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ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ



Anna-Mária ORBÁN

Amprente culturale în arta fibrelor *(Fiber Art)*



Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române



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Anna-Mária ORBÁN

**AMPRENTE
CULTURALE
ÎN ARTA FIBRELOR**
(Fiber Art)



AMPRENTE CULTURALE ÎN ARTA FIBRELOR (FIBER ART)

Autor: **Anna-Maria ORBÁN**

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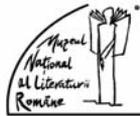
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Summary

I. FROM THREAD TO FIBER ART

Introduction

We live in a globalized era which urges us to have a change of vision; we must think of, and discover, what is of utmost importance; we need to contemplate certain phenomena which represent us in society and which define our character, describing our humanity, our culture.

The tradition of textile culture is part of this universe, and *Fiber Art*, the contemporary textile art, cannot be separated from it, as it stands at the confluence between the values of the past, and the trends of the present. This connection represents a beneficial encounter which has created a fertile ground for contemporary textile artists, embracing with its creative force, every aspect of the textile art, and which has come to be known as *Fiber Art*, in just a few decades.

I.1. Textiles - The Cultural Footprints of Mankind

I.1.1. Cultural Milestones in Prehistory and Ancient Times

The power to create, to transform and to build represent skills which have developed under the influence of immaterial concepts, expressed by faith, philosophy, literature and science, as the essence of certain cultural values with which it has identified.

How would our world be if man had not discovered fiber, thread, knitting, weaving and if he had not given them meaning, significance? How did man invent fiber, and how did he come to discover weaving? First, man needed to discover the characteristics of fibers, then he needed to create them, and, depending on their type, to spin them, knit them, and explore their qualities. It is in this context that G. Semper, Cherblanc, H. Ephraïm developed ideas regarding the origin of textile art and its techniques which existed from the very beginning of civilization.

The first traces go back to the Neolithic (6000 B.C), during the Danube civilization, but also during Cucuteni culture (cca. 5500 B.C. - 2750 B.C.) where different types of knitting and weavings were

discovered on the bottom of ceramics vessels. The variety and the type of structure show that textile techniques were already diversified in the Neolithic. The only weavings dating back to Late Neolithic were discovered in China, and belonged to *Liangzhuculture* (3300 – 2200 B.C, in the city area of *Hangzhou* and *Shanghai*) being strong proof of sericulture. In early antic civilizations, fabrics were already important in society. Textiles evolved at the same time with society itself and they went on evolving and diversifying on all continents (Africa, Asia Minor, Egypt, China, Europe, South America, India).

1.1.2. Myths and Legends

Legends with and about fiber s, magic fabrics, filled with symbols and meanings, surrounded by mysterious stories, stand proof that man, regardless of the historical era or location, has given thread and fabric (by coloring it and decorating it) a more profound meaning than just simple decorative or practical function. Thus, they another dimension, bearing philosophical meaning, sometimes being endowed with magic powers, hidden significations which we can decipher through narratives.

The most popular myths and legends belong to the classical literature: *Arachne* who was transformed by *Athena Pallas* into a spider, in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Homer's heroines, in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: Penelope, Helen, Calypso, or Circe in Hesiod's *Teogonia*, –they all practiced weaving and embroidery. The myth of Penelope, the legend of Ariadne's thread, the three *Moirai* (*Lakthesis*, *Clotho*, *Themis*)–they are all mentioned in Plato's *Republic*. Romanian folklore talks about the *Ursitoare* (*weavers of Fate*) or *Baba Dochia*; in Lithuania there is *Laimėlea*, a famous weaver, a fortune teller, in Latvia there is *Laima* and her sisters, *KārtašiDēkla*, the goddesses of Fate. In Indian tradition, the goddess of wealth, *Lakshmi*, holds the power of the six *guna* (a primordial double twined thread). The legend of the *Red Thread of Destiny*, in Chinese culture has been transmitted till the present day – and it is a theme used by Beili Liu in a textile installation which received the Distinction Award at the Kaunas Biennial, in Lithuania (2011). Apart from all these myths, there are legends based on true events: the story of silk – with princess *Xi Ling Shi* (the wife of the legendary emperor *Huángdì*), or another interesting story from Rari, (a small village in the Andes) where the technique of crin, a special weaving technique using colored horse hair was invented.

I.2. Traditional Textiles, Source of Creativity and Inventiveness

In order to emphasize on the millennial heritage of textile culture, we must observe the transformations that take place when passing from artisan culture to organized culture. The intercultural dimensions determine both the value of these relations between inherited cultures, as well as the contemporary structure involved in this field. Artisan culture and artistic culture share the connection between man and fiber, a unique experience, where tradition and innovation meet.

The collective spirit of human creativity has proven to be the drive of society and has materializes as *Fiber Art*, a phenomenon which continues to manifest itself on more levels. For contemporary artists, tradition represents a reference point which deserves to be continuously explored, while innovation is a way to benefit from creativity.

The high number of tribal/artisanal textiles in museums or private collections stand proof of human inventiveness and creativity, but also of practicality. In China, during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) men wore vests made of tubular bamboo beads which allowed the skin to breathe. Today, there are many tribal populations who still use traditional techniques (a chest armor made of rattan and orchid fiber, created by the *Daani* population from New Guinea; or from bark in Kongo, Indonesia and Polynesia). The diversity and particularity of these tribal/artisan pieces embedded into an artist's work represent a new aesthetic potential which can be included in contemporary art (the technique of Rari, in the works of Paula Leal Egaña, has become an aesthetic concept called "*Cuenco*" recognized by UNESCO as an "exceptional product which glorifies tradition as well as innovation as an experimental aesthetic experience").

Thus, we can see that a traditional technique can create a so-called fertilization environment which will manifest itself in that characteristic *genius loci*. The same techniques used in several geographical areas, by people with different traditions and customs led to a specific style, a specific iconography, which make it easy to recognize and distinguish them. Weaving with wool, cotton, flax, silk, dying with indigo or plants, tie&dye, felting, block printing, embroidery, a great variety of *appliqué*, or lace and *sewing, quilting, patchwork* and many other techniques were used by many cultures both in the East and in the West.

The true essence of the artistic expressions does not reside only in the effects of exterior aesthetics, tactile characteristics, or the used

material, but also in the way in which this artistic medium can be transfigured into a messenger of meanings and interpretive trends (works by Monika Järg – silk embroidery on wood)

I.3. The Story of Fiber Art – A Chronology of Events

In order to understand this transformation of threads into *Fiber Art*, we must highlight several key moments in the 20th century which witnessed many art experiments, as a result of new tendencies in art.

This is a period when the definition of art, its meaning, significance and purpose changed. The first change towards this new vision took place during the Avant-garde movement which influenced the entire art world. In 1925, several tapestries with a strong stylistic influence (*Art Deco*, *Art Nouveau*, *DeStijl*). were exhibited at the *Salon d'Automne* (The International exhibition of Decorative Arts) in Paris.

During the following years, Bauhaus school plays a determining role and represents a major influence, firstly by launching artistic theories and secondly as an education system. (Anni Albers and Gunta Stölzl, the founder of the textile department within Bauhaus school).

We cannot talk about textile art as an artistic genre at this time, at least not on equal terms with painting or sculpture, although great artists created prints and tapestries: Picasso, Miró, Matisse, Dufy, Chagall, Leger, Calder, Sonia Delaunay, Le Corbusier, Lurçat. The sculptor Henry Moore, created several projects for prints in Ziska Ascher's workshop. Louise Bourgeois –the founder of confessional art created works in which threads, fabrics, drapes played a special role in mirroring the passions and tensions in her past.

Before the world war, there is a series of monumental tapestries designed by different artists and created by craftsmen using the *haute lisse* or *basse lisse* techniques in the workshops of *Mobilier National* in Paris but also in Aubusson (Jean Lurçat, Victor Vasarely, Mario Prasinis, Henri Matisse, Robert Wogensky, Mark Adams). In America, which was less affected by the atrocities of the World Wars, there is an art elite who starts several artistic movements, such as abstract expressionism, which would have a strong influence in Europe, or Japan. In America, painters such as Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, Romare Bearden, also created tapestry patterns. "Just as modern art aligned art movements such as *Fluxus*, feminist art, *process art*, *performance*, it is for the first time when *Fiber Art*

work appears on the agenda of contemporary art.” (Quinn, p. 10)

(Atsuko Tanaka, “Electric dress” – member of *Gutai* group. Her action is the flagship for *wearable art* starting in the 60’s; Robert Morris, in 1958, states “cutting and draping is an artistic endeavor”). These actions are concrete signals announcing changes in art and they reflect the artist’s stand related to their work.

