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2000

## Teaching and Learning: A University Studio Art Experience of Trique Weaving

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Strand, Laura, "Teaching and Learning: A University Studio Art Experience of Trique Weaving" (2000).  
*Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*. 819.  
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## **Teaching and Learning :**

### **A University Studio Art Experience of Trique Weaving**

by Laura Strand

To learn through an apprenticeship, in which the master sits beside you and guides you step by step through a complex process, is the oldest and most durable method through which the textile arts have passed from generation to generation and from culture to culture. Through the process of making, the meanings embedded in the objects are revealed.

Over the past five years I have had the privilege of studying weaving with three Trique weavers from San Andres Chicahuaxtla in the Sierra Madres Mountains of Oaxaca State, Mexico. The Trique huipil is a densely encoded cultural document. The registers of symbolic motifs which line this long wide over-garment, function as a text in Trique culture. Through variations in this code the separate Trique towns identify themselves. Motifs and variations of motifs passed down through generations are freely mixed with new and creatively imagined representations of the modern world and its events and objects. The garment itself is symbolic of womanhood in both obvious and subtle ways and the loom is an integral part of Trique mythology.

Through four study trips of three weeks each, my students and I have woven with our Trique teachers, all day, each day. We learn the motifs one at a time. The ingenious and individual method of the making of each motif provides clues to its understanding. Each year, learning through our fingers as well as through our eyes and ears, we delve deeper into both the meanings of the symbolic motifs in the huipils and of the meaning of weaving in their lives and in ours.

In the talk I will offer my observations of the study of the Trique weavers and their weavings through a discussion about the learning process of making.

Laura Strand is an Assistant Professor of Art, directing the Textile Arts program at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. She earned her Master of Fine Arts degree studying with Cynthia Schira at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, has taught at Skidmore College, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth and is now in her sixth year at Southern Illinois University. Her own artwork is shown widely. The two semester travel study discussed in this talk starts in Mexico and continues into the fall semester, culminating in an exhibition and catalog of artwork and writings.

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