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A History of the Evolution of the  
Teaching of Textiles and Weaving  
In Quebec Since 1905.

Joni S. Crosby

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

March 1987

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## ABSTRACT

A History of the Evolution of the  
Teaching of Textiles and Weaving  
In Quebec Since 1905.

Joni S. Crosby

This thesis is a study of the historical development of textile and weaving education in Quebec since 1905. It is divided into three sections:

The introduction traces the social, historical, and economic contexts of different Québec textile and weaving educational systems.

The second section describes the chronological development of all pertinent educational programs in the province.

The final section focuses on the creation and evolution of the educational programs offered by ten institutions which contributed to the evolution of the teaching of textiles and weaving in Quebec since 1905.

By following this sequence of sections the reader can gain a rudimentary concept of historical events in art which were concurrent to the time period taken into account by this thesis. The second section introduces the reader to the collective histories of specific Québec schools and gives an overall view of how these histories developed in relation to one another.

Finally, the third section carries the sequence of general-to-particular to its logical end by covering, in detail, the individual histories of the represented schools.

### Acknowledgments

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### Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of this thesis is to compile an historical survey of the evolution of the teaching of textile arts and weaving in Quebec since 1905.

### Sub-Problems:

1) To record the significant educational contributions made by secular, non-secular, and private organizations towards the development of the educational system offered to weavers and textile artists in Quebec.

2) To note the key contributions made by specific individuals in the development of Quebec's educational system in weaving and textile art.

### Delimitation:

In this thesis, two limitations should be specified. First, the time frame of the study, and second, the realm of textile artists and weavers to be covered in this thesis. As to the former, the historical content will commence with the creation in 1905 of the Institute Chanoine Beaudet; an "école ménagère" which offered textile studies, and will follow further developments up to 1986.

When dealing with the second delimitation, one must



acknowledge on-loom as well as off-loom techniques. To be more specific, the individual areas which will be considered as part of this study include: loom techniques, such as tapestry and hand-weaving, while the off-loom techniques will include the areas of spinning and finger weaving, of which the ceinture fléchée is a notable Quebec example.

The scope of the information compiled throughout the thesis has, logically, been bound by the availability of relevant documentation. Its focus has centered upon the most significant contributors to advances in this history; while there may exist some participants who have not been detailed, the decision to include or exclude was based on the definitions noted, the availability of documentation to verify their contribution, and the over-all quality of their contribution to history.

#### Significance of the Study:

It is the purpose of this thesis to cover information which previously had not been compiled, and to produce one volume offering new insights to art educators, textile artists, artisans, and historians.

An understanding of the present state of the education

of weavers and tapestry artists in Quebec is facilitated by this research. Also, for the first time, a background is documented against which present educational offerings can be compared.

This type of study has been used in reviewing many other topic areas of Art Education. David Ecker, a noted exponent of this class of research, stated,

In order to understand what art education is today, it would be useful to examine some of the developments which have occurred in its history. By becoming familiar with the major developments of art in American public education, the character of present day theories and practices can be seen more clearly because a basis for comparison will have been established. With a clearer view of the present, those responsible for art education programs will be better prepared to make intelligent decisions regarding its future. <sup>1</sup>

The fact that the weavers' arts were incorporated so early into Quebec's general history of education suggests the continuing significant role they would play throughout Quebec history and culture. Documented accounts begin as early as 1685 when Marguerite Bourgeoys began teaching girls in Montreal. Other, equally impressive, reports made by the early Intendants of Quebec note the output of local weavers and record the hardships faced by these European-trained artists.

Part of the significance of this study is that it will focus on the important contributing roles which contemporary Quebec weavers have played in the

international Fiber Arts movement. During the last three decades, Quebec weavers have been widely acclaimed for their innovative work at many international competitions and exhibitions. A newspaper headline for the review of the Deuxieme Biennale de Tapisserie de Montreal 1981 read; "Artists bring back an ancient art form." While the headline might mistakenly suggest that the textile arts had been lost in Quebec and only recently re-discovered, it does hint at the international re-awakening which has taken place. Based on the strengths and involvement of the Quebec textile artists and weavers, it would seem a reasonable undertaking to make an historical survey of their educational background, the focus of this thesis.

## Introduction

In Quebec, the development of the arts of handweaving and tapestry have been formed by internal and external pressures. Artistic movements and aesthetic sensibilities have brought changes of international significance, just as historical events have irrevocably altered the path of this evolution in ways never previously imagined possible. To enrich the understanding of the teaching of this area of expertise, it is necessary to realize the dynamic influences which have played a part in the arts themselves.

While the techniques described in this study are ancient in nature, they play an intimate part in the life of this province. Since its founding, weaving had been an essential part of Quebec family life. With industrialization, it had been discarded for more easily obtained, factory-created, materials. However, at the beginning of this century, weaving regained popularity in Quebec as a leisure time activity.

During the first half of this century, a change took place in the nature of the crafts and our attitude towards them. Because the machine now supplied the essentials of life and work, the crafts were free to become more expressive of human creativity. They began to occupy almost exclusively a part of the cultural spectrum somewhere between the functional disciplines of the artisan and the aspirations of the artist.

1905 marked the beginning, with the opening of an "école ménagère" at Saint-Pascal de Kamouraska. The

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founding concept of these schools was to give the female students a basic education in all classical studies, in addition to domestic service studies. Included in the classical studies at this school, and many of those which were to follow, were handweaving and spinning. It was the intent of the ecoles menageres to give their students an education which would make them accomplished in all skills necessary for running a household, often a self-sufficient one.

It was not only a fashionable idea, it was considered a prudent one.

At this time, following 1905, there was much popular interest in cultural heritage; the crafts which had been part of Quebec's history were re-examined. Art styles such as Art Nouveau in Europe, the Arts and Crafts movement in England, helped foster a new found interest in handicrafts on an international scale. Later, in the 1920's and 1930's, interest in weaving was sustained and encouraged by such institutions as the Bauhaus school of Germany, where weaver & Sophie Taeuber-Arp taught. Also, artists like the European architect Le Corbusier, began integrating tapestries into a new practical and aesthetic appreciation of this ancient art form.

Following the First World War, the arts regained popularity and vigor. The 1919 manifesto of the Weimar Bauhaus by Walter Gropius proclaimed a new reunification

between the artist and the craftsman, an ideal which had begun with William Morris in England.

Momentum grew for artists working with textiles. Sonia Delaunay was working in Paris in the early 1920's with textiles. She drew away from the traditional conventions, developing new techniques and aesthetics in textile manufacture. Sophie Taeuber-Arp, teaching in Zurich at this time, brought together contemporary art theories and aesthetic thought in her textiles. From this point onwards, fabric was no longer excluded as a suitable medium for contemporary art.

By the late 1920's tapestry was revived in France. Changes were encouraged so that it was more in keeping with modern painting styles, which were a direct influence. An effort was made to disguise the inherent characteristics of the tapestry. Likewise, scale began to change. Infinitely detailed renderings gave way to a more bold handling and a monumental size.

The advent of the Second World War did not crush this developing aesthetic. Although the Bauhaus was forced to close down on August 10th, 1933, its influence became even stronger internationally when the teachers from this center left Germany to teach and work in many other European and American schools. Once the war was over, artists profited from these international influences, intellectually as well as financially.

The United States in particular pioneered this new

spirit in art. "The economy of the country was booming and the demand for consumer goods, from pots and pans to works of art, was insatiable. A buoyant creativity particularly in the New York, area carried its message to the nation and indeed to the world."

