



Myriam Balaÿ | France



· Myriam Balaÿ ·

Myriam Balaÿ is a maker. After graduating with a degree in industrial product design, Myriam entered the textile world and had memorable experiences in haute couture (Chanel, Dior,) designing textile products for the company “Du proche et du lointain” and serving as the co-founder and artistic manager of the Copirates brand.

Twenty years ago, she visited India where she had set up a weaving production for large textile pieces with a technique close to Ikat. The system allowed her to test a lot of things in terms of colors and materials. As an autodidact, Myriam was trained in weaving techniques and her pieces have been very successful. Today, Myriam

has changed tools and miniaturized her loom. “It’s portable. It’s convenient. I take it everywhere. I can even work on the train and in the car. These bracelets are like miniatures of these big pieces and they serve to create color palettes. But, ultimately, I weave as would any weaver who lives on the banks of the Nile River.”

One of the most striking features of her work is that it’s handmade. Everything has a story. Myriam’s newest endeavor is Bracelets Loom, launched in 2014 and sold internationally. In her home studio, her loom is set up, ready to weave her threads into one-of-a-kind creations.

1. You have designed textiles for fashion brands like Chanel and Dior. What's the most memorable creation you have ever made?

When collaborating with haute couture brands, I worked on material manufacturing and pattern design, rather than assembling and finishing the whole collections. And because of that, I don't think there is a piece of work that I consider memorable. What I got from such experience, even more memorable than the style work done on computers in Paris studio, is that all the prototyping work was done in the mountains of Forez (Loire), far from Paris. The whole team (graphic designer, weaver, haute couture trainee) settled in a Jacquard weaving workshop and I was then associated with the entire creative process on the loom. The team had an incredible choice of threads, a variety of colors and the ability to experiment without any restrictions. It was that kind of immersive work style, paired with many available materials and tools that made this experience beautiful. My goal there was essentially to work on Chanel's dresses. And now when I meet a woman who wears a Chanel dress, I tell myself that it may be made from a fabric that I helped to weave. It makes me happy and proud.



2. Could you please share with us the story of your Bracelets Loom? What or who inspires you to create them?

For weaving, I get inspiration from everything. Nature is important to me and it inspires me to complete all the photos I made during my study in fine arts. Nature is an infinite collection of colors, shapes and materials. When I mean nature, it can be a very broad thing. It can also be a corner of an urban landscape or a flower placed on a coffee table or a passing landscape on a train trip. It represents a reverie or a moment when we concentrate on the detail of an object. Flowers are one of my favorite subjects. I'm fortunate to have a chance to collaborate with a very beautiful magazine for a few years, so I can further emphasize and express my relationship with nature and flowers and colors.

Another great source of inspiration, especially for technique and know-how, is related to my Indian experience—the large abstract woven pieces and the materials. In India, I learned that everything is possible. It's that spirit that prevailed when I launched the LOOMS series. The idea was to create a miniature work on great Indian textile pieces. I've been working on woven collection for more than 20 years and it's like a link in



time and space. Initially, I didn't want to make a bracelet. The collection just naturally became a sort of fashion accessory and I knew it was necessary that this miniature work should have a function and meet future customers. I am not a pure dreamer: like all creators, I need my work to earn a living.

The pattern of the repetitive cross on the LOOMS refers to the first textile piece I wove in India. This cross is like a pooja to me. In India, when a weaving loom is installed and ready for use, the weaver says a prayer and makes ritual offerings (pooja) before operating it. To respect this rite, I made a cross on my LOOMS collections. The name of my bracelets comes simply from the English words of "loom" or "handloom."

3. The retro-styled colors of your bracelets is very special. Do you have a method for choosing color palettes?

To create my palettes of color, I study the collection of old threads that I sourced from various flea markets in France and Europe. I spend a lot of time looking for threads that match my work and meet my desires. I love doing it so very much. I find it easy to mix older threads with some new ones. I also match precious materials with raw materials, for example, jeans cloth with golden threads. The indigo LOOMS with golden threads is one of my classic bracelets.

4. Besides Bracelets Loom, you also work in different fields of art like making paper lamps. What's the commonality between paper art and fiber art?

Paper and fabric are both made of cotton. I only use paper made from cotton fiber for my lamps. I know how to use paper for my weavings very well because the two materials are naturally linked. And I use fabric all the time. This is a kind of material I particularly like because fabric matches almost everything. I like its flexibility and lightness. I'm glad to use such material for something light and bright like the lamps.

5. What has been your greatest challenge to date? How did you conquer it?

Making my customers understand that it takes time to weave my bracelets is one of my biggest challenges. I need a rather long manufacturing time because I do everything myself and I work alone. After all, I'm not a machine.

Traditional craft is sometimes misunderstood, although it's still appreciated by many. People must understand that for an artisan, there is no difference between life and work. It's a work life that we choose willingly, a life full of creation and happiness.



Bracelets LOOM

All Bracelets LOOM are handmade in Myriam Balay's studio in the south of France.

Tools: portable looms

Materials: linen, silk, cotton, hemp, vintage threads



^ Bracelet LOOM N° 96 (upper)

Tools: portable looms

Materials: linen, silk, cotton, hemp, vintage threads



“Traditional craft is sometimes misunderstood, although it’s still appreciated by many. People must understand that for an artisan, there is no difference between life and work.”