

## **Fields of the Future: Unraveling the Loom**

### **A Podcast by Bard Graduate Center**

#### **S2E7: Molly and Lara Manzanares from Tierra Wools—The Artistry Behind a Weaving Business and Workshop**

**Introduction:** This is Fields of the Future, an interview series by Bard Graduate Center. This season highlights the work of scholars, artists, and educators working with Indigenous textiles and textile history of the Southwestern United States and Mexico. Juliana Fagua-Arias speaks with Molly and Lara Manzanares from Tierra Wools about life as sheep ranchers, the musicality of weaving, and the intersection between business, artistry, and education.

**Juliana Fagua-Arias:** Hi, I'm Juliana Fagua Arias, I'm a designer, art historian, and curator. I'm currently a guest in New York City or Lenapehoking, the land of the Lenni Lenape. I'm thrilled to be talking today to Molly Manzanares, rancher and master hand weaver. And with Lara Manzanares, award-winning musician, songwriter, and weaver. Both of you are owners of the retail store, workshop, and gallery Tierra Wools. Hi, Molly and Lara. Thank you for joining us.

**Lara M:** Hi.

**Molly M:** Hi.

**LM:** Thanks for having us.

**MM:** Yeah. Thanks for having us. It's great to be here.

**J F-A:** So, my first question, could you tell us, what is Tierra Wools, how it was born and how it has changed over the years?

**MM:** Tierra Wools is a hand weaving, spinning and hand-dyeing workshop. And we started in the early '80s, as a group of people. My husband and I grew up in this, in the Chama Valley, which is a very beautiful area. It's about 7,200 feet elevation and, the winters are fairly severe here. And it's very rural. So, it's kind of an economically depressed area. But we grew up here and we wanted to stay here. And so, we started talking with neighbors and, and just looking at some of the resources that we have available and figuring out ways to try to make a living. We had some sheep at the time, we were raising sheep and we ended up organizing a nonprofit called Ganados del Valle, which is Flocks of the Valley. And one of the first things that we did was form a wool committee, and Tierra Wools was born from that committee. We started out with a group of people; we never were a co-op but we operated on cooperative principles a lot. And then in the early '90s, Tierra Wools separated from Ganados del Valle and became a for-profit worker owned. One of the really important ways that it changed in that period of time is that we didn't pay people to weave upfront, we changed to consignment. That changed the face of the business quite a bit. Some of them weavers who had been weaving before were not excited about that idea of weaving and then waiting for the product to sell before they could get paid.

**J F-A:** That actually leads me to my next question. I'm really curious about what was the weaving scene was like in New Mexico when Tierra Wools was founded, and how it differs or relates to the weaving scene today.

**MM:** There's a long history of weaving in the state in New Mexico, but in the early '80s, I would say there were small pockets of weaving still happening, in Chimayo and in Taos there were weavers. But I think weaving has been really cyclical and the market for weaving is very cyclical. It just depends on what's happening in the state because a lot of the sales that happen with weaving are based on tourism, so it changes a lot in that way.

**LM:** Weaving was a big trade, you know, a century or so ago. But that was sort of more down in Rio Abajo, like Albuquerque area, Albuquerque, Bernalillo. And then, I mean, even before that, before the Spanish conquistadores got here there was weaving going on. In the Pueblos, with cotton. So, weaving has just, it's been in New Mexico for a really, really long time. And there was a lot of weavings being produced and being traded down. And, uh, they would go to Saltillo, Mexico. And Taos was actually a, uh, another trade center for weavings and stuff. You can see some of the designs that we use here in this area now that have, you know, survived within families, I guess before Tierra Wools was started, even in this small area.

**MM:** Oh, definitely.

**LM:** Um, and you know, we have the Saltillo inspired designs of, you know, that come from Saltillo, Mexico. And where does the Vallero star come from?

**MM:** I think that's really from the Chimayo area. From the Española area.

**LM:** Yeah. So, there's a lot of tradition and it goes back really far. But a lot of it stayed within families, even when things weren't, uh, that great economically, you know? Right? Like when Tierra Wool started there were some folks who had weaving in their families at the very beginning of Tierra Wools too. Right?

**MM:** We have a couple of weavers here now who are descended from a line of weavers. But there was mostly, they were weaving for home use just right here in this area.

