



A lovely quiet Saturday, about 6 inches of snow fell yesterday, and another 3 or so are due in tonight. The studio is warm, and my children are out, so it is just my husband and me putting around the house. These are the easy days, I cherish them when I get them, because tomorrow could be completely different.

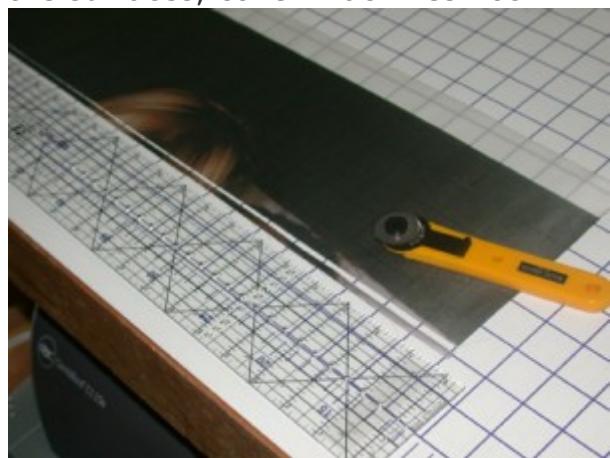
I spent some time cleaning up the studio. That is a really important part of my creative experience, to organize and clear away the surfaces, cover machines not in use

, carefully return things to their proper places. I'm not so distracted by clutter which can take me away from the task at hand.

I decided to spend the rest of the afternoon working on a piece on my table loom, which is almost finished, using a Theo Moorman threading. I weave about a quarter inch of ground fabric, then lay in on top a thin strip of silk, and hold it down with poly sewing thread which is warped in with the cotton ground. The strip is part of a childhood photograph I printed on 10mm silk Habotai, which comes on a 10' roll, pretreated for ink jet ink, and mounted on paper for easy transport through the

printer. I got this from Dharma Trading. By running two or three lengths of this silk, 23" long, I could

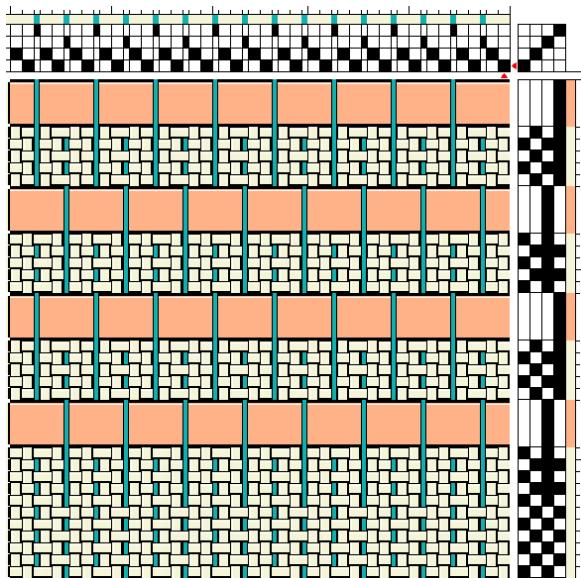
print a much larger image, since I'm



stripping it anyway, it doesn't matter if it is in two or three pieces.

This is a larger version of one I sold, called Big Sister. The photo is from around 1957, of my younger sister and me, caught in an intimate moment. The photo above is the smaller version.

December 20th, 2008 in [Blog Entries](#)



It would help explain how I wove the image in the previous blog, if I included the draft. The peach strips of weft would represent the silk strips of the image. When you carefully beat them into place, they slide down to cover the plain weave ground underneath. Hope this helps.

December 20th, 2008 in [Blog Entries](#)

I had to switch gears today, I wanted to send a piece to the members exhibit at the Surface Design Conference in Kansas City. The deadline is March 1st. I was under the assumption that they wanted an image by March 1st, but when I reread the prospectus, it calls for the actual piece, 18" square to be sent to them by that date. I had been planning to use the photo of the 16" version, and if accepted would weave the 18" version. But alas, they need an actual piece.



