

December 7, 1931 – October 31, 2019

Archie Brennan was born in Roslin, Scotland in 1931. At the age of 15 he began studying drawing at the Edinburgh College of Art. Through these classes he met apprentices from the Dovecot Studios (Edinburgh Tapestry Co.) and a year later embarked on a six year weaving apprenticeship at the Dovecot. Archie completed a degree from the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) in 1962, served as Director of the Dovecot Studios from 1962 to 1977, and during the same period of time founded and headed the Department of Tapestry and Fibre Arts at ECA. At the Dovecot Archie designed tapestries to be woven in the workshop and he worked with other artists as they created designs for the Dovecot. He wove as a studio weaver and on his own works.

In 1977 Archie was elected Chairman of the British Arts Council and President of the Scottish Society of Artists. In 1975 he moved to Australia, where he consulted on the formation of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop. He later served as consultant on the new National Arts School in Papua, New Guinea and led the design team for the Parliament building, employing mosaic, wood, metal, textiles and painting. In 1981 He was appointed Officer of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II, for contribution to the arts. In 1993 he moved to New York with his partner Susan Martin Maffei.

Archie's tapestries are marked by a sense of humor that involves word play and commentary on popular culture, by a reverence for historical tapestries grounded in the technical givens of tapestry weaving, and by an insatiable curiosity expressed by his use of the phrase "What if...?". Throughout his career, Archie wove over 500 tapestries.

Archie was also a passionate advocate for tapestry - writing, lecturing and teaching. His work and viewpoint have influenced the entire field of contemporary tapestry. Archie championed not only technical excellence, but also an attitude of exploration that was grounded in weaving itself. He encouraged weavers to develop their designs keeping tapestry's structural grid of warp and weft in mind. His emphasis on process was reflected in his propensity to see weaving as a journey up the warp, a conversation between the weaver, the technical realities of weaving, and the unfolding image on the loom. He championed weaving on upright looms, from the front of the tapestry, for a more direct and interactive experience translating the image into tapestry.

Archie's love of weaving was infectious. He celebrated the many amateurs in the field, finding joy in the idea that across the world, weavers were tap, tap, tapping away on their looms. He freely shared his design for a copper pipe loom that could be made cheaply and easily, whose components could be found in any hardware store, and that could be broken apart to fit in a suitcase.

Archie was an avid spokesman for small format tapestry. Fighting against attitudes that tapestry must be large, his perfectly scaled miniature works that call attention to subtle differences in materials, the structure of the cloth and weaving techniques, demonstrated how vibrant and

compelling small tapestries can be.

To read more about Archie Brennan and see images of his work, visit the following websites:

<http://www.brennan-maffei.com/>

https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex_ata/archie-brennan/introduction/