

Foundation Diploma in Tapestry Weaving: developing skills and creative language (2 year, part-time course)

Awarded by West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

Course Tutor: PHILIP SANDERSON

Studio Leader at West Dean Tapestry Studio and Tapestry Subject Tutor on the Fine Art programme

This West Dean College Foundation Diploma in Tapestry Weaving is awarded in recognition of the successful completion of the two year, part-time programme of six, three-day units, self-directed study and making, and a final 1500 word essay. It aims to offer tapestry weavers a broad insight into the technical and creative techniques of tapestry weaving, necessary for developing skills and building your own creative language.

It is aimed at weavers who have completed a beginners' course at the College or elsewhere, and are looking to commit to an extended and intensive programme of study.

Each unit will be based in the unique environment of [West Dean Tapestry Studio](#), one of the UK's only professional tapestry studios specialising in contemporary design and weaving using traditional techniques. The Studio has worked with a wide range of contemporary artists and designers, such as Henry Moore, Tracey Emin and Eva Rothschild, as well as re-creating an important series of medieval tapestries.

SELF-DIRECTED STUDY

Between each unit you will be asked to develop your own line of research in response to the course focus. This includes the production of small woven sample pieces as a way of developing and experimenting with images, brought to the start of the following unit for discussion and dissemination. A tutorial session will be planned with the programme tutor between each course.

By the end of the first year you will have a greater understanding of tapestry weaving and a larger knowledge base that will provide you with the ability to understand all stages of the production process at both technical and aesthetic level.

ESSAY

It is expected that students keep a journal of their studies and weaving for the duration of the Tapestry Foundation programme, and submit an essay following the successful completion of the requisite six units of study. The essay must be completed within two months after completing all six courses.

The final essay will consist of a 1,500 word reflective account that demonstrates the link between the candidate's overall experience gained from the Tapestry Foundation and their intended future pathway with evidence of historical and cultural research relevant to the candidate's own practice.

Detailed specifications relating to the presentation of this written work may be obtained from the Programme Tutor.

COURSE TUTOR

Philip Sanderson has designed tapestries for numerous clients, notably for the New Parliamentary Buildings in Westminster. In 2014 his tapestry 'Nowhere' was shortlisted for the John Ruskin Prize. As Master Weaver Designer at the [West Dean Tapestry Studio](#) he has worked on a wide range of tapestry commissions, many in collaboration with leading contemporary arts practitioners, and also on the recreation of the Hunt of the Unicorn Tapestries for Stirling Castle. He is also associate tutor on the College's full-time Fine Art (tapestry and textile art) programme.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Year 1

Unit 1: SETTINGS, WEAVING TECHNIQUE AND TRANSLATION

25–28 January 2022, Three Days Intermediate S3D11356

The first unit illustrates how changes in the setting of the warps and the weight of weft can produce differences in the woven surface and impact on the translation of an image. The series of small sample tapestries made will form the basis of a collection of reference material, to aid the decision making process for creating finished works.

Other technical aspects, such as the use of leashes and the correct use of tools, such as bobbins and beaters is covered, alongside identifying and remedying irregularities within the woven surface.

The unit will also focus on design development and an introduction to the process of translation, before you discuss plans with the tutor for self-directed study, research and woven samples to bring to the next unit. This will reference the experiences gained from making the technical samples to inform decisions about materials and the scale of the work.

Unit 2: CARTOONS, SCALE AND THE WEAVER'S PALETTE

17–20 May 2022, Three Days Intermediate S3D11523

The second unit will begin with a group session to discuss the work produced on the previous unit. This is an opportunity to share experiences and discuss any issues or discoveries that emerged during this stage.

Students can then begin to consider the next part of the process through further sample work, this includes:

- Cartoon production, different kinds and appropriate uses of cartoons.
- Scale; size of tapestry, considering both practical and aesthetic issues.
- Warp setting and weights of weft including selection of materials for warp and weft.
- Availability of materials, sourcing materials and how this might influence choice of yarns used.
- Selecting the palette of yarns for the project.
- Considering final presentation of the work and how this may influence production e.g. using a selvedge will the warps be visible, inclusion of a weaver's mark.

Within the final phase of this unit students can begin to refine their ideas and having worked through the above list of activities begin to make decisions about the production of a final piece of work, planned in conjunction with the tutor to bring near completion for the beginning of the third unit.

Unit 3: FINISHING PROCESSES/PLANNING A PERSONAL PROJECT

6–9 September 2022, Three Days Intermediate S3DI1524

Following the group discussion on the pieces woven following unit 2, highlighting aspects that arose during the weaving, and how the image may have developed or evolved during production. There will also be an opportunity to discuss how the work may progress from this point; if the tapestry woven can be one of an on-going series; or you wish to plan to explore a different style of working; or even if you would like to make the same tapestry again.

