

## **SHELLARD Jennifer (UK)**

### ***Computer-aided design for weaving one-off pieces on the theme of light and shade - paper***

The enclosed images represent work in progress for an AHRB funded research project scheduled to run from August 2003 to July 2004

The project proposal questions conventions of textile art and craft weaving by identifying with a distinctly painterly and collage-making approach, realised through the use of digital technology. The facility remains a discreet tool, offering liberation from the design of repeat-pattern normally associated with dobby weaving.

The pieces are essentially non-functional banners that explore relationships of scales and composition and are woven as single repeats of approximately 0.5 by 2.5 metres. The main body is woven with silk which is subject to controlled dye techniques. Light-responsive yarns are introduced in the warp whilst weave structures are strategically used to alternately enhance and subdue their impact, with the aim of developing a subtle and serene aesthetic.

The decision to use predominantly spun silk ensures that the explorations of colour – by dyeing and painting – are maximised by the fibre's natural properties. The interaction and balance of colour with light reactive yarns, as well as with various light sources, are an important aspect of the research.

'Light and Shade' has been the theme of past exhibitions of my work ('From the shadow to the Light, woven textiles group show; Contemporary Applied Arts, London May 2001) and in exploring the effect of introducing light responsive yarns, my investigations have begun to focus on a variety of light sources, with a view to integrating them into a display which will activate and control the visual impact of the work.

A key objective of the research is the exploration of image and presentation within an architectural environment, where light and space play major roles. Inspiration for the work derives from the spiritual effects of light and shadow, from rhythms in nature and in music.

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I trained as a jeweller in 1974 and was working in non-precious soft materials for some years before deciding in 1994 to follow a four year part-time masters degree in woven textiles at the Royal College of Art in London. Whilst studying at the college, I was drawn to the use of computers for the design of jacquards, such a natural adjunct to the essentially binary nature of weave; and the work that resulted began to focus on tonal gradations, optical effects and, through the use of light and shade, illusions of three dimensional surface. A subsequent invitation to exhibit in a group show themed 'From the Shadow to the Light' at Contemporary Applied Arts in London acted as the catalyst that has since evolved into my current research project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Board, through the London College of Fashion where am on a research-based lecturing contract.

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