weavers incorporated exaggerated stepped lines and raised forms to capture the vigorous, structural feel. Nickolls' art is autobiographical and universal, drawing freely from European and Aboriginal art traditions.

The fifth tapestry, Elizabeth Marks Nakamarra's *Creek Bed*, 2009, is on loan to the embassy in Paris. The delicate and complex painting on which the tapestry is based is reminiscent of the vast landscapes of the Western Desert and the stories of its creation.



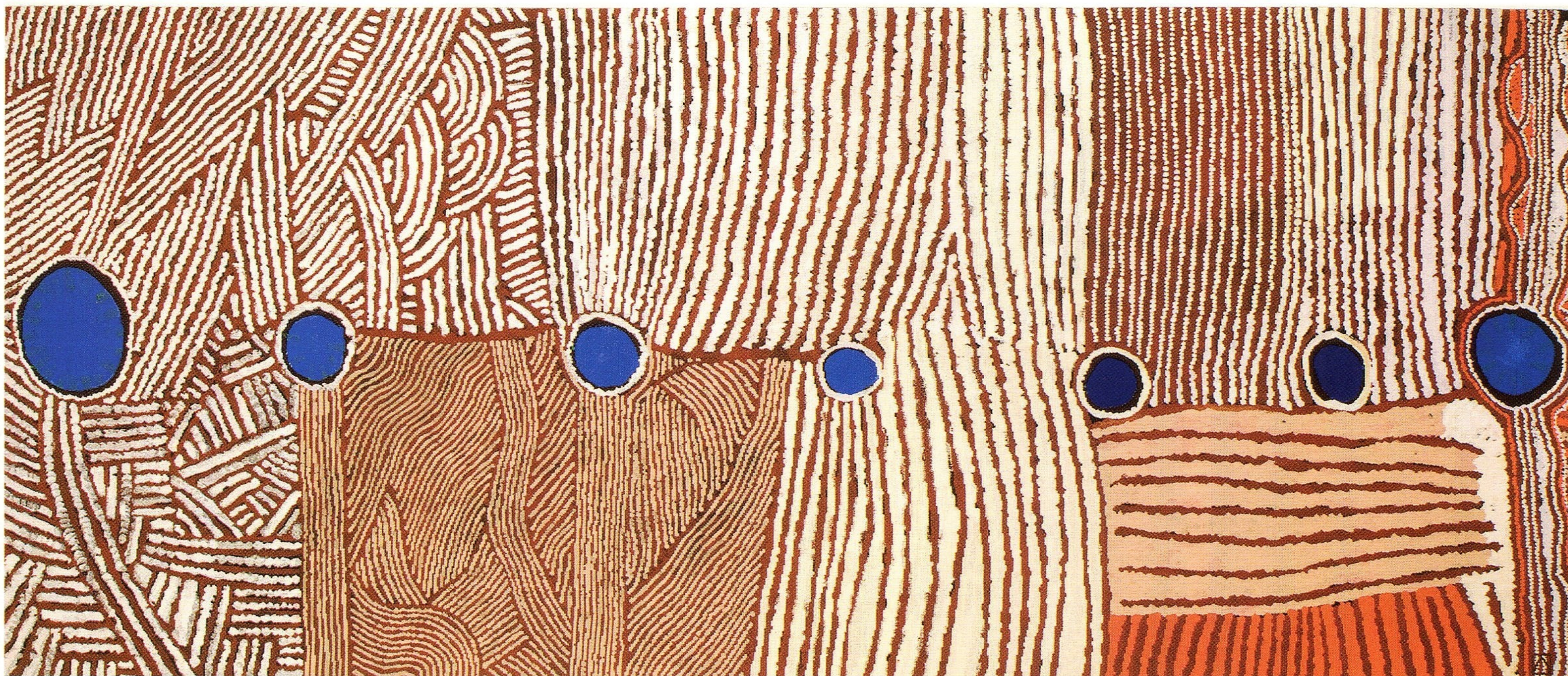


The sixth work, Nyankulya Watson's *Ngayuku Ngura* (*This is My Country*), 2010, is on loan to the Rome embassy. Based on a painting of the same title, the tapestry's strong reds and magentas contrast with the dark background. A senior Pitjantjatjara woman, Watson lives in the Nyapari and Kalka communities in South Australia, where she paints for Tjunga Palya and Ninuku Artists.

