



Augmented / Articulated List
FEARLESS by Flossie Peitsch

Flossie Peitsch: Art as FEARLESS Endeavour

Review by Neal Nuske, January 2024

Peitsch has recognized the physical, intellectual, and spiritual importance which *space* and *place* (SPLACE) (Peitsch, *The Immortal Now*, 2007) has for Indigenous people...but not only indigenous people. Her artistic endeavour is a continuing process involving the restoration and reconfiguration of her migratory *self* in the context of her most recent artistic *splace*, FEARLESS.

For more than forty thousand years, the Australian landscape has been the *splace* for Indigenous peoples wherein the intense symbiotic relationship between landscape and person creates identity and strengthens belonging. When this intimate relationship between landscape and person is fractured, a legacy of incalculable loss is generated. (Peitsch, BABYSTEPS)



Paradoxically, loss changes the personal landscape of life, family, friends, as well as the fundamental importance inherent in a familiar geographical landscape. For the migratory *rara avis* Peitsch, recollections of homeland were reborn in a foreign context: “My land of birth, Canada,” emerged into artistic consciousness (Peitsch, FLIGHT). The act of remembering is an ongoing cognitive process which reduces the intensification of isolation and non-being by reconnecting all the foundational building blocks of personal identity (Peitsch, ARTERIAL).

A crisis ensues when landscape is perceived primarily as a commodity for consumption, or a means to a financial end: both symmetry and balance are threatened. Consequently, well-being is challenged and mined by anxiety which will intrude upon and corrode a personal sense of timelessness, peace, and serenity (Peitsch, SLIPPAGE). Thereafter, personal *splace* is destabilised across multiple dimensions: the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. For Peitsch, artistic creativity is one means by which personal identity and belonging is restored. This requires retreating into a personal *splace*. Tapestry weaving is “mind travel” and becomes a ‘time capsule.’

FEARLESS is the most recent outcome from inhabiting *splace* in which all aspects, shapes, and dimensions of Peitsch’s *selves* were identified and ritually woven (re-membered in contrast to dismembered), that is, put back together (reconfigured), in various forms, in a particular *splace* (Peitsch, OBLIQUE). Inevitably, the artist will resurface, even though returning to the reality of time and place can be a jolt (Peitsch, STRUGGLE) or in quiet seclusion (Peitsch, MIMOSA). What Peitsch writes in OBTUSE (Peitsch) summarises her conclusions about life: *...the enclosed finite shapes set in simple tactile backgrounds represent an ordered world of logical cause and effect. This well-arranged simplicity will never be a reality... Life is not ordered. The future is unknowable and uncertain.* (Peitsch, FEARLESS by FlossiePeitsch: The Augmented and Articulated List, 2024) Such a conclusion takes the fear out of living in, with, and amongst the irregular complexities of life.

FEARLESS is a set of visual variations, a landscape of life-experiences, woven into a set of tapestries. While there is an identifiable common origin to all 50+ Tapestry Weavings, the basic design, plus colour combinations for each set, as well as the manner in which the tapestry-weavings are crafted in response to chronological time-signatures (2017-2023), does not create a bland, monotonous world. Far from it. FEARLESS may be likened to a set of visual variations based upon an existential theme, as Peitsch writes in her Design Overview, ‘a soundscape tackling the mystifying world of change – found both intrinsically and externally.’ (Peitsch, FEARLESS by FlossiePeitsch: The Augmented and Articulated List, 2024)

Works Cited

(1972). Retrieved from National Archives of Australia: <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/first-australians/other-resources-about-first-australians/wave-hill-walk>

Departure from Nazi Germany of Paul Tillich. (n.d.). Retrieved from Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Paul-Tillich/Departure-from-Nazi-Germany>

Echo, U. (2006). *The Island of the Day before*. Batavia, IL: houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Merton, T. (2002). *No Man is an Island*. Boston: Mariner Books.

Nuske, N. (2023, November 11). Critical Essay on the Art of Dr Flossie Peitsch. (NN: BTh, GradDipSoc, BEd, MEd). Sapphire Beach, NSW, Australia: Unpublished.

