



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

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## *Something Old, Something New*

HONORING TRADITION, INSPIRING INNOVATION

## Something Old, Something New

Kathe Todd-Hooker, Theme Coordinator

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Cover image: Kathy Spoering, "Croquet Coquette," 36 in x 53 in, ©2002

## Directors' Letter, Spring 2020

Dear ATA Members,

Welcome to this inspiring issue of *Tapestry Topics* where we will explore the idea of something old/ something new in so many different ways. When you weave tapestry the idea of old brings to mind some specific things including the long history of tapestry making, the age of our tools that may have been handed down through generations, our own personal history with tapestry, and on and on. And, of course, as citizens of the fast paced 21st century something new is always popping up to offer us possibilities and challenges. We thank Kathe Todd-Hooker for being the theme coordinator for this issue and all of the ATA members who contributed their articles and images.

For me “something old/something new” is the way I think about the technique of pulled warp. This is a technique that I have experimented with and used off and on for over 40 years, yet a technique that always seems new and full of surprises each time I return to it. I think about the weavers before me, like Herman Scholten, who used it so elegantly and I think of my students who have laughed with joy during their first “pull”.

The tapestry world lost a fine artist and master weaver last fall with the passing of Archie Brennan. He had such a strong influence on many of us who are currently weaving. It is gratifying to know that his work will live on. Please read the call for articles to “... a bit of weaving’: Archie Brennan’s Legacy” for the upcoming issue of *Tapestry Topics* that will be dedicated to Archie and his legacy.

We hope to see many of you next summer in Knoxville for ATA’s Biennial Members Meeting, the Speakers Session, and of course our workshops and/or workshops sponsored by Convergence. Our wonderful workshop leaders, Fiona Hutchison

and Jennifer Sargent will talk about their work in the Speakers Session which is free and open to the public. We also hope you find time to weave something wonderful for **Renditions**, the ATA members Unjuried Small Format Tapestry Exhibition.

*Tapestry Topics* comes to life because of the hard work and guidance of many volunteers. We thank Editor, Leslie Munro and the wonderful team of volunteers: Robbie Lafleur, Patricia Jordan, Pat Williams, Ruth Manning, and Kim Mumbower along with our administrative Manager, Maggie Leininger.

Please find some time to sit down and peruse this issue as we are sure that you will find something interesting about the old and the new.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan".

Susan Iverson  
Director at Large, President

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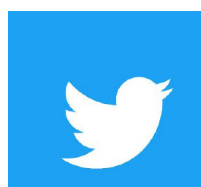
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## Archie Brennan

December 7, 1931 – October 31, 2019

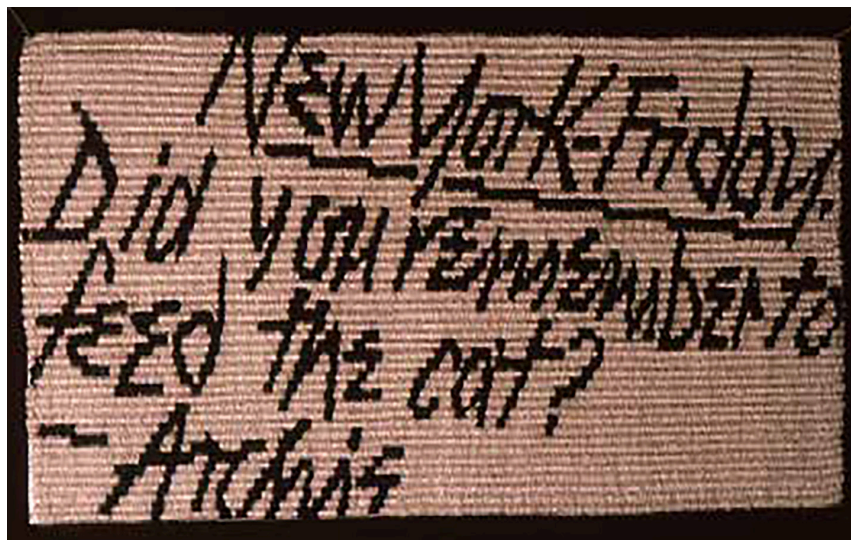


Archie Brennan was born in Roslin, Scotland in 1931. At the age of 15 he began studying drawing at the Edinburgh College of Art. Through these classes he met apprentices from the Dovecot Studios (Edinburgh Tapestry Co.), and a year later embarked on a six-year weaving apprenticeship at the Dovecot. Archie completed a degree from the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) in 1962 and went on to serve as Director of the Dovecot Studios from 1962 to 1977. During the same period he founded and headed the Department of Tapestry and Fibre Arts at ECA. At the Dovecot Archie designed tapestries to be woven in the workshop, and he worked with other artists as they created designs for the Dovecot. He wove as a studio weaver and on his own tapestries.