Quebec began to feel these international influences when, in 1944, tapestries were executed from designs by Alfred Pellán, at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Quebec.

Les peintres ont été le ferment nécessaire au renouveau de la tapisserie au Québec. Ils savaient que la tapisserie pouvait être l'un des meilleurs compléments de l'architecture moderne, que les murs des maisons et des édifices avaient besoin de matières colorées et chaleureuses. D'autre part, des artisans étaient prêts à se mettre à la disposition des peintres pour traduire leurs cartons. Quant au public, il a gardé intact le goût des ouvrages exécutés à la main et il fait bon accueil à tout ce qui lui est présenté sous forme de tapisserie, panneau mural, bannière, tapis...

Artists, who usually were associated with other mediums, began to take notice of these craft areas. Other artists, who had their work translated into tapestry, included Fernad Leduc, Guido Molinari, and Jean Goguen. Still, those who were directly involved with these crafts remained a select few.

The 1940's and 1950's were a turning point. The designs were still being done in time-honoured atelier fashion, where artisans simply followed a master's design, but the finished works showed tapestries in a more modern light and prompted a reconsideration of the artistic possibilities of the medium.

From the 20's throughout the 50's and even at the time of the first Lausanne Biennale (1962), it was evident that the modern painter's contribution to tapestry was more keenly appreciated than the art of weaving. The weaver as an artisan became subservient to the painter as mid-20th century pictorial painted images and attitudes were expressed in woven form.

From that time forward, tapestry became less of a translation of a design with painterly overtones, and more of an artistic creation appreciated in its own right for its inherent characteristics.

Interpretations of designs became accepted and later were encouraged, in both the traditional tapestry workshops and independant studios. Tapestry moved from the mechanical reproduction of a design to being the aesthetic enhancement of designs through their translation into tapestry form.

Information shared between artists from different backgrounds and different countries served to enrich these areas and elevate their popular appeal.

While the impetus for major changes began prior to 1950, it was during the 1950's and 60's that the more rapid and spectacular evolution occurred.

The previous generation's ways of life and thought were examined and found badly wanting....Old values lost in the pressure of a largely urban population were re-discovered. Working with the hands in a craft had a new and strong appeal since it offered not only a living, but also other less tangible rewards. The crafts attracted many men and women for these reasons although few, either because of talent or motivation, persevered in them to achieve professional levels of competence.



While public interest in our cultural heritage and the new progressive crafts were rising during the decades of the 50's and 60's, there still were a limited number of artists who actually practised these arts in Quebec. In truth, although their numbers were low at the time, they were slowly increasing. However, relative to the artists who worked in the traditional fine arts, there were not many who would form the nucleus of the Quebec movement.

The 1960's were the era during which the terms "textile art" and "fiberart" came to be known. - A great rush of creative energy enveloped the textile field.

Basic expression had to do with freedom, revolution, and primitive vigor. Often aggressive, the message was orgiastic and territorial. The 60's may one day be designated the period of discovery likened to the fauves and to Abstract Expressionism in painting; it also relates to Brutalism, which appeared in 60's architecture. As defined by the critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, Brutalism denotes heavy, aggressively articulated, rough surfaced, hovering mames - words that can indeed be ascribed to Art Fabric of the 60's.

While these international influences were felt within Quebec's artistic and educational community, there were also more local influences at work.

Changes which effected the education, philosophy and aesthetics behind Quebec's tapestry and weaving community can be seen as corresponding to changes which occurred in Quebec society and economy as illustrated in many governmental studies. The Rapport de la Commission

Royale d'enquete sur l'enseignement in 1961 showed that at the time of confederation approximately 70% of the work force was involved with agriculture and related small industries. (which at that time included, by definition, crafts people and artisans). By the mid-1960's, that figure had dropped to only 15%, indicative of a gradual, but extremely important shift in society. "

Another section of this study brings to light another related change: urbanization. Again the figures tell the tale; in the year 1871, 77% of the Quebec population lived in rural areas, and 23% in urbanized centers. In 1961, the figures nearly reverse themselves, with 75% of the population in urban areas and 25% in rural. <sup>10</sup> Such major changes, even over an extended time, had a great effect on lifestyles of the time, from the general make-up of traditional Quebec society, right through to employment, education, and the interests of the populace. Where education at one time had been a very basic preparation, it had developed to the point where it now had a much broader intellectual base. <sup>11</sup> The old rule of self-sufficiency, which used to exist in Quebec, had long since given way to the on-going encroachment of industrialization, mechanization, and technology. "Les femmes... ne filent ni ne tissent; elles font de la couture, mais en utilisant des matériaux achetés au dehors..." <sup>12</sup>

During the 1960's, the government administration of these organizations which were created to support, aid, and help develop Quebec artisans had also become problematic. Complaints were made by artisans that too many policy decisions had been made by too many different government ministries, and no central plan had been developed or followed. The continuing input of government, however well-intentioned, had proved to be more confusing than beneficial.

As well, a 1960 study by Louise Bernier pointed out the importance of a re-designed educational system for artisans.

Outre la publicité, un autre moyen semble très favorable à l'expansion de l'artisanat: c'est son enseignement dans les écoles, principalement dans les écoles spécialisées. Dans une proportion de 72.8% les artisans sont de cet avis. Que d'années il leur a fallu consacrer à la maîtrise des techniques requises par leur art! N'aurait-il pas été possible d'apprendre les secrets de leur métier avec une, deux, ou trois années d'études? Cette connaissance prévient les pertes de temps inutiles, et facilite la création et l'exécution des œuvres. L'organisation d'écoles spécialisées et les conditions faciles d'y accéder aideraient grandement les jeunes artisans. 13

With their new artistic and social status, these contemporary artisans were considering the value of their artistic education in a serious manner.

Apprenticeships had almost ceased to be the educational outlet available to the Quebec artisan, and a more formal, institutionalized system had taken its place. As the previous statement attests, there were short-comings

to be worked out of the emerging educational organization; there were changes still to come.

Artistically, the dynamics of the 60's prepared the ground work for the refinement of expression which came in the late 1970's, and has continued into the 1980's. Textile art has gone through its infancy and has currently evolved into a more mature and sophisticated art form. Likewise, access to information has drawn the textile arts, artists and educators in this field into the new high-tech era.

Textile creation thus has at its disposal up-to-date tools which, apart from their fashionable status in other fields, are here in perfect accord with the very nature of fabrics. This event is absolutely decisive in the rediscovery of textile memory which has seemed to us to characterize textile art in the west. 14

A Chronological History of the Evolution of the Teaching  
of Textiles and Weaving in Quebec Since 1905

Although traditional crafts had been a part of Quebec's history since its earliest colonisation, its re-emergence into the mainstream of cultural history and artistic endeavours began at the start of this century. In keeping with the focus of this paper, the initial keynote event which signaled the start of this modern development was the opening of a school, the Institute Chanoine Beaudet.

This history will follow further developments in Quebec in a chronological fashion, ending with the 1985-86 academic year.

In 1905, a school was opened in Saint-Pascal de Kamouraska as an "Ecole Normale Classico-Ménagère". The orientation of the school was to give female students a secondary school education in basic studies, while also preparing them in the skills which they would need to become either homemakers or teaching professionals. This particular school, which would later be known as "Institute Chanoine Beaudet" after one of the founders, was the first in a long line of schools to be created under the guidance of the ministry of agriculture for the province of Quebec.

