



Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

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Katherine Perkins, "Aspen Vista," 37" x 21"
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Letter from the Director

by Becky Stevens

As of the first of July, the new fiscal year, I became Director of Member Services. I will carry on for Alex Friedman who has done an outstanding job of representing ATA. Thank you, Alex, for four years of sound leadership, for promoting ATA here and abroad, and for remaining on the board.

I am honored to be part of this dedicated and hard working board and plan to maintain its commitment to a schedule of educational retreats and speakers'

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forums. We welcome your input on what subjects, teachers, and speakers will benefit your development as a tapestry artist. We are considering expanding the exhibition opportunities to include a small format international exhibit and discussing ways that we can have more contact with the regional groups. The new roster is out and shows ATA has grown to 427 members, 111 of whom are Circle Members. We will celebrate our 25th anniversary next year with a Gala Silver Celebration.

Christine Laffer is stepping down as Director of Resources to devote more time to the growing website. Thank you, Christine for four years of your wise council, for fostering ATA's place in the art community, and for continuing on the board. Linda Wallace has agreed to serve the remainder of Christine's term. We welcome her enthusiasm and her good ideas. As a Canadian, Linda will bring a valuable perspective to ATA and will expand ATA's representation of North American tapestry weavers.

There are other subtle shifts of duties with the addition of new volunteers. Karen Crislip has agreed to become the archivist. New board member, Linda Weghorst, will take over the Distance Learning Program from Priscilla Lynch who has nurtured it for several years. Thank you, Priscilla. Barbara Heller completed eight years as a board member, wearing many hats. Her enthusiasm, ready support and good ideas will be missed. Thank you, Barbara. David Johnson has created guidelines to make it easy for any of us to be a guest curator of an ATA web exhibition. Board member Janet Austin is the curator of the newest exhibit, "Fractured Landscapes," which presents the work of Suzanne Pretty. It can be seen on the website www.americantapestryalliance.org.

Many of us were fortunate to attend Convergence and ATA events in Grand Rapids, Michigan in late June. It was a busy and exciting time, filled with excellent exhibits, provocative lectures and tempting vendor displays. Many people contributed their ideas and energy to make the ATA events at Convergence so much fun. Here are a few: Peggy Strang -- ATB6; Lynn Mayne and committee -- ATB6 Catalog; Elinor Steele -- ATB6 postcards; Priscilla Lynch -- Grand Ideas Exhibition and Catalog; The Wednesday Group -- Exhibition; and David Johnson -- No Host Dinner. Mary Lane organized the Forum, Exhibitions A-Z, the Slide Slam, and "The Way In Retreat. Michael Rhode contributed to Slide Slam and Christine Laffer was the moderator of Exhibitions A-Z.

Several of our members had one-person exhibitions and many sent work to the Convergence exhibitions. My heartfelt thanks to each of you for sharing your work, for inspiring us and giving us the opportunity to satiate our senses with tapestries of many varieties. I look forward to hearing from each of you about how ATA can better serve your needs, and how you can contribute to the success of upcoming programs and events.

Happy weaving! Becky Stevens

Next Issue: Transitions as Design Element including joins and border treatments. **Deadline October 1.** We are looking for articles that address the various ways tapestry weavers approach transitions and use the necessary breaks to good effect. The subject can be scholarly, ethnic, about clever solutions or the simplest of techniques. Note the early deadline. Other themes under consideration for future issues include Narrative tapestry, Working with disturbing topics/ political or personal, Color, and All about exhibiting. You are very welcome to add to the list and even join in the fun of selecting authors and featured artists.

Mark Adams

The newsletter has been remiss in announcing the death of tapestry designer Mark Adams on January 24 of this year. His career was very long and diverse. Although he started out in the 1950's as a designer for tapestries after studying with Jean Lurçat, he was also a successful designer of stained glass. However, by the 1970's he became more interested in painting, especially watercolor images of very pristine objects.

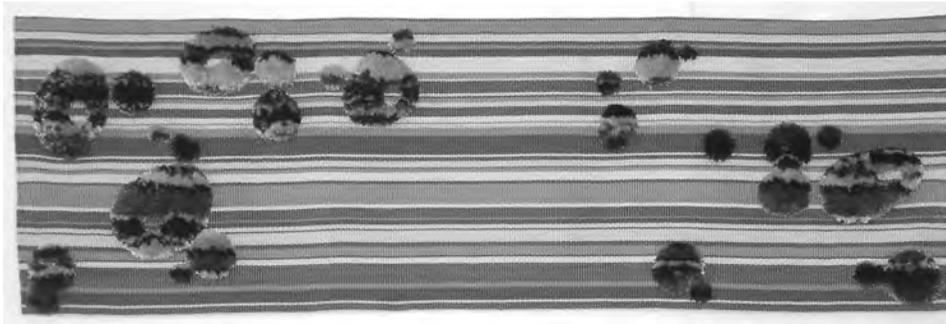
An article about his life and influence on American tapestry weavers will be in our anniversary issue. We would like to feature comments from the many California artists and others who were influenced by his work or his personality, especially in conjunction with the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop. My own weaving style was affected by his almost abstracted use of hachures as a design element for contemporary imagery, after seeing one of the tapestries he designed for the Weyerhaeuser Headquarters. Please help us to portray a full picture of this influential artist.



ATA Student Award Recipient

Mary Caitlin Sellers, a textile student of Susan Iverson at the Virginia Commonwealth University, has been selected by the Board of American Tapestry Alliance as the first winner of the American Tapestry Alliance Student Award.

Caitie was inspired to weave as a young child by watching her great grandmother weave on a counter balance loom. Intrigued by the complex machine she enrolled in weaving classes to learn how to use it. She soon realized she wanted more creativity than what pattern weaving allows. She transferred to VCU to study tapestry and jewelry making. She will graduate with a double concentration in textiles and metals in 2008. Her future plans may include graduate school and possibly teaching in a craft school. We wish her all the best in her future career as a tapestry artist.



Mary Caitlin Sellers, "State of Mind II - February," 10" x 35" x 1", 2006, tapestry with pile weave, rayon weft, linen warp

The Board of ATA created this award to encourage younger tapestry students. If you are interested in helping to fund the award, please contact Alex Friedman. We look forward to recognizing many more new tapestry artists.

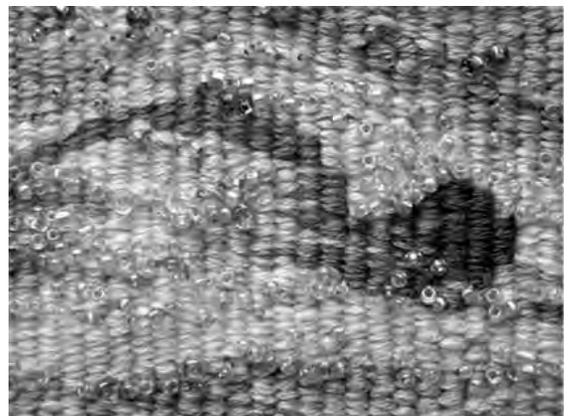
"Grand Ideas" Small Format Tapestries are Grand

By Deborah Corsini

Of the myriad textile exhibitions at Convergence 2006 in Grand Rapids, MI, the ATA sponsored Small Format tapestry exhibit, "Grand Ideas," was the most charming and engaging to see. Tapestry artists responded to the 10" x 10" x 1" maximum size requirement with a multitude of techniques, materials and themes. Tapestry artists from the very well known, like Archie Brennan and Susan Martin-Maffei, to less experienced weavers took on the challenge of the small scale with inventiveness, humor and sensitivity.

I was lucky enough to have a pre-conference workshop in the Kendal Center of Art where the tapestries were nicely hung in the bright lobby entrance to the building. For three days I could examine each piece and find new surprises and wonderful jewels amongst the over 150 small tapestries exhibited. Techniques ranged from very traditional, to shaped, stitched and embellished pieces and also included four wedge weaves, to my delight. Materials ran the gamut from natural wool, cotton, linen and silk to sewing thread, embroidery floss, synthetics, rayon, plastic, and beads.

A selection of my favorites would have to include "Swimming" by Urban Jupena. This tapestry pictures a



Urban Jupena, "Swimming" detail showing bead "bubbles"

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Barbara Arrighi, "Warped Mind - A Self-portrait"

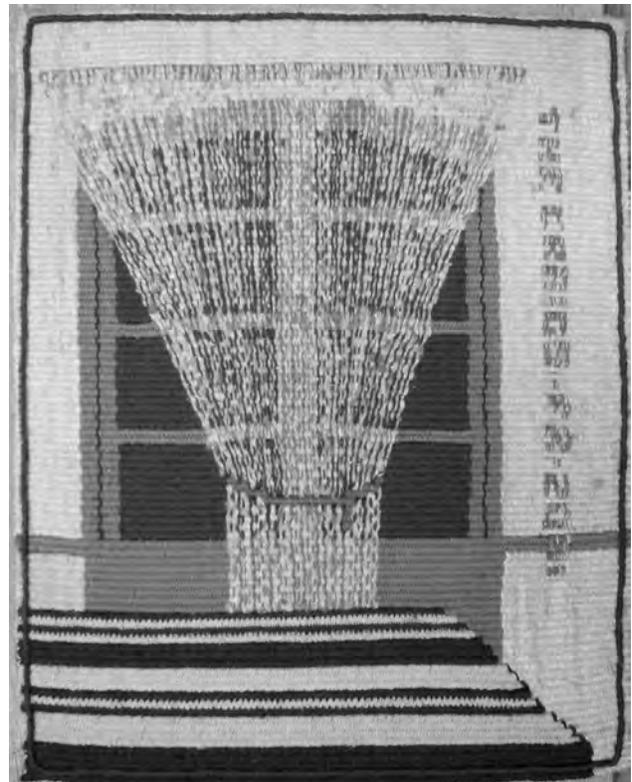
solitary figure swimming through sunlit water. Woven in embroidery floss it shimmers with the addition of tiny beads like water bubbles that sparkle in sunlight. This tapestry perfectly captures the effervescence of splashy foam and the reflection of light on water on a hot summer day. Jupena's use of an exposed linen warp as the frame is a pleasing and practical contrast to the image.