Peitsch, F. (2007). *The Immortal Now*. Melbourne: PhD Exegesis.

Peitsch, F. (2024, January). FEARLESS by FlossiePeitsch: The Augmented and Articulated List. Maryborough, Victoria, Australia: Unpublished Manuscript.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). ARTERIAL. 2020. Tapestry Weaving, Darwin / Nganmarriyanga.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). BABYSTEPS. 2017. Tapestry Weaving, Kalkaringi.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). DESERT LIGHT. 2018. Tapestry Weaving, Willowra.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). FLIGHT. 2018. Tapestry Weaving, Willowra.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). MIMOSA. 2020. Tapestry Weaving, Nganmarriyanga.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). OBLIQUE. 2023. Tapestry Weaving, Billiluna.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). OBTUSE. 2021. Tapestry Weaving, Maryborough.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). REPRISE. 2021. Tapestry Weaving, Maryborough.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). RESOLVE. 2024. Tapestry Weaving, Maryborough.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). SLIPPAGE. 2018. Tapestry Weaving, Willowra.

Peitsch, F. (n.d.). STRUGGLE. 2018. Tapestry Weaving, Willowra.

Renkin, Ryan, Collette. (2006). *Art and Soul Flossie Peitsch*. Melbourne: Macmillan Publishers Australia.

Tillich, P. (1952). *The Courage To Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tillich, P. (1957b, p. 41, 43). *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Yale University Press.

Augmented / Articulated List.....

FEARLESS by Flossie Peitsch

DESIGN OVERVIEW – Descriptions and History

FEARLESS is a new, robust body of fiber art / digital / performance / soundscape tackling the mystifying world of change – found both intrinsically and externally. Pursuing spirituality in its many expressions, Peitsch is an interpreter of human existence. She is an exegete of her lived experience. SPLACE (Peitsch, 2007) - that is, *space* and *place* within the reflective and creative artistic *self*, is the artistic context within which Flossie's experience of Australia's diversity is collected and expressed in her art.

An assemblage of fifty (50+) new small tapestry weavings; plus five (5) strange, quilted, animal-shaped assemblages by Peitsch, offer expansive, tactile reflections on a changing world. All the outcomes have been created on site in very remote Australia or, are reflective of this experience. A changeless landscape and a travelling suitcase of limited fiber resources facilitated both the unity and diversity of design / colour demonstrated.

'Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.' Thomas Merton. To express my deeper philosophies behind this collection, I would need to say something about my using art as therapy to survive life or possibly, to escape it. To temporarily exorcise reality, with its frequent pain and ultimate loss of control. An artist creating fine art under the pretense of art therapy is something I dismissed as authentic practice in my PhD research. Now, I must retract those words. After all, fine art is fine art - no matter what its impetus. Another thing that needs saying, is that I want to disappear from sight; hide behind this collection, to somehow to become invisible. There are countless online articles interrogating the effect and importance of artists' identifying identity and stressing social issues in society. I have often done just that during my long art practice. However, this time I aimed for an ambiguity of self – not becoming a prophetic road sign, fearlessly pointing a way ahead. My fearlessness comes cloaked in a smaller, quieter, more fragile voice.

Through non-preemptive visual language, Peitsch encourages audiences to reorient and reshape their thinking about the ordinary and extraordinary traumas of post COVID, post-postmodern life. As a fine art visual artist practicing for over fifty (50+) years, themes of ageism, the worlds of epilepsy and glaucoma, cultural and spiritual literateness, diaspora and displacement are adroitly considered in transformative, visceral outcomes which signify the struggle, the calm and the veracity of ordering disordered lives.

Following are first person texts by Peitsch, articulating some of the predicating influences and fabrication challenges of creating this collection of tapestry weavings.

50+ Tapestry Weavings

Series: BABYSTEPS

Date: 2017

Location: Kalkaringi, NT

Panels
: 6

Dimensions: 6 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) Medium: cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Framed



As an artist-in-residence, commissioned to bring a unifying project to very remote NT, I introduced weaving to literally draw together the threads of disparate cultures – the local indigenous peoples, community council, with supportive medical and educational services. Effectively, everyone in the small community wove parts of these weavings. The result is BABYSTEPS - a story of small repair, of respectful healing, following the truncated and disastrous historical negotiations between locals, unions and the station. At nearby Wave Hill (National Archives of Australia, 1972) in the 1966, Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji spokesman, led a walk-off of 200 Aboriginal stockmen, house servants, and their families from Wave Hill as a protest against the work and pay conditions.