**J F-A:** And I'm curious because you mentioned tourism. How does tourism influence what Tierra Wools sells? How is that process of deciding what types of weavings, for example, what types of materials are you selling?

**MM:** Well, when we first started Tierra Wools, we had a lot of help from Rachel Brown, who was a Weaver in Taos. Her take on things was that everyone has an artist within them. And so, we went on a sales trip to New York City because she knew some people there. And I remember her telling me that someone that she had talked to there about selling the weavings had said, "Oh, no, you need to tell people what designs they need to do. You need to set the designs."

And, and she said, "No, that's not going to happen." And so from the beginning of Tierra Wools, we've always just, given a little bit of guidance, but no, we didn't tell people what to weave.

**MM:** So, I think there is some influence from tourism because when people come in, they want to buy a certain, you know, they'll buy a certain thing. But I don't know, over the years, we've just discovered that there's someone for everything. And I sort of look at things from that perspective, because I feel like if you can't sell your work, and that comes from us having the sheep and trying to make a living at this and trying to increase economic activity in the area. If you can't sell your work and make it something that can sustain a family, then for me it doesn't really make any sense.

**LM:** I, uh, grew up in that environment too. I started weaving, my mom started teaching me when I was about eight. And I was just in the workshop all the time learning from the other weavers. And, uh, and I... So, I grew up in this production environment, you know? Let's wind to warp on the loom, it's... Well, how long were the warps?

**MM:** Like 30 yards.

**LM:** 30-yard warp onto the loom. It was like a big production with everybody helping and it was just this huge thing. And then, you know, don't cut off every weaving, like weave a series of weavings onto the loom before you cut off in order to like not waste warp threads and, you know, all those things like that. So, when I left here, actually, and I went to, I guess it was at CCA in San, in San Francisco or Oakland where I was a teaching assistant for introduction to textiles during grad school and we were teaching weaving. And it was such a contrast for me having grown up in a production environment where it's about making a living. It's also artistic, but making a living is very important. And then, um, being in a situation in art school where, I mean, we wound a warp to make one weaving for the students, right? It was like one warp, and I was just kind of like, whoa.

**J F-A:** (laughs)

**LM:** Uh, these instincts sort of were coming up like, "No, no. We need to like make this piece, warp piece or we're going to waste warp and like, we're going to not make money." And like all these things, (laughs) that I sort of grew up around. But it was also great to be in that situation with the students in art school, because I was able to kind of like step back and appreciate weaving more (laughs) as an art form and all the possibilities that there are within it without the pressures of the business part of it. So that was, that was really kind of eye-opening for me. It was nice.

**MM:** And actually, there's a kind of a funny story because after 34 years, we moved from where, from Los Ojos where we had started Tierra Wools to, uh, another place on Highway 84.

**LM:** Somewhere accessible to traffic.

**MM:** Which is much more accessible and we're actually getting a lot of people, and we're actually getting a lot of people, and we're making sales, and it's, it's kind of frightening. (laughs) And, um, but it's allowed me, I'm 62. And I just now am able to allow myself to actually think about the art more and actually price weavings as, as an art piece rather than, you know, figuring how much all that we have in there. How much time have I spent. But at the same time, we were making beautiful things. We weren't like, you know, we were hand-dyeing the yarn and, and really everybody learned some color and design techniques and, and we, and we have made beautiful things over the years.

**J F-A:** This is actually a really interesting segue to my second question, because, um, for the podcast we've interviewed mostly weavers, but Tierra Wools is really the first and the only retail store that we are interviewing. So, if you could maybe tell us a little bit more about that sort of business management aspect of weaving. How about, for example, I'm interested in the customers that Tierra Wools, is it, uh, mostly makers? For example, do you have collectors?

**MM:** We have a wide variety of customers, because over time we have started doing classes. So, we have a whole group of people who we've developed who come and take a class and then they go home. And they like the art form and they'll start weaving at home. And so, then they order yarn from us, or they come through here every summer and they buy yarn. We have a huge following. We have a huge number of supporters actually. Early on we did a lot of marketing and then gradually we had a lot of people do articles on us and talk about the whole economic development aspect. And, and I don't know, over the years it's just, uh, grown into, a loyal-

**LM:** Yeah. Loyal customers. That, it's been around so long and it built up a reputation, uh-

**MM:** And early on, we, we, people would ask us, "Well, will these increase in value these weaving? And then we were, "Yes, yes. (laughs) They definitely will increase in value." (laughs) But it's actually happening now.

