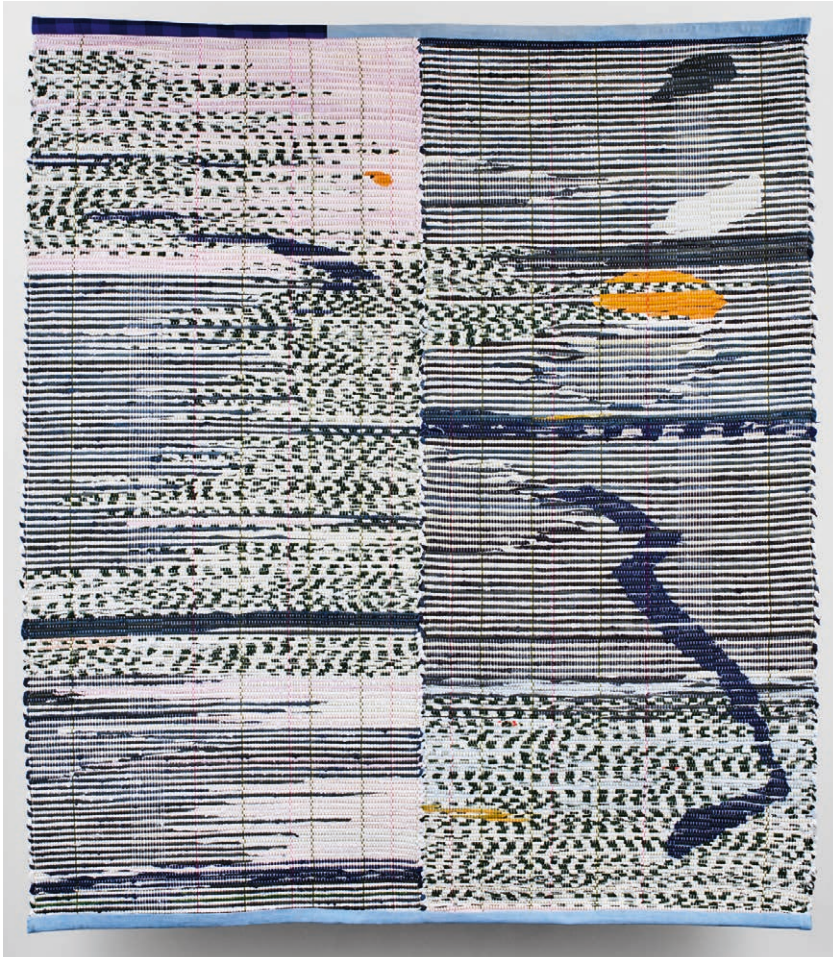


**Left** *Edition 001-01/05*, 180 × 210 cm, 2019. Two lengths of rag rug sewn together. The patterns are made of inlay. Detail of the work to the left. Climbing ropes.



SEBASTIEN AGNETTI



# Materializing Pattern

ARTIST-WEAVER ESTELLE BOURDET INTERTWINES HER SWISS BACKGROUND AND THE ART TRAINING SHE HAD THERE WITH THE TEXTILE CRAFT PRACTICE RECEIVED FROM HER MOTHER'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY IN HÄLSINGLAND PLUS THE WEAVING SKILLS GAINED FROM STUDYING AT CAPELLAGÅRDEN ON ÖLAND. HER TEXTILE ORIENTATION WAS APPARENT FROM THE OUTSET.

THE FIRST TIME I saw Estelle Bourdet's woven work was at the 2019 Capellagården summer show. Her weavings spoke their own language, notably with a strong graphic expression, refined technique and real character. Creating imagery and expression with distinct originality and a sense of identity is indeed a challenge. Estelle Bourdet has succeeded at that.

Raised in a little Alpine village in Switzerland, 1260 metres high, she had the opportunity to do snowboarding and rock climbing and grow up in an inspiring, creative setting, with space to flourish. When she was little, she would collect yarn and crochet it. Summers were spent in Västmanland and Hälsingland, from where her mother comes, amidst rag

rugs, handwoven curtains and fishing nets. Rag rugs and textile crafts were just taken for granted. Along with the sense of appreciation and care for one's clothes and textiles in the home. Respect for making and textile materials.

Estelle Bourdet embarked on a wide – ranging art training at the Ecole Cantonale d'Art



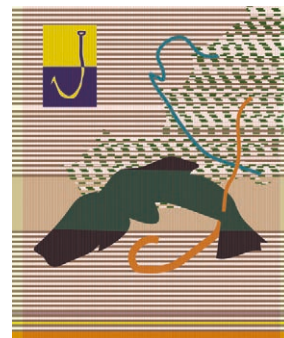


BENGT ARNE IGNELL

## Estelle Bourdet

Born and raised in Switzerland.  
Now living in Berga, Småland.  
Education at the Ecole Cantonale  
d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL), Textile  
Design – Lucerne University of  
Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU),  
2 years Textiles at Capellagården.

Current and coming exhibitions  
Show with Clara Dayet at Studio  
Tina Hellberg, October 2021 in  
Stockholm  
Show at Direktorenhaus, autumn  
2022 in Berlin  
Collaborating in the *Indigo Madder*  
show at VÄV2022 in Halmstad



*Issei Poisson*  
*La Truite*,  
140 x 178 cm, 2021  
Rag rug with inlay.  
Sketch for the rug.

de Lausanne (ECAL), which included sculpture, graphic design and painting. Though not weaving, and textile options such as embroidery were not part of the direction she was after. She took time out and went back home for a while. Bought a loom and taught herself weaving. The first rag rug appeared. Other weaves were executed on frames she made herself. And it was in weave that she found her way to the method she now uses for working with her designs. Converting them into a textile medium. She then wanted to learn more about weaving, the craft practice and weaving technique and applied for a place on several courses in Sweden. She was accepted at all of them and chose Capellagården over and above the others, including a master's at Konstfack.

