



Lilian Lee

Winner of Award for New Weavers 2023

I was born in Taiwan and moved to New Zealand in 2011. We moved to a rural area in 2019 where we were surrounded by plenty of possums and had some possum fur at home. I had zero experience with spinning, knitting or weaving. Out of curiosity, I went to the Far North Spinners and Weavers Group with Cornelia, who is a weaver, to see whether I could do something with them. I subsequently joined the group in May 2021.

For my first project I started with a warping board borrowed from Cornelia who showed me how to use it, and a table loom borrowed from the group. Meanwhile I read some books from the library and also watched some YouTube videos. I chose crochet cotton which was easy to find in the local wool shop. Then the weaving journey began. It was not easy but somehow I felt pleased after I had finished my first project. Then came the COVID-19 lockdown and everyone had to stay at home. During this period, the club had Zoom meetings and I continued weaving. I had no idea whether I was on the right track or not. Eventually we would return to regular club meetings.

What wonderful news when life was back to normal. At the first meeting I showed my woven projects and my mentor Agnes gave me positive feedback. She introduced and organised meetings for new weavers at her studio in 2022. It was superb. We learned about Fiberworks software and dyeing, and discussed how we can correct our weaving mistakes. Agnes was always helpful and supportive. At one stage she suggested that I should restart the warping as the tension was a problem on the loom. She demonstrated how to set up the loom. It was so impressive and it taught me how important the right tension is.

I have learned from the group and weavers meetings. I am a visual person and like to see whether a pattern speaks to me or not. Most of the time I didn't know whether I was ready for certain advanced weaving techniques so I would discuss this with Agnes and she would tell me whether I should wait or go for it. Colour plays a crucial role in my weaving projects. Sometimes I spend some time sitting in front of the computer and come up with something which I sleep on and look at it again the next day to see whether it still speaks to my heart. The same process can continue for more than a week until I am happy with the final version.

The *Snowflake Twill Scarf* was the first time I tried fine yarn. I figured out that the thickness of the crochet cotton yarn would make the project too massive and prolong the pattern so I decided to try fine yarn with the same pattern. The transition was not so easy, especially when I put the mercerised cotton yarns 2/20 warp on the table loom. They are delicate, in comparison with crochet cotton yarns. I love the snowflake twill pattern and tried it with different purple tones to let the pattern pop out.



The huck lace pattern grabbed my attention at the first sight for my *Light-weight Poncho* and I was inspired by the multiple pattern combinations. A poncho is normally woven with wool or something thicker but I thought a light-weight poncho was a nice option for early morning and evening summer wear in New Zealand. The two woven pieces were different lengths. I sewed them together then added store-bought lace which I dyed with a similar colour tone to give a different lace texture around the neck. The fine mercerised cotton yarn 2/60 was quite a challenge – the thickness of it is similar to sewing thread, so it is very fine. In this project a lot of heddles were needed on shafts one and two. Fortunately I realised the heddles needed to be readjusted before I started warping up the loom. I had to stay focused all the time.



The *Name Draft Woven Piece with Leather* handbag started with some linen-mixed yarns bought in a charity store, which I thought of weaving with cotton to make a handbag. My mentor suggested that I could choose a name draft overshot. After a couple of times trying it in the software, I got a more complicated pattern than I planned to have. I then added extra ends per inch to make the structure stronger for a handbag. I am always very interested in mixed media, and leather is one of my favourite materials to work with. For me it is a perfect match for this handbag project. The woven piece is the focal point of the handbag.

Agnes encouraged me to enter for the Award for New Weavers. This was something I was not likely to do on my own as I am not competitive. My concern was that I can't be productive because of daily chores but I was told that I should try to focus on what I can do, not what I can't. Based on this principle, I took up the challenge and gave it a try. I am glad I did it, not just because of the win but because I am satisfied with the weaving I undertook and what I learned from the process. This involves knowing what to weave, deciding on the pattern, calculating the materials to use, warping up the loom, weaving, finishing the cloth

and constructing the article if required. For the future I will continue to explore weaving. I would like to learn more different weaving structures, for example collapse and three dimensional weaving.

I am grateful for the guidance from my mentor Agnes and the members of the Far North Spinners and Weavers Group who supported and encouraged me on this journey. I would like to thank Creative Fibre for the opportunity to enter this award and for enabling new weavers to explore this craft.