Patrick Mung Mung's *Ngarrgooroon*, 2010 was the seventh in the series and hangs in the Dublin embassy. The simplicity of the design belies its complex mark-making. Mung, a senior artist at Warmun Art Centre and an elder in the Warmun community in the East Kimberley, discussed the interpretation with the weaving team, emphasising the importance of the white dots and the directional marks in each area.

The eighth tapestry, *Kunawarritji to Wajaparni*, 2011, is on loan to the embassy to the Holy See in the Vatican. The weaving is based on a collaborative painting by eight Indigenous men — Peter Tinker, Jeffrey James, Charlie Wallabi Tjungurrayi, Patrick Tjungurrayi, Richard Yukenbarri Tjakamarra, Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Putuparri Tom Lawford and Clifford Brooks — from regions around the Canning Stock Route in Western Australia.

The ninth and most recent tapestry is Brook Andrews' enigmatic *Catching Breath*, 2014, and is on loan to the high commission to Singapore. In *Catching Breath* the presence of the veil conceals or represents faith, culture and social values — the subject peers through the veil with eyes clearly focused on the outside. The original portrait is from Andrew's archive of rare books, postcards and paraphernalia.



LEFT *Ngarrgooroon*, 2010, Patrick Mung Mung, woven by Cheryl Thornton, John Dicks and Milly Formby, wool, cotton, 1.8m x 2.16m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. On loan to the Australian embassy, Dublin. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE

ABOVE *Kunawarritji to Wajaparni*, 2011, Clifford Brooks, Jeffrey James, Putuparri Tom Lawford, Peter Tinker, Richard Yukenbarri Tjakamarra, Charlie Wallabi Tjungurrayi, Helicopter Tjungurrayi and Patrick Tjungurrayi, woven by Pamela Joyce, Sue Batten, Chris Cochius, Milly Formby and Emma Sulzer, wool, cotton, 1.67 x 4m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian embassy to the Holy See. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE

RIGHT *Untitled (Detail from Kiwirrkurra Women's Painting)*, 2007, Nanyuma Napangati assisted by Polly Brown Nangala, woven by Cheryl Thornton, Mala Anthony and Milena Paplinska, wool, cotton, 3.05 x 1.98m. Australian Embassy Tapestry Collection. Currently on loan to the Australian high commission, New Delhi. IMAGE BY VIKI PETHERBRIDGE





In the days of the comet

In 2011 the workshop completed a work by Australian artist David Noonan that was exhibited in the UK as part of the influential British Art Show 7: *In the Days of the Comet*, curated every five years by London's Hayward Gallery. British Art Show 7 paid particular attention to the ways that artists use history to illuminate the present and 39 artists were invited, based on their significant contribution to British and international art.

Noonan's *Untitled*, 2009, toured with the exhibition for 15 months to several cities in the UK. 'To have one of our works exhibited in such an influential contemporary art show . . . is a wonderful opportunity for the workshop to showcase the extraordinary skills of our weavers and highlights the breadth of possibilities in contemporary tapestry', ATW director Antonia Syme said at the time. In transforming the work's complex imagery, the workshop's weavers retained key details needed to maintain the sense of an uncertain narrative as well as capture the textures and mood.

Diamond Jubilee project

The *Diamond Jubilee Tapestry Project* began in 2012 in celebration of the Queen's 60 years on the throne and the visit to Australia of HRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

It has its roots in a collaboration with the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, which he founded. The first stage was an intensive four-day workshop in Melbourne for students at Coolaroo Primary School together with educators from the Prince's School, the Royal Botanic Gardens and artist Nusra Latif Qureshi. Trained in Lahore in the Mughal miniature painting tradition, Nusra has developed a rich contemporary practice that links the visual histories of South Asia with her experience as an immigrant woman in Australia.

Nusra was inspired by her participation in the student workshops as well as by extensive conversations with senior weavers, and her vibrant design incorporates aspects of the students' artwork. The ochre of the background refers to the vast red earth of Australia and the spikes of the callistemon filled with specks of bright colour are symbolic of the diversity of the country's people.

On 6 November, HRH The Prince of Wales visited the ATW, chatted with the students and viewed their artwork. The completed tapestry travelled to the UK in early 2013, where it was exhibited as part of the Wool House show at Somerset House and then in the Dovecot Tapestry Studio exhibition in Edinburgh in 2014.