Barbara Arrighi's "Warped Mind – A Self Portrait," is a charming, expressive tapestry portrait. The face, divided by color as if to reveal mixed emotions, has a quizzical, funny expression that we all can relate to. Although primitive, the features, especially the lips, are well rendered. The area above the eyebrows and below the hair is unwoven, exposing the warps, a peak through the brow to the brain and to our collective weavers' joke – are you warped?

"Variations on a Theme – Moment to Pause" by Kathe Todd-Hooker is a delicate and exquisite tapestry that captures a panoramic sunset view over the mountains. Her fine sewing threads and embroidery floss are skillfully blended and catch the glow and beauty of nature's palatial setting. This small piece is a quiet and stunning reminder of our beautiful planet and of taking a moment to appreciate its natural splendors.

Other scenes that are handsomely depicted are Susan Martin-Maffei's "Views Near Mme. Touitou's – The Craigs", an interior window with a delicately woven textured, transparent curtain. "En Attendant le Printemps" by Christine Pradel-Lien views a stylized abstracted nature through a window. Nature seems to enter into the interior and pattern the walls with designs, shadows, and spring itself.

Though there are so many other tapestries that I could mention, I particularly liked "River City" by Priscilla Lynch (see photo on cover page). Her imagery, an illustrative and beautifully patterned depiction of architecture, water and sky is rich with color, pattern and playful design. The red sculpture towering by the water's edge reminds me of how important art is to our community and to our lives. Lynch also did an exceptional job chairing and organizing this year's small format exhibit. The accompanying catalogue (now unfortunately sold out) is a wonderful and inspiring document of the exhibit that reminds us of the beauty, diversity, experimentation and compelling stories that can be told at this intimate woven scale.



Susan Martin-Maffei,
"Views Near Mme. Touitou's – The Craigs"

Notes from "The Way In" Retreat

Rita Landau: Sharon Marcus Workshop

Feeling the need to expand my parameters, I had chosen Sharon Marcus' workshop. The experience was just what I needed. In preparation, I read several of the articles Sharon had suggested and subsequently became a trifle concerned that maybe this class would be somewhat "over my head". As it turned out, that was definitely not the case. Sharon's approach was very thoughtful, provoking, and tantalizing, challenging all of us to explore one of three suggested topics: They were: Use Pattern / Ornament in a Subversive Way; Consider one of the following words as a starting point: Palimpsest (i.e., re-used writing material that retains evidence of previous text), Diaphanous, (or a texture so fine it appears transparent), and Paradigm (model or pattern); or Use word association to consider Sense of Place, how the smell or sound of a particular place might be portrayed. For example, Don Burns communicated that in word associations, what comes to mind are typically visual words. But by questioning what a certain smell or a certain sound might look like or if it is "touchable" he was able to illustrate a much stronger picture of that place. Even with an art background, it had been a long time since he approached design conceptually. The word association exercise allowed him to be more imaginative.

Following a short slide presentation of various artists' work we immediately set to work, each of us stretching our creative juices in our own way to develop ideas through writing, sketching, collaging, even stitching and weaving. When the time came to present a preliminary plan, Sharon sat with each of us individually to assist with further developing the design process. Her personalized interaction was invaluable. Also, everybody in the class felt very comfortable with each other, sharing ideas and making helpful suggestions.

On the second day, the walls around the room were filled with wonderful creations, and we each had the opportunity to present our ideas, and to receive further suggestions and friendly comments from one another. In addition, we were able to compare notes with people in the other two groups, giving us an even broader scope of various design processes, and to enjoy the work of other fine tapestry weavers.



Jan Austin confers with Kathe Todd Hooker while Tommye Scanlin listens to Sharon Marcus.

I would say that two days were perfect, keeping in mind that many of us had already been working hard during Convergence. I came away feeling very enriched and invigorated.

Barbara Burns: Jane Kidd Workshop

I went into the workshop with the desire to take my designs to a new level of sophistication, looking for more complex ways to tell a story that would draw the viewer in.

Jane began our class by handing out an "idea map" consisting of a list of questions that give you a framework for expression, and facilitate a personal dialogue to develop a design using key words, symbols, patterns and other images found in research and exploration. Technical data such as scale, color, and technique is also recorded.

Jane then showed us examples of her use of the idea map and sketches, as well as slides demonstrating the progression from a literal design to a more subtle one by peeling away the layers of irrelevant detail. This was very useful to me since subtlety is not my strong suit. From there we set to work on our own ideas. Jane spoke with each of us individually about our concept.

Later in the day it was time for group discussion. With the walls covered with our designs in process, Jane stressed the need for the group to not critique at this point, simply to offer insights and suggestions. Experiencing group comment time was inspiring and thought provoking. There was a great deal of sharing and a sense of equality. I have to admit at this point that I had some trepidation when I saw who was in my class: people I consider "heavy hitters" in the

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Barbara Burns and Betsy Snope discuss a project with another participant.

world of tapestry, and whose work I have admired. I found that everyone was there to learn and share and, from what I could see, no one was made to feel their work was inferior.

We also received a Composition Checklist which posed questions about compositional concerns that may or may not be applicable to the particular design in progress. This included such things as spatial organization, color systems and whether to use borders.

I appreciated that Jane gave everyone individual attention several times in the workshop as well as time for feedback from the group. I found Jane to be insightful, sensitive and non-judgmental. She always managed to boil something down to its essence and explained her ideas clearly and concisely.

The time spent outside of the class was also valuable. There was a great deal of sharing and camaraderie between people in all three classes. I feel I have made connections with

a few people that I would like to foster. Really, the only faults I could find were that I would have liked another day to work and, of course, to socialize; and the timing with the July 4th holiday was less than desirable.

It was one of the most productive workshops I have taken in a while. I left with a cohesive plan for how to approach and develop a design concept. I know I will use what I learned for a long time. I also came home with a design in process that will, with more work and research become, I hope, my best work to date.

Betsy Snope: Susan Iverson Workshop

“The Way In” was a wonderfully appropriate title for the retreat. I had been particularly eager to attend this workshop. Although I love the act of tapestry weaving, I feel quite “artistically challenged”, having very little art background. Meeting so many of the artists I've admired for years has been a thrill.

I attended Susan Iverson's section, which started with an introduction and review of her handout. Topics included: “Where do Ideas come from?”, “Categories of Subject Matter”, and “Developing the Idea into Image”. She emphasized the need to “draw, draw, draw!” The remainder of the two days consisted of a group process for developing a topic, such as “words of contrast,” then employing hands-on exercises, such as using stripe compositions to convey the contrast. Each exercise was wall-mounted and critiqued by the group. One of the exercises involved bringing a favorite poem or quote, sharing it with the group, then making a collage, avoiding illustration of the poem, while retaining meaning for the reader/viewer. The various exercises were interspersed with slide presentations of art and nature. Another interesting exercise involved taking a 12" square of brown paper, cutting it up and creating a balanced visual space with the pieces encompassing at least a 36" square surface. We all had opportunities to speak individually with Susan about our current and proposed projects.

I came away realizing I had learned a lot and need to learn more. I must admit, however, that having spent the time at Convergence before the retreat, I don't know if I could have absorbed another day. I will, however, be back for the next retreat. You can count on it!

ATA is turning 25 and we're having a party! Save the date: April, 2007

in conjunction with the opening of ATB6 at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles.

Details to be announced. To volunteer your help in planning our big event, please contact Joan Griffin, Volunteer Coordinator. joan@joangriffintapestry.com

Monique Lehman's

Tour de Force

By Linda Rees

By using woven monofilament fishing line to overlay the image, Monique Lehman has created a remarkably effective innovation in the tapestry "Heartsong of American Hero Mattie Stepanek." The portrait of the young poet and victim of Muscular Dystrophy was initially woven for Pasadena, California's 2005 annual "Peace Through Music" benefit concert devoted to handicapped children. Monique added the second layer after the event, feeling that something more was needed to give the image greater impact. She was trying to convey the loss, the ephemeral nature of life. One of the most challenging tasks in art is to balance appealing imagery with an unpleasant reality that needs to be addressed. This tapestry accomplishes the feat. The portrait reveals the youthful optimism and charisma in its well-rendered face, while the filmy, luminescent overlay reminds the viewers of his fate. The tapestry is the property of the Pasadena Human Relations Commission and will be auctioned to benefit Muscular Dystrophy once it has finished touring in ATB6.

Technically, Lehman rotated the tapestry, forming a new warp of monofilament over portions of the image and proceeded to needle weave with the fishing line in selected areas across the original work. Other sections of this layer were woven in thick, dark wool so that only portions of the tapestry reveal the grid covered figure. The tension is surprisingly even, given the difficulty in working with the stiff monofilament. Mounting the tapestry on a backing board further enhanced the controlled appearance. Light catches the line creating a shimmering effect in contrast to the matt appearance of the wool. "Heartsong" is deserving of the accolades it received from viewers for its craftsmanship and visual appeal.