In 1977 Archie was elected Chairman of the British Arts Council and President of the Scottish Society of Artists. In 1975 he

moved to Australia, where he consulted on the formation of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop. He later served as consultant on the new National Arts School in Papua, New Guinea and led the design team for the Parliament building, employing mosaic, wood, metal, textiles and painting. In 1981 He was appointed Officer of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II, for his contribution to the arts. In 1993 he moved to New York with his partner Susan Martin Maffei.

Archie's tapestries are marked by a sense of humor that involves word play and commentary on popular culture, by a reverence for historical tapestries grounded in the technical givens of tapestry weaving, and by an insatiable curiosity expressed by his use of the phrase, "What if...?". Throughout his career Archie wove more than 500 tapestries.



Archie Brennan, "Postcard . . . Feed the Cat?,"  
4 in x 6 in, 12 epi.

Archie was also a passionate advocate for tapestry—writing, lecturing and teaching. His work and viewpoint have influenced the entire field of contemporary tapestry. Archie championed not only technical excellence, but also an attitude of exploration that was grounded in weaving itself. He encouraged weavers to develop their designs keeping tapestry's structural grid of warp and weft in mind. His emphasis on process was reflected in his propensity to see weaving as a journey up the warp, a conversation between the weaver, the technical realities of weaving, and the unfolding image on the loom. He championed weaving on upright looms, from the front of the tapestry, for a more direct and interactive experience translating the image into tapestry.

Archie's love of weaving was infectious. He celebrated the many amateurs in the field, finding joy in the idea that across the world,

weavers were tap, tap, tapping away on their looms. He freely shared his design for a copper pipe loom that could be made cheaply and easily using components found in any hardware store, and which could be broken apart to fit in a suitcase.

Archie was an avid spokesman for small format tapestry. Fighting against attitudes that tapestry must be large, his perfectly scaled miniature works that call attention to subtle differences in materials, the structure of the cloth and weaving techniques, demonstrated how vibrant and compelling small tapestries can be.

To read more about Archie Brennan and see images of his work, visit the following websites:

<http://www.brennan-maffei.com/>

[https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex\\_ata/archie-brennan/introduction/](https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex_ata/archie-brennan/introduction/)



## Something Old, Something New

**Kathe Todd-Hooker**

I am deeply grateful to those who supplied articles and insights. I found it vastly interesting and fascinating to read the different unique interpretations of the theme—*Something Old, Something New*. Every time I take on the weaving of a newly designed tapestry, it's a new, often mysterious, experience based on the experiences of past tapestry technique, past designers, and practice—the challenge of each *duite*, the challenge of what is next, but always being aware of the past creating the future. And, always, the vicarious thrill of seeing others find their A-HA! moment, when the past and future merge into the makings of a paradigm shift!

**Kathe Todd-Hooker** is a tapestry designer/practitioner, a studio artist, an instructor (both online and at @Between & Etc Tapestry studio in Albany, Oregon,) an occasional contract weaver, a researcher, and an author of five books on tapestry technique, a blog, and numerous articles on tapestry and related subject matter. She began to weave tapestry in 1978 due to a serendipitous wrongful definition of tapestry. Wanna be a yogi and certifiable “between and tapestry dinosaur.”



Kathe Todd-Hooker, “So Sought After,” 14.5 in x 10 in, 2007. Dual duty craft thread for warp. Embroidery floss, Sulky metallics, linen embroidery floss, cotton darning threads, sewing thread and rayon embroidery floss. Recipient of the ATA Award for Excellence, 2009.

## Thank You to Our Contributors

Including Kathe Todd-Hooker, Theme Coordinator

**Linda Franco** lives in Oregon's inspiring Willamette Valley with her husband Fred and family, where she spends her pondering time gardening, beading, weaving, spinning, and anything else she can get her fingers into.



Native Californian **Alex Friedman** has been a tapestry weaver for more than 40 years. Alex Friedman is a member of Tapestry Weavers West and former American Tapestry Alliance Co-Director. She maintains a studio in Sausalito, California, and welcomes inquiries. [www.lexfriedmantapestry.com](http://www.lexfriedmantapestry.com)



**Robbie LaFleur**, from Minneapolis, Minnesota, has been following a thread of Scandinavian textiles since she studied weaving at Valdres Husflidsskole in Fagernes, Norway in 1977. She teaches a workshop inspired by medieval Norwegian tapestry, or billedvev (literally: picture weaving). She coordinates the Weavers Guild of Minnesota Scandinavian Weavers Study Group and is the editor and publisher of the quarterly *Norwegian Textile Letter* ([norwegiantextileletter.com](http://norwegiantextileletter.com)). [www.robbielafleur.com](http://www.robbielafleur.com)



**Kathy Spoering** has been designing and weaving tapestries for more than twenty years. Her work has been exhibited in many juried exhibits, including the ATA exhibitions. Her tapestries are sold in various galleries throughout the country and have been a part of the Art in Embassies Program. [www.mylifeisbutatapestry.com](http://www.mylifeisbutatapestry.com)



