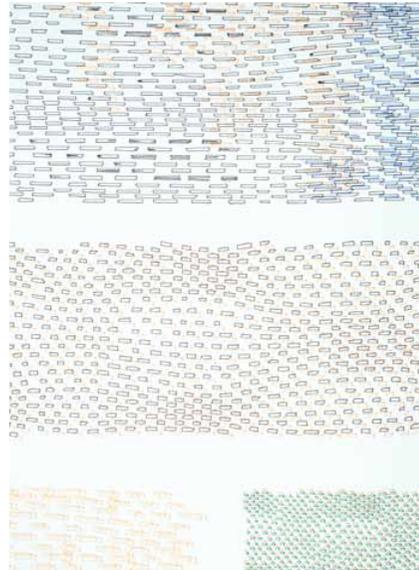


RIGHT / Samanidou combines weaving and drawing, two traditional creative skills that she aligns with modern digital design tools.

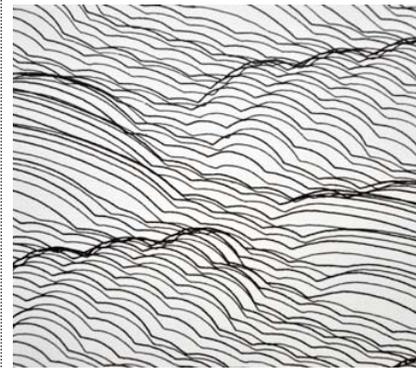
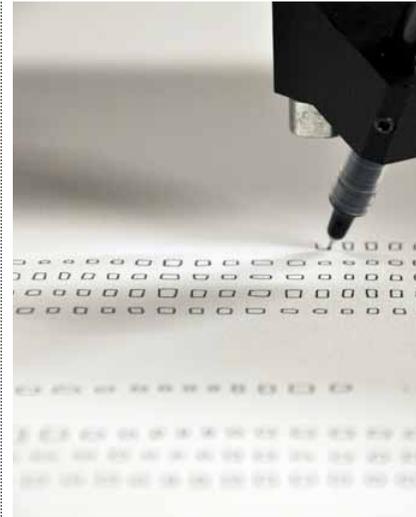


ISMINI
SAMANIDOU

When it comes to textile innovation, award-winning designer Ismini Samanidou is one of the first names that comes to mind. Known for creating new and original methods, London-based Samanidou combines traditional craft skills and organic materials with digital design tools. The new modes of design she creates are as sustainable as they are exciting. 'I am intrigued by the possibilities that result when craft and digital technologies are combined,' Samanidou says. 'They often result in works that are made without wasting resources, and are fabricated more efficiently, making them last longer. Bringing the designer-maker closer to the kinds of digital and industrial technologies that can produce artistic works creates a better outcome.'

In her own practice, Samanidou uses digital technologies to relay information about different materials to the production process, and to sync the exchanges of data between them. 'The techniques I develop wholly integrate digital technologies with designer-maker practice,' Samanidou explains. 'I mainly use a computerized Jacquard loom for weaving my designs, and even though it is an industrial machine, I use a traditional weavers' making method of changing the designs and materials intuitively as I am weaving.'

The textiles that Samanidou produces are mainly super-sized works made for exhibitions and art collectors, and they are often architectural in scale. Samanidou's extraordinary 16 x 3m (53 x 9ft) 'Timeline'



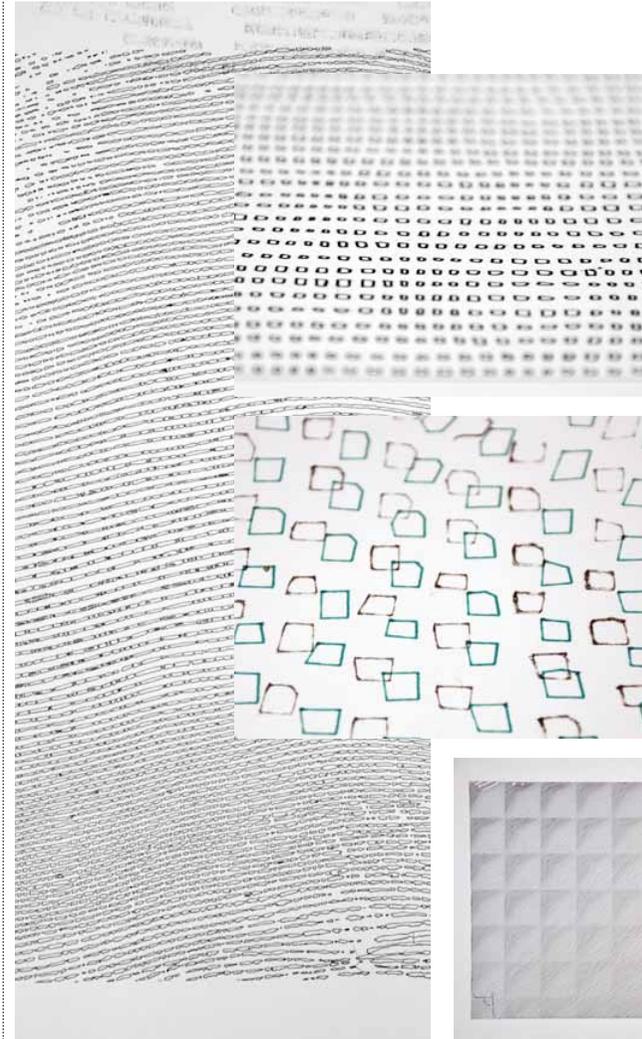
ABOVE / Together with designer Gary Allison, Samanidou explores the extent to which weaving could be combined with the milling techniques that shape wood. The process begins with digital drawings, as shown above. The machine can create single geometric shapes or overlay several, or draw contours and curves.