Lehman is an energetic and ambitious artist. Besides being in "ATB6" and the small format exhibit, "Grand Ideas," she won first place in "Celebration!," an HGA exhibit featuring spiritual work. The tapestry "Empty Space Filled with Particles that Perpetually Pop In and Out of



Monique Lehman, "Heartsong of American Hero Mattie Stepanek," 56" x 30" x 3", 2005

Existence" was woven on a single layer of monofilament in a more conventional manner. In addition, she had two items juried into the fashion show, which were used to give a dramatic beginning to the event, and two small works in the "Cutting Edge Grandeur" multi-medial exhibit also sponsored by HGA. (See *Tapestry Topics*, Winter, 2005 for images of Cutting Edge and Grand Ideas entries.) As most readers know, Monique spearheaded the "Memorial Tapestry Project," found venues and publicity for it in at least two continents, and was featured on television talk shows. She was awarded a "Models of Unity" award by the Pasadena Human

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Relations Commission in 2004 in recognition of the project and her years of teaching many ethnic groups in the area.

Monique began her weaving career by receiving a master degree from the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw, Poland. In an email, she described her experience: "In the '70s everyone in Europe was fascinated with fiber; artists were showing their power by creating heavily textured, monochromatic monumental fiber constructions. My inspiration to weave came from visiting the tapestry collection of Polish 16th century king, Zygmunt August at the royal castle in Cracow - Wawel. My tapestries were not well received by Polish artists, because they were realistic, flat, colorful and they looked like photographs. I was happy to find out that in this country [USA] craftsmanship and realistic images were valued." She moved here in 1978, where she has done numerous commissions, especially finding a niche in hospital settings for her representational content. She continues to challenge herself to produce innovative exhibition work.

Congratulations are in order for a very productive 2006 Convergence endeavors.



Monique Lehman, "Empty Space Filled with Particles that Perpetually Pop In and Out of Existence"

Energy: The Tapestries of Shelley Socolofsky

By Linda Rees

"Incantation" and "Well of Surrender" by Shelley Socolofsky, were two of the most talked about tapestries in the "American Tapestry Biennial 6" exhibit. The large tapestries emit energy, and reveal astoundingly vibrant color interplay alongside very muted and grayed out blending; all compacted into complex narratives, ripe for interpretation. A large, relatively classical female face defines the mood of each piece, although to quite different effect. In "Well of Surrender," the eyes are almost hidden behind a deep blue "filter" while a pensive or petulant mouth challenges the viewer to pay attention to the interior landscape on which the face is resting. (See ATA artist pages.) In "Incantation," the viewer becomes the mirror observing features in a face that is, perhaps, trying to come into focus. The palette of this tapestry is primarily patterns in red, brown, blue and the mixture of light neutrals of the face, except that a band of yellow filters the area above the face where the imagery is less stormy or debris-like, more circular, than in the lower sections. The superimposed color layers appear to have symbolic meaning, again, subject to interpretation.

Part of the success of Socolofsky's particular form of fragmenting images is that she uses sharp vertical or horizontal transitions to simulate collage/manipulation of otherwise quite organic settings. The imagery dominates the surface, almost making the medium irrelevant. However, one only has to step in close to the tapestries where myriad color changes and the persistent orderliness of the weaving reaffirms the power of tapestry and the impressive skill of its maker.

In the early 1980s, while working toward a BFA in textiles at the University of Oregon, Shelley spent a year in France studying French art history and literature. During that time, she discovered Gobelin tapestry. She returned to France after graduating to train at the Gobelins workshop.

Socolofsky's career since that time is as multifaceted as her weavings. She began doing private commissions as early as 1985 and major projects for public spaces by the 1990s. As she explained in the "Art Pages" of the Valley Library, Oregon State

University(OSU), which is one of the many universities to own her work: "I spent the next 10 years [1985-1995] in Los Angeles, teaching textiles at the Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design and exhibited my work nationally. It was in LA that I became enamored with the immediacy of collage, photo-montage and computer manipulation. Collage emulated the modern "quick fix" culture. Its immediacy, set against the ritualistic, rhythmic, slow process of weaving intrigued me. I began using collage and other mass media technology . . . as the basis for my tapestry images"

When she returned to Oregon in the mid-nineties she taught high school art classes in Salem OR, still producing commissions and personal imagery for exhibition until 2004, when she branched out artistically by returning to the University of Oregon for an MFA. She has been in four of the seven *Fiberarts*

Design Books and, in 2001, received a National Endowment for the Arts Regional Fellowship Grant sponsored by the Oregon Arts Commission to pursue her own work. Her work has won honors and been featured in numerous exhibits and printed commentary, including an "Art in the Governor's Office" solo exhibit in Salem OR, in 2006.

The decision to return for an MFA was influenced by the opportunity to learn Jacquard weaving. She accompanied Barbara Pickett, head of the fibers department at the university, to the Lisio Foundation in Florence, Italy and also to the Jacquard Center in



Shelley Socolofsky, "Incantations," 65" x 36", 2005

Hendersonville, North Carolina. Shelley remains decidedly committed to tapestry weaving but feels it is worth exploring other, quicker, methods for potential commission work. She is convinced that the quality could never be as rich without the artist's hand in the ongoing weaving. The surface qualities of tapestry appeal to her. The university has purchased professional grade equipment but as of yet Shelley had not begun to actually weave on it. That will have to wait until the next school year begins. For the summer she is working frantically on a commissioned tapestry.

Socolofsky is reputed to be exceptionally quick at weaving. However, an artist who thrives on complex imagery is faced with the dilemma of how to balance the desire to delve into intricate color changes and the realization that time spent weaving translates into cost. For Shelley, the

hope is that she will find Jacquard weaving rewarding and visually appealing enough for commissions and continue to weave work for exhibitions in the tapestry technique she loves.

She currently received an HGA scholarship for the 2006-2007 school year, and also has the opportunity to teach tapestry at the University of Oregon this fall. If she were to pursue a full time teaching position at some time in the future, experience with jacquard weaving will surely enhance her eligibility.

(Ed. Note.) Because of the recent increase in Jacquard entries in fiber exhibits, I became curious about the practical aspects of an artist pursuing this style and wrote to Bhakti Ziek, with the following questions. How easy is it for a practicing artist to have access to the technology – computer software and connection to commercial production if not affiliated with a university? Are most such pieces funded through grants? Can an artist out on her own, not teaching at a university, have the resources to stay competitive with those who are? How far in advance do you typically have to schedule production time? If there is much wait-time, does it effect the continuity of design ideas? Do you get to be there to supervise or to check in at various stages? Is there a substantial amount of conversion or coding to be done once an idea is in your head? What is the most exciting phase of the process or the least exciting? Ziek has recently coauthored the book: *The Woven Pixel: Designing for Jacquard and Dobby Looms Using PhotoShop®* with Alice Schlien.

Tradition and Change

Bhakti Ziek

I was one of the lucky attendees of the infamous concert by Bob Dylan at Forest Hills where he was booed and threatened for going from acoustical to electric guitar. We have seen a similar reaction in the textile world when computerized dobbie looms were first introduced, and we are seeing another wave of fear as artists turn to new hand jacquard looms, and to fully automated looms. My path of exploration has taken me from backstrap to digital weaving. Nothing has been abandoned; rather it has been a journey of absorption and expansion of possibilities. As a project unfolds I have to ask myself “what is the appropriate loom for this expression?”

I will try to detail some of the excitement I have found from using digital methods of weaving. First I should mention that I am a very fast typist and was one of the first people in this country employed using word processing. I would not qualify as a “geek”, but I enjoy sitting in front of the screen for hours. When I discovered software for weaving in the mid-1980s it was like a marriage of two interests. Designing for dobbie looms with software was a breakthrough in understanding—suddenly the relationship of tie-up, threading and treadling made sense. For the first time I really could understand the three-dimensional nature of weaving, the fact that threads do move through planes, and where they reside affects the look of the cloth.

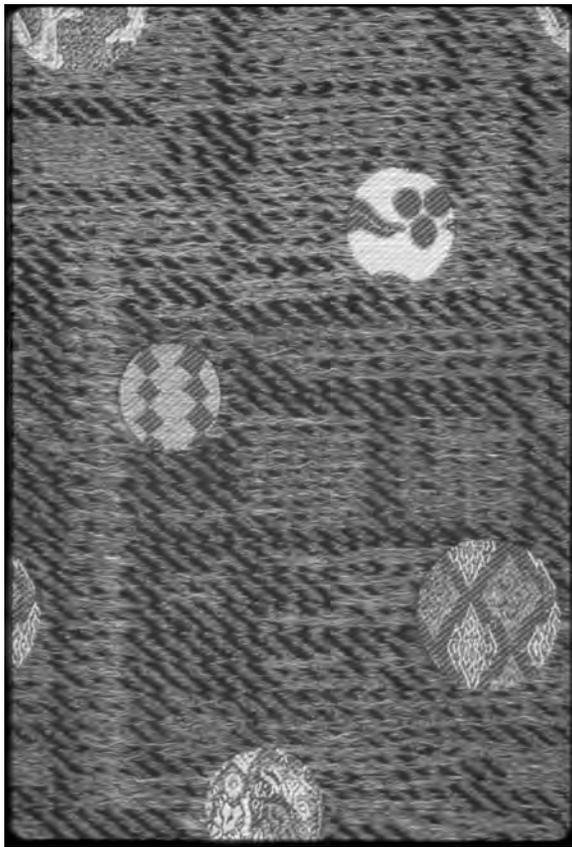
While I was learning weaving software, I was also borrowing textile swatches from the Fashion Institute for Technology (FIT) Swatch Library in New York City. Here was a source of constant inspiration and frustration for me. How was it possible to get such fluid imagery with so many colors into this cloth?