Among the courses taught at the school, as in most of the subsequent schools of this type, were the

traditional techniques of handweaving, handspinning, and the dyeing of fibers. Examples of the work done at these schools was exhibited in yearly competitions, and attracted much attention from the public and news media. While they were admittedly very traditional in scope, their quality of workmanship was considered high and served to bring samples of these techniques back into the cultural milieu. At this time, the focus of the education offered by these schools was decidedly practical in nature. Artistry and innovation was not encouraged in the way that the faithful reproduction of traditional items was prized.

The next development came in 1906 with the creation of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal. The origin of the Guild dates from 1902 when a group of Montreal women, affiliated with the Women's Art Association, realized the importance of revitalizing the crafts of Quebec, and "began a campaign to conserve and revive crafts."<sup>16</sup> To achieve this goal, they opened a shop in Montreal to exhibit, collect, and sell craft works. They distributed information to other interested centers across Canada, and initiated a considerable number of exhibitions. They were reputed to have organized up to 77 expositions in the province between 1905 and 1910.<sup>17</sup>

Working from funds which they had received from the

Lady Strathcona Foundation, they named their association The Canadian Handicrafts Guild, otherwise known as la "Guild Artisanale Canadienne. In 1906 they obtained a Dominion charter and became a permanent factor in the rebuilding of public awareness and appreciation of Quebecoise crafts. When J. L. Perron, who at the time was the Quebec minister of agriculture, saw their 1929 exhibition, he approved heartily and increased governmental aid for artisans and their associations.

The guild's mandate was:

développer et revivre l'artisanat, amener le public à en apprécier la valeur, organiser un centre de documentation, réunir une collection permanente, monter des exhibitions, sauvegarder l'art indien, et l'art esquimau. 10

At this point, the government began to notice the changes which were taking place in the province, and to act upon them. There was increasing demand for vocational and technical education from the general populace in Quebec. The skills required for the jobs available at that time were less frequently being taught by apprenticeship and more often by institutions. To supply this demand for skilled labour two technical schools were established, by law, in 1907. One was situated in Quebec City, and the other in Montreal. Three years later, the federal government appointed a Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education. Despite increased demand for schools of this nature, it took until 1911 for the two to actually open

their doors. At the time of the openings, these two schools had twenty full-time professors; ten were engineers, nine were artisans, and the last taught general culture related courses. 19

A quote from a radio program which occurred a few years later, stated that:

within recent years emphasis is being placed on the necessity of special training for artisans. Quebec led Ontario in providing modern facilities for technical instruction... in 1911, Montreal had a technical school... which for its size, the building and equipment is among the finest in either America or Europe. 20

This was considerable praise for the institution which would later have a branch school known as the Ecole de Meuble. 6

When the report was finally given by the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, it was based on a careful scrutiny of the state of vocational education in Canada, and upon studies of what was happening in this field in the United States, Great Britain, and parts of Europe. Recommendations included encouraging the establishment of Fine Arts colleges in urban areas over a ten year period, and establishing an annual fund of three million dollars for them. Over a ten year period, the Dominion Development fund defrayed many of the costs of maintaining and encouraging vocational education. 21

In 1915, additional interest in teaching weaving



and spinning was created when the Cercles des Fermieres were given a charter. These regional groups were sanctioned in 1909 by the Quebec minister of agriculture, Joseph-Edouard Caron. The "clubs" were formed on exactly the same basis as the world's first Homemakers Clubs in Ontario. Their main intent was to offer domestic education and practical courses in agriculturally-related subjects to the women of rural communities and to offset the possible educational disadvantages which their isolation created. Under the guidance of the ministry, the first year saw five groups started. By 1975 there were over 70,000 members belonging to 795 local circles.

These groups could request instructors from the ministry of agriculture as frequently as they could set their meetings. Among the studies offered, weaving, knitting, and spinning were frequently chosen by the groups. At the time of their inception, the annual fee was only 25 cents for the monthly conferences, instructors from the ministry, courses, and the library that was available at each group's location. 22

The early 1920's signaled a new beginning in the advancement of crafts education in Quebec. Expanding leisure time and an increase in consumerism jointly created the economic climate for, and social interest in, the fine arts. In 1921 the provincial secretary of the province, Athanase David, visited France and

observed their school system. While he did not return with glowing praise for their state-run schools and organized secular education, he introduced a bill in the legislative assembly one year later which created the government's two Ecoles des Beaux-Arts. The Quebec City school opened almost immediately and the Montreal school one year after. From the start they boasted a combined total of 1,500 students. The principals, M. Bailleul in Quebec City and M. Fougerat in Montreal were brought from France to take charge of these schools.

These gentlemen used their backgrounds in the fine art schools of France to develop the Quebec schools. Their knowledge of the contemporary art scene was also influential. Quebec at last had immediate links to European advances, in these two schools.

The first major expansion of the schools occurred in 1927. At this time the two schools were linked together with four other technical and commercial schools and placed under the direction of a group which included the provincial secretary, the principal of the Montreal Fine Arts School, and three mayors.

Two years later, the minister of agriculture instigated another form of expansion. At the bequest of the "Cercles des Fermieres", the Ecole des Arts Domestiques was founded. Its first director was Oscar A. Beriau, a man who passionately worked at documenting and reviving Quebec crafts. This school was not only

formed to offer better courses, it also acted as the co-ordinating office for the regional, and ever-expanding, écoles ménagères.

M. Beriau almost single-handedly restored the Quebecois craft of "ceinture fléchée" by locating one of the last living artisans of this historic craft, Mme. Napoleon Lord, from Sainte-Marie-Salomé. She taught ten of the instructors at the Ecole des Arts Domestiques, who in turn made the knowledge available to students - from écoles ménagères across the province and to the Cercles des Fermières. After her initial term in 1930, Mme. Lord continued to teach her craft, and helped re-introduce a craft which had been in danger of being lost to Quebec culture.

1935 was the year that the provincial secretary, Athanase David, once again guided legislation which created the Ecole du Meuble de Montreal. In 1930 the Ecole was a department in the Ecole Technique de Montreal, but with this new legislation it was separated and put under the directorship of Jean-Marie Gauvreau.

Although the main interest of the Ecole du Meuble was carpentry, Gauvreau included studies in weaving, tapestry, and ceramics. His decision was a harbinger of future aesthetics, but was based on a composite of practicality and artistry. M. Gauvreau's own background included education in both Quebec and Europe and he sought to synthesize the best qualities found in both

these influences. His artistic knowledge and critical abilities were exceptional. Many of his ideals echo the concepts forwarded by the Art and Craft movement and the Weimar Bauhaus manifesto. The true ambition of the school was not only to create competent technicians, but also to give them a solid artistic education. M. Gauvreau invited many artisans to the school to give conferences, and had the French weaver M. Plasse-Le Caisne give a series of study sessions to students and artisans alike.

During the Second World War, energies and interests were diverted from their usual focus. However, in the post war years, the government and populace of Quebec returned to its previous endeavours, but with renewed fervour and seriousness. After the war, Quebec saw itself as an active member in the modern world, and raced to enact changes to keep up with this newly-discovered sense of identity and cultural growth.

In 1945 the office de l'Artisanat et de la Petite Industrie was created by the Quebec Ministry of Industry and Commerce. It had been proposed by the Cercles des Fermieres in order to co-ordinate the efforts of Quebec's artisans. With Jean-Marie Gauvreau as its first director, its mandate was to gain information concerning the state of artisanry in Quebec, to educate the public, to help artists and artisans progress in their work, and assist them in developing their

livelihood based on their chosen field of expertise.

