



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
*Edinburgh College of Art*

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## UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:  
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



**RESEARCHER**

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Susan Mowatt

**OUTPUT TITLE**

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*BLACK/TIME/LINES/WHITE/TIME/LINES*

**OUTPUT TYPE**

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Artefact

**DATE**

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2016

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FIG. 1  
 BLACK/TIME/LINES/WHITE/  
 TIME/LINES, 2016. 100cm x  
 200cm x 6cm. Wool, cotton, mohair,  
 acrylic, chenille, silk, polyester  
 thread. Photo Susan Mowatt.



## 01 / STATEMENT

The output is a wall mounted artwork consisting of two wooden panels, each measuring 100cm x 100cm x 6cm, covered in vertical woven strips. The strips are long and narrow, woven on two warps using wool, linen, cotton, mohair, acrylic, chenille, silk, and polyester thread.

The research challenges conventional understandings of tapestry and its historical associations, and explores its significance as an action in the 21st century. Mowatt invests the act of weaving itself to test the limits of weaving and its relations to painting, drawing, performance and installation art.

The output was a large-scale work that consists, unusually, of multiple, discontinuous, woven elements, constructed using an innovative self-taught technique that uses a continuous weft thread woven on the absolute minimum of warp threads (two). The methodology employed challenges customary associations of tapestry with luxury and expense, to instead present it as an ongoing process of material use and re-use.

The work was accepted for several tapestry exhibitions, all juried and international: *Artapestry 4* (2015), which showed at four international venues, the Royal Scottish Academy (2016), Cordis International Tapestry Prize (2016), *Karpit 3* (2017), and *A Considered Place* (2019), at Drum Castle.

The output won the Cordis International Tapestry Prize in 2016, which is the biggest international prize for this artform.



FIG. 2  
WHITE/TIME/LINES detail.  
Photo Susan Mowatt.

FIG. 3  
 BLACK/TIME/LINES detail.  
 Photo Susan Mowatt.



## 02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The output is the outcome of practice-based research into methods and forms of tapestry of two wooden panels, each measuring 100cm x 100cm x 6cm, covered in vertical woven strips. The strips are long and narrow, woven on two warps using wool, linen, cotton, mohair, acrylic, chenille, silk, and polyester thread.

It is a diptych that is a simple depiction of time – night and day. The output sits within Mowatt’s longstanding research into the relevance of tapestry as an artform in the 21st century and the boundaries of its established definition. To explore this question, she has invested a fluid, intermedial approach that utilises a variety of media including drawing and performance. This liberates the work from labeling such as ‘textile’ or ‘fibre’ art, until recently deemed as lesser artforms. This output focused on the process of weaving. This slow, methodical, time-consuming process is at odds with the digital world. By highlighting making and the tacit knowledge of materials and processes in the production of artworks, Mowatt questions what we now value and have lost as a society.

This interest in the social dimension of tapestry links her work to contemporary practitioners such as Ann Hamilton and Anne Wilson, whose work addresses social and historical contexts surrounding the use and production of textiles and who venture beyond their specialist medium in order to interrogate it. Many contemporary tapestry weavers embrace a pictorial and often narrative approach whereby a drawn or painted picture is mechanically translated into marks in wool. Mowatt’s approach is more influenced by the hand-weaving methods of Medieval tapestry and its use of cartoons.

**FIG. 4**  
Back of wooden frame showing woven lines stretched over and stapled into place. Photo Susan Mowatt.



**FIG. 5**  
Detail of front of work showing multiple woven lines. Photo Susan Mowatt.



## 03 / ORIGINALITY

Tapestries are constructed using discontinuous weft threads woven between multiple warps. Mowatt's research extended the boundaries of what is usually considered to be tapestry by creating a large scale work that consists, unusually, of multiple, discontinuous, woven elements.

It firmly places the emphasis on the process of weaving by removing all pictorial or illustrative references. The work is constructed using an innovative self-taught technique that uses a continuous weft thread woven on the absolute minimum of warp threads (two).

By reusing existing works and yarns, this approach challenged the customary associations of tapestry with luxury and expense, as symbols of status and privilege – instead presenting tapestry as an ongoing process of material use and re-use.