So I brought my table loom over to the cutting table , which is really convenient because I can stand and cut the strips as I weave them in. The second or third blog I wrote back in December described the process and gave the [draft](#), using a Theo Moorman threading. I weave about a quarter inch of ground fabric, then lay in on top a thin strip of silk, and hold it down with poly sewing thread which is warped in with the cotton ground. The strip is part of a childhood photograph I printed on 10mm silk Habotai, which comes on an 8.5" x 10' roll, pretreated for ink

jet ink, and mounted on paper for easy transport through the printer. I got this from [Dharma Trading](#). By running two lengths of this silk, 8.5" x 16" long, I could print a much larger image, since I'm stripping it anyway, it doesn't matter if it is in two pieces.

In the first photo, I found if I score the paper backing with a sharp ruler edge, I can get it started easier than



fumbling with the corner. In the second photo, I am peeling the paper backing off the silk. In the third photo, I am cutting the strips of silk, I cut them about $3/16"$. You can see there are two big sections that make up the image. The last photo is of the table loom, you can see I have two strips woven in already. I'll describe more about the weaving process later. I figured out a way to do a pick-up of the tie down threads so only the ones I need are actually held out, the rest on the side get woven into the ground.



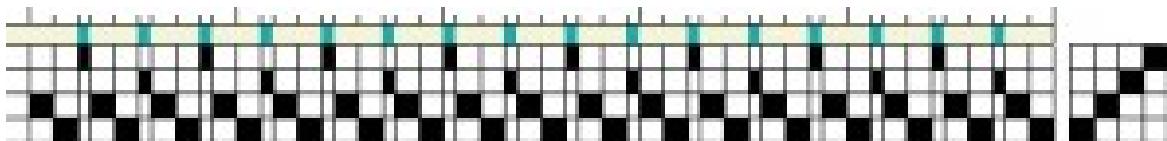
This will be a slightly larger version of one I sold, called [Big Sister](#). The photo is from around 1957, of my younger sister and me, caught in an intimate moment. The photo is the smaller version. In the December blog, I was weaving the same piece, but 24" wide. My sister saw it on my blog and tearfully requested one for her, she even offered to pay me, but since she

is the other child in the photograph, it is only fair she gets this one once I have exhibited it.

February 23rd, 2009 in [Blog Entries](#)

I was able to make a lot of progress today on the piece I started yesterday. I made so much progress, I'm 2/3 of the way through. So I'd like to think that I'll get it off the loom tomorrow, but who knows, life keeps taking all sorts of twists and turns...

I'll describe how I did the piece, if you aren't a handweaver and are reading this, it will go right over your head I'm sure, but bear with me, I always get really interested people whenever I lecture on the [Theo Moorman technique](#), and I'm doing this a slightly different way, with a pick-up. First the draft:



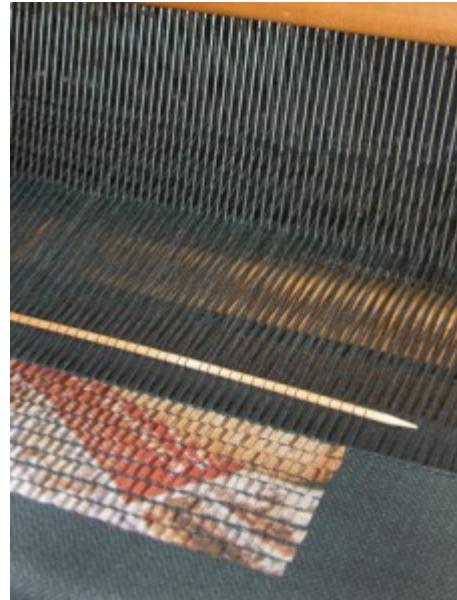
I am threading the first and second shaft with gray 10/2 cotton, and shafts three and four are threaded with gray polyester sewing thread. So the ground fabric is a plain weave with shafts one and two, and the thin tie-down threads are on shafts three and four.



First I lift shaft 1 and 3, and weave across with the 10/2 cotton in the shuttle.