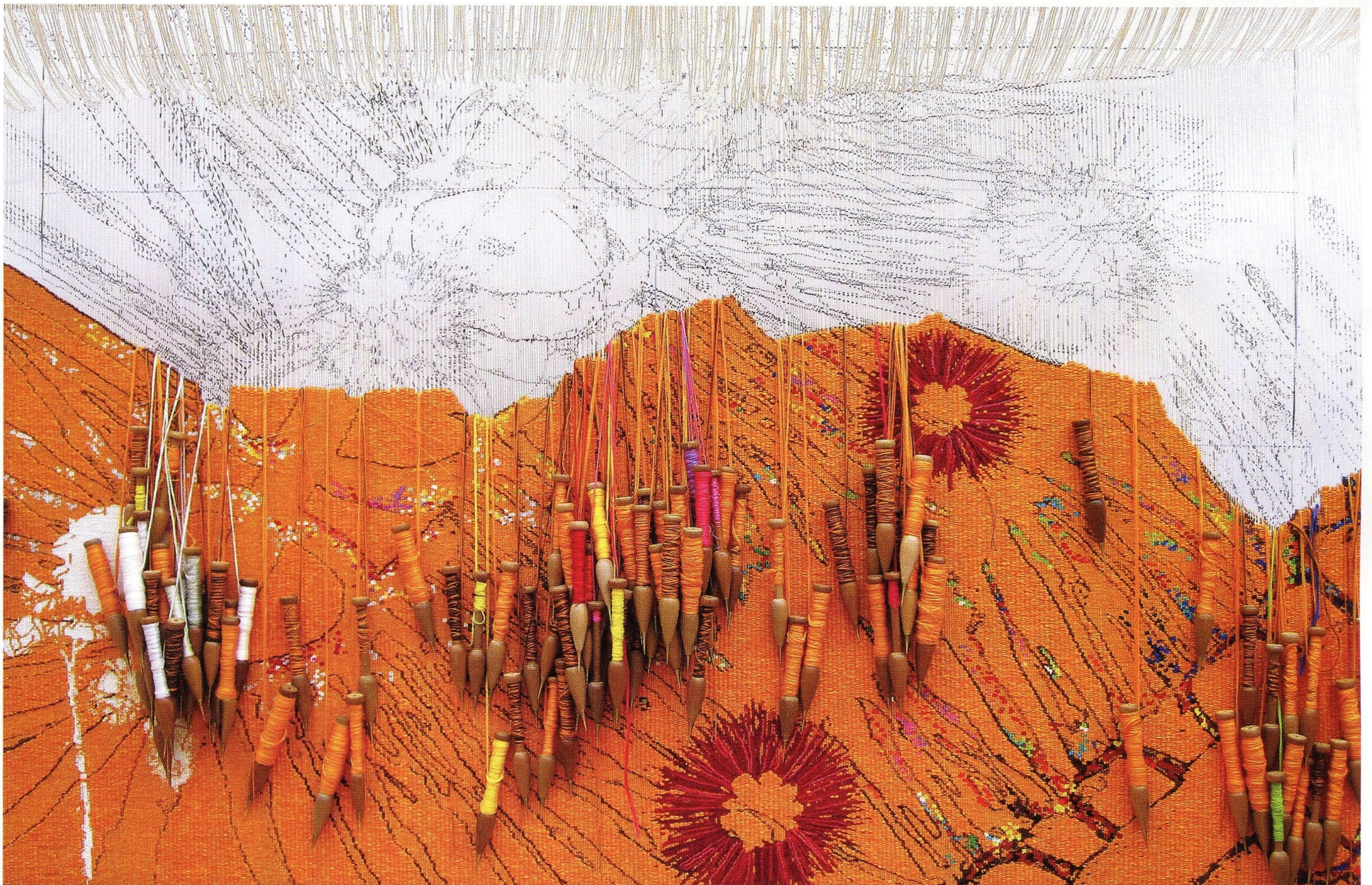


FAR LEFT *Wamungu – My Mother's Country*, 1996, by Ginger Riley and John Olsen's *Rising Suns over Australia Felix*, 1997, take pride of place at headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra.
IMAGE BY JOHN GOLLINGS

LEFT Weavers Chris Cochius, left, and Sue Batten, right, discuss samples with Nusra Latif Qureshi for her tapestry.