Repositioning tapestry within a fine art context, the research emphasises concept over technique, and process over pictorial or visual element. The temporality of the process is key to its impact.

**FIG. 6**  
BLACK/TIME/LINES detail,  
2016. 100cm x 100cm x 6cm.  
Wool, cotton, mohair, acrylic,  
chenille, silk, polyester thread.  
Photo Susan Mowatt.



## 04 / RIGOUR

FIG. 7  
Experiments in studio.  
Photo Susan Mowatt.

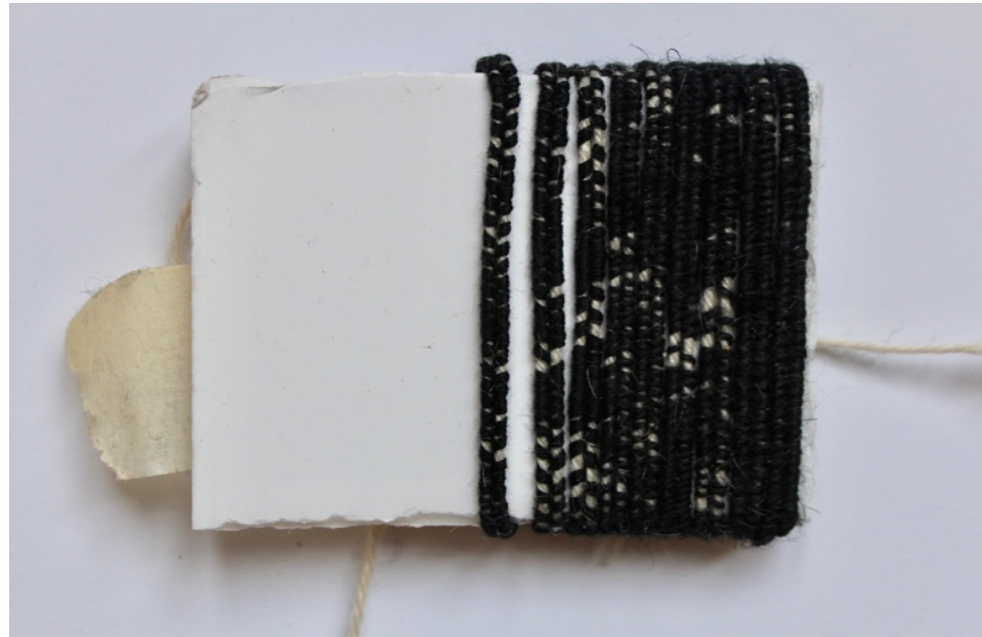
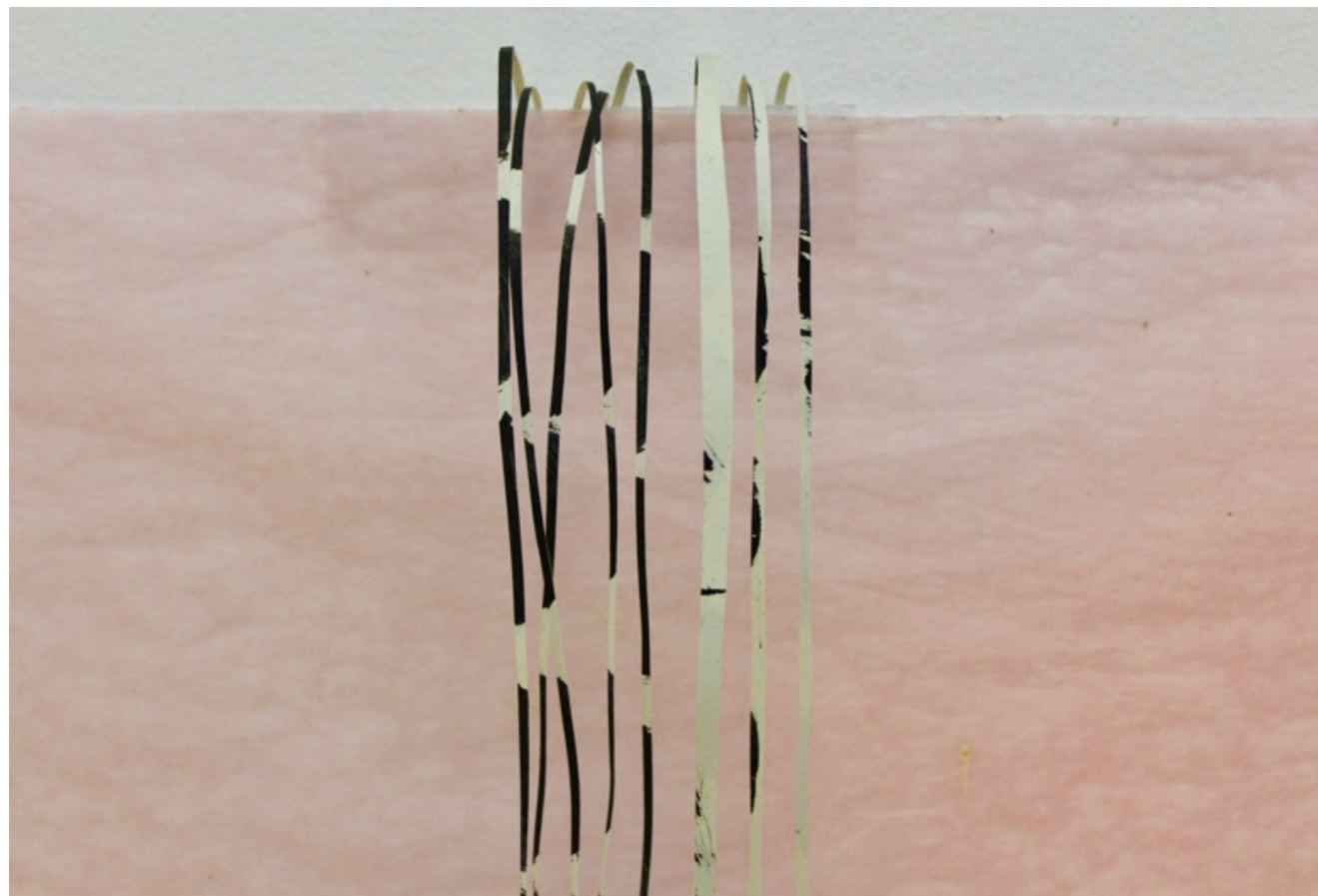