Then I drop shaft one, and insert a pick-up stick, which is an 1/8" dowel that I shaved the ends on to make it pointy. The pick-up stick goes under the threads on shaft 3, the sewing thread,

picking up only the threads I want to hold up through the next four rows. That way, the tie-down threads will weave into the background on the sides where the silk strips won't be woven in. I release shaft 3.

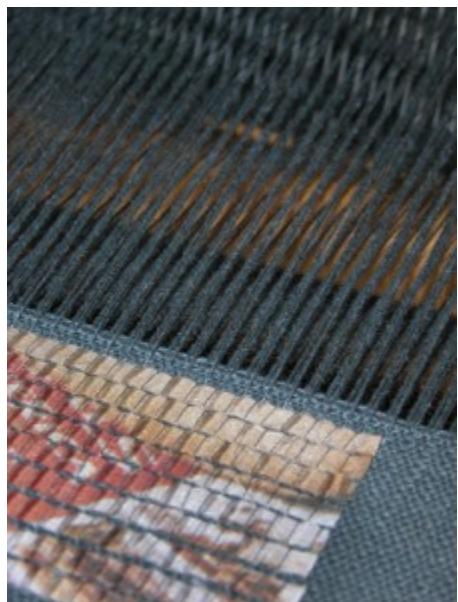


I lift shafts 2 and 4, and before I weave the next shot, I push the pick-up stick up against the reed. That lifts the tie-down threads from shaft 3 up and keeps them out of the way. I weave across with my cotton weft. I beat the weft in place, which moves the pick-up stick back to the fell line (last row of weaving) and then release shafts 2 and 4.

I lift shafts 1 and 3, and weave a shot of weft across, the pick-up stick remains at the fell line.

Then I repeat the previous step, lifting shafts 2 and 4, pushing the pickup stick against the reed, weave a shot of weft, and beat into place. The pick-up stick moves back to the fell line.

One more shot of weft, with shafts 1 and 3 lifted, for a total of five shots, it is important to weave an odd number of shots, once the strip is placed, the next row will raise the opposite set of tie-down threads.



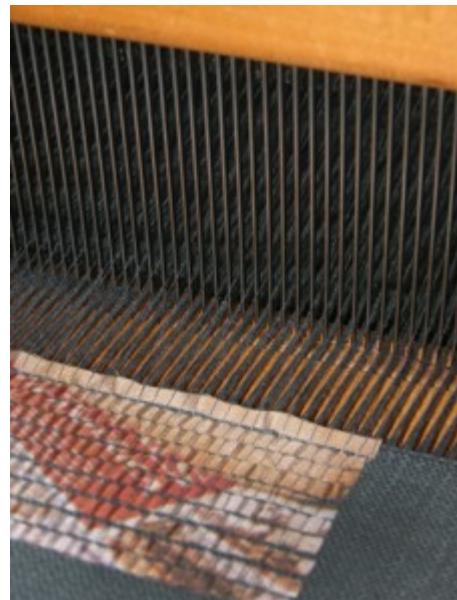
The piece should look like this, remove the pick up stick, and lower shaft 1. All that remains raised, are the tie-down threads on shaft 3.

I carefully take my silk strip (see the blog from yesterday for information on this part of the story), and place it under the raised tie-down threads.

I beat that strip gently into place, and change the shed to raise shafts 2 and 4,

and start the process all over again, but this time shafts 2 and 4 lead, with the pick-up stick placed under the tie-down threads on shaft 4. You eventually get into a rhythm.

I could really use a boat shuttle with a lower profile, I've seen them around, made for the Structo Looms I think. My weaving buddy Sally



had a couple at a meeting once, and I thought they would make weaving on a table loom so much more efficient. But for now, since I mostly do yardage on large floor looms, this is what I have to work with and I just scoot it across the shallow shed, until it gets to the other side. If I wanted speed, I'd use the floor loom. An advantage of the table loom is that shafts stay up by themselves while you are manipulating the silk strip. Speed isn't so important here.