The 60’s is the period when conceptual art was born, first in the USA, as a result of movements such as *neodada*, *minimal art*, and *Fluxus* which appears, almost at the same time, in Western Europe and quickly spreads out in several other countries in the world (Japan, South America and later in Eastern Europe). This type of art contributed to the deconstruction of the modern art paradigm, fighting against formalism and influencing contemporary art trends and the evolution of textile art, of monumental tapestry and transforming them into *fiber art*.

Fiber art first appeared in America and Europe and then spread out in the same areas as conceptual art. This is the period when *fiber art* is established as a global trend. The notion was coined after World War I, in the USA, and characterized the new trend in textile art (Lunin, 1990). The first step towards this transformation took place in the USA in mid 1950’s through *art&craft*. In the 50’s, Lenore Tawney, together with Sheila Hicks, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Louise Bourgeois and other artists struggled to close the gap between craft and art.

The first International Tapestry Biennial in Lausanne, in 1962 is considered to be the most important cultural event in Europe, in textile art, organized regularly till 1995, a dream come true, thanks to Pierre Pauli and Jean Lurçat (59 artists from 17 countries). Polish artists had an important influence there, which made the art critic André Kuenzi, talk about “a Polish tapestry school” (Magdalena Abakanowicz, Ursula Plewka-Szmidt, Wojciech Sadley, Janina Tworek-Pierzgalska). The following editions see artists from many European countries (Jagoda Buić, Gulyás Kati, Balázs Irén, Droppa Judit, Ritzi and Peter Jakobi, Teodora Stendl, Ana Lupaş and many others). The trend appears in Hungary as well, in the 70’s, at the biennials and triennials in Szombathely, and characterizes the new generation of artists. The first contemporary Polish tapestry exhibition was organized in Łódź, Poland, in 1972, with Polish artists, a tradition still kept today thanks to the International Triennials of Tapestry.

I.4. Contemporary trends in Fiber Art

Starting with the 90's, the new generations of artists are faced with new challenges. Art becomes interactive; it becomes a show, a particular experience. There is a tendency towards experiment, individuality, towards extending the limits and breaking the cannon, without the power to totally replacing it. There is also a "hypertrophic" diversity characteristic to the postmodern world which creates a great variety of styles and working methods, and the apparent freedom of expression in the most nonconformist way, which leads to limitation or, the opposite, to new forms. One of the main features of *Fiber Art* is that it can use any kind of material, breaking the limits between the conventional and unconventional, where the fiber receives conceptual dimension, substituting materials, techniques, creating a live dialogue between the forms and the artistic interpretation. Thus, a connection is created between the diversity of inherited culture and new technologies and tendencies in contemporary art.

I.4.1 *Craft&Beyond – The Use of Traditional Techniques*

The trend to integrate traditional techniques in contemporary works of art started in the 60's, with the *art&craft* movement which still goes on today as a live cultural phenomenon called *craft&beyond*. There are many artists who resort to traditional techniques (Louise Riley, Kent Henriksen, LinaJonikè, Katya Oichermann) using embroidery as narrative. Cayce Zavaglia reaches a painting like manner. Xiang Yang resorts to threads and stitching in order to illustrate political topics. Ann Hamilton, in her work entitled "Indigo blue", combines ready-made elements, blue shirts, contextualizing American history by assembling associative elements which tell a story about the history of dyeing and cultivating the indigo plant in Spoleto USA. ShihokoFukumoto, uses natural dyes, especially indigo and the *shibori* technique. Polly Barton and Orbán Anna-Mária discover the delicacy of the *ikat* technique, in a contemporary context. The batik technique became quite popular in the 70's in Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary and Romania). The Polish even came to call it the "Polish batik". The *shibori* technique is used in many *Fiber Art* creations and in *wearable art*, not only in creations by Japanese artists, but also by other artists around the world. Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, has been perpetuating this techniques for more than 30 years, all

over the world. (the most renowned designers and artists who have used this technique are Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, Jun'ichi Arai, Hélène Soubeyran, Junco Sato Pollack, Vita Plume, Yamaguchi Michie, Umeda Yuko, Ushio Takumi and others.). The traditional Korean technique—*bojaghi* or *pojaghi*, created an entire artistic movement. In 2012, *Korean Bojaghi Forum* taking place in Heyri and organized by Chunghie Lee, professor at *Rhode Island School of Design* (RISD) U.S.A, brought together 140 contemporary art works from 11 countries. Many artists started using this technique after discovering its artistic potential (Sung Soon Lee, Fiona Kirkwood, Catherin O'Leary, Leonie Castelino, Jiyoung Chung etc.). The *quilt* and *patchwork* techniques are often used in contemporary creations (Lena Constante), as well as its derivative, *chenille*, or *textile collage* (TeodoraStedl). Felting, considered to be the oldest textile technique, used by the nomadic peoples in Asia, is combined with different other materials and techniques (*shibori*, *crochet*, silk or wool cloth) in contemporary view. Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser, experiments with all the methods of felting, creating both bi-dimensional, and tri-dimensional works. FazekasValéria creates “functional sculptures”, Andrea Graham creates monumental tri-dimensional shapes. The traditional *haute lisse*, *basse lisse*, *savonnerie*, techniques involve certain approaches, work methods and materials. The projects of artists such as Sheila Hicks, Christian Jaccard, PierreBuraglio created in the workshops of *Mobilier National*, Paris, continue this old tradition, dating back to Louis the XIVth being the only such institution in Europe.

1.4.2. Stylistic Trends, Influences of Artistic Movements

Understanding artistic phenomena surrounding *Fiber Art* is only possible if we observe its evolution during certain periods of time, from modernism to postmodernism, taking into account that art, through its forms of expression, becomes more and more a transitional area between science and art, with customized interdisciplinary searches and which encompasses different fields of knowledge which neither arts specialists, nor the public are capable of “handling”.

These exhaustive aspects do not bring solutions to dilemmas regarding establishing value in contemporary art, but rather explain the complex nature of creation. The tendency is to escape from a parietal representation – “taking it off the wall” into the exhibition space, in order

to conquer the environment, then “getting out into the street”, into public space, which inevitably affects the forms of expression. Contemporary art faces more challenges than its own autonomous space, limited by classic creation, as it becomes an extension of a universe transposed into image, where physical and spiritual dimensions are confronted, followed either by an aesthetic or practical function.

Ecodesign, recyclable art, neopop art, ephemeral art, experimental art, street art, ready made and so on, are trends from which *fiber art* cannot be separated, although it follows its own path. (Devorah Sperber is interested in the problems of visual perception, by the connection between art, science and technology, as a follower of feminist movement; “Junichi Arai goes beyond just weaving and poetically reaches the unexplored stratosphere where old textile techniques meet third millennium technologies” wrote about the artist J. L. Larsen; Eglè-Ganda Bogdanienè, in addition to classic textile art works, also approaches *performance*; Chiharu Shiota, transforms the environment through installations where threads enclose physical objects.

1.4.3 Experimental Trends in Fiber Art

We can now talk about materials created to absorb solar energy, or which emit light or energy, or about fabrics used to communicate or convey messages, or which can respond to interactive stimuli, be sensitive to chemical substances and modify its color depending on the level of pollution in the environment, or about fabrics that can keep their initial shape (the memory of the fiber). All these are being discussed and experimented by scientists, artists and designers. These features open up the way to new possibilities for contemporary art works.

Barbara Layne is preoccupied with integrating optic fiber or LEDs into the weaving. At the Kaunas Biennial in 2011, *Experiments with Light: Art Lab* presented creations which not only target spatial or bi-dimensional works, installations, but also *wearable art* visible in the dark thanks to black light from a UV or a fluorescent lamp; In a *ArchiLace* workshop, Rachel Wingfield and Mathias Gmachl created an installation which absorbs daylight and generates an animated light show in the evening (Stoke Newington design studio *Loop.pH*); Daniel Palacios created a kinetic sculpture using a rope stretched between two spinning mechanisms, an interactive installation which generates 3D waves and

complex harmonic sounds responding to movement – this is a clear statement regarding the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary characteristics of contemporary arts. The boundaries between fields are shattered and a new dialogue between art and science is created.