FIG. 8  
Experiments in studio.  
Photo Susan Mowatt.



The work developed from Mowatt's longstanding technique of shifting warps to a horizontal position, allowing a weaving and unweaving of lines in space, and creating a performance within the installation.

Through drawing, collage, cutting up and studio experimentation, Mowatt discovered a way of making the lines work as if they were woven simultaneously on one set of warps, by stretching them over a wooden frame.

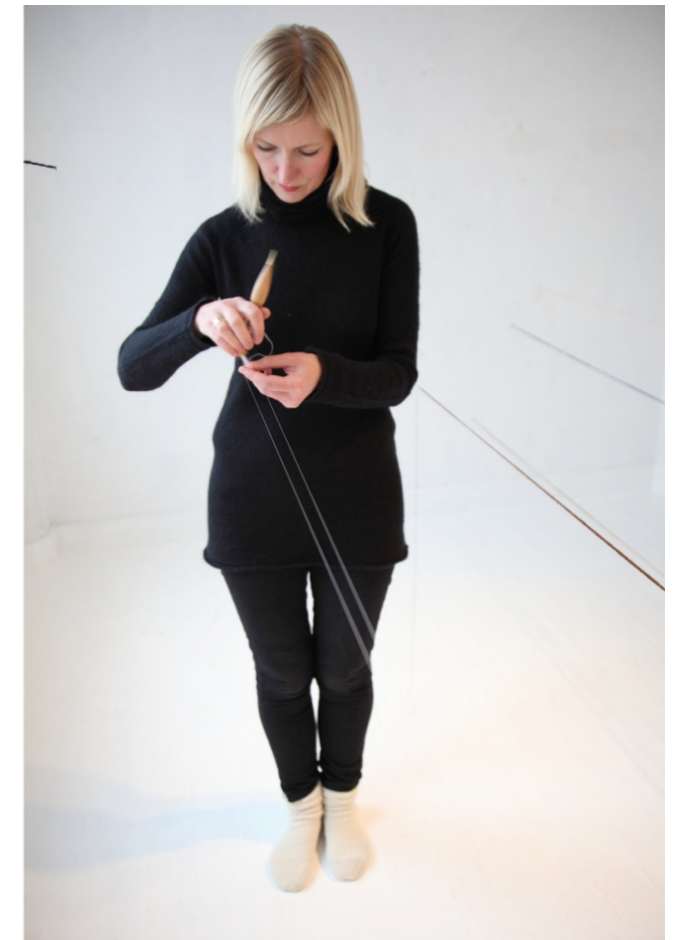
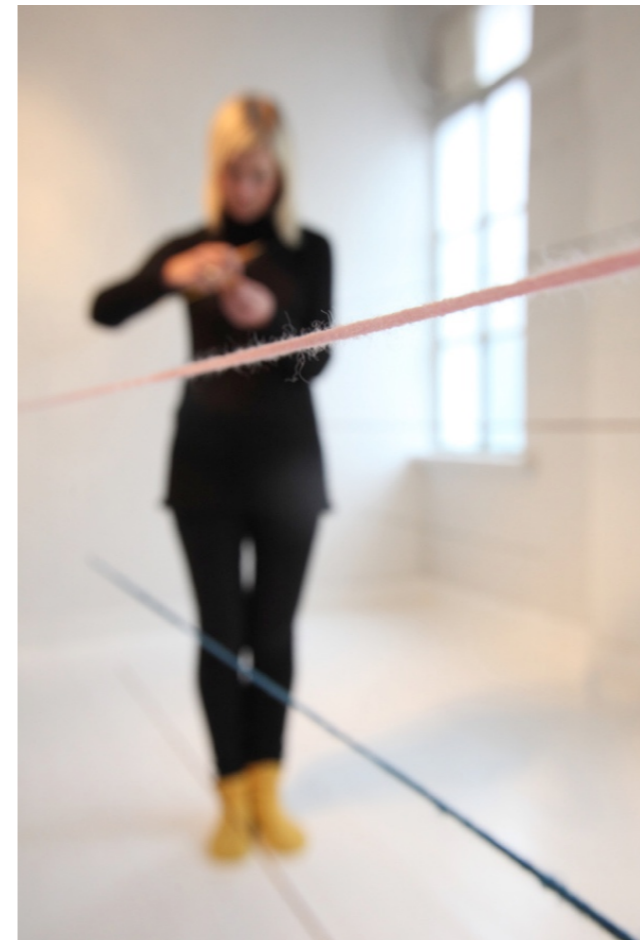
Hundreds of thin, woven lines were produced on two warps. Each line took about two hours to weave. When these were cut off the loom, they looked like a pile of long, coloured strips.

Mowatt then took each strip and stretched them over a wooden box (a stretcher with a front, wooden panel). She experimented with various arrangements until she was satisfied with the composition. The strips were then stapled into place at the back of the frame.

**FIG. 9**  
Experiments in studio.  
Photo Susan Mowatt.



**FIG. 10**  
Performance in GalleryGallery,  
Kyoto, Japan, 2012.  
Photo Kanzaki Jun-ichi.





## 05 / SIGNIFICANCE

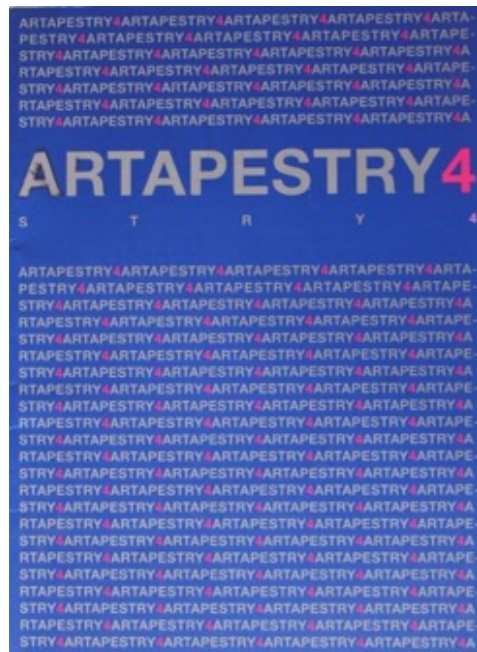


FIG. 11  
Artapestry 4, 64 page catalogue.  
ISBN 978-8791774-03-4.