Dobby looms had broadened the spectrum of cloth for me, but these swatches needed way more individual control of threads than the dobbie allowed. I was on a quest to understand the relationship between structure and image in cloth.

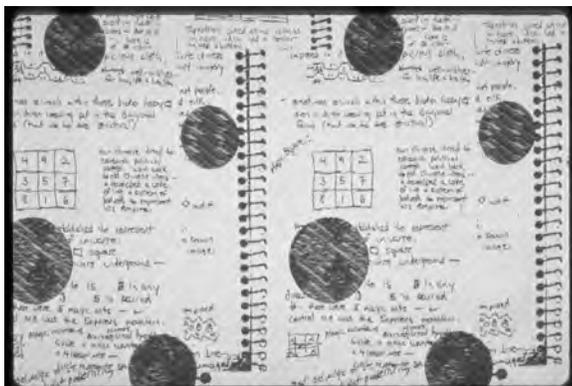
Curiously, at this same time, 1984, a class was offered in New York on jacquard design, taught by two up-and-coming designers for industry. It was a theoretical class that did not even visit a mill, but it introduced me to the basics of jacquard. It also showed me the compartmentalization that existed in the textile industry. One teacher knew how to draw designs for jacquard, and the other knew how to choose structures and yarn, but neither was a technical designer who created the structures (a specialization of another person to whom they went for input). I realized that I wanted (needed) to wear all the hats, and the creation of the structures was an essential element missing from the puzzle.

Then, during graduate school, I began to research historical textiles and their structures for my own use at both dobbie and floor looms. Like many tapestry weavers, I am intrigued with the possibility of narrative in cloth. I feel a tangible excitement that a grid of threads interlaced at 90 degree angles can end up looking like a row of irises, a man fishing, or a multi-headed monster. Since I already knew how to create imagery through brocade and tapestry processes, I was more inclined to study complex structures unfamiliar to me, like compound tabby and lampas. Patience was useful here, as I would hand pick studies, eventually creating pseudo-jacquard pieces on the compu-dobby. (See photo page 12.) The unfolding of the images afforded me perseverance, but so did the challenge of moving back and forth from the loom to the computer, figuring out ways to create and interleave the chains of structure. I found the exploration of new structures to create color and textural contrasts exhilarating; it furthered my visualization of how threads dived back and forth in the web of the cloth.

A few years later, I was in the right place at the right time. The industrial textile program where I was teaching replaced their 19th century jacquard looms with two state-of-the-art fully electronic jacquard looms. Over the next 8 years I learned more than half a dozen specialized software programs for designing jacquard and dobbie fabrics. I had access to the type of intricate structural possibilities and the motifs they could engender that I had been studying in the FIT swatches. Actually, due to the ease of modifying both



Above: Bhakti Ziek, "History of Fabrics: Barbara's Song," Side A detail. 87" x 54", 1996, cotton, woven on a fully automated Jacquard loom.
 Below: Bhakti Ziek, "History of Fabrics: Barbara's Song," Side B detail.



and play with complex structures, but I can also tie on my own dyed warps, use dyed wefts, and expand the variation of weft material (limitations on the power loom had made me cautious about weft choices). The weavings I have created on hand jacquard looms appeal to me because they meld all I have learned about weaving — structure, material and image. I can even brocade my jacquard weavings on the hand jacquard.

I do not think there is any inherent value in hand weaving fabric that I could produce equally well, and faster, on a fully electronic loom. Likewise, I do not want to be limited in my materials and techniques because of the

my imagery and structural components, I had access to quicker methods of evaluation and change in design than ever before possible in the history of weaving.

My dreams about structural possibilities increased. Since I was not designing yardage for industry, I could push the process and ignore the factor of competitive pricing. I started to feel a kinship with printmakers, who can work on a plate, print from it, modify the plate, and print again. I was able to produce groups of weavings that dug deeper into the concepts than would have been permitted by the time constraints of weaving by hand. My "History of Fabrics" series not only allowed me to weave my handwriting, I was also able to produce large-scale two-sided weavings that looked different on the two faces. Although I could have produced multiples of my work, I chose to produce one-of-a-kind weavings. The only limitation on my designing was the fact that the loom had four repeats of approximately 12.5 inches in width across the cloth. Mostly I worked within that constraint; though sometimes I cut the fabric up and reassembled it to defy the repeat.

In more recent years I have produced limited multiple editions of some of my work. These pieces were conceived of as blankets, geared to a specific market, and priced accordingly. They were produced at a mill — I designed the cloth on my computer but was not involved in the actual manufacturing (whereas at the college, I used to run the loom for my own work). I did not have the flexibility of weft yarn choices that I was used to, nor could I do the sampling and reweaving until I got exactly what I wanted. I worked from a weave blanket, which can be thought of as a box of crayons. The structures varied in terms of which yarn colors came to the surface, but otherwise the cloth was fairly uniform in texture.

I have found that production work and sales are not my forte. Luckily I discovered two mills whose requirements allow me to design at home and send loom-ready weave files through the Internet. Their small minimums match my needs. Again, the designs I send to each mill are created with their constraints in mind.

Working on hand jacquard looms (the TC-1 and AVL looms) I have been able to incorporate the best of both worlds. As with power looms, I can create intricate imagery and play with complex structures, but I can also tie on my own dyed warps, use dyed wefts, and expand the variation of weft material (limitations on the power loom had made me cautious about weft choices). The weavings I have created on hand jacquard looms appeal to me because they meld all I have learned about weaving — structure, material and image. I can even brocade my jacquard weavings on the hand jacquard.

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constraints of the loom. One loom does not meet all my creative ideas and needs. Fortunately I have access to many methods of weaving through the looms in my home, the internet and current willingness of a few mills to work with individuals, and the ability to travel to sites that have a hand jacquard loom for rent.

Groups like the American Tapestry Alliance gather and form because the details matter; and yet, even within specialty groups like this there are dif-



Bhakti Ziek, "Washer Woman Revelation," triptych, 70" x 118", 1988. Hand-picked compound triple warp pick-up (pseudo-jacquard)

ferent approaches to work that cause alliances and disagreements. Different approaches, different concerns, different results yet each one defines herself as a tapestry weaver. So if one specialized group can yield so many variations, it is not surprising that the umbrella of weaving covers a huge range of interests, approaches, and modes of working.

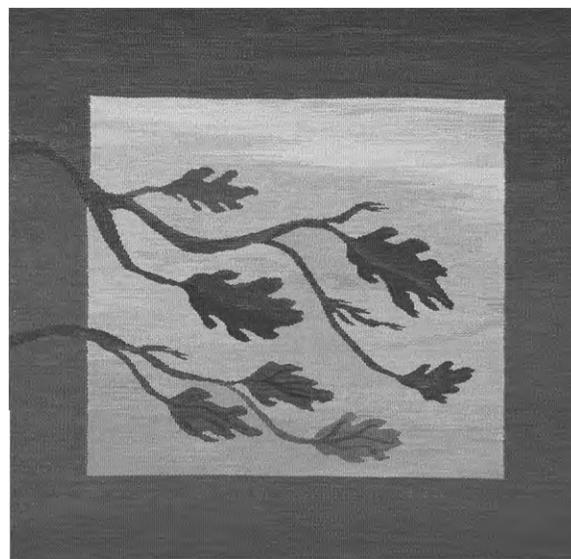
Weaving by an individual is such an anachronism in our society that no matter what form you use for your work, you are still part of a relatively small group. For some of you, knowing that the computer can be used as part of your weaving process will be an exciting new venture. You might try it and get deeply involved, or try it and feel indifferent, or you might just enjoy watching the results of other people's research. Surely digital technology will not be the last modification to come along and change our perceptions of what it means to be a weaver. The spectrum of possibilities as a weaver is vast — truly the most important thing is to find methods and materials that capture your imagination and get you to work.

Katherine Perkins: In Celebration of Wildness

By Lany Eila

If you would like to find Katherine Perkins, first explore the mountains and arroyos around Santa Fe, where she takes long daily walks with her enthusiastic dogs, then look for her at her loom surrounded by windows and a garden view, or on the back deck brewing a pot of natural dyes. If you would like to see the joining of this inspiration into her work, visit her recent show at Weaving Southwest in Taos, New Mexico, in Taos, New Mexico, online at (<http://www.weavingsouthwest.com>).

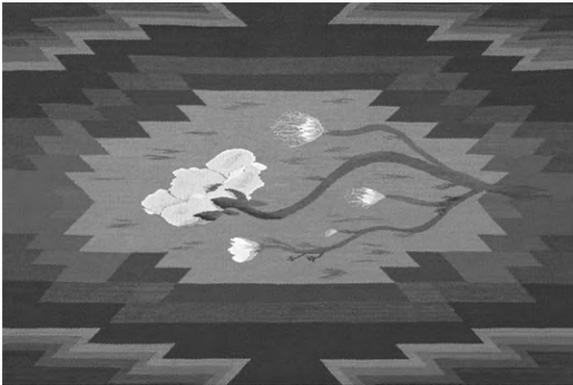
The images in Perkins' work include both intimate, stylized studies of plants found in the southwest, and the open spaces in which they grow. The ten tapestries were all woven at a galloping pace in only 18 months, and yet each is detailed and expertly crafted. The fact that this body of work was woven during a relatively concentrated period of time gives the show continuity, with themes and colors bouncing back and forth between works. Perkins' flowing, variegated backgrounds also tie the show together.