In conclusion, the multitude of trends and styles in *Fiber Art*, - an art form which is still transforming, comes from the fact that it can respond to any form. This is why, more and more artists from different fields discover fiber and are more and more tempted to use it as an art form.

II. FIBER ART – DIVERSITY AND PARTICULARITY

Baudelaire said about the visible world that “it is no longer inert, it creates new contexts for the visual experience”. This also refers to works of Fiber Art, an art form which is associated with a certain type of vision, of creation, of building a relationship between thread/fiber, space/human being, through the visual forms which can be generated in this context.

The relationship creator-cultural tradition, focusing on the inseparable connection between man and environment is a feature also present in the diversity of trends encompassed by Fiber Art distinguishing it from other contemporary artistic genres, thanks to its particular forms. Actually, these aspects represent the importance to maintain the continuity of these interests and the connection between cultural tradition and contemporary creative phenomena emphasized locally, and globally. The constant participation of artists in international or national exhibitions, in biennials or triennials of textile art has represented a platform, a synthesis of thematic preoccupations in contemporary, conceptual, aesthetic tendencies, in artistic compositional solutions or technical solutions. For textile art creators, such a manifestation represents a possibility to confront themselves with their own work, at the same time with other creations, to experiment, to do research, to compare, to draw conclusions about possibilities of learning without attending a “school”; it is a place to measure their talent, skills and creativity. In the end, these aspects of contemporary textile art acquire a broad and lasting definition, through the unconventional embrace of modernism: we can notice that in textile art there is a continuous preoccupation to maintain the aesthetic standards threatened by the relative democratization of culture in the industrialization era; the

apparently predominant and inner logic of modernism was to maintain the norm as a root of the past, of the traditional, against an opposition which had not been present up to that point.

The need to become a mirror for personal time is conveyed in art creations. Innovation, thus novelty – the trademark of modernism – remains a criterion imposed on a more radical and more precipitous level than before. After this “explosion” of modernity we notice that in a relatively short period of time, the so-called “innovations” of modernism started to become less and less radical and, that, given the way in which these signals were established, they actually ensured a continuity between Western art and the confirmed values of the past.

II.1 Forms of *Fiber Art*

The evolution of the forms of textile creations can be traced back especially within the aforementioned artistic events, biennials, triennials, individual and group exhibitions, events which also define the extent to which creative tendencies are present in the art works exhibited. Through form we understand the diversity with which this artistic genre has created its own path in order to define its identity within the cultural and artistic landscape. Today, we can distinguish the following major categories: Fiber Art – wall-hanging/spatial art (tapestry, wall-hanging panel, installation, unique textile objects); wearable art or accessories - unique pieces, limited editions and textile design (interior design, unique accessories/limited editions); textile miniature. These are only a few directions where we can find a variety of tendencies characteristic to Fiber Art, art forms such as textile band, of flag –experimental forms.

II.1.1 Wall-hanging / Spatial Art

The major characteristic for these forms is the way in which they interact with space, the way in which they define themselves depending on the parameters of a conventional or unconventional space. Wall hangings have specific compositions: we can find decorative elements of repetitive design, or characteristics of *diptichon*, *triptichon*, *poliptichon*. Spatial art focuses on finding unique tri-dimensional forms – which create compositional harmony and rhythm which are subject to the requirements of space.

II.1.2 Wearable Art

Wearable Art was born almost at the same time with Fiber Art and explores a field where the fiber/the thread is in relation with man, with clothes and accessories. Wearable Art enchants senses such as touch and sight searching for an artistic form, and its purpose is to bring forth aesthetic issues, through subject or concept, without placing practicality in the foreground. Wearable Art erases the boundaries between sculpture and clothing, between functionality and non-functionality, between performance and static art. It is a form in opposition with mass production in the fashion industry, incapable to fully satisfy the taste and the creative artistic potential. There is a high number of artists preoccupied with this artistic form, of Wearable Art, such as Erica Spitzer Rassmussen, Isa Vogel, Ann Clarke, Földi Kinga, Rie Hosokai, FazekasValéria, Park Jeung-Hwa, Akihiko Izukura and many others.

II.1.3. Minitextile

Textile miniature is a form of experimenting characteristic to Fiber Art and it started in the 70's. It was highly popular among artists until it became a classic form, free of constraints (regarding technique or materials) which facilitates the discovery of a certain visual language subject to a bi-dimensional or tri-dimensional construction. The specificity of a minitextile is conditioned only by its size (usually 20 x 20 x 20 cm, or sometimes 25 or 30 cm)

II.1.4. Experimental Forms - Flag, Band

In 2000, at the Szombathely Art Triennial in Hungary, apart from minitextile, the organizers introduced, for the first time, a new category called "flag". In 2003 another category, "band", was also introduced as a new form. The textile works included in the "flag" category cannot be bigger than 3x3m, while the works in the "band" category may be "infinitely" long, but they cannot be more than 40cm in width – these are the criteria established by the organizers.

II.2. Technique and Creativity in Fiber Art

The specific characteristic of artistic creativity cannot be regarded strictly theoretically as it integrates a flow of continuous concerns, constantly present in artistic works. In order to understand this creative

process, we firstly need to ask: what is a creator? In his book, "Iconoclast", the neurologist Gregory Berns explains these things through the relation of the iconoclast man and the mediocre man, perception being the key process in understanding this phenomenon which is learnt through experience, with the help of the senses (sight, taste, hearing, smell, touch).

This way of "seeing differently" (highly common among artists) involves the perception mechanism of the human brain (discovered by the latest neurological studies). We distinguish things through aesthetic categories as well; we resort to our aesthetic taste, which is, in the end, the result of a classification process. In what an artist is concerned, these skills are even more refined as the diversity of factors between the artistic imaginary and the artistic endeavor is mediated by the effect of a cognitive dimension which interposes in the creative act, as a result of the artist's experience and aesthetic taste.

If we analyze the creation stages of an art work, there are three essential things we need to look at: 1. The clue – the starting point/the source of the idea/the topic/the theme – an answer to the question WHAT? 2. The material/the materiality/the way in which the idea is conveyed – an answer to the question HOW/OUT OF WHAT?; 3. The destination of the work / the functionality and the purpose – an answer to the question WHAT FOR/WHY/FOR WHOM? – always established by motivation and the subject of the work.

All these stages are interdependent, they complete each other and they represent a great variety of possibilities and complex associations of ideas and practices in which creativity is an essential factor.

II.3. Techniques and Materials in Contemporary Textiles

II.3.1 Materials Used in Fiber Art

Fiber Art is an artistic form interdependent on the material. At the same time, the physical characteristics of the material may lead to the development of a unique language. This endeavor cannot be separated from the traditional or contemporary influences, so it creates a dialectics of the developing processes, in order to find a new vision regarding space/man, an endeavor which will continue with exploring the possibilities of expressions. By exploring the material, one can discover one's own language, one's own ability to correlate and associate the

material to the technique, the approach to the imaginary vision, to build a creational corpus. The artist is a searcher, he tests, he chooses, he associates the quality and the characteristics of the material with representation archetypes, with models he resorts to by means specific to the artistic endeavor, by using certain techniques.

The classification of materials used in textile creations is done based on the distinction between conventional, unconventional and experimental materials. We understand by conventional materials those materials whose characteristics are of natural origin (vegetal, mineral, animal) or of synthetic origin, which have been transformed into textile fiber, using different manufacturing processes (cotton, flax, hemp, phloem fibers [ramie, sisal, jute], wool, natural silk, synthetic silk [viscose], synthetic fibers). We understand by unconventional materials those materials produced manually or industrially whose materials not textile, but which can be transformed (in thread) and adapted in art works. This category includes metallic fibers (cooper, aluminum, steel wire, etc), paper, optical fiber and any other material which, thanks to the ingenuity of the creator and the association with certain textile techniques, can be used as thread and can substitute for textile fibers when used in applying classic textile techniques. (Harmati Hedvig used aluminum springs which she braided into a cross, creating an installation entitled *Moira*; Vígħ Krisztina, created a textile work using the recyclable blister strips from medicine, combined with embroidery; Mary Giles, experiments with iron, rust, wire, wax and flax)

The experimental material represents the material which is created, invented and patented by the creator, who gives the material its attributes and qualities through experiments. The existence of such materials proves that a creator is not satisfied only with the characteristics of an existing material and tries to discover and to create materials with characteristics that meet the needs of the art work and the purpose of the artist.