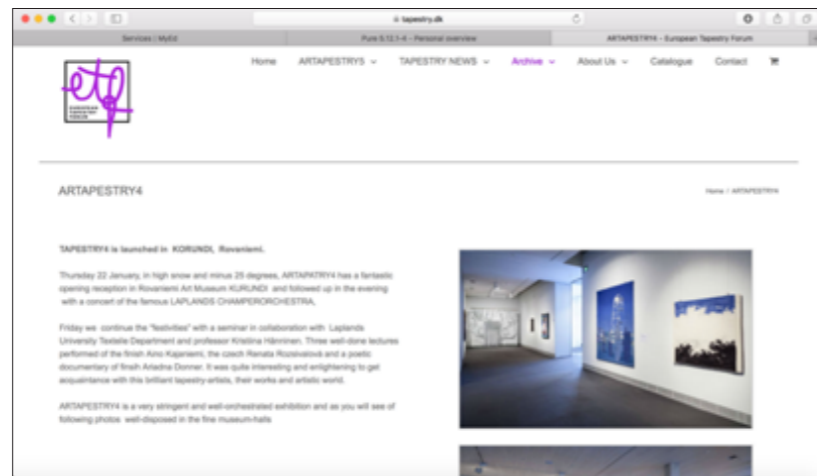


FIG. 12  
Artapestry 4, 64 page catalogue.  
ISBN 978-8791774-03-4.

The work was accepted for several tapestry exhibitions, all juried and international: *Artapestry 4* (2015), the Royal Scottish Academy (2016), Cordis International Tapestry Prize (2016), *Karpit 3* (2017), and *A Considered Place* (2019), at Drum Castle, Scotland. The selection of Mowatt's work, despite its challenge to the traditional methods of production outlined in the criteria for selection, was testament to the rigour of her concept and aesthetic.

*Artapestry 4* is a pan-European bi-annual tapestry exhibition, that seeks to showcase the best current tapestry practice in Europe. The first rendition of the output was BLACK/TIME/LINES, a single panel work. This piece was submitted and subsequently selected by the *Artapestry 4* international jury.

Mowatt was the only artist to have two works selected for the exhibition. The exhibition comprised thirty-two works in total, representing twelve countries and attracting an audience of over 27,000.

The exhibition opened in January 2015 at Rovaniemi Art Museum, Finland then travelled to the Textile Museum Lüneburg, Germany, the Verein Textile Kultur Haslach, Austria and the Art Centre Silkeborg Bad, Denmark.

The work was therefore shown in significant venues in four European countries over the course of a year.

Members of the *Artapestry 4* jury were Francoise De Loisy, Chief Curator, Musée d'Angers (France), Richard Drury, Curator (Czech Republic), Richard Brettbauer, University Professor, Linz (Austria), Anna Ray, textile artist (UK) and Ingunn Skoghult, artist (Norway).

This work won the Cordis International Tapestry Prize in 2016: the biggest international prize for this artform. The Cordis Prize was initiated by Miranda Harvey and Ian Rankin of the Cordis Trust in 2015 to celebrate Edinburgh as a centre of excellence for tapestry weaving.

It was one of six works shortlisted from 90 entries from 19 countries worldwide by a jury of six experts.

The Cordis Prize exhibition of shortlisted works was showcased at the Royal Scottish Academy, The Mound, Edinburgh. January to February 2016, during the exhibition *Converge*, organised by Visual Arts Scotland. 18,000 visitors saw it when it was exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh.

In 2017, BLACK/TIME/LINES/WHITE/TIME/LINES was selected for *Karpit 3*, an international juried tapestry exhibition in which the work of 39 artists were selected from fifteen countries worldwide.

