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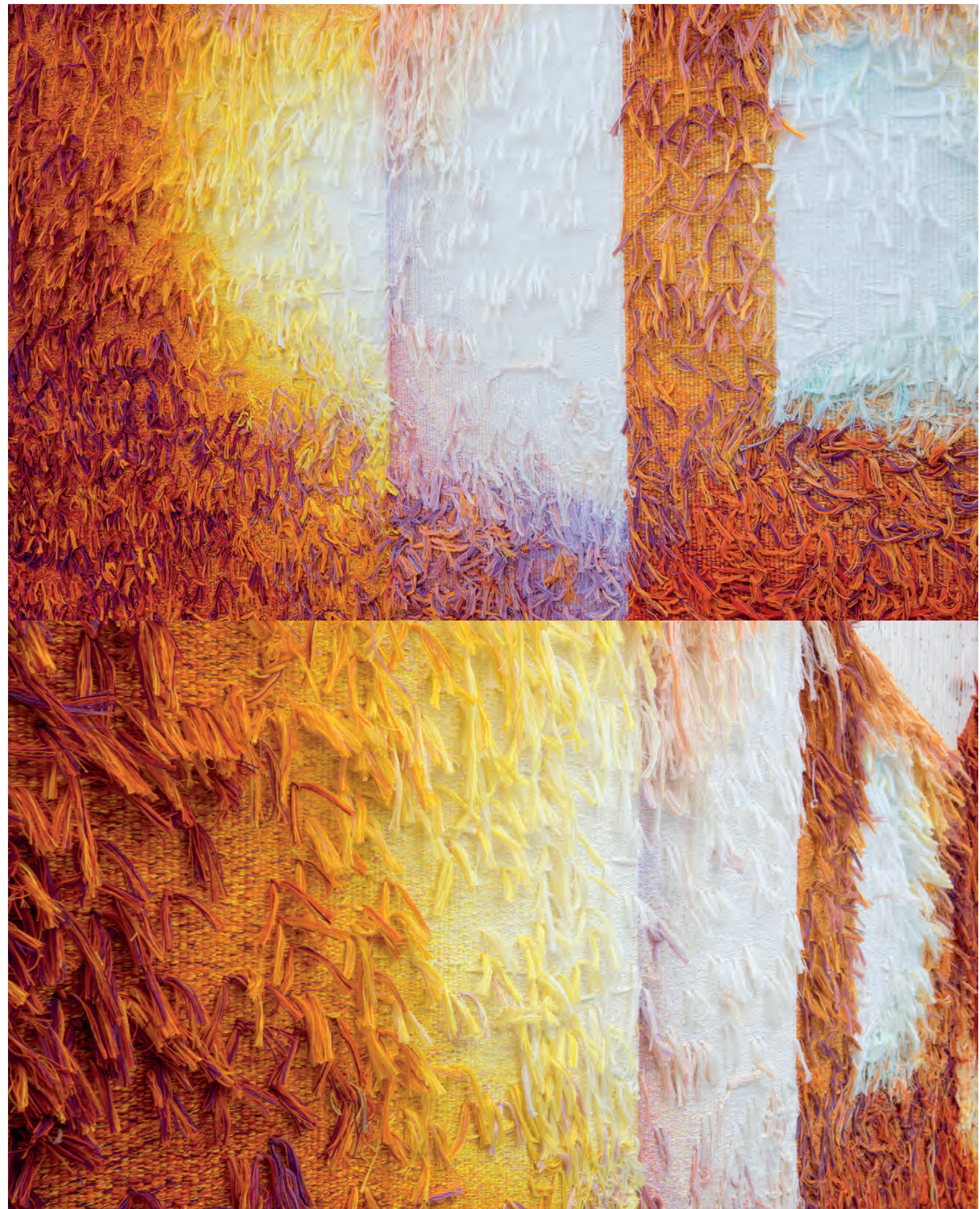
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A WOVEN 'ELSEWHERE'

Wardle's winning entry to the inaugural Tapestry Design Prize for Architects has been rehung for *Melbourne Now*. The perspectival study is woven to play with representations of light, depth and texture.

Architect Wardle
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Photography Jeremy Weihrauch





All images: Wardle, woven by Chris Cochius, Pamela Joyce, Jennifer Sharpe, Cheryl Thornton, *Perspectives on a Flat Surface*, 2016, wool, cotton, 1.92 x 3.84 m.

Perspectives on a flat surface (2016) is an impressive tapestry hanging in the NGV Australia at Federation Square, as part of the exhibition *Melbourne Now*. At 1.92m x 3.84m it is almost the dimensions of a wall itself, and although it looks as if though it was made for the Ian Potter Centre it was in fact designed as a competition entry for the inaugural Tapestry Design Prize for Architects (TDPA) in 2015. Organised by the Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW), the TDPA is an initiative led by architect and former chairperson of the ATW, Peter Williams, to commemorate the relationship between architectural space and the art of tapestry design.

Led by Wardle and woven by Chris Cochius, Pamela Joyce, Jennifer Sharpe and Cheryl Thornton at the Australian Tapestry Workshop in Melbourne on Kulin Nation Country, this extraordinary piece was supported by Judith Neilson AM, who gifted it to the NGV Collection. Woven from multiple strands of cotton in tones of yellow, orange, pink, white and purple, it warmly invites the audience 'inside' the work via a series of picture planes that project out towards the audience. Each plane multiplies, shifting perspectives across one wall while allowing another to exaggerate the proportions of the

space. The partial views and variant transmissions of light within each inverted chamber suggest a place that is 'elsewhere'.

In anticipation of Denton Corker Marshall's new Australian Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice, the 2015 brief was to design a tapestry that would grace the 'white cube' interior. Wardle responded by referencing their own exchange between Australia and Italy. Wardle's experience visiting the Teatro Olimpico and encountering Vincenzo Scamozzi's trompe l'oeil street scene set design during his travels in 1982 left a lasting impression on the architect. Inspired by the composition techniques employed in each variant perspective, which achieved a performative quality within the space, Wardle noticed how they distorted perceptions of scale and distance. Furthermore, he was interested in the relay of space perception through the perspective of an individual, enhancing the auditory experience. This exploration led to a digital reconstruction of an inverted version of the trompe l'oeil chambers. The resulting digital render, composed of fine pixels that resembled a ray trace, served as the entry for the tapestry design prize and the reference

image for the weavers – Cochius, Joyce, Sharpe and Thornton.

Employing the traditional Gobelin technique, they meticulously wove together layers of weft (horizontal threads) over warps (vertical threads), transforming Wardle's memory of an experience into a tactile and tangible masterpiece.

Tapestry is not in the usual remit of architectural representation in the 21st century. And yet this woven sketch achieves a tactility, at the hands of many skilled workers, that does have an architectural quality. Reflecting on the relation between architects and weavers, Wardle said: "We thought, maybe we could combine what we do as architects – space-making and the performance of space – and see if we could project that into a form that could be made into a tapestry."

Looking at this work, it is easy to imagine warmth, softness and weight in the 'elsewhere' space of the white cube. U

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