II.3.2. Techniques Used in Fiber Art

Apart from traditional techniques of weaving, dyeing, printing, felting or *applique* (and many others), new technical approaches have been adopted, such as mixed media, personal techniques, digital techniques, experimental techniques, which combine the conventional working approaches with unconventional ones, and highlight the

influence of the industrialization processes, of new technologies – just as an artificial organ interposes in this traditional creational corpus. The importance and the necessity to maintain these techniques to the benefit of contemporary creations explain their presence and continuity. Thus, there is a qualitative jump thanks to which tradition and innovation attain meaning – two fundamental aspects which are indispensable in understanding these artistic flows, which are in continuous transformation.

Traditional techniques

Traditional textile techniques have developed on all continents since ancient times. Their diversity and variety have been kept thanks to local traditions and we can discover a traditional textile technique in almost any geographical region. When we talk about a traditional textile technique we are actually talking about an entire technology chain where the bases, dyes, materials and substances used are integrated in the manufacturing process. The presence of these techniques is also found in the tribal/artisan environment, but their role has created a solid basis and an incontestable reference point for contemporary Fiber Art.

John Gillow classifies traditional textile techniques based on the following principles: non-loom textiles, loom-woven textiles, painted and printed textiles, dyes (indigo, tie&die, stiched resist, wax-resist etc.), sewing and stitching techniques (embroidery) and embellishment.

Personal techniques

Personal techniques usually indicate the artist's innovative approaches which are usually different from the classic pattern of a certain technique. In textile art, a personal technique is different from other classic techniques, such as traditional techniques or mixed techniques. The mixt technique combines several specific techniques or materials from different environments within the same textile art work, while personal technique may resort to different environments, but the transfer to the material will be done by the creator's personal choice /innovative intervention, by the uniqueness of the technical solution and the authenticity of the result which is undefined, unspecified, until it is accomplished by other authors.

Personal technique is characterized by the approaches the author

sets, in line with the creative process, the artistic endeavor which results from the necessity to establish a symbolic connection between the source of the idea, the characteristics and the quality of the base/material (regardless of its nature), the expressivity of the artistic language and the idea the authors wants to emphasize in his artistic endeavor.

Jolanta Rudzka Habisiak is a creator who focuses on original textures and structures, innovative objects both for interior design as well as for the ambient/wall hanging. The way in which she discovers the relationship between texture, surface and pattern repetition proves a refinement of simplicity and complexity at the same time, discovering the ways to transform and adapt an apparently dull material, as paper or leader strips, which are transformed into a show by her creative hands. Jolanta Rudzka Habisiak created her own brand of products, JRH. She has won numerous national and international awards and, at present, she is a professor and Director of the "W. Strzemiński" Academy of Arts in Łódź, Poland.

Włodzimierz Cygan is an original artist with a particular style, especially in his more recent works (in the last decade). The weaving language in his art starts with using visual effects created by building a circular netting whose different directions are then reflected onto the surface of the weaving. He creates his own alphabet which makes his works unique and easily identifiable (regardless of the form) bringing him numerous awards, starting with the 80's. He mostly uses materials such as: flax and cotton, wool and sisal, in the most varied of combinations.

Laima Oržekauskienė experiments with digitally printed synthetic fiber, over which she uses double weaving or tapestry; computerized *jacquard* and special thread embroidery are techniques she masters and through which she manages to refine weavings and the subject she is representing. Her technique is almost sublime, creating a geometrical decorative structure, which interposes upon the figurative image, which has been processed and transfigured beforehand.

Mixed media

The mixed media is the sum of those specific operations where several techniques and materials are used. The preference to combine different technical processes and materials on the same art work has been

obvious since the birth of traditional techniques, where we can notice combinations between weaving and dyeing techniques, stitching and *appliqué*. In contemporary creations this tendency has been exacerbated by adding unconventional materials and processes through which the material was subordinated to creation, in order to respond to the artistic and aesthetic requirements of the art work. It is almost impossible to classify the variety of mixed techniques or the variety of materials used in this process because they are correlated and combined depending on the personal choice and preference of each artist. (Severija Inčirauskaitė - Kriaunevičienė, uses cross stitching on rusty everyday objects)

Digital technique in textile art

Technology evolution in the 20th century led to the digital era which has spread out to all the scientific and artistic fields. Just as photography influenced art without changing its meaning and purpose, digital technology has contributed to the discovery of new possibilities. Computer systems have revolutionized the creation, design and manufacturing of an art project. Thanks to digital technologies, visual information is diversified and changed depending on the processing possibilities, on the simulation and creation capabilities as a working tool, by using image editing applications, such as the Adobe package (especially Adobe Photoshop), or the vectorial graphical system (CorelDraw, Adobe Illustrator). Each system has its own features which are used in compliance with the nature of the project, while the two systems may coexist.

In textile art, we can differentiate between digital design/simulation, printing technologies, and digital weaving technologies. The digital editing technologies are based on a digital image which is made up from pixels. The pixels create a digital image that simulates reality and the eye perceives the photograph/digital image as a real image. This system has already been implemented in weaving techniques, as well as in digital technologies of printing and simulating weaving or computer design. The invention of digital weaving technologies, of weaving using the *jacquard* technique, is relatively new (starting with the 80's). Weaving design and creation is done through digital processes (in shorter time than using the card system) at industry level, as well as TC-1, TC-2 (Thread Controller-1), a digital loom invented by Vibeke Vestby -

Norwegian artist and weaver and the company Tronrud Engineering (the first prototype was launched in 1990/91).

This system was implemented in higher education programs, in many countries throughout the world such as USA, Europe (Norway; Finland, Denmark, the UK, Estonia, Slovakia; Sweden; Latvia, Austria; Poland, Lithuania), Asia: Taiwan; India; Japan, and Canada. Among the textile artists and designers who use this technique in their work we mention: Lia Cook, Bhakti Ziek, Cynthia Schira, Sheila O'Hara and Pat Kinsella from USA, Louise Lémieux Bérubee from Canada and many other artists from around the world, such as: Lise Frølund, Sue Dwyer, Jane Eisenstein, Hanna Hapasaalo, Agnes Hauptli, Susanne Hissen, Heather Macali, Christine Matson, Kari-Merete Paulsen, Kaija Rautiainen, Monique Ryser; Alice Schlein, Andrea Sharp, Geoff Shilling, Diane Sheehan, Karina Siegmund, Eli Skogsrud, Christine Spangler, Grethe Sørensen, Monique van Nieuwland, Pauline Verbeek-Cowart, Carol Westfall, while the number of users is raising. There are artists who prefer manual *jacquard*, with the help of the card system, with exceptional results, such as professor Zigmund Łukasewitz, from Poland, or artist who prefer industrial *jacquard* such as Monika Žaltauskaitė-Grašienė, from Lithuania.

Digital printing technologies are so evolved that, practically, any type of solid material can be digitally printed. There is already a wide range of machines created for special printing bases, which can vary from natural materials (cotton, flax, viscose, silk, etc) to synthetic or unconventional bases (nylon, wood, metal, etc). Regardless of the type of format, digital images are adapted in size and resolution depending on the sizes of the standard base, using inkjet printing or CMYK separation (C-cyan, M-magenta, Y-yellow, K- black) or separation on more color channels when it comes to special colors.

Experimental/innovative techniques

Experimental techniques (ET) require sound professional knowledge (techniques, technologies and knowing the characteristics of the materials) but also iconoclast, out of the box thinking which corresponds to an artistic, aesthetic, technical and technological standard. ETs can have innovative results when a creator gets involved, bringing all the experience gathered along the years and increasing performance.

The artist is a live lab full of ideas, techniques, and work possibilities, with a new way of thinking, of processing and analyzing information. (Suzanne Lee, the director of the research project *BioCouture* from Central Saint Martin's College, in the UK, is the creator of a new process of creating textile fabric, by using *Kombucha* bacteria, sugar, acetic acid and tea bags. She has experimented different dyeing techniques with this material using natural ingredients (iron oxide, vegetal or mineral colorants, such as indigo) in line with the bio movement.