The exhibition was held on the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Association of Hungarian Tapestry Artists in the recently renovated Gallery Vigadó, Budapest from April to May 2017.

A 120-page catalogue accompanied the exhibition, with essays by Patricia Corbett, Art Historian, critic and former Director of the Castle of Angers, France (which houses the Apocalypse Tapestries) and Wehner Tibor, Art Historian.

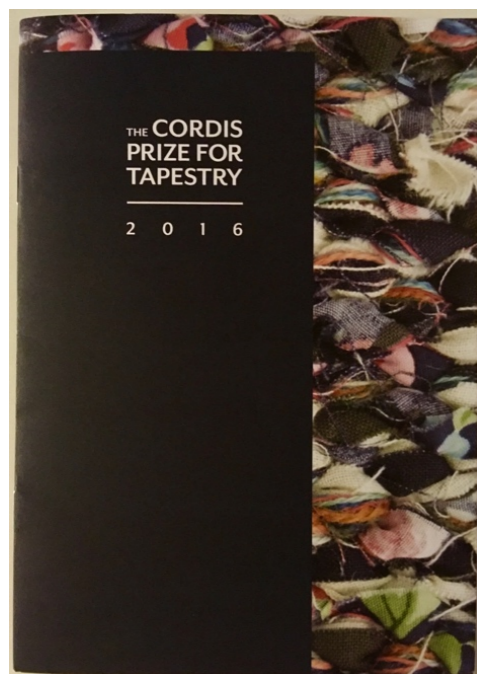


FIG. 13  
Cordis catalogue cover and spread.

FIGS. 14–15  
Cordis website, screengrabs.

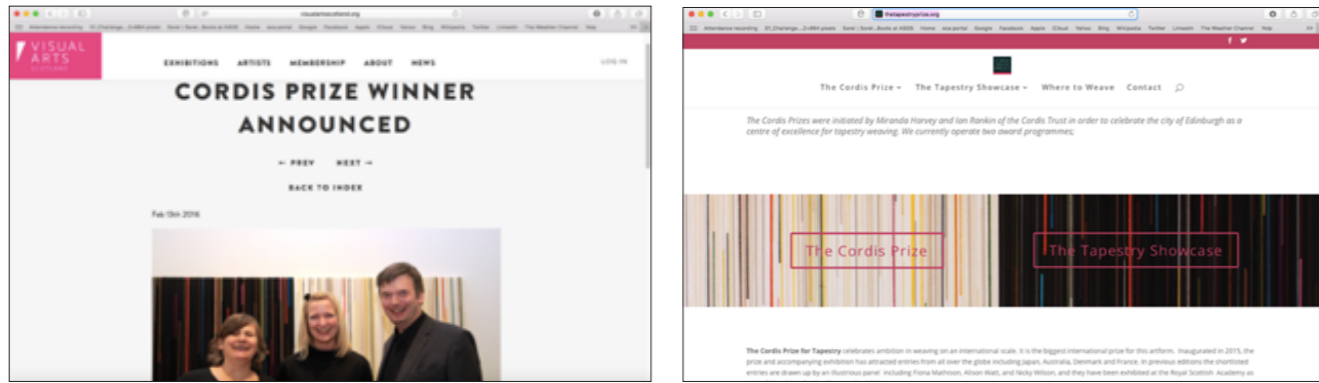


FIG. 16  
Collecting the Cordis Prize from  
Miranda Harvey and Ian Rankin.  
Photo Susan Mowatt.



FIG. 17  
*Karpit 3* catalogue cover and  
spread. Photo Susan Mowatt.