**J F-A:** Are the educators, for example, for the workshops the same weavers that create the, you know, the weavings that you sell, or what's that relationship with the weavers like?

**MM:** We have about 30 consigners, but we have, and they're not all weavers, but mostly weavers. And we have Nathaniel Chavez and Sophia DeYapp who work here all the time. And then there's myself and my sister, Tony who weave here all the time. And then we, uh, some of the main weavers we have are Fred Black and Kathy Strathearn, who's created a lot of weavings for sale. And also, um, the other one is Savannah Chavez, she's Nathaniel's sister. So, I teach, and Sophia teaches a lot. Sophia, yeah, teaches a lot. And Nathaniel teaches sometimes. Lara comes in and fills in and teaches, as much as she can. The people that work here are the people who do everything. (laughs)

**LM:** Yeah. (laughs)

**MM:** We, uh, we, we get the yarn made, we dye the yarn, we, um, we weave the yarn and then we teach other people. But recently we've gotten some people from outside, contracted with somebody to come in and teach spinning, and that's really popular.

**LM:** Hand spinning.

**MM:** Hand spinning. And a big part of what we do is the Churro wool, which is traditional. And it's a very important part of what we do.

**J F-A:** I want to ask you so many of the weavers of Tierra Wools were descendants of Spanish settlers in the Rio Grande Valley, many of whom produce what is called Rio Grande blankets. So, could you tell us a little bit about that heritage and what characterizes the Rio Grande weaving style?

**MM:** Uh, well, the Churro is, uh, is a part of that. The wool from the Churro was, um... The Churro was brought first by the Spaniards when they first came and, but it was adopted and adapted very well to the climate. And then the Navajo people used it. They really liked it. It doesn't take much water to wash it and it takes dye well, and it makes a nice less stress yarn that looks really great in weavings. It kind of had died out, the breed had kind of died out, and so people were using inferior quality of yarn. But we've reintroduced the Churros not us exclusively, but there's been a resurgence of the breed. So that wool is a characteristic of the Rio Grande weavings.

**LM:** And then the Rio Grande style loom. It's a treadle loom, a standing-

**MM:** Walking loom.

**LM:** Walking loom. Yeah. Um, and the design that we use is based on you know, designs that came from Europe, uh, the kind of big walking one. But, I mean, there was weaving here, uh, like I said before, there was weaving here already. Um, it's just the weaving before that was more like on a vertical loom.

**MM:** The looms can, you can get a great deal of tension, so they're great for doing blankets or rugs or heavier duty weaving.

**LM:** Yeah. And then design. There are certain...like stripe patterns, you know, that are more prevalent in like the historical Rio Grande blankets that you'll find from New Mexico and Northern New Mexico, certain stripe patterns. And, uh, dyes, I guess...to a degree. Uh, indigo there, there's a lot of blue, you know, ones, if you look at the historical photos and things that are in books. A lot of, uh, blue, blue and white, and black, um, pieces.

**MM:** The other thing about the sheep is the natural colors. From the Churros you can get, there are a lot of different shades of grays and blacks and white, you know, from white to black.

**LM:** And like brown, brownish grays and-

**MM:** And you will see that in the older Rio Grande weavings. And then some of the design elements too are very typical of Rio Grande weaving.

**LM:** As in the tapestry things you mean? Yeah. Like the Saltillo star.

**MM:** Yeah, and the Vallero Star. And so, on the walking loom we end up with fringe. So that's another, another thing. We have fringe as to differentiate between the Navajo weavings and the Rio Grande style weavings. These will always have fringe.

**J F-A:** So besides, uh, being a retail store, Tierra Wools is also a workshop. So can you tell us a little bit more about what type of classes you teach and I'm really interested in knowing what do you enjoy most about teaching?

**MM:** Right now, we do a beginning weaving, a tapestry weaving class. We do the spinning, hand spinning class and a natural dyeing class. We haven't done any... We, we do two kinds of dyeing, we do natural dyes. My sister does the dyeing, Tony, um, using plants that are gathered around here and also some purchased plants. Most of the plants around here give you gray and green, gray and green and yellow.