Lee Joonwon, considering that personal objects and the objects around us bring back memories and create certain emotions which we cannot externalize, uses an entangled wire base, covered with synthetic foam to solidify its shape.

III. TEXTILE ART AND ART EDUCATION

Education is a social activity with an instruction and catalyzing role in developing the modeling drives of society and cultivating spiritual values, and in refining human condition, and it involves both the individual and the collectivity. Education generates processes on several layers of knowledge, in which dialogue, the capacity to enquire and to make statements, to reason and to ponder are essential. It is in this context that we ask: What is education? What is its purpose? Many scientists and philosophers have asked this question: Plato, Aristotle, Comenius, Kant, Rousseau, Herbart, Durkheim each of them having their own vision and motivation, strongly connected to their philosophy.

III.1. The Dynamic of educational systems in artistic fields

Educational policies in the European Community (EEC) set by the Committee for Higher Education (CEHE) and the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research of the European Council have emphasized on the importance of skills in the education system. The mechanisms of the education systems are in continuous change due to the dynamic of society, which means that education itself is continuously adapting and improving. In vocational education the attempt to shape the individual, personal character and improving skills focuses on improving receptiveness, sensibility, spirituality through specific methodologies and artistic processes, because a future artist will be "the recording device" of his time.

Art and design establish the quality of life and the values of society. Vocational education focuses on vocational training during higher education, according to programs of study (first cycle: BA, second cycle MA, third cycle DLA the equivalent of PhD), but there have also been other forms of education, royal schools and private institutions which operated under the Church or different religious orders. (the *Accademia di Belle Arti Bologna*, founded by Pope Clemente the 11th in 1711 [*Accademia Clementina*], after the model of the Royal Academy in Paris and *Accademia di San Luca*; The Academy of Fine Arts in Vilnius which still operates today in one of extensions of the Catholic Archdiocese).

The European Council, by implementing the Bologna Process (1999), aimed at an educational policy meant to ensure similar, compatible and coherent higher education systems, in line with the interdisciplinary discourse to which the European Cultural Convention and The European Higher Education Area contributed, both having the same goals: harmonizing the education system to which 46 countries adhered, both from within the EC, as well as from the outside.

The efforts made by the members of the Bologna Process (BP) between 1999 – 2010, have turned into reality by the Declaration of Budapest-Vienna (2010) which led to the creation of The European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In April 2012, the Ministerial Convention Bologna/EHEA, organized in Bucharest, discussed the issues of the implementation of the BP after almost a decade. The structures of artistic education have been most affected, as major restructuring was needed (education curricula, analytical programs, subjects, Academic Majors), these issues being also discussed by the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), founded in 2003. Starting with university year 2005-2006, a new 6/5 year structure was implemented as imposed by G.D. no. 896/2004 HG 88/2005. Also, the Law for National Education, art. 150- (1) stipulates all the accreditation norms for university programs, and the external assessment norms by ARACIS or EQAR. The undergraduate programs correspond to a minimum of 180 and a maximum of 240 ECTS, according to ECTS/SECT and complete with level 6 in EQF/CEC. Art. 10 of the Law for National Education 2011, chapter III., Art. 137, (5) defines the field and study programs, the education level, language, as well as the annual figures as set by the G.D given by the Ministry of Education, before 31st of March of each year.

III.2. Teaching Methods and Academic Majors in Higher Education – Textile Arts/Fiber Art

There are different theoretical models created by several professors: Donald Schön writes about reflective practice (1983); David Kolb in 1984 develops the experiential learning theory - ELT); John Biggs brings forth the issue of teaching methods and the need to build learning systems (2004); Elliot W. Eisner, professor at Stanford University, president of ISETA (*International Society for Education Through Art*) establishes the role of the arts in education, art being a model to improve educational practices. All these theoretical approaches emphasize on the fact that the preponderance of practical Academic courses help develop critical reasoning in vocational training. In 2011, professor John C. Bean publishes a guidebook for trainers, focusing on critical thinking and active learning as perspectives necessary in the learning process and in creative practice, regardless of the academic major (Bean, 2011). There is a gap between creative practice and thinking strategies expressed in writing, so for students who choose art, the focus is on studying visual forms and exploring issues connected to visual perception, practical skills, and the sense of touch.

Textile art majors were mainly introduced in the period between the two World Wars, within Institutions of Decorative Arts or Applied Arts, depending a lot on the practical experience and on the artistic authority of certain artists of the time, such as Paul Poiret, Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill, Dagobert Peche, Otto Lendেকে, Maria Likarz and many others.

The Bauhaus School played a major role in establishing the field of textile arts, this being a period which changed the role of education. The study of language elements was theorized and implemented in a new vision by Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Johannes Itten, professors at Bauhaus School, as these elements were necessary for a teaching methodology which established and reshaped the theory of artistic practice (the relation point-line-surface). Gunta Stadler-Stölzl – one of the founders of the textile art department within Bauhaus School (weaving and dyeing workshops), together with Anni Albers, Otti Berger and Benita Otte are among the most important personalities of the time. It is then that new directions regarding techniques and textile materials were set, in compliance with modern, experimental trends.

In other parts of Europe, textile art departments are founded only after the Second World War (The Academy of Industrial Arts in Budapest (*Iparművészeti Akadémia*) -in 1946)

In Romania, the first Art Institutions are founded in the country's cultural centers in *Cluj*, Bucharest and *Iași*, and after 1990, in *Oradea* (decorative arts, fashion) and *Timișoara* (textile arts – textile design, fashion design). In 1860, A.I. Cuza – Ruler of the Romanian Principalities, signed the decree to found the first University on Romanian territory, The School of Sculpture and Painting, and on 6th of December 1864 he granted the establishment of two *Belle Arte* Schools, one in *Iași* and the other one in Bucharest, under the presidency of the painter Theodor Aman (currently the National University of Arts, with two Academic Majors: fashion design and textile art & design). The School of Fine Arts in *Cluj* opened in 1925 (painting and sculpting) and in 1950, when the institution became The “Ioan Andreescu” Institute of Fine Arts – a new department of textile art was founded. In 1990 the Institute became the “Ioan Andreescu” Academy of Art. Today, it is called the University of Arts and Design *Cluj*, and it has two Academic Majors, in textile design and fashion design. The institutionalized art education system has a general framework but the field of study and the Academic Majors differ from institution to institution, both in Romania, as well as throughout European countries. I had the opportunity to visit *MOME* Budapest; *Accademia di Belle Arti Bologna*; *École Supérieure des Arts Appliqués “Duperré”*, Paris; *Vilnius Art Academy*, The Department of Textile Arts in Kaunas, Lithuania; “*Władysław Strzemiński*” *Art Academy*, Łódź, *Faculty of Textile Art*. Everywhere, art education is based on the relationship between the student and the professor, on good communication and involvement and professional motivation.

Out of all the higher education institutions I previously mentioned, the best organization can be found at *MOME* (The *Moholy Nagy* University of Art and Design, Budapest), at *Vilnius Art Academy*, and *ASP “Władysław Strzemiński”* in Łódź, Poland. The latter has a Faculty of Textile Art and Fashion, with four different departments: Textile Art, Fashion Design, Textile Print, Jewellery, each of them with different Academic Majors. Within each department there are studios, with distinct study majors, for example the Experimental Textile Studio; Innovative Interior Object, Carpet and Tapestry; Decorative Textile

Studio, and, apart from these, there are several workshops Paper Studio, Weaving Workshops, Computer Design Studio. The student can choose an academic major (that is a main studio) and then a minor out of all the Faculty departments. The educational program of the students is designed in such a way so that it molds on their personal interests and preferences, helping students choose their own majors, discover their own artistic affinities and their creative potential, permanently assisted by the professors, so that the future artist will rise to the artistic challenges of society.

Higher education art programs are subordinated to the purpose and the goals of learning certain notions which the students need to be familiar with, since the beginning of their studies. Knowing the terminology, specific techniques of weaving, printing, dyeing; acquiring drawing skills, having the capacity to accurately perceive volume metric forms, to apply different working practices, and ET knowledge are absolutely necessary to participate to this education process. All the necessary skills and personal training are based on education strategies depending on individual study, on the one hand, and practical art study in a group, on the other.