A change was made in government during 1946, when responsibility for professional and specialized education was removed from the department of the Provincial Secretary. All education from the section of specialized education was put under the guidance of the newly-formed Ministry of Youth and Social Welfare. Professional education was divided among the Ministry of Youth, the Department of Public Instruction, the Ministry of Agriculture, and a few other related ministries.

It was in the mid-1940's that Quebec's handicraft culture, including weaving and tapestry, began to make astounding advances. To the late 1970's, they were to grow from a traditional craft into the contemporary art seen today. During this decade, industrialization which had been fine-tuned for the war effort turned back to its prior endeavours. Artistic design was re-introduced at the industrial level, again from the influence of the Bauhaus school. Aesthetically-designed items were proposed for mass production. Availability of these articles encouraged aesthetic choices, and the arts became a bit more accessible.

In 1946 the Ecole du Meuble had 551 registered students, while the two Ecoles des Beaux-Arts had a combined total of 915 attending their classes. 20 The public was also becoming much more aware of the value of

handicrafts and "were no longer buying because of snobbery, but because they were beginning to learn to appreciate the beauty of handmade articles." 24

In 1948 a group of six women decided to work together in a Montreal studio, becoming the Montreal Potters Club under the leadership of Eileen Reid. Over the years the club's membership gradually increased and they diversified their interests to include the textile arts. Thirty years later this collective association became Montreal's Visual Arts Center.

Also in 1948, the secretary of the province established a system of prizes and scholarships for these handicrafts, with a total of \$2,000 being allotted for the awards. The system functioned on the basis of rotation with the decorative arts given equal status with painting and sculpture. By 1950, the money for this program had doubled to \$4,000.

The Ecole des Beaux Arts opened a new tapestry studio in 1949 and the first head of this new section was Jean Bastien. He came to the post immediately upon returning to Quebec from France where he'd been studying the Gobelin technique of tapestry. Once back, he began to teach this technique, bringing with him first-hand experiences of the modernizations beginning in Europe in this field.

A fire in 1941 at the Ecole du Meuble was to seriously affect its operation and eventually signaled

the end of the school. From that time on, classes were gradually transferred to the Institute des Arts Appliques. By 1958, the entire program had been taken over by the Institute. "They (the Institute) supplied a general program using the first two years from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, with a specializing year in the applied arts." 25

Within the next few years, the program had developed into four years of study; the first two years of general study and the last two of intensive study in a chosen field.

The Institute des Arts Appliques lasted for ten years until 1968. At that time the textile courses, which it had inherited from the Ecole du Meuble, were given to the newly created CEGEP du Vieux-Montreal. As part of the innovative CEGEP system in Quebec, it fell under the jurisdiction of the Service de l'Aide a la Jeunesse, and the Honorable Paul Sauvé.

The 1960's were the most exhilarating years in the development of the textile arts. Traditional materials and techniques gave way to aggressively-innovative styles. The textile arts gathered increasing popular interest along with headlines. This did not go unnoticed by the community of educational institutions.

A series of CEGEP openings between 1968 and 1973 signaled a new educational structure for artists in Quebec. In 1969, the Université de Quebec à Trois

Rivieres became the first to offer courses in tapestry. In the same year the Université de Quebec à Montreal began its first courses named Metiers d'Art and Couleur Textile.

The Ecole des Beaux Arts was integrated into Laval University's programs as their Visual Arts School in 1970. The following year saw the old Potters Club re-emerge as the Visual Arts Center. Along with a new name, the Center had a new interest and orientation towards textiles. In 1973, the Université de Quebec à Chicoutimi began offering textile courses.

After a short break in the flurry of activity, the first Biennale de la Tapisserie Quebecoise took place in 1979 in Montreal's Museum of Contemporary Art. A pioneer in Quebec weaving, Lucien Desmarais, was the president of this first show.

While the show was not really an historic landmark in the teaching of textile arts or weaving in Quebec, it is still noteworthy because it served as a landmark showcase for the display of the talents of contemporary artists who had gone through Quebec's art school system.

The most recent achievement in this historical line was the 1985 creation of the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Major in Fibers, now offered at Concordia University in Montreal. This three year program forms the nucleus of Fiber Study at the school which originally began as a single course option in 1974.



With few exceptions, notably the Concordia programme and a newly-developed perfectionnement programme at the Centre des Arts Visuels, there seems to have been a lull in the educational developments in the field of the textile arts during the 1980's. Many of the programmes which had already been in existence prior to this time are either in recession, or a period of re-structurization. Others are simply no longer offered. It remains to be seen whether or not the most recent additions to this history will flourish and foster the enthusiasm seen in previous decades.

Histories of the Evolutions of Ten Individual Schools  
Contributing to the Teaching of Textiles and Weaving in  
Quebec Since 1905

In this section, individual histories of schools previously introduced will be studied. These histories will be presented in succession, from each school's year of establishment to their most recent academic year. The order of presentation is based on the year of each school's establishment: the oldest first, the youngest last.

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild, also known as La Guilde Arstisanale Canadienne, was given its official charter in 1906. The group of Montreal women who created the guild were originally members of the Montreal Women's Art Association, but in 1902 found that their interests lay beyond the activities of that Association.

The guild's aim was to exhibit, sell, and collect high quality craft work. They also began to distribute information to centers and individuals across Canada so that others could grow with them. Soon they were arranging demonstrations in the crafts which they exhibited. As the guild expanded they were able to

offer their first classes in 1921.

These early classes were offered five days a week, after school, in various communities around Montreal to school children. A head teacher was hired to lead the classes, and she reported to the technical committee of the guild. Later, an educational committee was formed to handle the supervision of the classes.

As the guild expanded, so did the classes. By 1930, there were four teachers, a ladies' morning class, and even more children's classes. With this encouraging level of interest, the guild decided to open a "Weaving School".

The school was located at 415 Victoria Avenue in Westmount, Quebec, and officially opened in October 1932. Mrs. Bang was the principal and head teacher and Miss Buelow was her assistant. While Mrs. Bang was already an accomplished weaver at the time of her appointment, the guild funded a three-month trip to study in Norway prior to the school's opening.

At Norway's School of Weaving, she took a teacher's course, and visited museums and local guilds. Upon her return, seven new Norwegian looms were purchased to equip the school for its first session. For a fee of \$45.00, students followed a three-month course in which lessons were given four days a week, from 9:30 am. to 1:00 pm..

Five students made up the initial registration and

after completing the course, four opted to continue at a more advanced level. The guild also arranged for Mrs. Bang to give a course at the MacKay Institute for the Deaf and Dumb. 27 In the guild's annual report for 1933, it was noted that:

The weaving class established by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild at the MacKay Institution has been a decided success. It was attended by six pupils for eight months of the year and seven pupils for four...it is a pleasure to announce that all the pupils seem to take great interest in their work and most of them have done extraordinarily well. The range of work taught covers practically all lines: scarves and bags, baby blankets, luncheon sets, tweeds, curtains, linings, embroidery weaving, tapestry and picture weaving. 28

During that same year, the Weaving School was attended by 24 students and was moved from its Victoria Avenue location to the guild's headquarters on Peel Street. The school took up the entire upper floor and had room for at least 12 students to work at any time.

