

IN THE BEGINNING THERE IS THREAD

AMY REVIER'S HANDWOVEN CLOTHES TELL UNIQUE STORIES UNSHAKEABLE.
SLOWLY CREATED THEY SPEAK TO US ABOUT SIMPLICITY AND ORIGINALITY.

AMY REVIER describes the clothes she creates as cocoons. For creeping into, offering protection and space for the wearer. They exude simplicity and originality. Natural shaping, gorgeous materials. Based on clothes that have been in existence for thousands of years and proven themselves.

– People look lovely moving around in them, when the woven cloth takes on a leading role. Perhaps it is more that the best clothes carry us and not us them, she commented.

All her pieces are made from cloth handwoven by her. Warp and woof constructions of her own, with warp the base and weft the body.

– For me, weaving has a ritual quality. The lengthy work involved before the cloth is ready to be made up. It is all about thread rather than yarn for me. The way the threads meet. And then the creative potential in bestowing character to the cloth, unique to itself.

AMY GREW UP in a creative home, in Dallas, Texas. Always encouraged by her family to do what she wanted. When she was little, she would drape herself in cloth. Dressed paper dolls, layer upon layer, one model with 20 sleeves. Draping and dressing remain integral to her working methods.

She encountered thread during her art studies in Austin, in a project where the students

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had to produce a spatial installation. She created thread installations of black mohair: in a gallery called R House, which she directed from the front half of her Dallas home, from 2006-2009. There are resemblances to these images, she now finds, sitting under the loom looking up through the warp ends. Or when, for another art installation, she made huge loops of silk. Similar forms occur when chaining the warp. Ever present, these are for her primordial forms, inherent in weaving since time immemorial.

HANDWEAVING is not that common in Texas, but Amy found a woman who could teach her the basics on a simple loom. In 2009 an opportunity came her way to spend a year in Iceland. Things Scandinavian had always attracted her and she found Iceland highly stimulating. Though there wasn't as much weaving as she had hoped. Instead, she did installations centred around the human body. All the same, it was there that she first saw a Swedish loom, a Glimåkra.

– I approached the loom slowly, with great respect, sensing that I would be able to use it for sculptural work.

Amy's husband, Clayton Littlejohn PhD, then got a job in London, which is where they now live in a flat near a lovely park. With Art Deco housing gleaming white against the lush greenery. Amy is responsible for the neighbourhood garden.

Once the cloths are woven and finished, she creates each unique garment with a highly skilled tailor, who does the cutting and sewing. The fabrics do the deciding!

– I often drape the finished cloth, throwing it over a chair or tailor's dummy and it tells me what it wants to be.

Small alterations in the cutting can make huge changes. So finding a skilful tailor/cutter was imperative. That person has to understand her way of creating. Like with selvages. They provide line and form, are formed. Soft shaping without hems and stitching. Each piece of the exclusive cloth is treated with utmost respect. She avoids buttons, they are too much like regular clothes. Amy had the good fortune, she says, to find an amazing tailor from China living in the neighbourhood. That tailor, unfortunately, moved away but a new, equally skilled tailor has now taken over.

On arrival in London, almost five years ago, she had to start from scratch. Nobody knew

Amy Revier creates all the weaves
for her unique clothes.





Left A sweater woven in yarn where the nap raised in the finishing turned the garment into a pelt like creation.
Above Packaging and presentation are crucial.

Amy Revier

Grew up in Austin, Texas, USA
 BFA in Fine Art and Art History
 2009 – one year as an exchange student: The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program
 2011 – Moved to London
 2013 – Showed her first collection

amyrevier.com

anything about her. She had to decide what she wanted and in which way she would work. With her CV and training, it was not long before she got a well paid job at a gallery with plenty of travel opportunities. After four days she quit.

– I did not want to be an administrator and sit at a computer. I wanted to create.

