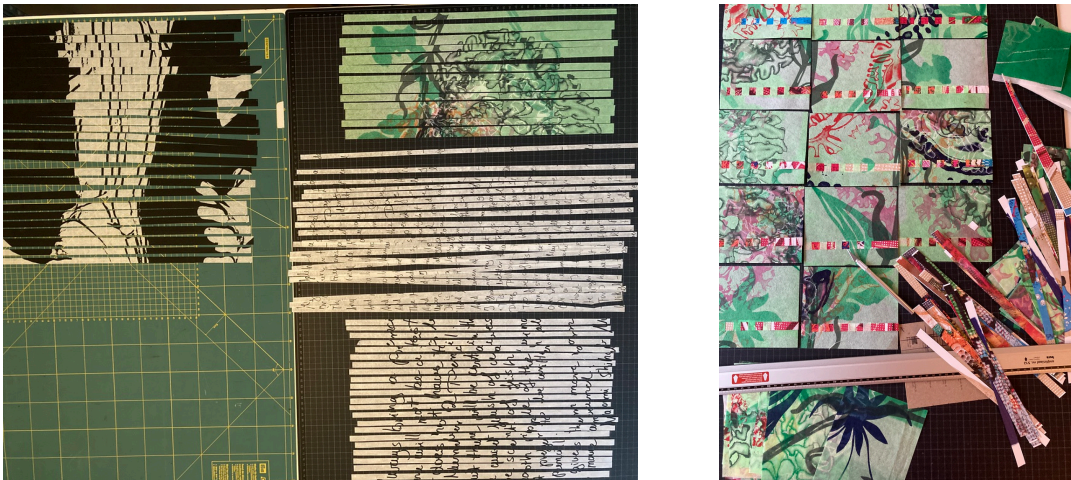


Graphic elements in weaving and screen printing, a talk in the autumn, 2023.



An animated conversation with Monika Auch. She participates in the AGA LAB book project 'The sweet murmur of leaves', is editor of kM and was a board member of the AGA LAB. A talk about artistry, her new book "Stitch Your Brain" and the artist's book project.

M.A.: I have been in the Netherlands since 1975, studied medicine at the University of Amsterdam and worked as a doctor. During my studies I took weaving lessons and started the evening course at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in 1996. In 2000 I graduated with a collection of three-dimensional, pleated fabrics that were woven on the Dornier machines in the Textile Museum Tilburg and on a computer-controlled hand loom. I also showed graphic work, a series of A1 size screen prints entitled 'Romance.'

Q: A special combination. How did you come to this choice?

M.A.: In a fabric, a grid is created by the various weaves and crossings of threads (warp and weft), which has similarities with screen printing. I investigated this and the mixing of colors in both techniques extensively during the training.

Q: You stopped working as a doctor?

M.A.: Both professions, in addition to a family, require full commitment. In other words: You can't dance at two weddings! During my medical studies, I acquired a lot of knowledge and skills that are useful in my current profession as a visual artist. For example, by copying the structures of anatomical specimens, I learned to look closely and understand how organic structures and the three-dimensional body are constructed. In addition, observation and good communication are essential tools in both fields.

Pieter Keune (1946-2022), founder and former editor-in-chief of the trade magazine kM, asked me in 2008 to strengthen the editorial team. I find interviewing colleagues in their studios and writing in clear language fun and inspiring. I am very interested in creative processes in art, especially the combination of handicrafts and innovative techniques. I regularly visit symposia and participate in workshops and specialist training for myself and to report 'hands-on' on about techniques and insights for our readers.

Q: You often work as an 'Artist in Residence'.

M.A.: To develop my work, I worked in Scandinavia and Ireland. The location of the residence influences you, provided you are open to it. The influence of a different environment on, for example, my choice of color is interesting. This summer I was in Iceland. The light there has a vibrant, living quality, so beautiful. I made transparent works that reflect the light. In comparison, the work I made in Norway is quite dark. The steep rock walls, the forest, lots of rain and the deep blue fjords created a dark mood - reminding of the music of Grieg or the paintings of Munch. In the

work made in Denmark you can see the blond, waving cornfields and the dark stubble after the harvest.

Q: Are you also inspired by folk art, the designs, the stories?

M.A.: I visit the museums, galleries and make contacts with local artists. In Iceland I learned the Glit technique and wove with the famous Lopi wool, which has a beautifully soft, natural color palette. In the Glit technique you also see a kind of grid, a geometric, graphic pattern. It is very laborious and has its own rhythm, once you get the hang of it.

Q: Your book 'Stitch Your Brain' has been published. How did the book come about?

M.A.: The book was presented by the publisher JapSamBooks at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2023.

Since the dawn of digitalization, swiping, scrolling and tapping have taken over many manual actions. The craft lesson has been removed from the school curriculum. What is the impact of this impoverishment of skills on the craft, on our well-being? How does hand-brain creativity actually work? In 2013 I started a research inspired by scientific models. The aim is to substantiate the importance of creative making with data and arguments in order to profile crafts and combat material illiteracy.

Publisher Eleonor JapSam thought it was a fascinating project at the intersection of disciplines, a dialogue between art and science. She made a match with graphic designer Joost Grootens, who brought all the information together clearly. The team consisted of a photographer, designers, translators, text editors and printers. I wanted the 118 brains from the 'Amsterdam Brain collection', the results of the study and interesting articles in the book. Wouter Stelwagen took fantastic photos. A young expert in technical art history, Mané van Veldhuizen analyzed every brain for technique and use of materials. I am very happy with the cover of the book. It is lined with metal rough mesh, immediately the sense of touch is activated when you hold it in your hands. The production was made possible by subsidies from funds and foundations.

Q: You have created a special book for the AGA LAB project in the form of a long fabric that can be rolled up from two sides. It reminds me of papyrus scrolls, but also of a Japanese form of the rolled Moku Hanga.

M.A.: The design of the stylized flowers arose from the preliminary research for the "Stitch Your Brain" project at the Brain Institute in Amsterdam. The MRI scans of my brain made there were converted into rasterized film and printed on top of each other as collages in iris technique with a beautiful color gradient. The title of the series is: 'My brain as a flower'.

For the design of the book, I wanted to emphasize the physical contact with a book. The prints are cut into strips and woven together with paper yarn as a two-meter-long scroll. The scroll has two sides: the colorful screen-printed side and the back, woven in muted, natural colors with paper yarns. Spreading it out from both sides creates movement in shape and color. The graphic structure of the fabric is visible at the same time as the colorful front. Changing the colors from light to dark shades is a reference to the changing of the seasons, the theme of this book project.

The conversation shifts to the importance of graphic workshops.

M.A.: There is a revival of graphics. For example, in the basement of the Rietveld Academy, next to the typesetting shop and on one corridor with the screen printing shop and other graphic workshops, is the bookbinding shop, abbreviated and known as BB. The workshop is almost always fully booked. The workshop allows the production of small editions of publications. It is a meeting place of artists who exchange experiences and ideas and collaborate. BB is literally and figuratively a connecting place, a hub in the Rietveld bubble. Here the boundaries of the concept of bookbinding are explored and pushed, just like in the AGA LAB book project.