It is late and bedtime is looking like a pretty great concept...

February 24th, 2009 in [Blog Entries](#)

And finally, I started to weave another one of my Theo Moorman images, this time from a photo we took of my children on top of the World Trade Center Twin Towers, in August of 2001. I don't know why that day I told my husband we should take the kids in to see the sites in NYC. We hadn't done that with the kids, and I'd never been on top of the Trade Center Towers. It was an unbelievable feeling to be on the top of the world, looking out at Manhattan on that beautiful August day, and I will say that every strip I weave in is a painful memory that within two weeks, those towers would be rubble. I was just preparing to teach a class at Montclair State University in the fiber department when the towers were hit, and I was encouraged by Madelyn van der Hoogt, editor of Handwoven Magazine, to write my thoughts that day in a [letter](#) to the editor. That letter and some other essays I've done are on the [Extras](#) page of my website.



So I am slowly constructing this piece, rebuilding what once stood, like the innocence of my children on the roof that day, strip by strip, on my table loom. I need to take the loom into a classroom full of 2nd graders on Tuesday, and it

is odd to think they weren't born when this event happened. I want to show them how I can weave pictures, and I'll take with me the Big Sister piece I did last winter. I'll take one of my bags of fleece, and my carders and my repaired Ashford wheel, and some silk cocoons, and a cotton boll, and some examples of my work and my articles, and I'll teach some 2nd graders about art, and fiber, and where their clothes come from, and who knows, maybe someday one or two of them will be drawn to a loom and vaguely remember when that weaver came to visit them in 2nd grade.

April 17th, 2009 in [Blog Entries](#)

I've blogged about this technique, a Theo Moorman Inlay on a cotton ground, in many previous posts. Search for "Big Sister" and you'll find many references. I printed the image on silk, and then cut it into quarter inch strips, and wove them back into the loom, in sequence while weaving a backing fabric at the same time. One of my blogs has detailed shots of the process. If I have time I'll search for it.



Anyway, the image here was shot the end of August, 2001, while vacationing a mere 20 miles away with my children. We took them to the South Street Seaport in Manhattan, and then up to the roof of the World Trade Center. I titled this photo "Top of the World". I don't need to tell anyone what happened a mere two weeks later...

It is a chilling photo, the shaky appearance of the towering structure, from the rewoven strips, two innocent children doing what children do when posing for a photo for dad, (notice the rabbit ears my son is sneaking in behind his sister's back), I am haunted by this photo every time I look at it. Reweaving it back together row by row, was somehow healing.

June 17th, 2009 in [Blog Entries](#)



This is the tale of two looms and a 19 year old who was into me for \$300. The reason he was into me for \$300. isn't important, but as he is trying to work off this rather cumbersome debt, I'm trying to think of things for him to do besides clean my house thoroughly, which he has already done. I was going to set him to work on the outside gardens today, but alas, it has poured rain steadily through the entire day.

So, that leaves something for me to invent for him to do in the studio. Enter two small Structo looms I acquired on my travels. The one on the right is an eight shaft, which had been refurbished, the finish is awful, but all the parts are there and in working order, except the aprons are cut way too narrow for the already narrow little loom. (For the non weavers, the aprons are the white cloth on the front and back beams that attach to the warp and the finished cloth.)

The second loom was also given to me, and all the pieces to it are sort of there, but many of the cross pins are missing and the loom frame had some creative copper beam replacements. This loom also had a hex warp beam with four two inch spools that fit snugly on the hex beam, and held a lot of fine warp. I unreeled one of the spools and pulled off about 20 yards. That's a lot of warp for such a tiny loom.