Katherine Perkins, "Autumn II," 31" x 35"

Many of the tapestries are paired. "California Gold" and "Nature's Paintbrush" feature framed, stylized poppies and paintbrush flowers. "Autumn I" and "Autumn II" offer framed images of blowing

leaves against blue and orange/red backgrounds, respectively. Leaves are joined with pinecones and branches in "Forest Floor." "Windy Ridge" carries forward both the framed style and the theme of blowing leaves. It, along with "Aspen Vista" and "Sky Island," offer the additional dimension of distant horizons. The yellow cactus flowers in the foreground of Sky Island seem lit from within.



Katherine Perkins, "Apache Plume," 27" x 35"

"Apache Plume" and "Desert Rose" emerged in response to Perkins' extended exploration of the natural dyes cochineal, madder, and lac. In an effort to use many of her approximately 50 shades of reds, pinks, browns and oranges, she framed the flowers in multicolored backgrounds echoing Rio Grande blankets. These tapestries merge Perkins' historical use of the Rio Grande style of tapestry with her current use of French tapestry techniques.

Perkins' artist statement brings the viewer back outside. She states:

In an era of exploding population, rampant development, expanding technology, and unmitigated assaults on the environment, those of us more connected to the natural world than to the modern world need to embrace and defend all aspects of wildness. As our wild areas are impinged upon by advancing urbanization we are, out of necessity, looking more closely at natural things of beauty. Broad vistas evoke a visceral reaction to the wonders of the wild, but, as these vistas are now often punctuated by cell phone towers or other signs of man, advocates of wildness are turning to less grandiose, more intimate, though equally evocative, signs of natural beauty.

What better way to celebrate wildness than to join warp and colorful weft in a time-intensive

sojourn through the joys of the natural world. As each of these tapestries was woven I could immerse myself in the memories of time and place that served as the inspiration for their creation.

The viewer, too, may enter into the natural beauty of these tapestries.

It is Only Natural

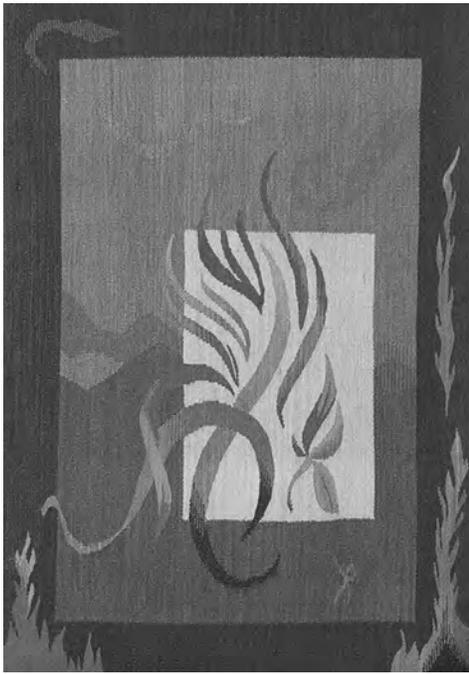
By Katherine Perkins

As a lover of the wild it was only natural, so to speak, that I would eventually begin using dyes that originate in wild places. It has been a delightful trip, but not without unforeseen consequences.

Although I have done all of my own dyeing for about ten years, using acid dyes with good success, the allure of the natural dyes was always there. Previously, I was too obsessed with acquiring the right color to make the plunge, not that I always got the "right" color. However, one day while wandering the woods I was looking at the chamisa, oak, and juniper and said "do it: start using natural dyes." As a resident of the extremely arid state of New Mexico, I deliberately decided for environmental reasons not to gather my own plants. Since I was going to purchase rather than collect, I figured I would start with my favorite color -- red. Cochineal, madder, lac. Ah, but what about value? I do use chiaroscuro and as I experimented, I realized getting a wide variety of values was more difficult with natural dyes than it is with synthetic dyes, especially for this raw beginner. ATA member Kris Bergstad was most helpful in answering a variety of questions about madder and cochineal. Unfortunately, I had to cease dyeing before I really got started because we were in such a severe drought I could not, in good conscience, use the water.

Luckily, in the winter of '04-'05 we were blessed with significant snow thus enabling me to resume dyeing. The following summer I forged ahead with my education and had many dye days that produced unbelievable reds. I was like a kid in the candy store and could not seem to get enough of that cochineal or madder. What could I possibly do with that many skeins of different reds using my French

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Katherine Perkins, "Nature's Paintbrush"
35" x 25"

style of weaving? I had absolutely no intention when I started weaving that the Rio Grande style would be the technique I adopted. My tapestries are representational, so shifting entirely to geometric abstraction was too much of a stretch. The solution was to do both. I added a desert rose to one tapestry, and an Apache plume to another. However, as great as those reds look in a Rio Grande tapestry, the style is not what I want to weave.

Brian Murphy, in the book *The Root of Wild Madder*, said "the challenge for weavers is the same that has taunted artists forever: trying to sense a divine power and represent this feeling in form and color." Though not an especially spiritual person I do find a connection to the natural world that touches my soul. Frankly, geometric shapes do not express these feelings for me. Thus I needed to stretch my pallet so I could create representational images, or better yet, abstracted representational images that would evoke the power of wildness.

Now that the show I was preparing for is up at Weaving Southwest, I am shifting my focus to a yearlong color class at the local quilt store. The samples for class can be done in any medium, thus I can work in tapestry. Each piece helps me expand on how to use the reds. Meanwhile, adding green to my natural dye pallet has made my heart soar almost as much as the reds did, especially since

green is so essential to depicting things wild. I still struggle with the values, but, since it is yet again a year of drought, I will have to delay the educational process for now.

Had I not started using natural dyes I would not have had these amazing colors that require me to reconsider how I use red in tapestry. At the same time my excitement over the cochineal, madder and lac dyes have given me inspiration to move beyond my usual colors. It has been a fascinating experience, and I am just itching to add new wild colors to my palette.

Review: Cover-ups & Revelations

By Micala Sidore

Barbara Heller's thoughtful, provocative and powerful tapestries displayed in the gallery at the Fiber Arts Center in Amherst, MA, during April and May 2006, made for a hugely successful exhibition. The work, from one of the top weavers of contemporary tapestry at the height of her abilities, pulsed with life and inspired choices. Barbara attended the opening and conducted a gallery walk, a question and answer session with the public, and a lecture and discussion with members of TWiNE [Tapestry Weavers in New England]. Heller has been weaving tapestries for about thirty years, and says that it is a medium where she "can give reality to my inner visions without being overtly political or mystical." She adds that "viewers are first enticed by the tactile beauty of the yarns and the image itself, allowing time for the message behind the image to be absorbed."

For the exhibition she included pieces from several of her well-known series. From the Ghost Image group (also known as Spirits in



Barbara Heller, "Natan in Egypt"
64" x 48", 1987
detail showing the two warp setts.

the Stones) she displayed “Natan in Egypt” and “Conversation at Megido,” as well as “Habibi”; her Cover-Ups included “School-Crossing Guard,” “Afghani Woman” and “Eritrean Refugees.” She has explored the image of the wounded bird for a long time, making that the subject of her talk to TWiNE, and the exhibit included two smaller groups of birds. Three were called collectively “War Zones” and individually “Bosnia,” “Somalia,” and “Rwanda,” and a pair were titled, simply, “Good Bird” and “Bad Bird”. She also included “Revelations: Still Life with Bird,” one of three larger tapestries from the series “Modern Apocalypse”; this one dedicated to the events of 9/11. (See ATB6 catalog.)

Heller’s themes obviously often refer to political events, subjects that can easily overwhelm all efforts to be subtle or thoughtful. Yet these pieces lack cant, bombast or cliché. In part, she achieves this because she does not seek to make just one point. The artist in Heller always remains in control, constructing pieces that carry multiple meanings. Her response to world events runs on many tracks.

What makes her efforts all the more extraordinary is the way her work celebrates the medium of tapestry and the structure of woven cloth with superb technical ability, both as weaver and dyer. Viewers can observe her appreciation of textiles in the Ghost Series, for instance, where images of people emerge from within walls. Heller believes that walls carry their histories with them, and in these pieces she has decided to make visible the people who have lived there. She exploited a weaver’s trick to make these tapestries: she doubled warp that she split for the more exact images of the people but left doubled for the ground, the walls of the environment in which the people live—or might have lived. These images suit the woven medium precisely, in that no other medium would represent as clearly the idea of something embedded within and coming into sight as part of something else. She has also precisely dyed the wool in a range of tones that helps to pull off the illusion.

In the Cover-Ups she is playing with material itself—wool used to represent cloth and plastic and mud—as she seeks to “explor[e] the way we relate to people whose faces are covered-up by their clothing or costume.” Historic tapestries used techniques like hachure to show the way that cloth can drape—curtains, furnishings, bed-coverings, clothing.

Heller’s garments do the work of conveying what we don’t see: “the body language...contradicts our interpretation of [what we see,]...as we misjudge.”

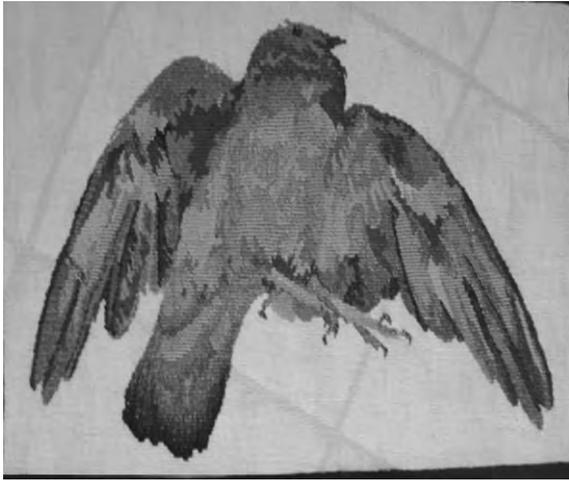
Half of the exhibition featured a repeated icon, birds. The idea, as she explained to TWiNE, arose out of a moment in time, in the late 1980’s, when “My cat was killing birds. At first he left only a few feathers, a claw, a beak. Then I began to find whole birds.” She considered what was happening. “Was the fact that the cat is programmed to kill for food a mitigating circumstance even if he does not eat what he kills? Is he still part of the balance of nature? Can killing a living creature ever be justified? One needs to think about something while spending hours at the loom weaving a tapestry and philosophical constructs give much room for meandering thoughts.”