Despite the positive outlook the school had for the future, Mrs. Bang wrote in 1934 that:

It is a fact that the school now, for the larger part, is frequented by socially well-to-do people, who take up weaving as a pastime and out of interest for the craft. However commendable this might be in itself, it is hardly in line with the spirit with which the school was started: to encourage the handicraft and thereby creating new sources of income. Hardly one out of five pupils will ever do any work for sale. The fees, although lower than is good for the economy of the school, keep the poorer class of people from attending the courses. 29

After 1934, there is no further mention of either the courses taught at the MacKay Institute, nor the

Weaving School in any of the annual reports of the guild still available. Questions directed recently to the guild failed to turn up any additional information on the Weaving School. The only postscript which can be added at this time is, that in 1967 the Canadian Handicraft Guild became the Canadian Guild of Crafts • Quebec.

### Cercles des Fermieres du Quebec

Sanctioned in 1909 by Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Joseph-Edouard Caron, the Cercles des Fermieres were built out of the Homemaker's Club of Ontario. These Ontario anglophone farmer's groups were originally begun in 1897 and were the first of their kind in the world. The regional Quebec groups quickly gained their own sense of identity and purpose, and by 1915, were given their own charter.

The purpose of these groups was to act as a balance against the isolation of rural life for farming women; to offer education geared specifically to their needs, to upgrade the possible standards of all facets of rural life, and to give the farming women an intensified sense of self-esteem and pride, along with new abilities. The Ministry of Agriculture of Quebec was their liason, but the groups were self-administered with an elected head council. Their first director was Alphonse Desilets.

Alphonse Desilets and George Bouchard were the founders of the first official Cercle des Fermieres, in Chicoutimi. While Desilets acted as Director until his replacement in 1929 by Anne-Marie Vaillancourt, it was Bouchard who first championed the cause of regional education in the traditional crafts. The Cercles could request courses and qualified instructors from the Ministry of Agriculture as often as they could arrange a

suitable meeting time, at no cost to the individual Cercle. Small libraries were also set up for their use. The annual fee, in 1915, was 25 cents. <sup>30</sup>

The first year saw the start of only five groups, with a total membership of 240 people. By 1919, the number of groups had jumped to 34, with 2,400 members. Those numbers grew again in 1922 to 43 Cercles and 6,550 members. Of that enrollment, 75% were farming families. Within those families, 2,650 had sheep, 1,250 grew flax and 3,275 were spinners and/or weavers. <sup>31</sup>

The courses which the Cercles could request included spinning, weaving, ceinture fléchée and knitting. The weaving courses were seven full days in duration. The fact that these farming women would agree to leave their home for this amount of time attests to the serious interest they had in their studies. <sup>32</sup>

To further encourage the practical application of these newly-discovered skills, the Cercles took part in exhibitions and contests. The first time they did was in 1920, at the Provincial Exhibition.

Interest in the Cercles grew, and in their 1933-34 report, they totalled 8,877 members. Within that membership, 4,939 were weavers and 5,379 were handspinners. <sup>33</sup> Their style of practical co-operative education flourished. Where specialists and specialized schools were not available, the members acted as their own researchers, not only within their own Cercle, but

from branch to branch. By 1943, the Ministry reported that they had organized 182 courses in weaving, spinning and crocheting, which had lasted 15 days each. Frequently, individuals who did not already have looms would pool their resources to obtain equipment for the benefit of the entire Cercle. There are many other instances of individual members donating their own equipment to the Cercle, and then teaching all members the skills needed for its use.

The classes held by the Cercles were practical in nature, and ever popular. After their first fifty years, there were 741 individual groups, with a combined membership of 41,175. This number was still to grow. Ten years later, the membership had nearly doubled that number. If nothing else, this gives proof of the strength of this association and the continuing importance of its methods and interests.



### L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts a Quebec

Operated under the auspices of Quebec's Ministry of Youth, the Fine Arts School of Quebec had a relatively long history. Located in Quebec City, it was opened in 1921. A year later, its sister school in Montreal was opened. However, of these two, it was the Quebec school which became known for its tapestry studio.

The school offered a four-year program of studies which gave both a broad cultural background in the Fine Arts and the necessary technical knowledge for practice in a special field. To apply for admission, students had to be at least age 17 and have received a grade eleven certificate. If they passed an entry examination, they would be admitted to the program. Instruction was free, but students had to pay for their own materials, a registration fee and a student association charge. Bursaries were available to help some students defray these costs.

The courses in tapestry were initiated by Jean Bastien in 1949. He was given the responsibility for this section immediately upon his return to Quebec from France, where he had been studying Gobelin tapestry techniques. He returned with new insights into the artistic possibilities of contemporary tapestries, and the plans for a Gobelin-style tapestry loom. The school's first loom was built under his guidance.

Bastien was succeeded in 1954 by Jeanne-d'Arc Corriveau, one of his former students. She led the tapestry studio until 1970. As Bastien's student, Corriveau also worked with the Gobelin technique of vertical warp looms. Many of Quebec's most noteworthy contemporary tapestry artists studied with her.

The tapestry studio was most active between 1965 and 1970. Students could take the initial course as an option in their second year of visual arts studies, and could choose to continue in this for the last two years of the diploma program. In the first year of the option, the students studied the techniques used in tapestry, and during the second year progressed to projects of their own creation. Students from all years worked together in the same studio. The time officially allotted for these studies was twice weekly at three hours per class, but most students required more time.

By 1970 the school's name was changed to Ecole des Arts Visuelles, and it was placed under the jurisdiction of Laval University. Michele Bernatchez succeeded Jean d'Arc Corriveau as the tapestry instructor at this time. After its relocation, the tapestry studio lasted for only five years. Students were not encouraged to follow this study; it was not considered an appropriate part of the traditional fine arts orientation of the new school. Tapestry was gradually phased out, and the studio was officially closed in 1975.

### L'Ecole du Meuble

Originally created in 1930 as a department within the Ecole Technique de Montreal, the Ecole du Meuble became a separate school in 1935. Jean-Marie Gauvreau was its director, and it was under the guidance of the Quebec Ministry of Youth. The goal of the school was to teach skills in the applied arts. This included: cabinet making, wood carving, interior decoration, upholstery, wood finishing, ceramics and weaving.

Gauvreau's influence on the school was key to its special attitude. It encouraged awareness of aesthetic interrelationships between the disciplines which it offered, and stressed the values of both craftsmanship and creativity. This became a model for many schools to follow.

The language of instruction at the school was French, and the staff consisted of 45 full-time, and 3 part-time, instructors. Approximately 575 students were registered each year. These students were offered courses during the day, or special courses in the day and evening. Tuition was charged, along with a student fee. However, over twenty scholarships and bursaries were awarded each year to qualifying students. An annual exhibit of student work was held, and the public was invited to attend. "

The Ecole du Meuble had a three-year course in

weaving. Entrance requirement for the weaving program was a secondary school diploma, or a family institute certificate.

This course includes not only the techniques of weaving but also the appropriate artistic training." 36 It included, instruction in design, composition and decoration, as well as research and practical work in a well-equipped studio. 37

Gauvreau proved to be an excellent director, and went on to hold other important posts in aid of Quebec crafts. He was educated at l'Ecole Technique de Montreal, l'Universite de Montreal, and l'Ecole Boulle de Paris, and succeeded in integrating the best qualities of the traditional French schools with the more modern Quebec. This involved an understanding of the interrelationships between different fields of artisanry and their common interests, a respect for tradition, and an appreciation of contemporary design and innovation. Many artists and artisans consider Gauvreau to have been the leading figure in Quebec artisanry for this period.