I want to set up one of these looms to make more of the little Personal Post series post cards, I've had some luck with in exhibits. The cards themselves are only about 6 x 4", so having an 8" wide loom, with a long warp on it should let me weave for awhile and see what I can come up with, without tying up my larger looms. And the way they were perched on top of two spool racks as you entered my studio made for some dangerous snowball effects when one or both of them caught on someone's clothing and went careening off their perch. But I digress... I technically only need four shafts for the structure for the post cards, it is a Theo Moorman inlay, with two shafts for the ground, and two shafts for the tie-down threads. The problem is I need a lot of heddles. And as far as I know,

Structo heddles are no longer made.* Someone please tell me if I am wrong on this... Between the 12 shafts I have on the two looms, I have enough heddles for the job, and I can use 4 shafts for the ground instead of two, because I can. So enter my 19 year old. His assignment once he rolled out of bed at noon, was to dismantle both looms, and keep the best parts, and transfer 60 heddles to each of six shafts. Here's the thing. Heddles, those little wire things with eyes, where each warp thread is threaded through, all have to face in the same direction. Or anyway in the perfect world they should. Older looms, where heddles have been added and taken away, tend to have a mishmash of heddle directions which is a pain in the neck to thread. So he worked for about an hour and a half, creating for me a nice eight shaft loom with lots of heddles, all going in the same direction.

Meanwhile, I pulled out the AVL warping mill to see if I could figure out how to



wind warp on those little spools that fit on the hex beam. First the math. The Structo reed is a fixed 15 dent. The thread I pulled off the spools, was pretty close to a 20/2's cotton, which is pretty fine. And from the quick count I did, they used that thread sleyed double through the reed, at 30 ends per inch. What I couldn't figure out was how to put the warp on the spools to begin with. So I unwound each of the spools, like peeling paint off a house, there must have been about 20 different warps tied end on end. I got to the end of the spool, and found that the ends of the warp were all glued to some kind of paper tape

that then inserted into a metal flange and the way the beam was wound, kept the paper from pulling out.

I dug around in my vast archives of stuff, and found my roll of paper tape, and grabbed the two cones I bought of 14's linen, (from my trip to Silk City a couple weeks ago), which appeared to be pretty close to a 20/2 cotton, and a



small cone of brown serger thread that matched pretty well. The serger thread is finer than sewing thread, and works well for the tie down yarns.

OK, I've never done something like this before, I use my AVL warping wheel for winding sectional warps. It came with a 20 dent reed, which is really odd, who uses a 20 dent reed, or so I thought at the time. Turns out that the actual space in each spool is 1 1/2", and 30 dents in a 20 dent reed is 1 1/2". How cool is that? (If you aren't a weaver and are reading this, I probably lost you back on the first paragraph. Sorry, but this is one of those posts that gets kind of technical so you may want to just look at the photos and tune in another time to see what I actually do with all this!)

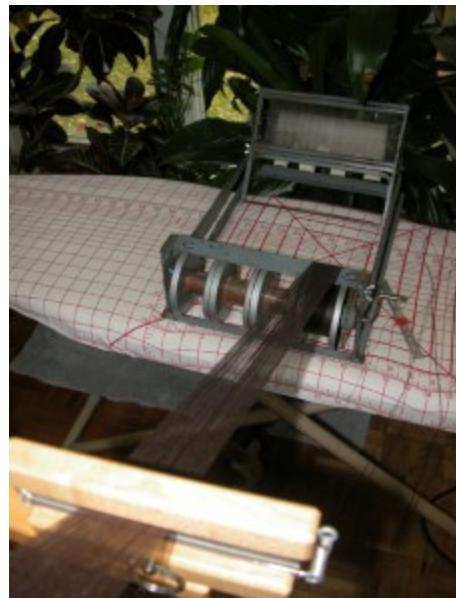
So I wound my 2" worth of linen/serger thread warp into the warping mill,



using the 20 dent reed, which meant the real width here was only 1 1/2". Then I beamed one of the spools directly off the AVL mill, right onto the back beam of the loom, which is missing its entire castle housing because my son has it apart on my cutting table. You can see the band of thread coming through the 20 dent reed.
Each

dent has two ends of linen and one end of serger thread.

