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Reality and Virtual Reality: Extending the Tradition of Compound Woven Structures

Rebecca A. T. Stevens; Laura Foster Nicholson; Lia Cook; Cynthia Schira; and Barbara Layne. Rebecca A. T. Stevens (editor), Washington, D.C.

The following papers examine the uses of compound woven structures in contemporary textile art and the methodologies employed to produce this art. Using the working methods and investigations of three teachers/textile artists, these papers will address the interrelated role of high-tech equipment and handwork that gives today's artists the ability to continue the exploration of these traditional structures with a new flexibility and freedom. Collectively the papers will illustrate the creative choices the artists make in using technologies to translate their textile ideas into tangible works of art.

A "compound weave" is a woven structure composed of more than one set of either warp or weft or more than one set of both, with compounding achieved by adding sets of elements and/or by combining complete weave structures.¹

Compound woven structures for functional textiles have an ancient history. Exquisite examples dating from the 4th century B.C. have been found in China². This is an impressive accomplishment when we consider that these fabrics pre-date the invention of the drawloom. The following papers describe new uses of these compound weaves.

In a recent article in *Fiberarts* magazine Mark Newport writes, "When artists or designers choose to work with a traditional process or medium, they do so knowing that they are entering into a dialogue with the history of that form."³ These papers show how artists build their work on a shared textile history, drawing on their knowledge of the past while embracing the methods of the present. The paper "Electronic Textiles: Hacking the Museum" which follows the first three papers, serves as the conceptual bridge from our current uses of compound structures to the textile world of the twenty-first century.