AMY'S LIFELONG, personal interest in fashion had taken her to the *Dover Street Market* shop in London with its select and exclusive range. The director of DSM asked me if I would show my new work there. This developed from a conversation when I was a frequent visitor to their store.

That was back in January 2013, a good four years ago.

So she bought a new loom, wove six garments in yarns of wool, silk and cotton procured from Japan. Amy admitted she was a little unsure as to whether anyone would actually buy her garments with their outright simplicity.

– But four sold in the first hour. One

woman bought three garments and her friend bought one.

New collections then followed: several buyers became loyal customers.

Amy has for some time now sold her pieces at Hostem, a gallery with two committed proprietors, James Brown and Christie Fels, who have become close friends. They share Amy and her husband's interests in food, literature and lifestyle. Hostem reopens their newly designed concept gallery early 2018 with new sculptural garments by Amy.

Her collections are shown several times a year in these premises, presented in an intimate and personal context. There Amy can meet her customers, or collectors as she prefers to call them. The pieces are bought by women as well as men. Amy never makes two garments alike. And does not take orders for specific models. It is more like artwork. She creates; buyers collect. Amy weaves from three to five garments in a month. Depending on the material and type of garment, she gets an income that allows her to continue as a weaver, while the additional contribution to their

Left A key garment is the coat. Here, created from cloth woven in plant fibres. Selvages at the front and the ends of the sleeves. The garments are cut by a tailor who then sews them up by hand.



Right Jacket-trousers combinations also figure on occasion. Here, with classic stripes.



household is, she says, a significant benefit.

Our conversation continued round their ample wooden table with a spread of fresh baked bread, fruit and green tea. Amy's passion for weaving and its potential led us into a discussion about the world of fashion, blinded by speed, with its constantly changing seasons. About creating quality instead of quantity. Having control over the creative process. She has shown it is possible. So what advice does she give anyone wishing to venture in this direction?

– I have always been honest with myself. You must be extremely disciplined and extremely determined to forage ahead and weave for a living. I would encourage constant learning and constant outings. Don't relax into your successes. Meet people, wear what you make, go see things...

– I do and I don't see what I make as functional clothing. I strive to make an object with spirit, with an unshakable authenticity. This, I feel, comes through in the work and connects to people who are now looking for something with a soul.

Threads for her cloths are ordered from Japan. Woollen yarns are spun from British fleece at a spinning mill in Kyoto. Other yarns are spun from paper or various plant fibres. One is made of cedar bark. The colour range keeps to the natural shades with a few dyed colour accents, subtly blended in. The cloths will always be her own handwoven work.

– Creating them is an intimate process, one in which I want to participate throughout.

The garments are often displayed on handmade hangers. People collecting her pieces frequently put them up on the wall, like art.

Time for the photo shoot: she donned one of her well fulled woollen coats after first mending a little hole on the shoulder and swathed herself in it. Did up the laces on her sneakers and off we went for a walk in the big park. Rain hung heavy in the air. Amy loves London: this is home for her. If she had a travel wish, maybe it would be to visit Sweden. Scandinavia appeals. She would like to see more weaving. And is drawn to nature, to proper old buildings.

When we got back to the warmth indoors,

we browsed through pictures of her collections. Coats, sweaters, jackets, trousers. A wool coat is cut from a good three metre length of woollen cloth, which will have been fulled down to 40% of its original size. A sweater in plain weave has thick stripes running crosswise.

– I saw a placemat with a few picks of thick thread running through and realized it could be the basis for a lovely sweater.

Each year she works out new strategies. Right now the focus is on packaging.

– If you buy an exquisite garment, it needs to be presented in a way that signals its quality. Perhaps the cardboard packaging for the garment is of itself utterly beautiful...

The next step might be to move away from clothes as function towards building installations. Going deeper into the creative process, finding new modes of expression. Following the thread.

– I have a dream life. I'm sure it will keep me busy all my life. I met an 80 year old weaver who said she was still learning, which is fantastic!