Everyone needs to belong somewhere on this earth. Everyone needs a physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual **space** to belong somewhere on this earth. This quest feeds my own restlessness. I uphold that globally, we are all equally worthy and entitled, but a trick of birth has left some far more privileged. This Residency gave me pause to consider this further from the indigenous perspective - whilst interrogating my own sense of belonging and lack of belonging.

Series: DESERT LIGHT

Date: 2018

Location: Willowra, NT

Panels: 3 +1

Dimensions: 4 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) Medium: cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Framed



Shades of unimaginable observed light - at dawn, during daylight and at dusk. This perpetual passing of time was for me, a reassuring source of normalcy throughout the year. For one year I lived in Willowra - the government-contrived amalgam of displaced, very remote NT indigenous communities. It is a hazardous five (5) hour drive from Alice Springs. That year brought unprecedented natural flooding, crocodile attacks, extended loss of power, basic food, services and supplies.

Still, the timelessness of the dry, sandy river bed, the serenity of the towering gums, and the soundlessness of life at night, carried promise and constancy. When reading the following texts, the self-descriptive titles for the following series, completed in Willowra, are self-evident.

Series: FLIGHT

Date: 2018

Location: Willowra, NT

Panels: 3 +1

Dimensions: 4 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) Medium: cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Framed



I did not take these very remote contracts out of a sense of misplaced 'pious charity' or as a selfless act in 'closing the gap'. Or with missionary zeal, hoping to 'convert' anyone to or from anything

I realized that I have employable, useful, sustainable skills, matched with courage and hutzpah. So, working very remotely as a teacher and learning about my adopted country in the

process, seemed a great idea. Somewhere inside myself, I was made aware of my personal vulnerability and at times, I fantasized about what form 'my leaving' might take? Then I realized that I did have wings. I had physically flown from Melbourne to Darwin and beyond. FLIGHT depicts this fantasy. The illustrated folded triangles are vehicles of transport - a method to instantly connect to my own family, and my long-time friends. My land of birth, Canada.

Using the time capsule of tapestry weaving as the medium, FLIGHT depicts 'mind travel', which carried me through time and eternity, connecting my past with my future in the present. Thus, it is the 'now'...microseconds in quantity - connecting quantum physics to art where 'The past would therefore still exist, just as the future already exists, but somewhere other than where we are now present.' (Does the Past Still Exist Somewhere, 2019). It was an adventure to be there, out of my comfort zone. I enjoyed it immensely. I was accepted, respected, fit in well with the indigenous locals. Though, while working in very remote communities, I am not ashamed to say that at times I was very lonely and longed to return to the safety and belonging of my own culture by swiftly disappearing, taking a flight away.

FLIGHT is myself in emotional transition to and from my unique remote teaching situation.

Series: SLIPPAGE

Date: 2018

Location: Willowra, NT

Panels: 3 +1

Dimensions: 4 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) **Medium:** cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers **U/Framed**



SLIPPAGE is a consideration of the conundrum of the mining industry, which whilst bringing royalty payments, also, delivered relentless social upheaval. Financial profits and prosperity extracted not only natural resources but also displaced ancient cultural grounding. The outback landscape is altered forever.

Series: STRUGGLE

Date: 2018

Location: Willowra, NT

Panels
: 3 +1

Dimensions: 4 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) **Medium:** cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers **U/Framed**



The 'knowing' that bringing western culture and the English language to these very remote aboriginal communities – some of whom saw their first white people in fewer years than my lifetime – could be the doorway to a viable future. And yet, be the wedge which would forever separate the ancients with their old ways from their restless descendants. Retelling 'traditional indigenous culture' alone, does not necessarily make it desirable to contemporary indigenous youth as a lifestyle. Young people around the world are the same in wanting mobile phones, fashion, freedom, and sadly, junk food!

