

COCKPIT ARTS

Rita Parniczky

- *Architectural Textiles and Installations*



Tipped as one of the standout stars of her generation by The Worshipful Company of Weavers, Rita Parniczky is winning awards and fans alike with her large-scale art installations that defy conventional weaving techniques. Using unusual materials like nylon monofilament, Rita weaves extraordinary x-ray like pieces that play with light and shadow. With exhibitions at COLLECT Open and work in the permanent collection of the V&A, she is successfully making a name for herself in the art world.

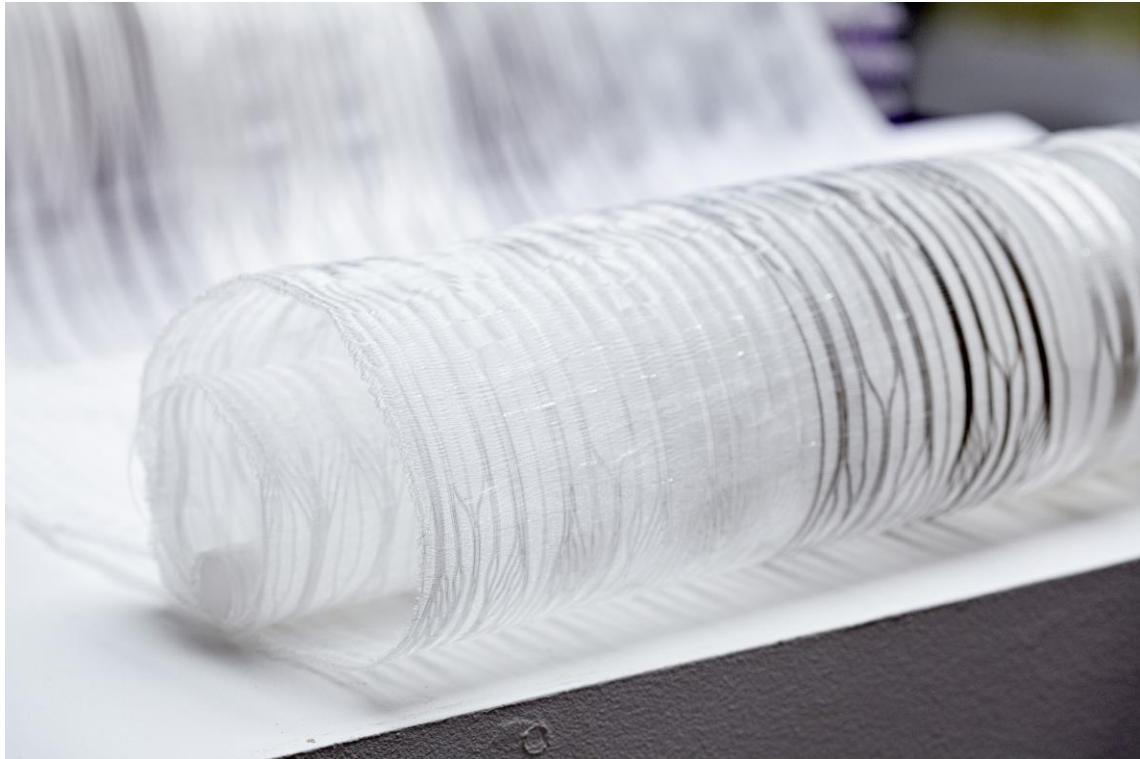
Rita graduated as a weaver from Central St Martins in 2009 and spent a couple of years working part time as a fabric consultant for Heals while pursuing her own practice at home. She needed to move to a larger space in order to develop her work, but didn't yet have the confidence to go it alone. "I chose Cockpit Arts mainly because of the business support you get here," she says. "I wasn't ready to move into a studio with no support. Cockpit seemed the ideal place for a complete beginner like myself."

She arrived at Cockpit's Deptford incubator in 2011, a move that allowed Rita to work on a much bigger scale. Her loom is now three times the size of the one she used as an undergraduate. Space is very important to her work and in a very real sense her move to Cockpit has allowed her to grow creatively and expand the boundaries of her chosen art form.

Rita says she didn't initially tap into the business support on offer. "Weaving on a large scale comes with different challenges," she explains. "I needed to spend time learning how to use a much larger loom and figuring out what I wanted to do. Was I a weaver, a designer or an artist?" She feels it's important that, although there is help on hand at Cockpit Arts, studio holders are left to develop at their own pace.

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In her early days at Deptford, Rita experimented with small-scale batch production, but she quickly realised it wasn't for her. "I wanted my work to have a life beyond simply being a product that is made and sold," she explains. "I'm really interested in what happens with the work once it is installed - how different locations and different light sources change the visual appearance and the viewer's response to my work."



It was through one-to-ones with Madeleine Furness, Cockpit's Business Development Manager that Rita started to get support making this transition from weaver to artist. "I feel Madeleine in particular really understands my work," says Rita. Initially they focused on time management and the need to prioritise research. They put together an action plan to build a network of contacts in the world of fine art and architectural textiles. Together, Madeleine and Rita worked on proposals for corporate curators, bids and applications. "I often find it difficult to put my ideas down on paper," explains Rita. "It's a really important skill for an artist to master in order to apply for exhibitions and funding and reach the right clients and collaborators."

In 2014, under Madeleine's guidance, Rita put together a proposal for the Costume and Textile Association's 25th anniversary exhibition in Norwich Cathedral; she went on to win Best in Show and First Prize in the Wall Hung Pieces category. Other successful applications included COLLECT Open 2015 and an Arts Council grant. In 2015, she was nominated by Crafts Council CEO Rosy Greenlees for The Arts Foundation Fellowship for Materials Innovation. Rita had several one-to-ones with Madeleine to work on her application. She was successfully shortlisted for the next stage, and ended up winning the runners-up award. This led to further opportunities with the Crafts Council, including being selected for their own business support programme, Hothouse 2015, and exhibiting at Design Days in Dubai this coming March. Rita has also been recently announced as the 2016 winner of The Perrier-Jouet Art Salon Prize.

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Rita's studio is now based in Cockpit's Holborn incubator, a move that has helped with her commute from home in north Kensington. Her new workshop has also afforded new creative possibilities. "The space I work in is really important to me," she explains. "Moving to Holborn has made it possible for me to study my work in sunlight as the studio I have chosen has excellent afternoon light streaming through the skylight."

She feels there are lots of extra benefits to having a studio at Cockpit, in particular citing the private studio tours. "I have had to get used to presenting my work to very different groups of people, from design students to patrons of the arts," says Rita. "It's been a great opportunity to build my communication skills."

Rita has grown and developed in extraordinary ways as an artist over the last four years. As Richard J. Humphries, MBE FRSA Upper Bailiff of The Worshipful Company of Weavers, says: "Just once or twice in a generation there is a designer who immediately you can recognise as a person who has the loom craft, the inspiration, and the courage to push the boundaries of weave to a new and innovative level. Rita Parniczky is that talented exceptional designer who combines the meticulous attention to detail and originality, which is revealed in her perfection on the loom." No wonder then that she recently won the Peter Collingwood Trust Award for 'pushing the boundaries of her craft in totally new and exciting directions'.



Rita is determined to keep pushing these boundaries, and is positively bursting with ideas that she is eager to bring to fruition. "I'd love to work in collaboration with architects and lighting designers, bringing together different areas of expertise," she enthuses. "I also love the idea of inviting people to a gallery at certain times of day so they can experience the visual transformation of my work as light touches it at different times. I have lots of ideas. I just need to find a location that is big enough to display them in!"

Photographs by Alun Callender