installation, for example, which was a site-specific piece crafted in London's Jerwood Gallery, is among the largest textiles ever exhibited in Britain. The installation was commissioned for the Jerwood Contemporary Makers exhibition in 2009, where it spanned the full length of the gallery, dividing it into several different areas. 'The project pushed the boundaries of what could be created with a Jacquard loom,' Samanidou says. 'The textile was so big that it had architectural proportions, which was a challenge to create using a loom that normally produces runs of fashion fabrics or interior textiles.' Samanidou's perseverance paid off, resulting in a pioneering textile that portends a new relationship between textiles and architecture. 'The textile illustrated the story of the space itself, weaving a space within the space,' she says.

Although Samanidou's work breaks new ground, the time-honoured weaving techniques she uses situate her work among the most enduring craft forms. Samanidou considers weaving to be one of the most sustainable techniques used today, and points out that its longevity and potential to create works with high production values sets it apart from other methods. 'Sustainability is an important aspect of my practice in terms of creating woven work which will be valued, preserved and passed on to future generations,' Samanidou says. 'When working with students, I communicate the importance of considering the materials and processes involved in making work, and encourage students to think about how the work will exist in the future.'

In 2010, Samanidou teamed up with product designer Gary Allison to explore the extent to which weaving could be combined with the milling techniques that shape wood. Samanidou and Allison replicated woven structures in wood, creating a series of milled timber pieces that replicate woven fabrics such as twill, which they titled 'Woven Wood.' 'We used digital design tools to translate my 2-D drawings into 3D data, which was then downloaded electronically by a 3D milling machine to produce wood panels,' Samanidou says. The designs that resulted are used as architectural panels for both interior and exterior applications.

Samanidou says she will continue to fuse hand-craftsmanship with digital methods in future, planning to use hand looms alongside milling machines, and digital design tools in conjunction with watercolour brushes and ink pens. 'In my own work and in my collaborative projects, I am driven by an investigation into how weaving can exist within architectural space,' Samanidou says. 'I believe this creates a new value for weaving, highlighting its beauty, longevity and sustainability, while creating works that can be enjoyed by generations to come.'



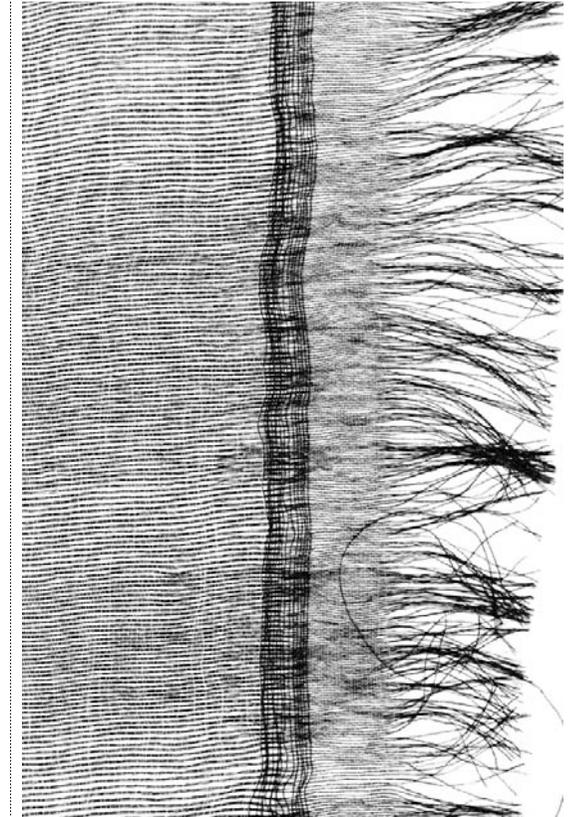
ALL IMAGES / Samanidou and Alison's work includes textiles, wood and computer numerically-controlled drawings on paper, shown here, which are studies for the works Samanidou and Alison produce. A narrative behind the work references ephemera and the impermanence of the man made. The marks on paper shown here recreate the texture and patina of cloth and are sometimes displayed along with the textiles or wooden pieces they relate to.