I used the paper tape and glued it over the ends to start(it's the kind you just lick, do they even make that anymore? It's used for taping up boxes, you can see the little roll to the right of the loom.) The paper tape held the ends really well, keeping the order, and slipped into the flange of the spool and I just started winding. The warp went on like butter, smoothest thing I've ever wound. The 15 yard warp beamed in about 3 minutes. I finished winding the warp by putting a piece of the paper tape over the ends coming out of the reed on



the AVL mill. That kept my thread order and allowed me to move on to the next spool.



first spool by a half dozen dents, so I had pulled it off and tossed it in the trash. Realizing I was going to be really close, and might make it to within the last half inch of warp, where I don't really need the tie down threads, I went into the trash and pulled out this mess...



rewound onto the cone, I managed to squeak out the last warp spool on the loom with only the end 1/2" with no tie down threads. Which is actually fine.

Everything went well until I got to the last spool. There was plenty of linen, but the serger spool wasn't looking like it was going to make it. Of course it was my only one, and as luck would have it, Coats and Clarks discontinued its Tru-Lock serger thread, replacing it with something else, which didn't come in that color, Chona Brown.

I had overwound the first warp for the



Actually, it was a lot worse, this was what was left after about an hour's worth of work and having the dog come cruising through the little pile I'd pulled out of the serger thread. But perseverance is my middle name, after all I am a handweaver and that sort of goes with the territory. Most weavers I know would take a couple hours to undo a mess like this, and after the serger thread was pulled out and



The problem is, when I wound the last spool on the loom, the 1/2" without the serger thread was on the inside not the outside of the spool. So I figured I'd have to do some creative threading, and maybe stretch some of the thread from other bundles, and anyway, it was time to make dinner.

My lovely creative pink haired daughter came into the studio after dinner and

asked her usual, "Watcha doin'?" I showed her my dilemma, and she said, rather annoyed, "Mom, just rearrange the spools on the beam..."

Boy did I feel stupid. So in about 15 seconds, I popped the four spools off the hex beam, rearranged the spools so the missing 1/2" of tied down threads is now at a selvedge edge, and all is well.

So, now I'm threading my loom, all the heddles are going in the same direction, and life is good. These little looms are a pain in the butt to thread, but I can put up with anything for 8". I tossed out a 1/2" of tie down threads on the opposite selvedge, so the two selvedges would match. I'm still not sure that the sett is appropriate for this fine yarn, in what I'm trying to do with it, but I won't really know until I actually start weaving. So stay tuned!

If you want more information on the AVL warping mill, the [AVL site](#) has lots of information and I also cover it in my monograph, "[Warp Fast](#)", which also covers sectional warping and warping with a paddle. The AVL warping mill works like a dream when winding the warping spools for the small Structo's. And my little [Leclerc Structo wannabee](#), that I've been using for the rug samples for the guild seminars, also has an additional hex beam with five warping spools on it for 10" wide! Yippee! And I can more than likely get more heddles for the Leclerc.

October 24th, 2009 in [Blog Entries](#)



*Additional Structo Heddles are available from:

Mary Scott
Serendipity Farm & Studio
980 Cypress Chapel Rd.
Suffolk, VA 23434

sheepman@gte.net
757-986-2010 (h)
757-651-2632 (c)



and I started to weave on it, using a very slim stick shuttle, I'm surprised at what a good shed there is for such a little loom. My damask boat shuttle is tied up on the other table loom. The fabric is really fine and tight, and I'm happy with the linen so far. I had started a couple of postcards on the remaining warp on my 25" table loom, on a gray 10/2 cotton, as a demo when I went to Albany the beginning of October. So you can see what the strips look like in progress. I'm hoping I can weave lots of little postcards, and with 15 yards of warp, I can really experiment with this medium...

Meanwhile, remember the Structo I was rewarping last week? I got about half of it threaded and then got side tracked by the trip to Atlantic City, and then the rocker and then, well, I needed to finish threading that puppy, and find out if my hard work would produce a cloth weight that would work for the postcards I weave. I've now finished threading the loom,



Here is a shot of the actual linen cloth, it is pretty fine, the linen is about the weight of a 20/2, and sleyed two per dent, I have 30 ends per inch, not counting the tie down threads.