**LM:** Yellowish, yeah.

**MM:** Yellowish. And they're beautiful, but you, for a little variety we, we buy indigo, and cochineal, and madder and get a few different things. And she does a lot of mixing. And then we also do commercial dyes, which is a powder dye. They're called acid dyes because they require a small amount of sulfuric acid to make the dye strike the wool.

**LM:** So, the classes, there's only a class for the natural dyes, we don't teach the acid dyes class. Molly Manzanares and Sophia DeYaap developed, uh, uh, the, I guess the yarn line, the Churro yarn line that we have here in the colors. So, they're unique formulas and they're named, each color is named after, uh, an element from nature, you know? Like, uh, "maiz" is one, one of the yellows. And then there's another one that's "pollo," which is a lighter yellow. And "anochecher" is like this, like, it's kind of how the sunset looks here, you know, um, like a purple-ish-. Uh, "oso" is one of the browns and then "piñon" is, I think, a darker brown. So whenever I weave with the yarn here, I feel like I'm weaving with nature, like literally with the colors.

**J F-A:** That's so beautiful. I love that.

**LM:** Yeah. Connie Taylor and Molly Manzanares (laughs) developed the yarn line. But Sophia and Nathaniel are the dyers. So, you know, it's a group effort.

**MM:** Yeah. That's for sure. Yeah. Everything we do here is a group effort. Except the individual weavings.

**LM:** Well, even that. When you're weaving, yeah, and the warping, you need, because you can't really warp one of these looms by yourself, you need at least one other person, maybe a few if it's one of the bigger looms. If you're weaving in the workshop, it's nice because, you know, people go around and check out other people's work and, you know, have little ideas, or if you need help you can, I'm always... If I'm weaving here, I'm always knocking on my mom's door, "Mom help. (laughs) I'm not sure about this. Should I put this orange in there or not?"

**J F-A:** What do you enjoy most about teaching?

**LM:** I enjoy seeing folks go from beginning to end of the class, like, and the amount of confidence that they gain in the process from beginning to end. I just like how being part of the development of someone's creativity and just like, you know, celebrating with them when they, uh, when they have a breakthrough or, you know, or they finally realize, "oh, I can do it." And, and also being there for them when they are like maybe struggling or getting tired and just kinda like reminding them like, "did you drink any water" and, you know, "on the last hour," "it's time to take a break." I don't know. I just, I just like being with, with the people and, and I like seeing them help each other too in the same way that the regular weavers here help each other. It's just really neat to have like a few people in the class and see how different everyone is, but also like how they can influence each other and help each other.

**MM:** From the beginning, we've been very open with information in this outfit. And people come and they say, "Oh, can we take pictures?" And, "Sure." And when we've had weavers who wove at home, we would teach them to warp and, so they do their own warp and go home. And I know of other weaving places that keep things kind of secretive and they'll wind the warp for them and send them home with a warp. And to me it's like the more information people can have the better. And, you know, it's, it's not gonna affect us negatively, it's gonna be a positive thing. And it, and it's proven true. I think it's a good thing.

**MM:** And so I think that's the main thing that I enjoy when teaching is putting the information out there and then having the person tell me what I've told them and then asking them questions about, "so if this were to happen, what would you do" or that kind of thing. I just like seeing people become independent. But I like telling them, there are several ways this can be done, this is one way.

**LM:** There was a group of students this past week that I was teaching in the tapestry class that had taken the beginning weaving class with me a couple of years ago so I knew them. And usually in the class, when I've taught, sometimes a thread breaks on the loom or something and then that's a teaching moment. Like, it's teaching people how to fix this 'cause what if it happens later? Um, but in the beginning weaving class that hadn't happened, and it hadn't happened, and it hadn't happened. And so, (laughs) and so I showed up with the scissors, and I had told them, don't lay the scissors on your loom, near your warp. Like, don't like, keep the scissors away from your warp. You don't want any accidents. So, when I showed up with the scissors, they were like...

**MM:** What are you doing?!

**LM:** And I... Yeah. So, I went and I, um, I don't know if I did it to everyone. But I, you know, went and actually like cut, uh, cut a thread. (laughs) And they were like, "Oh no, no. Oh, no. What do we do now?" And I'm like, "Well, this I'm showing you so that when, after you go home, if you continue weaving, like you will know what to do, 'cause I know that, like, it's not that big of a deal. It could be fixed." (laughs) So I guess I picked that attitude up from my mom. Yeah.