His written works are considerable in number, and he also found time to teach: at the Ecole du Meuble, at l'Universite de Montreal as an assistant professor, at l'Universite de Laval where he taught the history of the decorative arts, and at a few domestic science schools. As a member of the Royal Society of Canada from 1942, he received their 1955 Medaille Pierre Chauvreau in recognition for his work.

The major setback suffered by the Ecole du Meuble, came in 1941, when a fire destroyed sections of the school's building. Despite this, Gauyreau kept working on the weaving program, and in 1947 arranged for the French master weaver and tapestry artist Plasse LeCaisne to give some instruction at the school. Under LeCaisne's leadership the students were urged to seek creativity in each piece of work. ■■

The weaving program never recovered from the fire in 1941, and was later transferred to the Institute des Arts Appliques. By 1958, the Institute had taken over all the courses, apprenticeships and diplomas previously offered by the Ecole du Meuble. In that same year, the Ecole du Meuble was officially closed.

### Cegep Vieux-Montreal

Opened in 1968, the Cegep Vieux-Montreal took over the textile courses which had been offered by the Institute des Arts Appliques until its closure that same year. The courses given at the Cegep have not changed radically from that time to today. A survey-style introductory course, and an advanced exploration course form the program.

Of the three teachers who originally taught weaving and tapestry at the Cegep, Louise Quenneville, Jeanne Dansereau and Marie-Paule Morin, only the latter remains (as of 1987). Marie-Paule Morin taught weaving for two years at the Ecole du Meuble before teaching for two years at the Institute des Arts Appliques. This was prior to continuing her teaching at the Cegep Vieux-Montreal. At other times, she offered multiple-harness weaving courses at her boutique and studio in Ste. Jovite, Quebec.

With her expertise, the Cegep Vieux-Montreal became the first school in Quebec to cover some of the most intricate multiple-harness weaving techniques with students. From its inception, to 1978, the introductory class flourished as a core course in the visual arts division. During this period, it was common to have twenty or thirty students in one class. The heavy registration for the course made it difficult for

students to cover anything more than the most basic studies. The overcrowding problem continued in the optional advanced course, where students were expected to follow their own specific area of interest in personal research, guided by the instructor.

Rather than setting a formal course format, Mme. Morin has allowed each individual session of the course to be modified according to the interests of the students. The historical research is predominantly based on contemporary work. Some ancient examples are studied as a background to the weaving and tapestry work done by the students.

In 1974, the school introduced a visiting artist-in-residence program. However, since that time the enrollment has decreased significantly, and the program has not expanded further. Instead, all energies have been put into maintaining the existing program.

## Centre des Arts Visuels

Textiles were first incorporated as part of the program at the Centre des Arts Visuels in 1969. At that time, macrame and creative embroidery were offered to adults. By 1972, a tapestry course was offered with Anna Peterson and Elsleda Russell. The Center began to expand and develop in scope in 1971, when they received their self-improvement permit from the Minister of Education. Later in 1973, public and private funds enabled them to purchase a four-story building for the school. This space allowed for the construction of a gallery, boutique, library, six studios and office areas.

By 1974, a three year program was made available, with an option for students to specialize in textiles, ceramics or drawing/painting. The three-year attestation program consisted of ten specific courses, including design, art history and marketing. If a student wished to do so, a fourth year could be added after the attestation program was completed. This fourth year would give the students time to further explore their specialty under the guidance of the teachers, and to complete a major project.

Of the three original courses offered in textiles, tapestry, macrame and creative embroidery, the last two were the most popular at that time. With the expansion



of the textile program, batik, quilting, silkscreen and other printing techniques on fabric, dye chemistry and fibre structures were added. The course referred to as fibre structures covered information on weaving with a four-harness floor loom, tapestry on both floor and upright looms, some spinning and felting. It proved to be the most popular course offered at the Center.

The established programme continued from its initiation in the mid 1970's virtually unchanged, until its major re-structuring in 1985. Losses in registration and a cutback in the availability of government grants prompted this eventual change. However, not all support was withdrawn. Private and public financing helped the Center maintain the programmes in progress.

Regine Mainberger, the director of the textile department had been with the Center for eight years prior to this time and orchestrated the growth of the original textile programme, and its subsequent rebuilding. Due to her commitment, the programme was given a totally new direction.

By 1985, the school was able to purchase six Apple IIe computers, after support for the project was obtained from the Ministry of Education. It was the intent of the school to break new ground in the field of textile education, using the computer as a main tool. At this time, the registration for the fiber courses

averaged 10-12 students per course, for a total of approximately 200 students each calendar year.

With high hopes, the Center announced in its 1985-86 official press release that, "in 1985 a new dimension is added to the Center's mandate - to become the Center of perfectionnement, recherche, diffusion et innovation in textile construction".

The inclusion of computers in the program has enabled the Center to open up a new area for study, which still continues the design-based educational philosophy which has always been the orientation of the Center's programmes.

As the pioneer in Quebec in this endeavor, the Center will be using the Apple IIe computers in conjunction with AVL computer-compatible looms. The level of instruction has been geared toward the professional or serious amateur. This is a distinct change from other earlier programmes in the province, where the orientation was based more towards amateur self-improvement, or played part in a fine arts milieu of studies.

The Center's own assessment of the present state of its progressive programme of textile studies is that,

"...Given the overall situation, it appears that in making textiles its first and foremost vocation, the Center des Arts Visuels is taking the right course, not only in ensuring its own survival but also in contributing to the advancement of the metiers d'art in Quebec."

Université de Quebec à Trois-Rivieres

In the beginning of the 1960's, tapestry artists developed a new attitude to their work. They saw an option for creative self-expression in their medium. Instead of being a painting done in wool, tapestry was explored for its own inherent qualities. The limits of its linear structure were explored, colour could be either bold or subtle, the tactile nature of the fibre was investigated. As well, traditional and non-traditional materials were combined with traditional and non-traditional techniques.

Internationally, the textile art, or fiberart movement was developing and "breaking away" from traditional techniques. New public and artistic interest grew with this movement. In response to this, the Université de Quebec à Trois-Rivieres initiated its first courses in tapestry in 1969.

The first courses offered were based on the techniques of the Gobelin-style, vertical tapestry loom. Relatively traditional in content, the main intent of the courses were to foster a technical competence with the time-honoured materials of tapestry weaving. However, the advances made within that past decade in the field of tapestry weaving were starting to show the way for a more contemporary curriculum. Monique Mercier and Luce Boutin were teachers at this early stage; both

went on to help develop the Montreal Biennale de Tapisserie. The predominant guiding spirit in these first years was Pierre Daquin. He came to the university from France where he specialized in Gobelin tapestry. He fostered an innovative, pioneering spirit in his students.

The first year of the tapestry program, six students were registered for courses. After that introductory year, the registration enlarged to approximately fifteen in 1970, and continued at that level until 1976. By 1977 the registration for the tapestry courses jumped to thirty students. This higher registration was maintained until 1981, when the number of students enrolled dropped back to its previous yearly registration level of fifteen students.

In 1977 the teaching responsibilities were handed over to Marie Frechette. A native Quebec artist, who had studied in both Quebec and Europe, she updated the curriculum for the tapestry program, taking into consideration all the contemporary developments in the international art scene.

The tapestry program forms part of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree requirements at the university. Originally, students could register for seven courses in the tapestry section, as part of their studio options. Tapestry I and II, Batik, and a series of four advanced

tutorial courses made up the set of seven courses available. This structure lasted until 1973, when the courses were cut back to two; Tapestry I and II.

