

PRESS RELEASE

Woven Imaginings : New Weavescapes by Julia Engelhardt

Exhibition at Zuleika Gallery, Woodstock from 2 – 28 March 2024



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Following a very successful exhibition in the Stables Café at Blenheim we are delighted to be showing Julia Engelhardt's new *Weavescapes* in our upper gallery at Zuleika. Engelhardt works from the premise that the warp is the canvas, as she weaves beautiful abstract pieces from a plethora of materials, both conventional such as silk and cotton, but also unconventional like paper, steel and fique. In her woven work she takes great liberties with conventional drafts, with patterns and shapes forming as she progresses. Her titles play an important role and have a symbiotic relationship to the finished pieces. They not only give the viewer a clue as to her imaginings associated with each work, but are often humorous, poignant or dreamy.

From an early age Engelhardt loved anything to do with textiles - fabrics, threads, yarns - and proved to be very dextrous at various techniques, too. After coming back from a trip to Santa Fe in New Mexico, her parents gave her a small Chimayo weaving when she was eight. She was so impressed with it she still remembers the colours and pattern. So her parents bought her a basic loom which she eagerly learnt to use.

In 2013, she took a weekend taster course with artist and designer Margo Selby who works in woven textiles. This reawakened her interest in weaving and she decided to teach herself to use multishift table looms – just the challenge needed at the time.

Engelhardt prefers to diverge away from traditional weaving and showcase the natural movement and general qualities of her materials, just as a painter might feel the veracity and excitement of heavy impasto oil painting, so she approaches her art in an honest and thought-provoking way. She cites Sheila Hicks and Paul Klee as major influences. Hicks's artistic freedom as seen in her small *minimes* pieces where each one is like a sketch and where the warp is the canvas, and Klee's nuanced approach to colour and intuitive pattern

composition. Klee's idea that he was just *"taking the line for a walk"* is instilled within Engelhardt's work and she herself uses that analogy about her own practice. She speaks the language of weaving with its poetic terms such as "dressing the loom", "beam", "warp" and "weft", "reed", "shed", "shafts", "shuttles", "heddles" and "treadles". Words that link us to thousands of years of history and human evolution, and she translates them into a sense of order and an underlying rhythm to create beautiful, expressive works of art for us all to enjoy.

"For me, the shaft looms I use provide a tensioned 'canvas' in the warp necessary to construct a cloth but I allow yarns to breathe with an often very loosely woven weft. Once released from the loom, the looseness softens or even dissolves traditional angularity of weaves and allows for natural movement, fluidity, expression which are all key to my work." Julia Engelhardt, 2022

ENDS

Illustrated

1. Julia Engelhardt, *Ancient Sounds II*, 2023, wool, silk, cotton, acetate, nylon
2. Julia Engelhardt, *Bursting at the Seams*, 2023, wool, silk, acetate, nylon

Venue

Zuleika Gallery, 6 Park Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1SP.
www.zuleikagallery.com

Opening Hours:

10 – 5pm Wednesday - Saturday

By appointment Sunday – Tuesday – please contact +44(0)7719060962

Press Contact

Philippa Phelan – philippa@zuleikagallery.com +44(0) 44 7719 060962

About Zuleika Gallery

Zuleika Gallery's focus is on Modern British art and leading artists from Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds. The gallery was founded in Oxford in 2015 by Lizzie Collins originally as a pop-up. Lizzie is a History of Art graduate of UCL, and a postgraduate of the Courtauld Institute in London. A former auctioneer and director at Bonhams, and a specialist at Christie's in 20th Century British Art. The gallery's name Zuleika references both Oxford and Modern British Art as it is taken from artist Max Beerbohm's only, and comedic, novel 'Zuleika Dobson' which is set in Oxford and was first published in 1911. From 2017-2020 the gallery was based in Mason's Yard,