**J F-A:** So, I'm also really curious about your family ranch. I grew up in a city, I grew up in Bogota, a very busy, you know, bustling city surrounded by buildings. So, I'm just curious about what it was like growing up, on a sheep ranch.

**LM:** Well, um, my mom grew up, her father was a working cowboy. I'm the one that actually grew up on a sheep ranch.

**MM:** Yeah. I grew up in a cattle ranch and then I married a sheep, a sheep herder. So (laughs) it's kind of a funny thing in the west, you know? That doesn't happen now.

**LM:** Yeah. Um, growing up on a sheep ranch was a lot of fun in many ways. It was also hard sometimes, but not in bad ways most of the time. I don't know. I did spend a lot of time in the truck waiting for dad (laughs) to finish doing stuff. Or, uh, I think, I think it taught resilience quite a bit. Resilience and patience, um, and we had to be able to enjoy the moment and find ways to enjoy like, even situations that maybe weren't ideal like, like being out in the cold, you know? 'Cause you have to be working with the sheep or something where it's like blowing dust, like a dust storm all, (laughs) all day, but you have to be out there and finish the job. And like if you get hungry, like there's no, there's no Arby's, like you can't like, (laughs) You can't stop. Um, or, you know, there's... You can't just like, be like, "Oh, I'm tired. I'm gonna like rest and go buy a hamburger." It's like, there's no, there is no hamburgers. (laughs) There is no, like, maybe there's a can of Vienna sausages in the truck. (laughs) Like you're just gonna have to deal with it and, you know, wait til we get home at the end of the day or whatever. And then there will be good food that my mom has made from scratch after working outside all day with everybody (laughs) on the ranch. I don't know how you did it, mom. (laughs) Um, so, uh, yeah. I think it, I think it really, it was a character-building experience.

**MM:** What I remember about you guys is when we would dock lambs and... So, there's 800 lambs in a pen, we've sorted and the dust is thick. And so, we've sorted everything, so all the lambs are in a big pen. They ewes are outside, but everybody is balling, oh-

**LM:** Yeah, every time. Yeah.

**MM:** ... there's a big noise. And, and all the kids are in there, they pick up the lambs and hold them. When the kids weren't big enough, I would hold lambs. And then when they got big enough, I started doing the docking.



**LM:** That's like earmarking them and-

**MM:** Earmarking and castrating. And, um, you know, it's, it's, uh, it's hard work. It's hard work, but there's no, there's no stopping. Like she said... you just do it.

**LM:** The sheep were just like there and yeah. There's that or when it comes to like feeding the orphaned lambs or even feeding the sheep, like there's mouths to feed there's, you can't really, vacations weren't really a thing. But I was really happy that... We always made time like, like a daylong we'd go drive for an hour to the nearest town that had a movie theater and like, go see a movie. And like, that was our little like mini vacation. We all worked together. And I think that was really important. So overall it was good, but also as an adult, um, it's a hard life. Like as an adult, it's like do, I wanna do this, what my parents did? And see how hard they worked every day, and sacrificed, and suffered, and tried to figure out how to get money to buy food, (laughs)

**MM:** The number of sheep in this, well, actually ranches. The number of ranches is declining in the state. All over agriculture is, the average age of farmers and ranchers in this country is 68. So, it's, uh, yeah, it's, uh, it's a concern. It's of concern to people in the government about how to encourage younger people to do it. But there are a lot of factors that contribute to that. And part of them are economic and part of them are just, just what Lara was talking about. There's, the hard work is like when we were doing it, we encouraged them to go to school. Go, go to college, go. So, then they go on, they get a different experience and they figure out those other things that they, that interest them and that they wanna do. And so, it's not surprising that they don't really wanna come back and do this... in the same way that we did.

**LM:** In the same way, yeah, I don't think my body could handle it. (laughs) My mom kind of runs circles around me. It's a rewarding life, I think, but you have to be a certain kind of person to enjoy those kinds of rewards, you know. So, it's, it's hard.

**J F-A:** Okay. So, I would love to learn more about your own practice as artists, both of you. So, first Lara, could you tell me more about your music and I'd love to know more about, you know, where you find inspiration for it and what type of stories do you like to share through your music?

