

Ellen Harlizius-Klück

The Textile MATRIX Exhibition

In spring 2015, the Museum for Plaster Casts of Classical Sculptures in Munich, Germany was the stage for a retrospective exhibition (29th April-7th June 2015) of my textile art, book art, drawings, installations and reconstructions of ancient textile technology. The works were exhibited in the three parts of the museum basement: the northern and southern atrium and the garden hall (Fig. 1). A supporting programme accompanied the exhibition including guided tours on related topics like the technique of sprang by Dagmar Drinkler, weaving for the gods by Susanne Pfisterer-Haas, the story of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Isabella Stürzer, and fabric borders in art by Tamara Eisenhut. On the weekend of 8th-10th May, the Munich Art Areal festival included citizen science workshops and live coding events with the pattern matrix machine, a device developed in the weaving codes project (Fig. 2).

Today, 'matrix', the Latin word for mother or uterus, is mainly used in mathematics and engineering to denote a system of junctions like the columns and rows in a table. But it can also describe the basic structure of weaves where warp and weft threads cross. The term also describes my work, which oscillates between art and research, and it is the title of a quilt featuring a matrix engraving from the 18th century against the background of the Nike of Samothrake.

Most of the artwork in the exhibition was from the 1990s. Since then, I have concentrated on research topics like the mathematical principles of ancient weaving and the reconstruction of weaving on a warp-weighted loom. The results of these works were displayed in the southern atrium of the museum where, in 2006, a classical statue of Penelope was reconstructed and placed together with a reconstructed classical loom (Fig. 3).

The exhibition was a unique opportunity to show such research results in an (almost) ancient context. But also my earlier artwork fitted very well in



Fig. 1: View of the garden hall at the Museum for Plaster Casts of Classical Sculptures in Munich, Germany with book art and *Isaiah 6.1* installation (Photo: Roy Hessing).

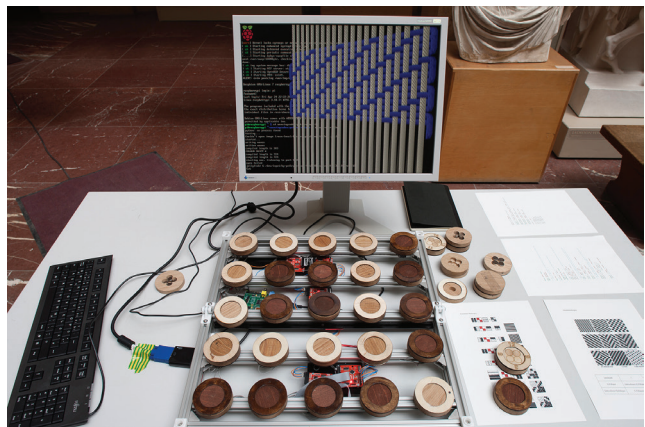


Fig. 2: The pattern matrix machine. A result of the *Weaving Codes - Coding Weaves* project. It allows the structure of a weave to be displayed according to a grid of dark and light wooden blocks on the frame. In this case, however, the machine was coded for the music performance and interpreted the input in a different way to generate sound (Photo: Roy Hessing).



these surroundings, together with the book art and installations which allude to ancient ideas, quotes and characters. Displayed in this context, the works started to communicate with the exhibited museum objects: Narcissus fell in love with his own portrait hidden in the ripples of the water installation; Ariadne fell asleep surrounded by books and objects dealing with dreams or memory like the *omphaloi* (navels); Marsyas' pains were mirrored in the loops of the installation referring to *Isaiah* 6.1 – “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple” (Fig. 4 in the background) – a work that shows the significance of the hem that plays a major role in my work and can be traced back to the technological importance of the ancient starting border explored on the reconstructed loom. Samples of this were displayed in front of the *korai* from the Acropolis (reconstructions by Emile Gilliéron with remains of painting that is now lost on the originals, cf. Fig. 4).

During the Munich Art Areal festival there was a live coding and weaving event where the pattern matrix machine was demonstrated for the first time. It consists of a tactile computer keyboard of sorts where anyone can test weaving structures and patterns (Fig. 2). For the performance at the Art Areal Festival, the pattern was translated into sound. This machine is a first result of the on-going project *Weaving Codes – Coding Weaves*, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) and conducted by me and Alex McLean from the School of Music in Leeds, assisted by the game designer Dave Griffiths.



Fig. 3: Functional model of a warp-weighted loom with a combined tablet- and double weave made by Ellen Harlizius-Klück. Reconstructed Penelope statue to the right (Photo: Roy Hessing).



Fig. 4: The *korai* from the Acropolis (reconstructions by Emile Gilliéron). Showcase with the result of weaving experiments by Ellen Harlizius-Klück in the foreground (Photo: Roy Hessing).