These two courses continued to be offered to the students in the program, but in 1981 the content was altered, so that papermaking and felting were included. The bridge was made from tapestry courses, to art textiles. By 1983, students had ceased to work on vertical tapestry looms, although three remained in the studio.

Artistic concepts became increasingly important, and the use of varied materials and techniques took precedence in the courses. The aesthetic exploration of the material of fibre, and the applications of techniques was encouraged through experiments in design, form, and the process of creation. Students were prompted to explore these possibilities on an individual basis, following their own artistic judgement. In 1985, the tapestry courses were being described as follows in the university calendar:

**Arp1010 Tapisserie I:**

Developpement de la creativite. Developpement d'une discipline intuitive et rationnelle de structuration de l'espace bidimensionnel. Apprentissage des possibilites et des limites d'un materiau: les Fibres.

Etude comparee de la tapisserie classique et moderne. Connaissance des materiaux (fibres naturelles et synthetiques) et de leur utilisation selon les procedes techniques de la tapisserie (haut-lisse, canevas, experiences textiles). Conception de cartons de tapisserie et realisation." 41

Tapestry II is described in the same manner as Tapestry I, the indication being that the studies would be on a more advanced level, with more freedom of direction being left to the student. The final metamorphosis to the Art Textile courses currently being offered officially took place as of Fall 1986. Tapestry I and II gave away to Art Textile I and II.

These courses stress the cultivation of the student's artistic conceptualization. Experimentation is encouraged, and later this leads to individualized analysis of techniques. Students build their technical abilities upon their artistic investigations of project topics, which involve innovations from contemporary and ancient tapestries.

## Université de Québec à Montreal

The Université de Québec à Montreal began offering its textile and weaving courses in 1969. The original courses, Métiers d'Art, and Couleur Textile, are still offered today, although they have been modified over the intervening years. Included as options under the Visual Arts division at the Bachelor level, they are available to education and creative arts students.

From 1969 to 1980, the Métiers d'Art course needed two classes each session to keep up with the student enrollment. Since 1980, it has required only one class for each session, which lasts two semesters. At six credits per session, this course gives a basic introductory survey of crafts. Ceramics, enamelling, batik and weaving are all covered equally in this course. Prior to 1980, there usually were twenty-five students enrolled each session. As of 1986, the average registration has been eighteen students.

The other original course, Couleur Textile, is also a six-credit course followed for two semesters. From 1969 to 1981, it consisted of studies in batik and weaving. After 1981, the course content was altered to include textile serigraphy, painting on textiles, and embroidery. This course had a regular registration of eight students per session until 1983. Since then, the registration has grown to an average of twenty students.

each session.

Under the guidance of the textile studies professor at UQAM, Micheline Couture-Calve, a new course was offered for the first time during the autumn 1985 semester: an independent advanced studies course. This is a studio course in textile creation, where students work under the guidance of a professor, but on techniques and materials of their own choosing. The classes are offered as three-credit courses during the fall and winter semesters. Since 1985, seven students have registered each semester for this study session.

The stress is on the development of the student's sense of art in their work, rather than focusing on a technical mastery. <sup>42</sup> For the future, UQAM hopes to develop a separate option in textile arts, as a division of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. The present aim is to install two new courses, worth eighteen credits each: an advanced creative studio session and an introductory studio session including fibre structures, textile dyeing and printing. However, the actual outcome of these courses remains to be seen.



Université de Québec à Chicoutimi

Marcel Marois was the first teacher in fibre-oriented courses at the university. He taught the first tapestry course in 1971, which later expanded to become Tapestry I, II and III. As the courses multiplied, so did the list of teaching personnel. It included Michele Heon, Marcel Marois, Diane Landry and Moissette Boicher.

Operating within the Faculty of Fine Arts as a studio option, tapestry was available at first only to students of the Visual Arts Certificate program. By 1977, the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Visual Arts major was adopted, and the tapestry courses were made available also to these students. A final expansion saw the creation of the bachelor level Art Education program, in which the tapestry courses again were included as options.

Concurrent with the development and expansion of the tapestry courses, a new course was added to the list of options; Textiles and Fibres. At its peak in the 1982-1983 session, this three-credit, one-semester course gave students the chance to explore contemporary textiles and fibre arts, while also studying their relationships to traditional and regional textiles, including Quebecois works.

In Tapestry I a brief history of tapestry and its

evolution was given, and the students were introduced to some basic techniques. For Tapestry II, the students progressed in the study of Gobelin tapestry, contemporary tapestries and some weaving techniques. Finally, in the last of the three courses, the students were encouraged to follow individual interests under the guidance of the professor.

On average, registration for these four courses was sixteen to eighteen students per class. Extra study opportunities were also provided by the university. In 1980 a studio session was arranged with Polish textile artist Magdalena Abakanowicz. During the summers of 1981 and 1982, sessions were set up with Micheline Beauchemin of Quebec and French textile artist Daniel Graffin, respectively.

Despite this activity, a recent restructuring of the fine arts programs cut the tapestry courses in favour of more mixed media approaches to studio work. The Textiles and Fibre courses, now renamed Fibres, is a three-credit option still available to Art Education and Studio students. For the Fibres course, students explore some basic fibre techniques at the start of the session, and later progress to self-directed projects under the guidance of the professor.

At this time, Fibres is the only class available in fibre-oriented study at UQAC. It would appear to be the only course which will be available for some time to

come, as stated by Alex Magrini, Director of the Fine Arts department. In his opinion, the current program of studies will be kept without change for at least the next six years. 49

## Concordia University

This university was formed from the merger of the former Sir George-Williams University and Loyola College in 1974. It is the Sir George Williams campus which currently houses the Visual Arts building where the department of Sculpture, Ceramics and Fibres is located.

From its beginnings, Concordia offered textile studies in the form of a six-credit crafts course of two semesters duration. Art C432 was listed under the Art Education department and formed part of the core courses required for the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Art Education major degree. It was an introductory level course which covered such craft areas as textiles, ceramics, leathercraft and metal work.

A visiting artists program was also given an early start at Concordia. As of 1987, it continues to be part of the activities in the Faculty of Fine Arts. Students enrolled in Concordia's fibre courses have enjoyed many opportunities to meet and learn from respected artists, such as Mariette Rousseau-Vermette and Marcel Marois.

As of the 1978-1979 academic year, the Crafts course was reduced in scope. It covered the areas of ceramics, fibres and fabrics alone, but would continue to be a two-semester course. In effect, the fibre and fabric segment was allotted one semester.

During the next year, another fibre-related course

was made available, Art C440, Papermaking: Process and Assemblage. A six-credit, two-semester course, Papermaking was part of the Studio Art section. Students from departments other than the studio arts could take this course as a studio option. However, the majority of registrants came from sculpture, ceramics and fiber sections.

A change came in the 1980-1981 academic year when the Art C432 course was transferred into the Studio Art section. Its new designation was Crafts C200 "Introduction to Crafts". Two new six-credit courses were introduced that year, Crafts C320 "Fibre Structures" and Crafts C450 "Advanced Workshop in Crafts".

The "Crafts C200" was a core course in the Bachelor of Fine Arts Major and Specialization in Art Education degrees. The two other courses, like the papermaking course, were offered as six-credit studio art options in the Major in Studio Art, Major in Art History and Studio Art, and the Art Education programs, (both the Major and Specialization). However, from its start as a service course to these Art Education programs, this program would continue growing and become a section in its own right.