Even if these strategies are different from one professor to another, the goal of learning is the same. As in other education systems, art programs involve several stages of the learning process: assessing the training level, proposing a new learning process according to the training level, coordinating the activity in terms of individual and collective study, evaluating the results so that performance targets are met.

III.3 Academic courses in Textile Education

Before an institutionalized system was established, before specific Academic courses or education objectives were set, art education suffered several transformations. It is interesting to note that, in the distant past, any subject was called "art".

In Ancient times, there were the seven liberal arts¹ (**NOTA!!!!** 1 – in the 5th century AD, MartianusCapella defines the seven liberal arts as being: grammar, dialectics, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music. In Western medieval universities, the seven liberal arts were: *trivium*, grammar, rhetoric, logic and *quadrivium*, arithmetic, astronomy, music, geometry, all of which we find not only in medieval illustrations,

but also on Flemish tapestry) which represented a sort of “curriculum” which any free man should have studied, and which became a moral standard, as well. The Middle Ages redefine these *liberalia studia* according to scholastic coordinates; religious schools are founded and subjects and forms of representation are subject to strict religious laws and moral standards. To a certain extent The Renaissance breaks apart from this strict pattern, by offering the freedom to study nature, man, natural phenomena, and by considering painting and sculpting as the most important art forms. “Treaty of Painting” by Leonardo da Vinci (*Trattato della pittura*) published post mortem, in 1651, in its original form, *Codex Urbinas*, states that painting is a “divine science” and emphasizes on the fact that “its first lesson, drawing, shows us how to build [a form]” (Da Vinci, 1651 [1971], p.19). Hence, the basis for all image representation is a construction, an interior architecture which can be unveiled and built by drawing. In conclusion, drawing is not just a technique, it is a way to build a world; the same goes for contemporary times.

The motivation of the philosophy of education is the existence of a relationship between the progress of mankind and the knowledge gained through education. In what art education is concerned, this is accelerated when the evolution of society is influenced by technology, science and innovative discoveries which change the rhythm of existence. New scientific fields are discovered, in order to respond to the constant need for scientific education as a multidisciplinary tool.

Unlike other professional education programs, in art education in general, and in textile art in particular, vocational training focuses on practical training, on developing creativity and individual personality, on improving practical skills and knowledge related to textile art. Textile art subjects are classified according to Academic Majors in *textile design*, *fashion design* and *textile art*. Digital technologies and other techniques which have been used more and more in contemporary art, have proven that, in order to create an art work, there is no real need to study the human body, as the techniques, the possibilities to edit images, photographs, have replaced this kind of representation.

The efficiency of these processes resides in a good communication between the master and the apprentice, the professor and the student and, at the same time, in the motivation with which the parties get involved in this complex phenomenon. In order to teach others, one must

have teaching skills, patience and teaching methods, a curriculum built according to objectives so that students are prepared to continue their activity in a creative way even after graduation.

There is a Korean saying that goes like this: “he who looks at the sky through a cane, sees only one star”. It is the same with professors: they need to “enlighten” their students, to expand their horizon and to help them succeed. Another saying “It is easier to know a person’s qualities than to dispose of their flaws”, illustrates the fact that the professor must be objective, must adopt solutions the students find useful, personally, as well as professionally. Developing skills to understand the grammar of visual language improves reasoning, investigation, experimentation, transfer, assimilation, all of which lead to cognitive evolution of future artists.

In art studies, some Academic courses belong to the fundamental courses group, which are mandatory within an main academic major. The structure of the curriculum requires a group of mandatory Academic courses, fundamental courses, a group of Academic courses offered according to the academic major, and a group of optional ones which will ensure a strong professional training. The hours assigned to courses cannot exceed 30 hours a week (to the 25 hours of fundamental courses there are 3 hours of optional courses). So, there are 27 ECTS per semester, with 3 other ECTS from the optional subject.

Art education in Romania in the field of textile art has several Academic Majors: textile art (wall-hangings/spatial art), textile design or fashion design, according to the University. We can sometimes find joint Academic courses, although their structure differs both in name and objectives and content, as it can be seen from analyzing the charts for each subject. During the first stage of training, students must gain knowledge and skills in drawing, the study of shape, the study of color, basic notions about art composition, visual language. All are elements necessary for a future artist. This endeavor is topped up by developing skills needed to conceive and design a project, manufacturing skills – where technical knowledge is crucial, in order to be possible to convey messages through image, and have the capacity to apply the laws of artistic grammar in the art work.

Assessment for each subject is done by taking into account “the activity in lectures, seminars, practical work; the results of the tests during

the semester; projects, expert works, themes. The final evaluation forms are: exam, test, colloquy and are taken into account in order to calculate the mean average of the results obtained during the semester”

The names of the Academic courses were changed when the BP was implemented, so there is a slight disparity between the name, content and objectives, if we think, for example about the unification of drawing, color composition, and tri-dimensional techniques into one “Bi and tri-dimensional techniques”. In what the Textile Art and Design department is concerned, there are subjects such as Styles in interior decorations and furniture (?), or Fashion accessories design. Although training is done based on technical conditioning, - tapestry& surface design or textile printing – the diversity of subjects is an attempt to cover all the directions of textile art and textile design, without offering a chance to study in more detail certain Academic Majors, as it happens, for example at the “Władysław Strzemiński” Academy of Art in Łódź, Poland, where Academic Majors have been organized into studios, this system being very well organized in what the completion of a project is concerned. Here, for three years, each student can choose several stages, can create several projects of the same nature but with different themes and issues. But the National University of the arts in Bucharest, both the students, as well as the coordinators from the Art and textile design department must approach different professional issues, covering textile art projects (wall-hanging panel, tapestry, installations) as well as textile design, surface design for interior decoration and fashion, all in just three years of study (actually just two and a half years, as the last semester is used for the final project). In practice, due to this diversification, the students barely “have a taste” of all the possibilities they could explore within a certain academic major, without actually getting to study in detail a certain special issue, regardless of their field of interest.

But what is a subject, in the end? Based on which criteria can we call it a “professional” subject? We can notice that today, education works based on certain laws, the institutionalized framework is rigorous, it stipulates objectives and tracks goals, whose results are assessed based on set criteria. Yet, education is still changing, as we discuss about education policies implemented at European level, about education programs and standards. Still, I keep thinking about what Seneca would have said if he had lived today, because all his observations, in *Epistulaes*

Morales (88), are so honest and still valid after thousand of years , so we could say to ourselves: “ I could not say with whom I am more upset; with those who hinder our knowledge, or with those who let us be ignorant” .

IV. FIBER ART AND ORGANIZED CULTURE

IV.1. Fiber Art and Organized Culture in Global Processes

Cultural policies adopted to perpetuate and promote Fiber Art.

Organized culture is meant to maintain and perpetuate patrimony values and national values as part of universal values in global processes. Indirectly, but sometimes directly, globalization endangers certain aspects of these cultural values, especially in what cultural autonomy is concerned, where there is the threat of homogenization or cultural disintegration influenced by economic or political interests.

The phenomenon of globalization, as “harmful” as it may seem, has had a very different influence on visual culture. At the same time with globalization, there is another type of communication intermediated through new communication networks, thanks to ET technology and the possibility to digitize information. The exchange of information has become a lot faster and more efficient and allowed for the creation of cultural virtual platforms which have influenced, to a certain extent, the stages and quality of culture, as well as the way it takes place. Borders between countries, continents, or cultural organizations have disappeared and virtual collaboration has been made possible, influencing even the education system, by creating e-learning platforms (Virág, 2006, p.8).

New standards of communication between cultural bodies, creators and the public have been established, as well as a new kind of cultural dialogue, one that incites to a more direct and active participation. Today, every art museum, every cultural or art organization, every artist can create a virtual platform which offers useful information about cultural programs, art projects or all kinds of different activities undergoing at a certain moment in time.

These virtual networks have created a new hierarchy of cultural phenomena, functioning on both levels – collective level and individual level. In art, a new phenomenon has occurred: the interference between

technical advantages, technological means, representation forms and the way in which creators convey their message to the viewers/receiver. In this context it is hard to substitute the contemplation of an art work in its real size with looking at it in digital format, because no matter how good a copy is, it can never match the original.

By tracking cultural events worldwide, we can say that there is a cultural policy taking place on several levels, promoting Fiber Art, both in the state sector, as well as in the private sector, even if the people involved do not always manage to get enough financial support from local authorities, or from cultural organizations.