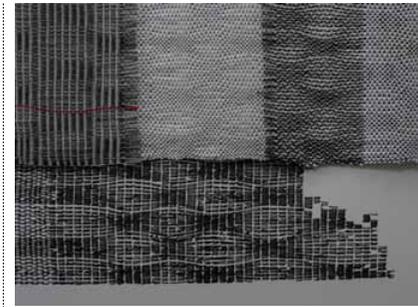
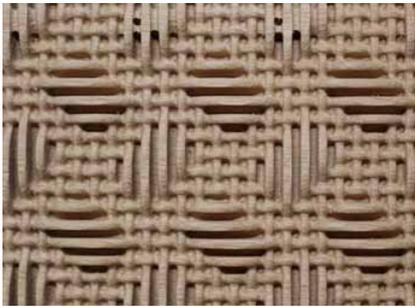
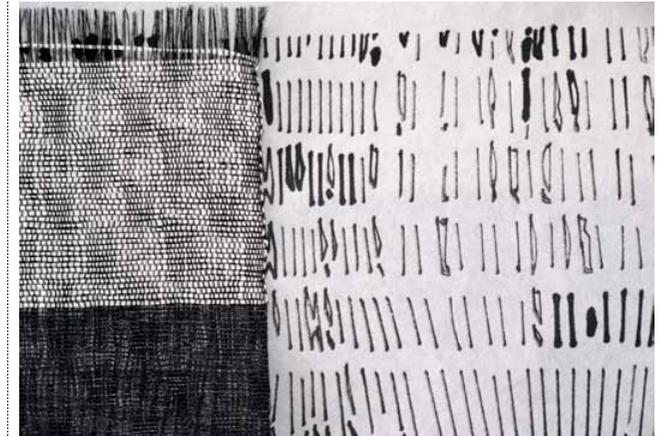
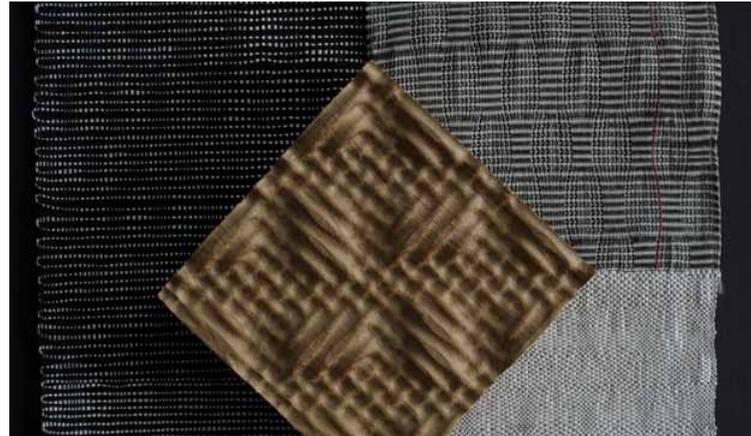
ABOVE & RIGHT / Samanidou brought these reeds back from Bangladesh where she exchanged skills with local craftspeople while visiting. The reeds and textiles made with them were later exhibited in England to show how the unique combination of crafts, designs, textiles and opportunities in Bangladesh can inspire sustainable practices among British designers and makers.



Samanidou combines traditional craft skills and natural materials with digital design tools to create new modes of design that are as sustainable as they are exciting.



TOP LEFT & ABOVE / These textiles were hand-woven using the bamboo reeds used by the local weavers of Tangail, who are well-known for their jacquard fabrics. Samanidou introduced the technique to her students in England, reviving interest in handmade fabrics.



THIS PAGE / In collaboration with designer Gary Allson, Samanidou used digital making methods to translate traditional weave structures into timber surfaces using CNC milled processes. Inspired by weaves such as twill, herringbone and hopsack, Samanidou and Allson combined wood and textiles to create new surfaces. The designs that resulted shown here, can be produced on doors, tables, screens or window panels to give them a unique look and an innovative texture.

ABOVE & LEFT / Samanidou integrates digital technologies with designer-maker practice. Her handmade drawings are translated into textiles on industrial looms. Many of her designs are based on photography that she translates into textures and motifs.