Barbara Heller, "Good Bird"
23" x 26", 2005

Heller pursued these thoughts as she researched bird imagery in art, and found several historical tapestries where birds play a role that has symbolic significance. Doves, herons, phoenixes and others add range and depth to the tapestries they adorn. Heller says, “There can be some debate as to whether an artist uses a bird in an artwork just because he likes birds or feels they are needed to give life to a landscape.” In her subsequent correspondence with a group of contemporary artists, many working in tapestry, she heard how myths enrich the stories that people tell about the birds in their work. Heller’s correspondents also talked about what birds do, like fly.

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Barbara Heller, "Bad Bird," 23" x 26", 2005

A bird that might be a vulture—or even an eagle—hovers over the remaining skeletal frame of major buildings in “Revelations: Still Life with Bird”. Is this [bird] the avenging angel of death,” asks Heller, “come to wreak havoc on an uncaring world, or is this the phoenix, rising from the desolation to create a new and better world?” Shards of gray, either feathers or ash, drift through the orange golden brown sky. Five blue rectangles line up across the bottom of the tapestry, each embellished with actual bits of bone. Life and the renewal of life, death and the remains of death, all contribute to the satisfying complexity of the piece, brilliant and grim.

Oppositions also play an essential role in “Good Bird/Bad Bird,” where a bird in tones of white and its mirror image, in tones of blue and gray, each occupy a field, one black and one white. “I was thinking of the raven and the dove,” says Heller, “and how one has come to be associated with goodness and one with evil I have placed them on black or white backgrounds to emphasize that it is often our attitudes towards a person or thing that makes it bad or good, not anything inherent in the thing itself.”

Students sometimes expect that once they have acquired the techniques, the art will take care of itself. But finding the right subject, discovering a personal vision and transforming it into tapestry, will always pose a challenge. Exploiting technical skill to good effect in a woven medium increases both the possibilities and the challenges. These dozen tapestries that Heller provided for the exhibit demonstrate how consummately successful Barbara Heller is at achieving these ends.

Mary Merrill, 1921-1999

By Nell Znamierowski

Color and the delight of submerging one’s senses in the vitality of bright hues was one of the important factors that drew the late Mary Merrill to tapestry. This love of color and its many variables found a respondent chord in her as she began to observe colors in Latin America and in the paintings of artists like Gauguin and the Fauves. Yet the very strong emotional pull towards color did not resolve itself for Mary until the last quarter of her life, when she became a tapestry weaver.



Mary Merrill, "Jackson's Red Maple," 21" x 30", 1977
Inspired by A.Y. Jackson's painting, "Red Maple" at the National Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario Canada

Mary Kohler Merrill was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1921. She attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, but left her studies to marry Charles Merrill in 1941. The couple traveled frequently. A trip to Oaxaca, Mexico, was memorable for her, especially experiencing the early morning colors of the ancient Mayan hilltop plaza at Monte Alban. This memory stayed with her, along with the exhibit “Masterpieces of French Tapestry” at the Art Institute in Chicago in 1949. It was a survey of works from the Middle Ages through to the 1940s, including the work of modern French artists, Lurçat and Dom Robbert. Seeing this show planted the idea of weaving into Mary’s mind. There it met color.

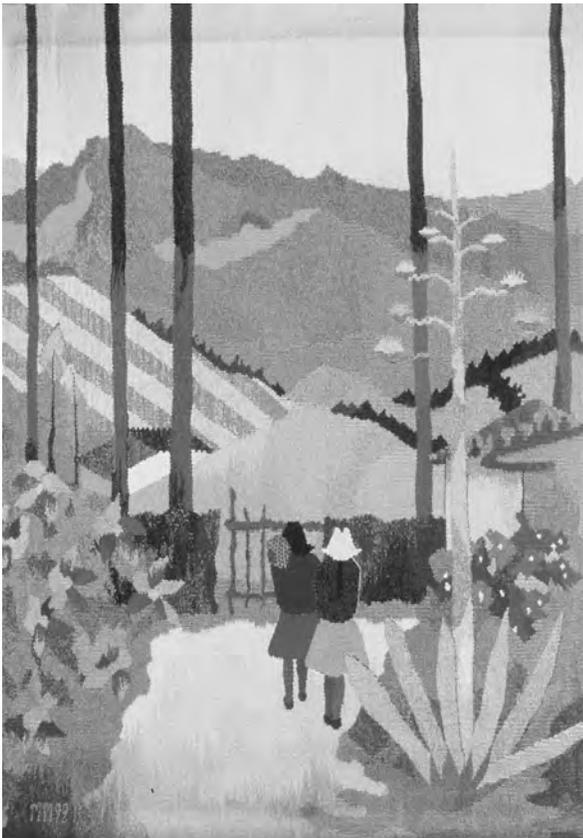
However, such ideas were temporarily put on hold since there were five children to raise as the family moved from city to city. In the early 1950s they lived in St. Louis, Missouri, for Charles’s work with educational institutions. It was there that Mary saw a small four-line ad in a magazine. “Learn to weave” jumped

off the page at her and she was on her way. From 1952-1955 she studied with Margaret Drewes, a local weaver and wife of painter, Warner Drewes. She learned harness loom weaving, not tapestry, but Mary took to it and soon after the lessons began, she purchased her first loom and produced scarves and linens.

There followed two years in Paris after which the family settled in Boston in 1957. Mary continued her fabric weaving and became a member of the Weaver's Guild of Boston. Mary and I became acquainted at this time. Friendship developed along common interests in painting and color. It was Mary who introduced me to Harrisville Designs yarn company where I subsequently became their color consultant. Mary was a devotee of the Harrisville wool singles and used it in all her tapestries. She loved to twist two strands of this fine yarn together to obtain a new color or for a mottled effect. When Harrisville discontinued the singles, Mary bought up whatever they had in stock and I contributed all I had from my yarn inventory.

She was very active in the Boston guild, even becoming "Dean of the Guild" from 1970 to 1972, and devoted many years to two specific projects. One was with the "Plymouth Plantation," the site of the Pilgrim settlement in Plymouth. It had been excavated, rebuilt as in olden times, and in need of cloth to make garments for the new "pilgrims" working as guides and interpreters. For 10 years, Mary was in charge of the historically correct weaving and knitting. She delegated work as well as producing it herself. How dull the gray cloth must have seemed for someone who loved color so much. Meanwhile, in 1974 and 1978, she took workshops in tapestry weaving with guild members, Ursula Jaeger and Barbara Herbster and began to make small tapestries. She continued to weave tapestries during the years between 1976 and 1984.

Her second long-term project was the Young Collection of Pre-Columbian Peruvian Textiles. Fellow guild members, Dr. Lloyd Young and his wife, Dorothy, had amassed a vast collection of Inca weavings while living in Peru. On behalf of the guild, Mary took responsibility for storing the pieces in her home while she organized members to help her research and catalogue the collection. In 1989 she was instrumental in having it permanently installed at the Haffenreffer Museum of Brown University. She enjoyed the project and felt it had introduced her to a "common humanity" in the work of weavers of another time and culture. The experience prompted Mary to finish her interrupted college studies. She obtained her degree from Brown in the 1980s. (Family accounting lists Mary as having received her degree in 1942. The discrepancy will be investigated further.)



Mary Merrill, "South IV - Dos Chicas," 66" x 48", 1992

Not being a trained artist, and not trusting her own design sense, her first tapestries were adaptations of paintings she loved., modifying the original and adding her own color ideas. In the summer of 1983 she went to study traditional tapestry techniques with Michele Mesnage in Boisson-Allegre in the south of France. There she met the west coast tapestry artist, Sharon Marcus, who became her mentor and with whom she studied in 1987 at Arrowmont, in Tennessee. Later, she also took a color workshop with tapestry weaver/writer, Carol Russell.

Shortly after the lessons in France, Mary bought a large tapestry loom from Quebec and ventured into her own designs. Merging her love of architecture and nature, travel was her big inspiration, with Latin America being the chief source of her designs. She took photographs and sketched in thinned gouache or crayon. Her early adaptations verged on the abstract whereas, I would call her own designs "expressionist realism." Whatever the style, it is evident that Mary reveled in luxuriant display of color.

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She proved to be very adept at using them dramatically for compositional effect and to build interest in the shaped areas and she achieved heightened intensity through contrast, placement and yarn blending.

Mary's love of color was strongly influenced by Gauguin, as the warmth of her palette might suggest; although to me, it is the Fauves and some early Kandinsky that comes through. The clashing yet compelling contrasts with yellows and golds as star players and brilliant red-oranges as close seconds are complemented with her greens, which are always "yellowy," and all the purples and blues. Mary only departed from all bright tones in her last two tapestries in which she contrasted muted and bright ones.



Mary Merrill, "Primary North," 60" x 79", 1996,
Inspired by Norway

She was a modest weaver. Although she exhibited in group shows locally, she was not after commissions or prestige. She wove for the joy of working with fiber and color and to bring places that spoke to her to pictorial reality. Her output was small, 17 completed tapestries with, perhaps, one or two unaccounted early pieces. The size range was from approximately 21" x 31" for the early works to 70" x 58" for the very last piece. Each completed piece was cut off with her husband present, followed by a champagne toast. It was all done very quietly in her studio in Hancock, New Hampshire.