**LM:** Well, I'm a singer songwriter and I play the guitar and I sing, sometimes alone sometimes with, you know, part of, uh, like a trio or even a full band if possible. And the style of music that I sing, I do a few different things. I kinda grew up singing, Spanish language like, I guess it's Mexican, New Mexican corridos and rancheras and, um, in college. And later I started to get a little bit more into Nueva Cancion, you know, when a little further afield. So that's something I've done since high school. And I used to play at the farmer's markets when my family would go sell meat at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market. I would go set up and-

**MM:** And sing.

**LM:** Yeah. We kinda had a little farmers' market band for a little while with a couple of the other vendors. (laughs) So that was, that was something that I always did. And then, um, and then I started to write my own songs, you know, maybe around 10 years ago. And at that time though, I mean, writing songs for me was just a way for me to understand the world. Exploring different rhythms and sounds and trying to figure out my internal landscape and express it. And then as a side effect, I guess. (laughs) Well, you know, maybe somebody else will hear it and they'll, it will help them too, um, or they'll relate to it in some way. In the last few years, I've been doing music a little more seriously and, um, I had the opportunity to create an album of my original music. And it's been well-received, you know, in New Mexico with the people I know and people who buy it. I guess I've got some fans. (laughs) But I have also started to do a little bit more storytelling around, I don't know. Well, I have this song, for example, that's sort of in progress. It's in my notebook and it's about the shack. There's a shack, an old shack on our property, on the ranch. It was the first building that was there. It's just full of like tools and chains and all kinds of stuff right now. And it's kind of falling down. The story was, I think that there was a couple that lived there at some point and were ranching like way in like 1800's, maybe? I don't know. I don't even know when. (laughs)

**MM:** Early 1900s.

**LM:** Early 1900s. And it's just this tiny little shack. And, uh, I don't really know anything else about it except that these two people live there. So, I started writing a song sort of thinking about the shack and writing a song about maybe these people who were there and sort of what happened in their lives. But it's not really finished, because I was writing about these folks and, and their beautiful little casita that they had and they were working hard and, you know, bailing hay and all this stuff. And then I don't know, at some point the song took a tragic turn. (laughs) And I was like, "Oh, no, I don't know if I want it to be a tragedy." (laughs) There's something about the guy, who got hurt doing farm work somehow. I don't know, it's kind of unclear.

**MM:** She has a good imagination. (laughs)

**J F-A:** Oh, that's fascinating. Do you think, for example, both of your creative practices, you know, weaving and music, do you think they intersect in any way?

**LM:** I think they do. Yes, they definitely do. Um, I mean, I was doing music lessons as a kid, and then also weaving, and playing sports, and other things too. But weaving, both weaving and music were very much ingrained in me. As a little kid, like my mom would put me on, you know, next to the loom when she was weaving. (laughs) She says that it was because, uh, she had to keep an eye on me and make sure I didn't go and eat the dog food. And so, and so she would put me next to the loom. And just, I remember, some of my earliest memories are of being sort of on the floor next to the loom and looking up and seeing the weaving process, like, from below, you know the warp, and the weft shifting, woof, and the beater beating and that rhythm of that, um, and then the rhythm of all the looms in the workshop. 'Cause I spent a lot of time as a little kid running around the Tierra Wools workshop. And just the clacking, and the sounds of everything, of all the weavers weaving, and, um, it was just really exciting. And then when I

became a weaver it's, yeah, it's very rhythmic. And again, the sounds that you're making and all the nuances of sound that are there, not just like the clickety clackety stuff, but also like the whoosh of the warp and the little textures of different things. And like, it very much is-

**MM:** The spinning wheel.

**LM:** Oh, the spinning wheel. Yeah. That's, that's a whole other thing. So yeah, that's definitely part of my internal rhythm section, I guess you could say. And it, I guess it's influenced my music. I'm sort of starting to do it in a more intentional way to connect the two. I did a performance just a few days before the shutdown, when I did a performance where I put contact mics on a loom and on a spinning wheel and I did a show with my music and a band, but also with the loom and the spinning wheel. And I sort of worked them into the show and used the sounds as part of the concert.