– It was the cultural aspect, my roots and the focus on craft practice that determined my choice. I needed a break from the art

world. At Capellagården I focused on technique with Berit Grybäck, the best weaving tutor I have ever had. And Linda Zetterman, the design tutor who offered many and significant suggestions for working with form and colour.

We met up at her studio in Berga, Småland. She had just cut down a commissioned weave and rolled it out on the wooden floor. Leaping on the surface is a fish form, rendered in rag weave on a warp, bright red in parts. This work evolved through Estelle Bourdet first inviting the commissioner to select a sketch from a couple made digitally, based on the commissioner's preferences for colour and motif. The selected sketch became the basis of what was then woven up. There is, on Estelle's website, a clear template for her customers to initiate this process. And the fact of them

choosing her form language gives her great freedom to then respond creatively.

*Do you feel weave sets conditions that govern you?*

– It is a challenge to look beyond warp and weft, which is what interests me. Breaking conventions. Creating surprises.

*Can you describe the process?*

– I am well and truly impatient and so sketching on the computer suits me, the process there is swift. When I then get to the loom, I let the making and the practice take over. And there I have patience. It can take its time. The presence of the hand becomes apparent. Unforeseen things can happen. It is in the shift from the digital to the actual that my weaves find a voice. I don't control chance. And sometimes mistakes are allowed. Errors are important, they also tell their story.

*Une fois cinq* på La Vraie Vie, in Genève 2020.



JULIEN GREMAUD

*Is it important for you to be behind the whole process?*

– Most definitely. I sometimes get asked how I have it in me and manage to take on both the design aspect and the production. But that I feel is my purpose, I want to be involved in the whole process, from the idea to the finished object.

#### FLOOR, WALL OR ROOM

Her weaves are both distinct objects, like a rug, whilst having a pictorial aspect. That means many people want to hang the work on a wall.

*What do you think about this?*

– I often get asked whether my weaves should be put up on a wall or placed on the floor. That framing of the question is not one I am too concerned about. So it might be that if a textile has a specific function, like a rug, it instils a kind of security we perhaps need. I am happy if somebody chooses to place my weaving on the floor. For it to be part of daily life, become worn and age. The way rag rugs are intended. But I am just as happy when somebody sees a work as an object for hanging on a wall, I really want my customers to use the weaving as they wish.

*What defines a rug?*

– A rug is both decorative and functional.

Maybe, I delude myself a little when weaving something with a function, to get some limitation, a frame, a security. To then be able to create something that blurs the boundaries between art and functional craft practice.

Estelle Bourdet has exhibited on several occasions. The venue spaces provide the conditions for determining which of her weaves are shown. So for *Une fois cinq* at La Vraie Vie in Geneva, 2020, lengths of weftwise rib were used to create a room within a room. After the show finished, the work was divided up and sold, as rugs or wall art. She is thinking about building on this idea for a prospective exhibition in Berlin, autumn 2022.

#### NEW CHALLENGES, NEW MATERIALS

There is, in a corner of her workshop, a heap of climbing ropes. These too are for recycling, as in rag weaves. The ropes came from the climbing centre (Klättercentret) at Telefonplan in Stockholm. There is a tradition within the climbing community of making mats with used/old climbing rope. Not much between that and weaving itself; ropes also allude to her own background in alpine sports. Normally, Estelle Bourdet works with natural materials, but the rope is of synthetic material and might require a different warp to the cotton or linen she would normally use. Preparatory sketching is next, then a full scale

cartoon before getting down to the rest of the work at the loom.

#### MATERIALS AND MEANING

*What do textile materials give us?*

– Textiles are everywhere. I have always had a real relationship with textiles. As a matter of course since childhood. I did crochet when I was little and collected yarn, now I weave with sheets, also collected. It is so cool, a bit like going on a treasure hunt. Textiles say so much. And now, with the textile training I have done, I have learnt to read material. Weaving with new products is not as exciting, I find, there is already so much around. Better to give what exists already another chance.

*What are your sources of inspiration?*

– Graphic design and its tradition, which is strong in Switzerland, has probably influenced and inspired me. There is structure there. Practitioners of the past like Sophie Taeuber, whose multidisciplinary investigations into architecture, sculpture, painting, weaving and dance using an abstract form language, are also inspirational. As well as Karin Larsson with her interiors and textiles and Tasha Tudor with her garden. Nature, though, has to be my top source of inspiration with its readiness to balance form and colour the way it does.

– The weaver and artist Amy Revier is another role model. I met her when she came to lecture at Capellagården. What she represents in her lifestyle I find very attractive. Linking craft practice and the rest of life in a natural manner. Working at home, gardening and all in one context.

Estelle Bourdet has returned to Capellagården. This time to do a one-year gardening course. The idea is for her to acquire other skills that mean she can alternate between weaving, which is sometimes a solitary activity, with seasonal work in a garden. Also with the possibility in mind of moving into the countryside. She might, perhaps, cultivate dyeplants. Vegetation could find its way into her woven imagery.

*Instagram: estellebourdet  
estellebourdet.com*