BOTTOM LEFT HRH The Prince of Wales and artist Nusra Latif Qureshi meet school children during his visit to the ATW. **IMAGE BY GREGORY ERDSTEIN**

BELOW Nusra Latif Qureshi's the *Diamond Jubilee Tapestry* in progress.





2015 Hancock Fellow Reiko Sudo at the ATW studio during her *Do You NUNO?* exhibition. IMAGE BY JOHN GOLLINGS

Hancock Fellowship

Supported by the Tapestry Foundation, the Hancock Fellowship was established in 1998 to bring international experts in tapestry, textile and design to the ATW and share their expertise through workshops, lectures and exhibitions while experiencing contemporary art and creative industries in Australia. The fellowship, named in honour of former ATW chairman Arnold Hancock OBE, demonstrates the workshop's commitment to strengthening engagement with the international arts community and promoting Australia's creative talent to audiences worldwide.

In 2010 the Hancock Fellow was Dr Elisabeth Taburet-Delahaye, director of the Cluny Museum: The National Museum of the Middle Ages, in Paris, who visited Australia in November of that year and delivered three lectures sponsored by the ATW, the National Gallery of Victoria and the academic centre at Newman and St Mary's colleges at the University of Melbourne.

Taburet-Delahaye has published widely on medieval art, especially on gold and silver metal work and enamels. She was principal curator of the exhibitions *Paris 1400*, held at the Louvre in 2004, which celebrated the arts under Charles VI, and *France 1500: the Pictorial Arts at the Dawn of the Renaissance* at the Grand Palais in Paris in 2010.

The 2015 Hancock fellow was Reiko Sudo, artistic director of renowned Japanese textile producer NUNO Corporation. NUNO has created fabrics for the fashion and interiors industries such as designer Issey Miyake and Yohji Yamamoto, and Sudo has created designs for MUJI, Tsuruoka Textile Industry and steteco.com. Her work has been shown in the USA, India and Israel, and is also represented in collections of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the V&A, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York.

At the workshop Sudo delivered a lecture exploring NUNO's constantly changing approach to textiles, and the gallery displayed NUNO designers' sketches and test samples, highlighting their interaction with local Japanese artisans and demonstrating the processes that go into creating every textile. In the gallery, the centrepiece of the exhibition, called *Do You NUNO?*, and launched by long-time friend of Sudo and director of Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Dr Gene Sherman AM, was a walk-in space encircled by two large suspended compilations created from 360 swatches selected from among NUNO's 2500 designs.



Dovecot and the International Weaver Exchange

Since 1976 exchanges of weavers and ideas between Dovecot Tapestry Studio and the workshop have continued and 2014 marked the beginning of another cycle of such interchanges between Melbourne and Edinburgh, through an exchange of weavers jointly funded by Creative Scotland's Creative Futures Program and the Tapestry Foundation of Australia.

This more formal arrangement is designed to raise the profile of contemporary tapestry weaving by building relationships and sharing knowledge. By spending an extended period in the host country, weavers have engaged with familiar and new working practices and immersed themselves in the local arts and cultural community.

Celebrating the continuing connections between ATW and Dovecot Tapestry Studio, an exhibition in 2014 at the studios brought together recent work from both institutions. Although geographically separate, they share a similar philosophy of working closely with contemporary artists to produce tapestries at the cutting edge of artistic practice.

Ian Were

LEFT Dovecot Tapestry Studio weaver Rudi Richardson and ATW exchange weaver Sue Batten warp up a tapestry at Dovecot Tapestry Studio, Edinburgh. IMAGE BY BILL BATTEN

RIGHT TOP ATW exchange weaver Sue Batten discusses the tapestry she wove *Everything has Two Witnesses, One on Earth and One in the Sky* with members of the Dovecot Tapestry Studio. The tapestry was on display as part of the exhibition *Current Exchanges: Dovecot and the Australian Tapestry Workshop*, Dovecot Tapestry Studio, Edinburgh, 2014.

IMAGE BY BILL BATTEN

RIGHT BOTTOM Dovecot Tapestry Studio exchange weaver Johnathan Cleaver and ATW weaver Cheryl Thornton working on *Bush Foods*.