Mary's first one-person show was at Harrisville Design in October, 1990. Two years later she had a two-person exhibit in conjunction with her husband's paintings at Cohasset, south of Boston. She began composing her memoirs at that time, in which she cites her "defining moments:" Monte Alban, the

French Tapestry show in Chicago, "Learn to weave," and in 1953, Gauguin's "Mahana no Atua" for color.

Mary was just hitting her stride when illness intervened. Her last solo exhibit was in August 1999, a few months before her death from cancer. The opening was very poignant, eliciting joy at seeing Mary's beautiful life's work yet sadness at knowing that this was the last good-bye. Her tapestry collection resides with the Foundation for Fiber Art in Amherst, Massachusetts. From there it has traveled to museums from coast to coast and is still available for exhibitions. It remains a joyous legacy from an artist with a soul as bright as her colors.

Review: FOLKS IN FIBER

By Louise Abbott and Jill Montgomery

LA: If you drive too fast through the intersection of Route 28 and 130, you might miss the Cahoon Museum of American Art in Cotuit on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. A modest 1775 Georgian Colonial that was once an overnight stop on the stagecoach line between Sandwich and Hyannis, the Cahoon Museum today houses the collection of whimsical folk paintings of Ralph and Martha Cahoon who had their home, studio, and gallery in the old house from 1945 until 1982.

The setting for the "Folks in Fiber" exhibit on the second floor of the Cahoon was spacious yet intimate. Its focus was on the human face and figure with treatments ranging from stylized to realistic. Forty-nine works were displayed from this country's top fiber artists. The collection represented great diversity in subject matter and age, along with an interesting mix of cultures and ethnic groups. All the fiber pieces were beautifully executed.

The Curator, Peg Irish, a rug hooker of international reputation, did a beautiful job displaying the pieces. Her thoughtful consideration given to the dimensions and fiber techniques enabled the imagery to flow from one room to the next. I was impressed by the way each individual piece was professionally presented. For example, "Oui'll Always Have Pears" by Anne McGinn of LaGrange, Illinois was mounted on a board covered with silk fabric with hand embroidery, and sides that mirrored the border around the weaving itself. It is elegant, woven with fine silk,



Ruth Manning, "Polka Dot Swimsuit," 11" x 5"

linen and cotton. **JM:** Earthtones dominate McGinn's small, 10" x 8" tapestry, which might well be called 'still life with pears and woman', but that would not have cleverly evoked a memorable Casablanca movie quote. Crossing angles of the background seem to enlarge the work, while rounded pears forms in the dress pattern, and bowl of pears repeat the theme. (See the ATA web site "About ATA" section and the ATB3 catalog.)

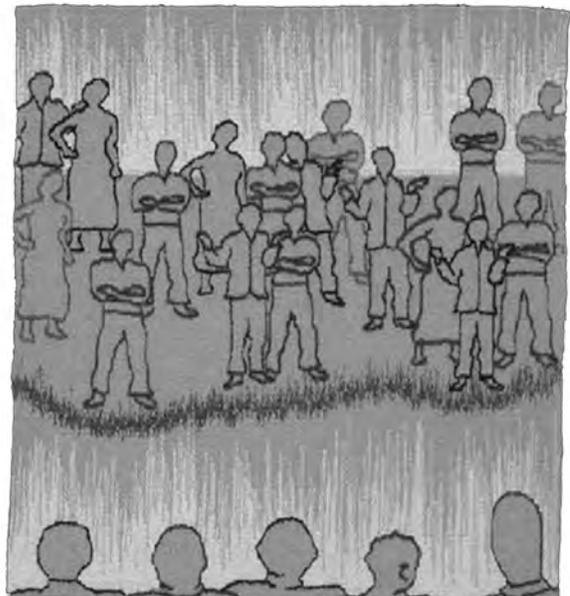
Moving through the gallery spaces, viewing the 49 fiber works including tapestry, quilting, rug hooking, felting, threadwork, beaded pieces and even origami, one could not help but appreciate the inventiveness and creativity the artists have shown. Though much more could be said about the fascinating and beautiful works shown, below is an overview of the tapestries exhibited.

Climbing the narrow stairway to the exhibit rooms, one is drawn in by two beach scenes that evoke the Cape Cod setting. Priscilla Lynch's "Beach Babes" (See *Tapestry Topics*, Spring 2004) is a humorous piece depicting three 'babes' languishing on deck chairs. It is finely woven with elements portrayed on the same plane, a flat perspective. The poses, outlining of the figures, and the blank eyes of the models all help to render an attitude of total "chilling" out. This tapestry and Ruth Manning's "Polka Dot Swimsuit" are wonderful introductions to set the mood of the exhibit. Manning's work particularly stands out for its bold, colorful imagery that escapes its small (5"x11") frame. It depicts a woman swimming next to a very decorative rope.

LA: Suzanne Pretty of Farmington, New Hampshire, chose to mount her tapestry inside a small shadow box, which played into her title of "Outside the Box", a statement of the Corporate Culture condition that exists today in many of our large corporations. In her clever interpretation, two of the five figures have managed to escape! Suzanne's use of color and beadwork offer a sharp contrast to the box. (See *Tapestry Topics* Fall 2003 Issue.)

The tapestry, "Washington Square" by Susan Martin Maffei of Manhattan, New York, has a wonderful black and white woven checkerboard border. This design is repeated throughout the weaving and is a marvelous background for the many people of ethnic diversity gathered in the square. The colorful tapestry is beautifully presented, mounted on a black fabric covered board and then remounted on another board a little larger. **JM:** From across the room, you first see Maffei's a narrow 40"x25" image as a pattern of earth-colored vertical shapes. The woven chess-board frame draws one closer as images are sorted out. Archie Brennan's work, one of a series based on his life drawings, presents a bold, striking image, that is strong and effective in its simplicity. **LA:** "I Wonder What You're Thinking" by Archie Brennan of Manhattan, New York is similarly mounted on a black cloth covered board. The quizzical expression of the man's angular face captures the mood of the title. I found myself reflecting on my own thoughts while observing the tapestry.

JM: Linda Rees' "Whose Way? What Way? My Way!" is another piece that treats the human form as a design element rather than a personality. Outlines of human forms appear to be on a floating stage before an audience indicated by several heads facing the figures. The muted grayish/violet color filling the outlines against the background of violet and flesh/peach tones are very effective. **LA:** These figures were isolated by hachure areas above and below.



Linda Rees, "Whose Way? What Way? My Way!" 28" x 27", 2002

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I loved the effect of the audience, the back of five heads observing the gesturing group.

“Dancing to Background Noise”, by Marianne Haller of Berkeley, California uses the technique of hachure to help convey the feeling of movement, and mid-tone grays and blues to help set the mood. The artist combines the “use of photography and tapestry weaving to chronicle the passing of time”. I found the piece very nostalgic. **JM:** Haller’s “Dancing to Background Noise” is a subtly colored and rhythmic piece with an elegant couple dancing. You can almost hear the music. One imagines that as newly-weds, this is their ‘first dance.’ The tapestries of Marianne Haller and Linda Weghorst were in the previous biennial, ATB5. Weghorst’s “Tribute to Othar Turner: A Complete Human Being” is finely woven in muted, soft shades. (See *Tapestry Topics*, Fall, 2004) The colors in the figure’s clothing are repeated in a background of rectangular shapes. I had never heard of the man but learned a great deal about his character from the tapestry. The exuberant imbalance of the figure and facial expression tell the story of a greatly enjoyed life.

LA: There were other large tapestries on display. “Four Girls and an Apple; Tangbe, Mustang, Nepal” by Eve Pearce from Bennington, Vermont showed the captivating backs of four Tibetan children with arms linked. The background in neutral shades encourages the feeling of desolation and solitude. The apple in the child’s hand is quite a contrast. **JM:** It is another in her series of large landscapes inspired by a trek she made in Mustang, a small Himalayan kingdom, and is reminiscent of the rooftop scene she exhibited in ATB5. This contemplative work’s fine weaving and subtle colors set off all sorts of imaginings. One wants to walk into the work and learn about these children, their camaraderie, and their sense of being.



Marianne Haller, "Dancing to Background Noise"
37" x 45"

LA: “Hut on the Rock” by Sarah Swett of Moscow, Idaho has an interesting design for a border and strong use of color. It is a water scene with children paddling a small boat to a hut on a rock. Sarah believes “frankly, there is no point in making anything unless one is thoroughly attracted both to a subject and to its form. There are too many ideas and too little time for anything else.” **JM:** The two children are rowing a bowl-like boat across a beautifully patterned, colorful sea while being watched intently by a frog in this fantasy piece.

The theme of the show, the human form; folks at play, relaxing, contemplating, is all in keeping with the Cahoons’ sense that art should be entertaining as well as informative. Also, the curator’s respect and love for fiber are clear in this exhibit.

Book Review: *Kids Weaving: Projects for Kids of All Ages*

By Sarah Swett • Illustrations by Lena Corwin •
Photographs by Chris Hartlove
Stewart, Tabori & Chang
Hardcover 8" x 9", 35 full-color photographs, 60
color illustrations, 128 pages
ISBN: 1-58479-467-4
US \$19.95 CAN \$27.95 October 2005

By Mary Dieterich

“Thank you so much for teaching us how to weave. I used to think that weaving . . . was meant for old women with canes and white hair, but boy, did you prove me wrong!” -- Fifth grader, Arrendondo Elementary, Tempe, Arizona

If weaving continues as a cultural tradition, instructions and encouragement will begin with the young. Call it the Mother’s Knee Concept. The young learn easily those things that are enjoyable, challenging and supportive of self-esteem, all at the same time. Certainly, weaving is one activity that fulfills such a criteria, and along comes Sarah Swett’s book *Kids Weaving* to encourage this concept.