November 3rd, 2009 in [Blog Entries](#)



So, I spent the weekend weaving off the companion piece of a diptych to replace the piece I was suppose to send to the faculty exhibit for Convergence. The original piece was unexpectedly accepted to an exhibit at a gallery in [New Bedford MA](#), and won't be available. To their credit, the committee graciously allowed me to substitute the same work in a different scale, since it will work with the image I had already submitted.

June 7th, 2010 in [Blog Entries](#)



'm nothing if not organized. Compulsively organized. Obsessively organized. I took a day timer, the old fashion kind you write in, and I plotted out everything that needs to get done before Convergence, crossed off days where I wouldn't be in the studio, and carefully filled in the remaining days so I had a feel of the time crunch ahead of me. It all fit in nicely, and I did a little exhale. And then the universe laughed at me. I know well that nothing goes as planned.

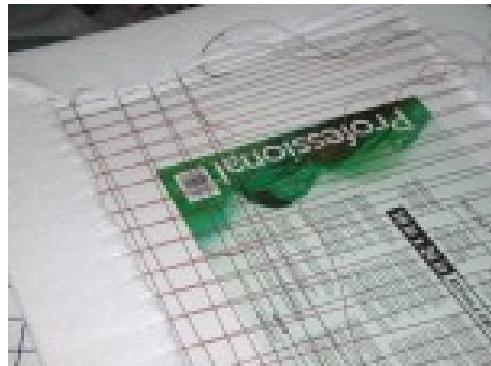


First thing up on my list, which I started Tuesday afternoon, was to finish the Rest in Peace Diptych. The story here, is I created one of my woven postcards, a Diptych, and entered Small Expressions. The piece wasn't accepted. So I decided to send it to the faculty exhibit for Convergence. No problem there. Except I entered an exhibit in Massachusetts on a whim, and of course, it got in, and the timing is too close to ensure it will be back from one exhibit, to turn around and ship to the other since I'll be leaving more than a week ahead for Convergence. (For a mini vacation with my husband, can you believe it?)

The exhibit committee graciously agreed that I could send a replacement piece to them, actually the same piece in a much larger scale. As long as it matched the photo of the original piece. Which meant I had to weave it. One of the panels had been finished last year, but I needed to do the second one. That's the piece I wove last month when I ran out of warp. I squeaked it out, splicing in 900 ends. So all I had to do was mount the two pieces, right?

I budgeted a day for this effort, maybe a day and a half. Silly me. I spent an entire afternoon at the art supply store, just trying to figure out how to mount the two panels, so they would look like the original. The original piece was 6" x 10". I mounted the woven fabric by wrapping it around stiff interfacing and used the spine of a spiral notebook for the bridge in between the piece. The replacement work is nearly four times that size, roughly 24" x 38".

I bought all kinds of stuff, and came home and plowed in head first. After careful measurements, the pair of 18" x 24" canvases I purchased were actually one inch too wide. So I consulted my tech guy, who happens to be in the country for a brief week or two before heading back to Saudi Arabia (I hear this will be a yearlong back and forth commute and I'm trying hard not to think about that). He came in and with a few swipes of a utility knife, he sliced off the offending inch, and now my canvas backboard is 18" x 23".



I wrapped the canvas board in two layers of craft fleece, and lashed it on the back side in both directions so it was really drum tight. I

covered the lashing with two layers of fleece, and stitched that all the way around. Then I decided that I'd like that side to be face up. It was slightly more rounded.



I wrapped the entire panel in grey silk, and carefully pinned that together.