Once cut from the frame the tapestries will be used to demonstrate the finishing process, this will involve making decisions relating to the work and how the work is to be hung or displayed.

By the end of the third unit, students will now have a greater understanding of tapestry weaving and knowledge base that will provide them with the ability to more confidently move through all stages of the production process at both technical and aesthetic level. The unit will end with further discussion as you make plans to devise and produce a tapestry project independently over the summer months and look towards finding your own creative voice.

Year 2

Unit 4: DYEING, MATERIALS AND WEAVING

10–13 January 2023, Three Days Intermediate S3DI1525

The dyeing of yarn is integral to the making of tapestries; this unit will begin with an overview of the process of dyeing yarns and the construction of a bespoke palette. An introductory session in the dye rooms will show students all aspects of the dyeing system used by the Tapestry Studio and provide the knowledge required to be able to select, prepare and dye yarns. Students will be expected to create their own dye book to document their research.

The system of dyeing in place at West Dean is a chemical system using acid levelling dyes which are specifically used for dyeing wool and silk; we will also examine and discuss alternative methods of dyeing yarns including dyes for cotton and linen and resources required for dyeing without a dye room.

Unit 5: EXPERIMENTAL WEAVING TECHNIQUES

28–31 March 2023, Three Days Intermediate S3DI1526

Unit 5 will introduce additional tapestry techniques such as tufting, wrapping, knotting and how to create shaped and three-dimensional tapestries, as well as considering the possibilities for combining tapestry with other textile processes. Through the production of sample pieces you will begin to explore the possibilities of working with differing scales and materials and to deconstruct the conventional process of tapestry weaving and identify which aspects of the process are relevant to your own practice. The samples will also provide an opportunity to produce work that is defined by a particular technique (or combination of techniques) than it is by translating an image.

The unit will also consider the different ways artists have engaged with tapestry in a more experimental way followed by a discussion on the relevance of specific techniques and materials to your practice.

Unit 6: DESIGN AND REFLECTION

20–23 June 2023, Three Days Intermediate S3D11527

The final unit will look at design and developing ideas and strategies for making new work. There will also be an opportunity to reflect on the two years through discussions held at the end of the unit and through the writing of your essay.

We will begin by looking at the different ways of creating designs for tapestry from personal practice to public commissions, collaborative and community based projects. Working with images and research gathered we will focus on how a design can evolve from initial sketch ideas to a finished design.

Building on the knowledge from previous sessions design will also include consideration of scale, materials etc., common factors that can influence design development.

To conclude the unit we will end with a group discussion centred on strategies for moving forward including plans for the creation of a future tapestry.

The final essay must be submitted following the successful completion of the six units of study. The essay must be completed within two months after completing the final unit.

EXHIBITION

An exhibition of the finished tapestries, supporting material, sketches and samples will be planned within the college on completion of the programme.

COMPLETION

The Foundation Diploma in Tapestry Weaving will be presented to successful candidates at the College Graduation Ceremony usually held in July.

The Foundation Diploma while not nationally validated nevertheless aims to provide students with the ability to identify themes within their practice and to identify the kind of work they are looking to produce and be able to communicate this confidently.

APPLYING FOR A PLACE

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The following qualifications will be considered for entry to the Foundation Diploma in Tapestry Weaving:

- Examples of woven tapestry, alongside evidence work in other media, textiles or other media, this could include development work and finished work.
- A commitment to attending all six units.

Students must complete and return the Application Form and the Questionnaire by 1 September 2021.

An informal telephone interview with the Programme Tutor will follow in early September, before places are confirmed in October. Following confirmation of your place, full payment will be taken using the details supplied on your Application Form.

For standard Terms and Conditions [please refer to our website](#), specific Terms and Conditions in respect of this course will be sent to successful applicants, this includes a commitment to attend all course dates offered.

COURSE FEES

The course fees are payable in advance for each year of study

Year 1: Course fee: £1266 (non-residential, covering all three units – payable by 14 December 2021). This includes the interim tutorial between each unit and yarns used for set projects during each course.

Year 2: Course fee: £1266 (non-residential, covering all three units – payable by 6 December 2022). This includes the interim tutorial between each unit and yarns used for set projects during each course.

Accommodation for a three-day course, including dinner and breakfast, is currently available from £283 (single occupancy). Please see [accommodation costs on our website](#) – specific to the timing of each unit.

For further queries about the course, please contact:

admissions@westdean.ac.uk

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