Kids Weaving is immediately appealing, as much to adults as to the intended audience of weavers. Charming children working at various projects, beautiful colored photographs, the clarity of text, instructions and diagrams, plus the inventiveness of fifteen projects, all contribute to the overall impression of careful attention to details.

In the Introduction, Swett sets the stage by defining weaving as a process and discusses the long history of the craft in terms of both time and geography. An explanation of what the reader/participant may expect to learn and do while exploring the book clarifies the author's intent. The text contains eight other sections. There are four chapters presenting activities and instructions under the titles "Weaving Without a Loom," "Weaving on a Cardboard Loom," "Beginning on a Pipe Loom," and "Advancing on a Pipe Loom." "Sources for Supplies" lists commercial entities for such items as various wools, natural dyes and mordants, yarns, and twine. "Recommended Reading" entries follow, including picture books and novel titles for the young. After the "Acknowledgements" and "Index," there are templates for the Dancing Map Dolls project.

As the author acknowledges, a lack of commercial equipment is often seen to be an inhibiting factor to individual activities. It is refreshing to see discussions for finding means that may be constructed from the most common of materials: cardboard, sticks, kitchen string, etc. The projects, excepting those for the pipe loom, are possible under almost any circumstances. With names like Dancing Map Dolls, Fairy Fence and Friendship Bracelet, these projects will intrigue the weaver-to-be

The latter half of the book is devoted to the utilization of the pipe loom. The design and directions for building and warping it are credited to Archie Brennan. Once assembled, there are instructions for weaving shoelaces, dog collars, belts, a weaver's bag, and a scarf. By including such a loom, the interest level for the book is extended considerably.

One of its rewarding features is the inclusion of comments that inform the weaving process via related areas of exploration. Any subject that hints of magic will appeal to most children and the section entitled "Glorious Colors from Natural Dyes" is just such a subject. An attractive aspect overall is the use of information that reinforces a strong connection between cultural traditions and weaving practices. It introduces many cultures that have inhabited the continents both past and present, providing vast resources for design images and production techniques. The universality of weaving is thus honored. One can imagine textiles as a basis of stories within one's own family: the experience of grandparents, the adaptations of aunts and mothers.

Kids Weaving is an idea book that will lend itself to enhancing known practices as well as inspiring new ones. Not only will individual kids find interest and challenge, but so will teachers, art supervisors, librarians, camp counsellor, parents and baby-sitters. All will find ideas that can enliven their special areas of activity.

By the time this book arrived in my mailbox, I had just completed a series of tapestry lessons with 241 Fifth Grade students. As I opened Sarah Swett's *Kids Weaving*, I could imagine all sorts of ways to recharge my classroom plans in the future. If ever there was a reference that could help save the world for weavers, this book is a fine roadmap to that world.

Volunteers Make It Happen

By Mary Lane

This edition highlights the committee that produced the catalog for "American Tapestry Biennial 6."

Lynn Mayne generously volunteered to chair the ATB6 catalog committee because she believes that catalogs are crucial in documenting the field of contemporary tapestry.



Catalogs provide a valuable historical record. They also offer us an opportunity to share the exciting work being done in our medium with others.

She values volunteering for ATA because it gives her a chance to interact with other tapestry weavers. Networking with colleagues is especially important for tapestry weavers, who are widely dispersed and often work alone. Her involvement with ATA also supports her commitment to placing contemporary tapestry within the fine art world. In addition to her involvement with ATA, Lynn belongs to TAOS (Tapestry Artists of Sarasota) and Tapestry Weavers South.

Besides her extensive work on the ATB6 catalog, Lynn's Allergy series was beautifully displayed at Gallery 800 in Grand Rapids.

Lynn started weaving tapestry in the 1970s when she attended a class at the Saginaw Art Museum taught

continued...

by Roz Berlin. She later studied with Michelle Mesnage in France. She now divides her time between Florida and Michigan, committing five to six hours each day to her studio. Her current project, understandably slow to start because of her commitment to the ATB6 catalog, is a diptych portraying blooming Bird of Paradise flowers and a Tri Color Heron.

When Lynn is not weaving she enjoys playing golf and tennis, choral singing, playing the piano and spending time with her husband, children and grand children.

Traudi Bestler of Minnetonka, Minnesota, proofread the text for the ATB6 catalog. She expresses her commitment to the organizations to which she belongs by being an active member. Her involvement as a volunteer for ATA reflects her love of tapestry and her desire to contribute to the future of contemporary tapestry. Traudi believes that tapestry needs to be represented within the larger art world, noting that many people do not recognize its value.

In response to the question, "How did you get interested in tapestry?" Traudi responded, "I was curious, and things just sort of got out of hand." Although she does not have a local tapestry group in her area, Traudi is planting the seeds by teaching weaving in her local art center. She also enjoys reading, gardening and music.

In addition to Lynn and Traudi, four other ATA members, who declined an interview for this column, provided vital assistance to the ATB6 catalog. Katzy Luhning edited the catalog essays, Laurie Robbins compiled the biographies of the ATA board members, Terri Stewart was involved with the search for a printing firm and the pre-sale mailings and Johanna Timpson helped in the search for a printer.

Member News

By Ellen Ramsey

Thank you new and renewing Circle members for the second quarter of 2006. Your additional support makes a real difference!

Studio Circle: Elizabeth Buckley, Odette Brabec, Lynda Brothers, Mary Rawcliffe Colton, Nancy Diggs, Pamela Done, Lany Eila, Ronda Ganson, Joan Griffin, Susan Hart Henegar, Silvia Heyden, Urban Jupena, Beverly Kent, Judy Koelsch, Mary Meader, Olga Neuts, Sandy Oravec, Pam Patrie, Shelley Quiner, Christina Rasmussen, Barbara Richards, William Saunders, Sarah Swett.

Curators Circle: Helena Hernmarck, Katherine Perkins, Jean Smelker-Hugi, Frances Williamson.

Temporarily Away? The post office has been notifying us about more and more undeliverable newsletters mailed to members who are "temporarily away" for blocks of time in the winter and summer months. Just a reminder that it is very hard for us to keep track of who might have missed an issue due to travel. **Non-profit mail is not forwarded.** If you have a second home, we can mail to you there if you provide the dates and information. If all else fails and you miss an issue we will gladly mail you another one when you get home, but you will need to remind us to do so.

That said, by now you should have received your 2006-2007 Member Directory. If you have not, please contact Ellen Ramsey at 206-440-8903 or ew.ramsey@comcast.net.

Kudos

Marti Fleischer and Marianne Vigander have work in the group show, "L.U.N.A." at the Fountain City Art Center, Fountain City, TN, August 11-September 22, 2006

Monique Lehman will have a one-person exhibit at the Institute for Genetic Medicine Gallery, University of Southern California, from November 9, 2006 to February, 2007.

Deborah Corsini, Suzanne Pretty, and Michael Rohde had work in the "By the Hand" exhibit at the Bedford Gallery in Walnut Creek, CA. Through September 10, 2006

Elinor Steele had work in "Fiber Celebration 2006" in Colorado this summer and also in "Crafts National 40" in Pennsylvania, where she received an "Award of Merit".

Karen Page Crislip has been chosen as an Artist in Residence at the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site in West Branch, Iowa. She will be designing and weaving tapestry there from September 13th to September 30th, with presentations on both weekends.



ATB6 artists. Deborah Corsini, Ellen Ramsey, Joyce Hayes, Christine Laffer, Jane Kidd, Monique Lehman, and Don Burns. Laffer's entry "Cloth of Construction," Lehman's "Heartsong" and Cecilia Blomberg's "June 4th" are in the background.

Want to network with other ATA members?

Check out our volunteer wish list. Working on a committee is a great way to network with other members. All the programs for ATA are done by our great volunteers – a fun way to use or learn a new skill.

Current Volunteer Wish List

Public Relations: As ATA expands we need to spread the word to the larger community. We need people to write press releases, research media contacts etc.

Anniversary Celebration: As we gear up for our Anniversary Celebration (early summer 2007) we need members to help with fundraising/planning for the events.

Please contact Joan Griffin (joan@joangriffintapestry.com) for more information on specific jobs...thanks. ATA will be happy you did and so will you.

Contact ATA

PO Box 28600 San Jose, CA 95159

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ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

	1 year	2 years
Individual	\$35	\$65
Studio Circle	\$55	\$100
Curator's Circle	\$125	\$225
Collector's Circle	\$250	\$450
Student*	\$25	\$45

*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Tapestry Topics

Guidelines for submitting articles to Tapestry Topics:

Next Deadline: **October 1, 2006** theme:
Transitions as Design Element,
January 15, 2007, April 1, July 15.

Send all items to: Linda Rees: lerees@comcast.net
--Or--
1507 Elkay Drive
Eugene, OR 97404

All photographs and electronic images should be accompanied by the following information : Size, date completed, and photo credits. Do not insert images into the text body. Attach each one separately.

Articles should be under 2000 words. Submissions will be edited for clarity and space requirements

Exhibition reviews: Articles should describe the overall sense of the show with insight and critical observations, and explain the parts that contribute to its impact.

Newsletter committee: Proofreader: Anne Clark, Layout: Elinor Steele, Distribution: Ellen Ramsey



Priscilla Lynch, "River City" See article on page 4.

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www.americantapestryalliance.org