Society is irreversibly connected globally through the internet. Seismic changes face every culture – ancient or post-postmodern but nowhere more distinctly than in Australia's outback. 'Not belonging' is still the possible widespread outcome for those seeking to be. Despite combined cultural efforts....no clear 'way ahead' seems apparent at this time.

Series: ARTERIAL

Date: 2020

Locations: Darwin / Nganmarriyanga, NT

Panels
: 3 +1

Dimensions: 4 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) Medium: cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Framed



ARTERIAL is based on the river courses as seen from the small planes used to transport me to and from my very remote communities – yet I hoped I could somewhat camouflage their design source by using unexpected colours. This removes the designs from a mere interpretation of reality to become a flight of fantasy.

All the rivers lead to the ocean and are connectors – even if to only allow the crocodiles to escape into new territory! The picture of a dangerous predator entering a community uninvited, reminds me also of the fact that mobile phone networks also enter communities - unfettered. Here, its first victims are also the children. For Australian aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders, there is little possibility of turning back the clock and returning to the world of ‘the noble savage’. The arterial current is relentless.

Series: MIMOSA

Date: 2020

Location: Nganmarriyanga, NT

Panels: 3 +1

Dimensions: 4 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) Medium: cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Framed



I was isolated from face to face contact with anyone in Darwin for several months - sitting out the expected plague effects of COVID 19. To survive and keep sane, I had only my weaving, a small apartment on the third floor with a view towards the harbour, and delivered food. This may not sound problematic but my isolation dictated no actual human contact.

However, eventually, I discovered that I liked my own company. Happily sipping a 'Great Northern' beer, I had uninterrupted weaving time. Who knew? I took the curving pattern of MIMOSA from the local flora printed on my tropical attire. I explored simplifying colours, using positive and negative space alone to create drama and movement... and incidentally, greatly extended my weaving skills.

Series: REPRISE

Date: 2021

Location: Maryborough, VIC

Panels

: 6

Dimensions: 6 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) Medium: cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Finished DETAIL



Soon enough, I was back home. It seemed appropriate to summarize the remote tapestries themselves taking one design from each series; then, in a series itself, using neutral colours, inserted a one sixth strip of the overall design size and then, added 'hieroglyphics' using black and a pop of colour to the original designs. I was also sifting and sorting through my remote teaching experiences as a whole.

This set of six (6) finished tapestries later seemed too 'clever' and contrived, to me. They were busy and complicated – not at all a summary, as how I had pictured them. Yet upon reflection, they do reflect the interplay of unthinkable, unsolvable stresses and gargantuan power grabs at work in my difficult job, teaching away from my home.

Series: OBTUSE

Date: 2022-23

Location: Maryborough, VIC / Billiluna, NT

Panels: 6

Dimensions: 6 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.6cmD) **Medium:** cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers **U/Framed**



OBTUSE is my continuing attempt to simplify the weaving design and colours in order to expand some of the best qualities of weaving.....texture over time. My criteria being 1) to use a parameter of only two colours per panel – in varying shades and tones; and 2) to create a four cornered shape with the same perimeter on each panel, using the same closed length of string but securing it at differing points on each background.

Some shapes seemed more pleasing to me than others, but I wanted to work somehow within my newest set of guidelines.

Each of the four 'corners' alludes to a continuing supportive, though at times obtuse, weekly connection with my three sisters (no brothers) over the fifty (50) years that we have lived in three (3) different countries. After my parents passed, it was truly an unknown to see if we sisters would stay close. Happily, we stayed on very good terms for many years - respectful, sympathetic and supportive.

Alternate titles to this series is HEADSPACE A – F. In this iteration, the enclosed finite shapes set in simple tactile backgrounds represent 'an ordered world of logical cause and effect'. This well-arranged simplicity will never be a reality. I have experienced this certainty in the raising of a family of six (6) children and now, by being involved in their adult lives as they make their own way in life, and by having the lived experience of my own aging body. Life is not ordered. The future is unknowable and uncertain.