Then I stitched the grey silk all the way around. I laid the woven panel on top of the grey base, and turned under the edges until

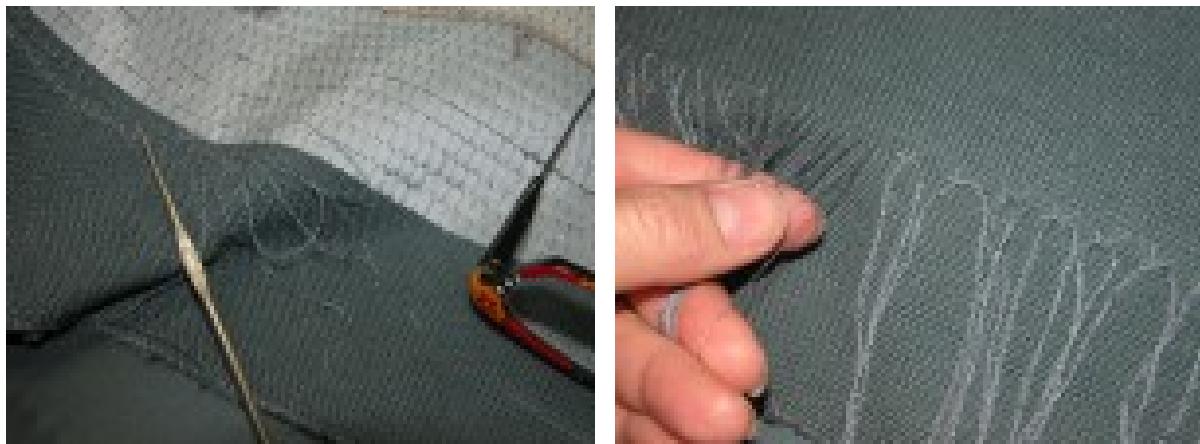


everything measured perfectly and pinned. I wisely decided not to stitch the panel permanently at this point, until I mounted the second panel. So I started the process all over again for the remaining panel. Now I'm seriously into day two of this project. And it isn't looking good for finishing any time soon.

I got to the part where I started to pin the second panel to the second grey silk covered backboard and I did a big fat groan. Bet you heard it all the way to Canada. See, when I printed the second 8 1/2" x 16" silk strip to create the image, at the very top of the strip was a little plop of yellow ink jet ink, right at

the top edge, in the sky over the twin towers. There were only two choices, to reprint the strip, but that would mean replacing the cartridges, which I didn't have, and then it would more than likely not match the first half of the image, or make the whole image a half inch shorter. I chose option B.

No matter now I stretched and shrunk, and manipulated the second panel, (which was actually the original panel, woven in full last year), there was nothing to be done but take out two rows of the design. Because you know, fabric only stretches and shrinks and can be manipulated when you don't want it to...



So I pulled out two silk strips, and then carefully pulled out the tie down threads at the top of the panel. Each thread had to be pulled through to the back and tied off. Now I'm seriously into day 3. I'm groaning because my to-do list is already off by a couple of days and I don't know where to put all the things that were on the list that haven't gotten finished. Or started for that matter. But the good news is now the panels are exactly the same size and the second panel (which is really the first, is anyone still following this whole escapade?)

perfectly fits the back board.



I stitched the panels onto the grey silk back boards, all the way around with invisible stitches. Then I had to invent some kind of spine in the middle. On the original piece, the spine represented a child's copybook or a photo album, and alternately represented the barbed wire



that wrapped the perimeter of the roof of the World Trade Center. You can see it if you look carefully in the photo of my two kids on top of the World Trade Center Tower, which we took two weeks before September 11. I remember at the time looking at the barbed wire and asking about it and being told that it was there so the public wouldn't climb past the railing and do something like try to jump. And I thought about all those people jumping off the towers two weeks later and I remembered the barbed wire...

I found the perfect spiral wire in a sketch book at the art supply store. I could only find it twelve inches long, but I figured I could splice



two end on end and come up with the 24" length I needed. And turns out there was enough spring in the wire binding that it could be squished to 23". I carefully removed 100 sheets from two sketch books to get the binding wires. Then I had to figure out how to stitch them onto the two panels. With a series of long straight needles and a curved one and some strategically place T-pins, I managed to lash the wire spine to the two panels. Now all I have to do is mount some kind of hanging device on the back, take a formal photo of the piece, label the back, and figure out how to invent an additional two days over the next couple of weeks to accomplish everything I didn't do while I was working on mounting this diptych... No sweat...

June 17th, 2010

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