FIG. 18  
Drum Castle, Scotland. Credit:  
VisitScotland / Kenny Lam



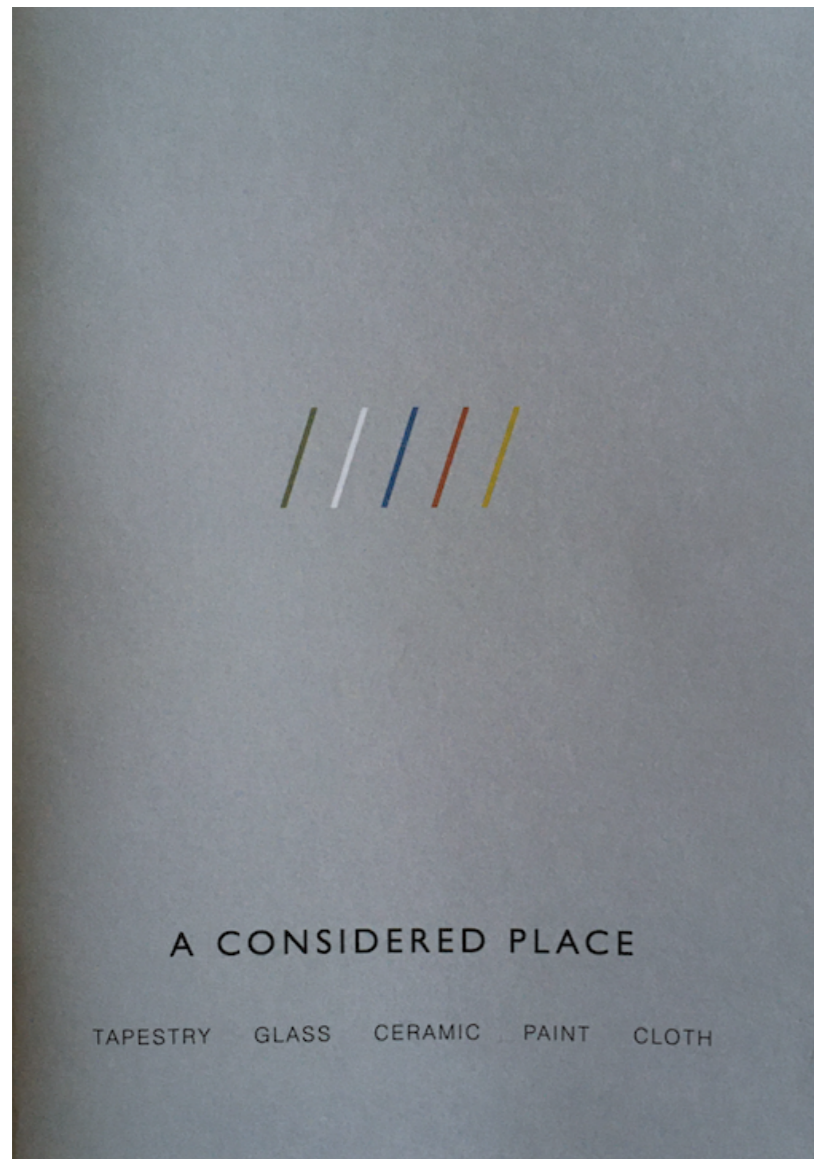
“BLACK/TIME/LINES/WHITE/TIME/LINES is a visually stunning piece of work with a strong underlying concept that stood out in a very strong submission.

This is new for tapestry and brings an awareness of the concerns of contemporary art practice to a field often caught up in more traditional craft traditions. The promotion of a more contemporary approach is fundamental to Cordis and their desire to promote and encourage the medium at the highest international level. They were delighted to award this work 1st prize, supporting the idea that if tapestry is to exist as a valid contemporary medium, work of such calibre and originality must be highlighted and promoted.”

Fiona Mathison,  
*Ex-Director of Dovecot*  
*Judge on Cordis Prize panel*

Subsequently, *BLACK/TIME/LINES/WHITE/TIME/LINES* was included in the exhibition *A Considered Place*, at Drum Castle, a National Trust of Scotland property in Aberdeenshire. Curated by Professor Dorothy Williams in partnership with the Scottish Gallery and Copperfield, London, the exhibition ran from 21 April – 17 November, 2019 and featured other artists Jane Bustin, Andrea Walsh, Sara Brennan and Jo Barker.

**FIGS. 19–20**  
Catalogue with texts by Professor Dorothy Williams and Amanda Game, independent curator, photographs by Shannon Tofts. Photos Susan Mowatt. Credit: Dorothy Williams.





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ISBN: 978-1-83645-026-9  
DOI: 10.2218/ED.9781836450269

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May 2020

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