

## Weaving at the Horizon: Encounters with Fibre Art on the Canadian Prairie

ABSTRACT: This essay situates the artistic practices of several weavers featured in the exhibition *Prairie Interlace: Weaving, Modernisms and the Expanded Frame, 1960–2000* within the broader context of textile modernisms and the status of fibre art in art history. Weaver and scholar Mackenzie Kelly-Frère offers an account of learning to weave in the early nineteen-nineties prior to the final instalment of the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennial. Using his personal experience as a departure point, Kelly-Frère notes how contingent communities of weavers (i.e. those in guilds, clubs and universities) navigated local and international shifts in the conceptualization of weaving from practical necessity and social practice to a metier for creative expression. By analyzing the confluence of European and North American influences, Indigenous and settler cultures, and tensions between traditional craft and modernist aesthetics, Kelly-Frère elucidates the prairie as a significant locus of innovation in fibre art. Considering hand weaving's pathway to revitalization in North America with its almost singular focus on the preservation of weaving traditions, such a development is all the more surprising. In this text, the Canadian prairie is conceptualized as a vital site of artistic innovation, where the horizon symbolizes both a literal motif and a metaphorical boundary for fibre's expressive potential. By examining the interplay of place and culture, Kelly-Frère contributes a nuanced re-evaluation of the fibre art movement's significance to artists who have contributed to fibre art on the Canadian prairie.

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