Today, there are not only state cultural organization, the education system, the museum system, but also cultural foundations, professional associations, artistic groups which are all preoccupied with promoting and perpetuating traditional values connected to textile art and Fiber Art, who do so through exhibitions, conference, festivals, magazines, etc.

In what European cultural policies regarding textile art are concerned, we would like to mention the activity of the European Textile Network (ETN). In February 1990 they managed to sign more than 200 contracts with people in Eastern European countries, inviting them to communicate with one another and also with their Western peers. In 1991, at Erfurt, ETN members drafted a sort of manifesto, emphasizing on the fact that they have the same objectives in perpetuating the field and culture of textiles. When EURATEX (focusing exclusively on EU textile industry) was founded, the European forums did not have real authority in the cultural policy regarding textiles. Although the Council of Europe in Strasbourg was operated the so called cultural routes "The Silk Road", together with UNESCO, the ETN board managed to convince the Council that these policies should be changed to the initial routes and that they should be administered by ETN. The second key moment was the Treaty of Maastricht which gave the EU a mandate to develop cultural policies starting with 1992, when the cultural partnership with EURATEX was signed. In 1997, in Brussels, ETN founded an International Cultural Foundation but after several failed attempts it was required to give up on its goals, in 2007. "The measures are targeted at the infrastructure of cultural policies at international level (thus luck plays an important role); these are immediately dependent on bureaucracy and in the EU court they depend on promoting cultural, in general", says BeatrijsSterk

secretary of the ETN, continuing to promote and inform about Fiber Art, via Textile Forum magazine and the cultural connections this organization has created worldwide.

ETN is involved in the activity of other organizations responsible with promoting textile culture, being a good cultural catalyzer in the education system as well. TEXERE (Textile Education and Research in Europe) founded in 2007 collaborated with ETN. Patricia Christy (TEXERE President) set to create an e-platform to facilitate international experience exchanges and access to European funding systems for trainers, such as Comenius, Lingua, Erasmus, Socrates and Leonardo which offer the possibility to collaborate in international education projects. Apart from the ETN, there are many other non-governmental organizations which support and promoted Fiber Art, such as Friends of Fiber Art International in the USA (<http://www.friendsoffiberart.org/>), founded in 1991, with 45 members in the USA and many others in 18 countries all over the world, which offers financial support for textile cultural events; TAFTA (The Australian Forum for Textile Arts - <http://tafta.org.au/>), founded in 1974 in Australia, at Sturt Crafts Centre, Mittagong, in New South Wales, where those present discussed about the lack of trained staff in the education system in the field of textile art; FORUM'80 was established in Brisbane. In the next six years they organized workshops and conferences related to tradition of textiles and traditional or contemporary textile culture. In the same period the Fiber Forum magazine published its first issue. Today the magazine is called Textile Fiber Forum, (TFF) being published quarterly since 2000. In 2010, they celebrated their 100th issue.

IV.1.1. Exhibitions/Biennials/Triennials/Festivals/Competitions

An international cultural event takes time, effort (physical, psychical, intellectual, logistics), attention, thoroughness, devotion and, of course, financial resources (today there is less and less funding available). The most important such events are biennials or triennials of textile arts, festivals, competitions which have been organized all over the world. International Fiber Art biennials or triennials are organized on categories (wall-hangings, textile art/ textile design, spatial works, textile miniature, embroidery etc.). At such an event the participants, either artists or art lovers, learn, observe, admire or assess the visual reality

through their own experience, analyzing every art work as a mirror of a personal universe built on common references, but interpreted in the individual spirit of each creator.

In Europe, the first International Biennial of Tapestry was organized in Lausanne in 1962, being the most important cultural event in the field of textile art (organized until 1995), with a similar event taking place in Hungary, at *Szombathely*, starting with the 70's, first locally and then as an international event in the Gallery of *Szombathelyi Képtár* (208 textile artists and designers with 247 original projects in the 2012 edition). The tradition of *Szombathely* Triennial is perpetuated restlessly by the art critic and curator Cebula Kazmierczak Anna (the current director of *Szombathelyi Képtár*), together with: Wehner Tibor, Fitz Péter, Kovalovszky Márta, Sárosdy Judit, Keszthelyi Katalin, Sárvári Katalin, - Hungarian artists, art professors and art historians).

In 1973, in Łódź, Poland (a city with a rich tradition in textile art and industry), the first edition of the International Triennial of Tapestry was organized, first only with national participation, with international participation starting with the 1975 edition (the 14th edition started in May 2013). We would also like to mention the Triennial of Textile Miniature which was organized nationally (10 editions) and the Triennial of Unique textiles (12 editions). In 2012, the Central Museum of Textile in Łódź (CMW) organized YATAT (Young Textile Art Triennial) which is the first triennial in the world dedicated to young graduates from textile arts, organized in cooperation with "W. Strzemiński" Art Academy (ASP Łódź), with 65 artworks from 14 Universities, Academies of Art and Higher Education Schools from all over the world (the National University of the Arts in Bucharest had six participants from the Textile Art department).

We must mention the Kaunas Biennial in Lithuania (the theme is UNITEXT), which will celebrate its 9th edition in September 2013, with 447 artists from 65 countries. The Biennial has extended to encompass theater and contemporary dance, with many cultural events (satellite exhibitions, conferences, workshops, theatre and dance shows, performance, education programs) all related to textile art and tradition. It perfectly blends into the new tendencies of contemporary art, through its conceptual/experimental character, trying to redefine the role, the purpose and the interpretation possibilities of this genre, by means of

textile culture. (<http://www.bienale.lt/2013/en/>).

There are other such events taking place in the European cultural world, such as the "Schytia" Biennial of Textile Arts in Kherson, Ukraine, (10th edition in 2014), many other satellite exhibitions, such as *Fiberman* (started in 2010, exclusively for male artists). This year it is the 6th edition of the International Biennial of Minitextile.

Fiber Art or minitextile biennials or triennials, are highly popular in many European countries: Miniartextil (Como, Italia), at its 23rd edition (2013), organized by the Arte&Arte Cultural Association; the International Triennial of Tapestry, *Tournai*, Belgium (7th edition in 2011; Riga International Textile and Fiber Art Triennial, Riga, Latvia, (5th edition in 2013); the 10th edition of the Triennial of Minitextile Angers, France, organized by "Jean Lurçat" Museum; the 15th edition of the International Exhibition of Minitextile (2013), of The Slovak Textile Artists Association TxT or the 3th Triennial of Textile-Without Borders in 2012, organized by the cultural association KTV Arttex in Bratislava (with 46 artists from 14 countries participating in first edition, in 2006, and 91 participants, 12 students, in 2012), or Rijswijk Textile Biennial, in the Netherlands (starting with 2011). The International Lace Biennial in *Sansepolcro*, Arezzo province, Tuscany, Italy (15th edition in 2012), The International Lace Biennial in Brussels (12 editions) which opened the doors for contemporary visions in lace works.

In Romania, the first Triennial of Contemporary Romanian Tapestry was organized in 1994, in Bucharest, by the Romanian Fines Arts Union which enjoyed a higher number of participants starting with its second edition in 1997, with a total of 74 artists (among which established artists such as Ileana Balotă, Titina Comșa, Lena Constante, Elena Haschke-Marinescu, Teodora Moisescu-Stendl, Cella Neamțu, Maria Blendea, Șerbana Drăgoescu etc. but also younger artists, from the new generation), and also with foreign guests from Poland, Slovakia, Hungary (Krystyna Dyrda-Kortyka, Iveta Miháľková, Katarina Zavarská, Pápai Lívია, Solti Gizella). The following editions, such as the one in 2003, the number of participates from abroad included artists from France, Norway, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, USA, Japan (Brigitte Amarger, Gunvor Nervold Antonsen, Rita Esposito, Brigitta Halberg, Angelika Hecht-Schneewolf, Linda Lewis, Hara Sugane) together with 57 Romanian artists.