Series: OBLIQUE

Date: 2023

Location: Billiluna, WA

Panels: 6

Dimensions: 6 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) **Medium:** cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers **U/Framed**



At this time, coincidentally, I suffered a severe inflammation caused by the COVID virus. Overnight, I suddenly become completely deaf. I was forced to cancel my overseas trip to visit my sisters.

I travelled back in Victoria and duly had an emergency ear operation to try to restore some of my hearing. My glaucoma, another health concern, had continued to advance but I was given a temporary reprieve on needing an implant. Then, I decided to return to the same school and very remote teaching for an additional term in 2023. Meanwhile, my sisters enjoyed their three (3) sister reunion. My husband was also in the USA for an extended period, supporting his ailing and aging father at this time.

I felt like an outlier – and this was indeed so, physically. But keenly, I also felt cut-off from my usual support group and culture. So, I threw myself into creative output. It was in this *space* (Peitsch, 2007) that I developed OBLIQUE. I ‘obliquely’ responded to the situations affecting me, abstractly and indirectly - with the intent to conceal, weaving my viewpoint as a form of mental processing – not revelation. The figurative definition of oblique well suits my overall intention to be furtive.

Additionally, designwise if something is oblique, it demonstrates slanting positions or directions. It was no problem to create such designs by simply carving off a corner of the quadrangles I used in OBTUSE. This is a good metaphor for how I saw myself in the bigger picture at this time – peripheral and extractable. Thus, the designs for OBLIQUE are derived from slicing off - as if surgically removing - one ‘corner’ of the enclosed area of each design. Strangely by simply removing a corner, however, led to wonderful design possibilities! It is as if I had to withdraw from the social strictures I had set myself before I could see the expansiveness of the world waiting for me to further unravel.

Series: RESOLVE

Date: 2023-24

Location: Maryborough, VIC

Panels
: 6/12

Dimensions: 12 Panels x (200cmW x 300cmH x 0.3cmD) **Medium:** cotton warp, mixed fibre weft - linen, cotton, wool, acrylic fibers U/Finished **DETAIL**



ABOVE: detail of six (6) of the twelve (12) tapestries in this series

Back in Maryborough again for the last three months of 2023, I was able to plan the final set of tapestries for the exhibition. Recovering from major eye surgery and a second bout of COVID, it was some time – and resolve - before I could begin weaving this set. Considering FEARLESSNESS....as both an attitude and experience, the twelve (12) letters suited twelve (12) designs. Using text in my textile work is no great leap, as it has regularly featured in my art practice since 2000.

Overall Challenges in Creating This Collection of Fibre-based Art

Community Input – Inconsistent

Tones – Too tricky for me to discern easily.

Fibre Inconsistencies – Not using regulated Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW) weft, but rather found fibres, much experimentation was required.

Tensions and pressures from my 'day job'...classroom teaching all ages, all years, all situations!

Deadlines – Dictated by school terms; tight travel and weight considerations were problematic due to flights in helicopters and very small planes.

Lack of any local resources – 'If I didn't bring it, it was not there!' Postal delivery took longer than the terms of my contract ie. Three (3) months!

Mental Attitude – Though I chose to weave to keep a good mental outlook, at times my weaving did not progress because I did not have a good mental outlook.

References

(1972). Retrieved from National Archives of Australia: <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/first-australians/other-resources-about-first-australians/wave-hill-walk>

Does the Past Still Exist Somewhere. (2019, June). Retrieved from CLEFS Digital Edition #1:
<https://www.cea.fr/english/lists/staticfiles/clefs/sciencehistory/does-the-past-still-exist-somewhere.html>

Echo, U. (2006). *The Island of the Day before*. Batavia, IL: houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Merton, T. (2002). *No Man is an Island*. Boston: Mariner Books.

O'Donohue, J. (1998). *Eternal Echoes: Exploring Our Hunger To Belong*. Auckland: Bantam Press.

Peitsch, F. (2007). *The Immortal Now*. Melbourne: PhD Exegesis.

Renkin, Ryan, Collette. (2006). *Art and Soul Flossie Peitsch*. Melbourne: Macmillan Publishers Australia.

Tillich, P. (1957b, p. 41, 43). *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Yale University Press.