**MM:** She sang La Llorona with the spinning wheel, it was very, it was really nice.

**LM(00:56:27):** I had sort of started getting into that some more and did that show and it was like, "Yeah, this is cool." Like, I want to see where this goes and then everything got shut down. And so that kind of put a damper on things.

**J F-A:** And Molly I'm really interested in learning more about your artistic practice as a master weaver. So, if you could tell me, you know, what inspires you for your weavings? What kind of images you like to create and anything you'd like to share about it.

**MM:** Well, I spent my whole life on horseback in the mountains outside and I think that's the main inspiration for my weaving. And also, the fact that we have all this yarn and the... Well, it's like the colors I, I remember just, putting piles of wool yarn, colored yarn around and then just putting them together in different ways. That's how we started out for years, that's how we made weaving. Is just like figuring out the colors that would, would go together and set each other off and I, I used to love to do stripes and, and figure out like what the different widths would do and the different colors with the different widths of stripes and, and the different repetitions or mirror images or that whole thing. I think that's, I mean, that's pretty endlessly fascinating, honestly. And weaving is, there's so much to it. I mean, there's so many things that you can do with weaving. And I've sort of limited myself to the Rio Grande weaving and to that loom and to that style and I have gone out and I do some pictorial type weavings. But a lot of times I will put them within the framework of a, of Rio Grande style weaving. And I just love it. I love that and I, I don't have a lot of desire to go out and do anything else because there's so much that can be done within that. And so, all the natural colors of the yarn is the other thing that's... I love to work with those natural colors and I've done mountain scenes with the, uh, just with, using natural grays so it comes out black and white kind of image.

**LM:** And my observation of your weaving, my whole life has been that you're very intuitive. There's kind of a plan and, and some sketches sometimes, but my mom also designs a lot on the fly and it just comes out looking really spectacular.

**MM:** Yeah, I do a rough sketch or, or just start with some colors and then I like to... I do. I like to design on the fly. Yeah. And I don't think about it that much. I don't really think of, as Lara has pointed out, (laughs) that, of myself as an artist that much. But, uh, I'm starting to, I kind of like that idea.

**LM:** You are an artist mom (laughs). You are for sure an artist, uh, yeah. And I've learned, I've learned a lot from you. I do some of the intuitive stuff as well. I enjoy doing that. Sometimes if the design is too fixed, then it can get kinda boring after a while. If you're just like, you know, it's like coloring... you're just, uh... sometimes that can be nice if you just kinda wanna, you know, get in the zone of like doing the motions of weaving. But after a while you wanna like change things up, or change your design, or-

**MM:** I just finished a special order that was three feet wide, but seven feet long. And it was the repetition, and it was only three colors. And so...but it's like childbirth. After it's done, you kinda forget the pain. (laughs)

**LM:** That's funny.

**MM:** You forget really soon.

**LM:** Yeah. I grew up doing the, more of the designs that I saw here in Tierra Wools and stuff. But more recently I started to go a little bit into pictorial weaving a little bit and actually it was kind of channeling some of my, um-

**MM:** Anxiety-

**LM:** ... anxiety about the world (laughs) into more like artistic pictorial pieces that were, um, I guess you could say they were political pieces. So, that's different. And that's not something that Tierra Wools usually does. But that was my own thing that I was doing sort of... activisty kind of stuff. (laughs)

**MM:** I think the only thing I would want to add is that, uh, I didn't really mention my husband who raises the sheep. (laughs) And, he was instrumental in building everything. He wasn't day to day with Tierra Wools, but he was, you know, very much, an integral part of the, the whole operation. And he's the sheep rancher and, and I am too. We both do that. And that's always been kind of a hard thing for me is, is that I, I am a rancher at heart and sometimes doing the, the back and forth between the ranch and the, and the weaving and, and everything is, it's a lot. But he's always there.

**LM:** Yeah. Yeah. I think your, uh, partnership with dad is kind of the bedrock of the whole thing. I can't imagine either of you, you know, being able to do this without-

**MM:** That's right.

**LM:** ... the other. Yeah. They're a really good team.

**MM:** Antonio.

**LM:** Yep. (laughs)

**J F-A:** Thank you so much, Molly and Lara for joining us today for the second season of the Fields of the Future Podcast. It's really been a joy and a privilege, to speak with you and to learn more about your work.

**MM:** Thank you very much. It's been really nice to be here.

**LM:** Thanks for having us.