In 1999, in *Iași*, „TexpoArt” project was initiated as a biennial

national event (4 editions, until 2005), and starting with 2008 it became a triennial, its first international edition being organized by the Romanian Fine Arts Union *Iași* and the "George Enescu" University of the Arts, CreART – the Centre for Creation and Research, together with the ETN and the "Peticelul Internațional" group ("International Patch" Group) with 66 artists from around the world. TexpoArt in Iași remains the most important international textile Triennial in Romania, because the Bucharest Triennials were canceled in 2006 due to lack of funding and poor communication between the organizers. Romanian artists can only exhibit their works at Decorative Art Salon (*Cotroceni* National Museum, Textile Art Salon MIX, organized by the Romanian Fine Arts Union, the Decorative Art department, in 2012, the "Ariadne" Textile Art Salon in *Târgu-Mureș* [city in Transylvania] at its 17th edition this year)

On other continents the most popular events are the 7th edition of the World Textile Art Biennial (WTA), in Columbia, in Medellín, or the famous American Tapestry Biennial 10, in 2010, organized for American artists by the American Tapestry Alliance. In Japan there is the Kyoto Kogei Biennial, at the Art Museum in Kyoto (2012). In China, the 7th International Biennial of Fiber was called "From Lausanne to Beijing" and it was organized in Nantong, Jiangsu province. In 2011 the idea came to organize the first edition of the Hangzhou Fiber Art Triennial (September 2013) at the Zhejiang Art Museum, thanks to the professors from China Art Academy, the Fiber Art and Spatial Art Studio, who convinced the local authorities of the importance of such an event. In South Korea, in the city Heyri in August 2012 the first edition of the Korea Bojaghi Forum (biennial) was organized; this year, in Cheongju province, in South Korea there will be the International Craft Biennial also. In Australia, *Sensorial Loop*, Tamworth Textile Triennial had its first edition in 2010, and its curator was Patrick Snelling.

Among the many competitions dedicated to textile art and Fiber Art, in Europe we mention the *Valcellina Award - International Textile and Fiber Art Competition*, Maniago, Italy, dedicated to young artists (born after 1976) and organized starting with 1995, its last edition's theme was *Mixing Culture* and its director, the art critic Gina Morandini, the president of *Associazione Le Arti Tessili*, used the works of the 35 participants in the latest edition for an itinerant exhibition, organized in collaboration with Giovanna Romualdi, professor at *Accademia di Belle Arti Bologna*.

Among the events which promote art and traditional textile culture together with contemporary inventions and creations we would like to mention the International Festival of Extraordinary Textiles in Clermont-Ferrand, France, which started in 2011, in collaboration with Bargoin Museum. The platform of this festival was born out of a project HS (Hors serie) – of a local organization which in 2008 launched the idea of an international festival based on interculturality. No less the 38 local institutions and 17 from France and abroad are involved in this project: Musée des Tissus de Lyon; CIETA (Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens); Musée des Tissus, Lyon; Cambridge University Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, UK; The Ethnographic Museum in *Braşov*, Romania; Department of Textile Conservation, Metropolitan Museum, New York, SUA; *Musée National du Mali* in Bamako; *Musée du textile et centre de documentation de Terrassa*, Spain; Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, India; Bunka Gakuen Costume Museum, Tokyo, Japan; *Musée de la Mode*, Antwerp, Belgium; *Palazzo Mocenigo*, Venice, Italy; Plovdiv University "Paissii Hilendarski", Bulgaria etc.) with 57 members in the organization committee – researchers, professionals, and textile experts.

The International Festival of Extraordinary Textiles wants to re-launch the generous idea to reintegrate the concept and value of textiles in the public mind, in a collective form to which everybody participates: textile artists, textile designers, small produces, craftsmen preoccupied with perpetuating traditional techniques. This event mainly sets out to show the diversity of textile culture within an organized, interactive framework (during a specific period of time, set by the organizers). The participants at the festival are contemporary artists, fashion designers, collectors, foundations, museums, artisans, craftsmen, and business men.

IV.2. Publications

The role of special publications is mainly to offer accurate information about a certain field and its connected activities/projects. There is no magazine in Romania to cover specifically the field of textile art of Fiber Art (there were only magazine for the textile industry, such as *Dialog Textil* or *IndustriaTextilă*, in 1951) and *Arta* magazine first

published in a new form in 2010, without any special attention to events dedicate to textile *Fiber Art*.

For Romanian artists, the only sources of information about *Fiber Art* are foreign magazine (either in print or online), exhibition catalogues, art albums or books, etc.

In the European cultural world, the most important magazine dedicate to Fiber Art is *Textile Forum*, published by ETN (European Textile Network). The articles present the most recent information regarding *Fiber Art* techniques and events, in Europe and in the world. In spite of the fact that the magazine is an important source of information, its editor in chief BeatrijsSterk states: "...*Textile Forum* is only a flower in the media landscape, which can be easily missed".

There are other magazines such as *Text I Textil, sztuka włókna – fiber art*, a bilingual magazine (in Polish and English), published by Włodzimierz Cygan, textile artist and professor at ASP Łódź, - the founder and the coordinator of the magazine between 1991-1999. The magazine was published with the help of the authors. After 1999, it disappeared due to lack of funding.

Jacquard magazine– published by *Fondazione Arte della Seta, Lisio*, Florence, coordinated by Paula Marabelli and Carla Baldi – published in Italian, with summaries in English – is dedicated to all the aspects of the *jacquard* technique (restoration processes and techniques, costumes, traditional textile techniques, cultural events, educational programs led by Julie Holyoke and Eva Basile) and much more. The magazine is more of a general culture magazine, as it presents not only technical facts, but also a lot of historical information related to European textile art and tradition.

In the USA, the oldest and most important magazine is *Fiber Arts* (Interweave Press, LLC), published continuously between 1975 and 2011. The magazine was a cultural and information reference point not only for American artists, but for artists all over the world. Its issues were dedicated to different categories: *Fiber Art*, *tapestry*, *wearable art*, *basketry*, *textile object*, *experimental art* etc., with columns focusing on individual creation, artistic endeavors, interviews, as well as traditions and tendencies. The magazines went out of print in 2011 due to financial reasons (<http://www.fiberarts.com>)

IV.3. Fiber Art & Intercultural Dialogue

Motto: "Dialogue is the way which may, eventually, lead to personal fulfillment" - MihaiȘora

Besides the *stricto sensu* interpretation of the word, the layers of the idea of inter-culturality as an effect of globalization can be found today in different artistic and cultural fields, especially with certain phenomena, such as textile art. The intercultural concept bears a semantic complexity which unveils a general definition, but also a particular one, a integrating statement which can be both a trap, and a conventional discourse, but which can represent what Mircea Eliade used to refer to when he said that "perspective creates phenomenon".

Intercultural dialogue opens up new perspectives, new practices which promote common values, but also particular ones, and which help form new bridges between people, groups, or organizations, with similar interests and activities. The most common forms of intercultural dialogue, in visual culture are the events which promote or perpetuate art, in Europe and throughout the world. We can notice that organized culture works in different ways, spreading out in all the layers of society where common interest, dialogue and communication are essential factors, though we cannot eliminate the economic factor, which plays an important role. We still live in a consumerist society where cultural event organizers are hindered by bureaucracy, lack of funds, and lack of interest and responsibility towards traditional and national values. So what can the citizen, the artist do in this situation?

Let us just mention the case of Norbert Zawisza, art critic and professor, former director of the *Central Museum of Textiles Łódź*, who was forced to resign from his job of general director, after 30 year of assiduous activity in promoting textile art and tradition in Europe (but not only). The absence of such a great personality is an incommensurable loss for the future of *Fiber Art*.

Another worrying phenomenon is happening in Romanian, where, out of 647 museums, 67 are completely forgotten (such as the *Muzeul Țării Crișurilor*, from Oradea or the *Museum of Art in Galați*) waiting to be closed by local authorities, despite the number of patrimony objects found there.

Apart from these absurd situation (which unfortunately do happen in cultural life), there is the problem of maintain certain cultural projects devoted not only to *Fiber Art*, but to the entire span of visual arts. It is necessary to maintain an intercultural dialogue in order to harmonize inter-human relations, in order to keep the balance needed for a good collaboration based on mutual respect, so that art, the most common means of human expression, will not lose its true calling, that of conveying ideas, thoughts, feelings, and thus help minimize the negative effects appeared between technology and intellect, created, among other things, by globalization.

I feel the best conclusion would be to quote a good friend who once said: "May art be our home, and love our air!"

(Translation from Romanian by Laura Sîrbu)

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