The Fibre Structure course covered a broad spectrum of subjects including woven structures and various hand construction areas. The Advanced Workshop required that

the students have completed two crafts courses, be in the final year of bachelor level studies, and have the written permission of the crafts coordinator. This workshop emphasized the development of individual projects, in addition to regular class projects.

The last course to be developed, while the Fibre courses remained part of the Studio Art Section, was Craft C260 "Printed and Dyed Textile Design". This course was formed in 1981. It explored two-dimensional techniques such as silkscreen printing, block printing, batik and the resist dyeing of fabrics.

The 1982-1983 academic year saw the creation of the Sculpture and Crafts department at Concordia. All the existing crafts courses were transferred from the Studio Art Section to this new administrative body, and new courses were introduced. These new additions were Crafts C340 "Fibre Structure II", Crafts C440 "Fibre Structure III", Crafts C360 "Printed and Dyed Textile Design II" and Crafts C460 "Printed and Dyed Textile Design III".

With these courses in place, changes began again. The result was the 1984 creation of the department of Sculpture, Ceramics and Fibres. At this point, all the fibre courses which had been prefixed "Craft" were switched to a prefix of "Fibre".

The other changes precipitated by this departmental restructuring was the creation of a three-credit,

one-semester course called Fibre 398 "Special Topics in Fibres", and the end of the Crafts C200 course. Crafts C200 had formed part of the Art Education bachelor level core requirements until this time, but from this point forward, students were encouraged to register for either the introductory fibres or ceramics course.

The fibres courses had a combined registration in 1984-1985 of seventy-four students. During this same year, the first student to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art with a concentration in Fibres was registered at Concordia.

Kathryn Lipke has been involved in the textile programme and individual textile courses at Concordia virtually since its inception. Both as a teacher and the Director of Textile Studies, she has tried to keep Concordia's course offerings current with the most recent advances in the textile arts. Concordia's textile curriculum is the only one in Canada which offers a fine arts core of study.

Development continued with the 1985 creation of the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a major in Fibres. Students for this major initially registered as Studio Art majors, then transferred in their second year of studies to the Fibre major. Ninety-one students took fibre courses that year. A new six-credit course, Fibres C492 Introduction to the History of Textiles, became part of the mandatory course requirements in the

Fibres major. As well, the course in papermaking, Art C440, was brought into the Fibres department and renamed Fibre C470.

The most recent change has been the transferral of Fibre C492 from the Fibre department to the Art History department. However, this course still remains part of the requirements of the Fibres major degree. At present, the Fibres department consists of two full-time and four part-time teachers, and one full-time technician. Registration in the fibre courses has risen to 104 students, the highest total to date.

No major changes are planned for the near future. The present emphasis seems to be on "refining the existing program".

Although the prefixes and titles of the courses have been changed during the growth of this programme at Concordia, the basic philosophical direction has not. As of the 1986-1987 academic year, a statement issued by the Fibres Department stresses that,

The courses are structured to encourage inventiveness and a sense of research combined with strong technical training in fibre structures and printed and dyed textiles. The emphasis in the fibre area is placed on a fine arts point of view recognizing that the rich history and tradition of textiles serves as a point from which to examine fibres in the contemporary art milieu.



## Conclusion

It is intended that this study act as an additional reference for artists and educators involved in the textile and fibre arts. By drawing together information which has not been discussed previously as a single topic, it is hoped that this work will lead to new insights in the structure of educational programmes designed for textile and fibre artists. By following these historical developments in education, a background to current developments has been documented. This will aid or facilitate future evolutions, and make available a broader network of information for comparison and analysis.

Institutions offering textile education in Quebec have seen a full scope of programme alternatives throughout their collective histories. Initially, the turn of the century schools gave vocational or technical education oriented courses, which have since given way to a more expansive range of educational styles. Along with the traditional crafts of leisure-time classes for amateurs, programmes are now being offered for the perfectionnement of professionals and intensive study for artists.

Early educational directions were developed from a need for inexpensive skilled labour, or as a leisure time activity. Traditional materials and techniques

were employed, and examples of works from this time generally show a faithful adherence to the reproduction of time-honored styles.

As of 1905, there was no evidence of artistic advances in the styles or techniques being used in the creation of handmade textiles in Quebec. However, popular interest in craft work had been kindled as a reflection of the Art and Craft movement. The rural lifestyle of the majority of the Quebec populace encouraged the inclusion of some textile craft education within the existing school system. The importance of this rural population is evident in the creation of the Cercle des Fermieres du Quebec, a major force in the early maintenance and upgrading of textile education in Quebec.

During the 1920's and 1930's, textiles were being reviewed with increasing interest in Europe. The wide-spread influence of the Bauhaus had taken seed, artists had begun to experiment with textiles, and tapestry was being modernized and revived in the French studio-workshops. Concurrently in Quebec, the Cercle des Fermieres were becoming increasingly involved with the advancement of textile education, and the government was showing additional support for this venture.

The 1940's were the period when tapestry began to emerge as a modern art form, both in France and Quebec. Artists were creating works to be done in tapestry, and

the interpretation of these designs were forcing an ever increasing modernization of techniques. At the end of this decade, the Ecole des Beaux Arts opened their tapestry studio, and became the first school in Quebec to have a separate section which taught the modernized tapestry techniques.

The 1950's set the stage for the most critical decade in the history of the modern textile arts. Expressionism, abstract or figurative, was an international movement at this time. There was a raw energy during this period of textile art.

Also, there was a new found sense of international influence in art. Communication between countries increased the tempo of the exchange of new artistic ideas.

A sense of dynamism pervaded the 1960's. Aggressively innovative styles pushed back traditional limits and ushered in an international renaissance for the textile arts. At the end of this decade, and into the beginning of the next, universities in Québec integrated tapestry and textile studies into their programmes for the first time.

After the period of intense investigation during the 60's, the early 1970's carried on the artistic involvement with the textile arts, but saw a leveling off of the growth of this art form. Rather than drastic changes, there was a greater tendency towards refinement

of styles and aesthetic tastes. The textile arts became an accepted and acknowledged art form, it was not as radical as in the previous decade. Given this aesthetic acceptability, more schools evolved textile study programmes, and art shows were increasingly devoted to this field. The end of the 70's saw the creation of the Biennale de la Tapisserie Quebecoise, and more frequent shows by individual textile artists.

The present decade hasn't shown the same intense focusing of artistic energy as the past two decades, but the textile arts still claim a high level of involvement in the current exploration of divergent aesthetic styles.

Traditionally, Quebec's greatest outside influences in the textile arts have come from France, but since the 1950's and 1960's those influences have become international in scope. There is a growing sophistication within the field of the textile arts.

This is being absorbed into the educational programmes offered in Quebec. Since the 1940's, a direct connection was easily visible between the historical, cultural and aesthetic advances in the textile arts, and the educational practices of that time. The time delay between changes in the arts and corresponding changes in the educational programmes has shown a significant decrease from the 1940's to the 1980's.

Presently, there seems to be an increase in

background research in topics pertaining to the textile arts. Many artists are looking back into history in order to advance this art form. This concept of the "rediscovery of textile memory" as quoted from Michel Thomas in the introduction of this thesis is the underlying concept which directed the historical research into Quebec's textile art education.

The idea of reviewing history in order to better prepare for the future is of value to artists and educators. It can provide an indication of the best path for continuous evolution in an educational sense, as well as being a rich source of inspiration for the artist. Learning from an historical example is not a new concept, just one which should be reconsidered.

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