**Joanne Soroka**, Joanne Soroka has been weaving tapestries since graduating from the Tapestry Department of Edinburgh College of Art in 1976. She is the author of *Tapestry Weaving: Design and Technique*, now in its sixth printing. [www.joannesoroka.co.uk](http://www.joannesoroka.co.uk)





## A Novice Attempt to Graph and Weave a Coptic Pattern

Linda R. Franco

When Kathe Todd-Hooker asked me to write about the steps I took to graph and weave my Coptic sample, I laughed to myself. When initially pondering the study, I am grateful that I had not a clue that it would take me a year to weave an 8 x 8 inch piece I was happy with. The adventure began one Saturday morning; I jumped in with both feet!

Using *Coptic Textile Designs* by M. Gerspach, I selected a piece that looked like it required techniques Kathe had already taught me—soumak and plain weave. I warped my loom with an 8 inch continuous warp set at 10 epi (which would prove very useful for the next 12 months) and sat down with my black ALV yarn and DMC perle cotton wound in bobbins, and realized I did not have a clue where to start. Using a picture as cartoon would be very difficult for me. Then I remembered Kathe had said something about looking at the Coptic patterns as a graph. So, I pulled out some old graph paper, a pen, dried-up White-Out, and a ruler. I began graphing the outer border of the design—it looked like the simplest part to graph. During this time, my son stopped over for a visit and was interested in what I was doing. After quietly watching me smear dried White-Out across ink lines, he left. A short time later he returned with a box of mechanical pencils, an eraser and a pack of White-Out pens. My son had seen the obvious—I was going to be doing a lot of erasing. So, I would say the first step was to be ready to enjoy the slow process.

Newly armed with my mechanical pencils, eraser, White-Out, graph paper, ruler, and tape, I was ready for some serious graphing. The lower outer border looked like a good place to begin graphing out the S-shaped twining. Soumak would be the technique to create the lines I was graphing using the vertical graph lines as warp threads. The horizontal lines distinguished a single pass. Once I graphed out the three stacked rows of S's, I repeated the twining pattern without excessive erasing. All four sides

were the same twine pattern, so I was ready to tackle the corners. It was easy to see the initial drawing from Gerspach's book was an interpretation of a piece that had probably been stretched and misshapen over time, so there is no saying that I got it "right." In the end, I was very satisfied with the turn I graphed and excited that I could make a square border any length and height I needed. This border required an even number of warp threads to weave the twining and I had warped 80 warp threads leaving me five warps on either side of the design for a nice background trim. So far, so good.

Now it was time to graph the middle section, which I refer to as interlocking hearts with electrical outlet corners. Is my novice showing? Well, I was on a real roll and feeling a little cocky! I figured out the repeating pattern of the middle section and then hit my first hard block wall.



Based on the warps used in the outer twining border, I was left with one extra warp in the interlocking heart section. This section required an odd number of warp threads! Now I realize in the greater scheme of things, one warp off between the interlocking hearts and outer twining border could be overlooked, but I have an obsessive need for order. This was not going to do, and I was close to admitting defeat. I took a break for a few days.

As it would happen, the problem was solved at the Wednesday Open Studio. For some unrelated reason, Kathe brought up the technique of intermittently weaving tapestry over multiple warp threads (floating) to achieve a desired effect. Being such a linear person, I had not thought of this perfect solution to my extra warp problem! Weaving the two center warps as one provided the odd number of warp threads needed to weave the interlocking hearts section within the confines of the warps needed for the outside border. Once the center block was woven, I could re-open the two center warp threads to weave the top twining outer border.

Finally, it was time to graph the very center flower motif. Graphing it was not difficult. Weaving it with the five warp threads I had left was. This is when I realized that 8 inches at 10 epi was not a good choice. When actually



Linda Franco, "Coptic Pattern" first weaving, photo: K. Todd Hooker.



Linda Franco, "Coptic Pattern" second weaving, 8 in x 8 in, 10 epi, photo: K. Todd Hooker. Black ALV tapestry wool and DMC perle cotton.

weaving it, I tried twining, half passes and half bundles...to no avail. In the end, I decided to weave the very center as an "electrical outlet" as in the interlocking heart section. This was one time I could live with "it is what it is."

This piece was woven three times over the year. Each time I tweaked it a bit to get the spacing I needed to define the pattern well. I primarily did this by adjusting bundle size and passes. The final time I wove it, I used the black ALV as the background and colored linen for the soumak. It sounded a bit more traditional and mostly I just needed to work with color. I found I could not work on the piece when I was tired or only had a short amount of time. It took a lot of focus to not miss where I needed to end and begin soumak threads. I even had the patterns enlarged and laminated so I could use a dry erase pen to mark off a row as I completed it.

By the third time, I was more proficient at the pattern and enjoyed watching it work up faster. It was necessary to be flexible in my passes. Because of the combining of the two center



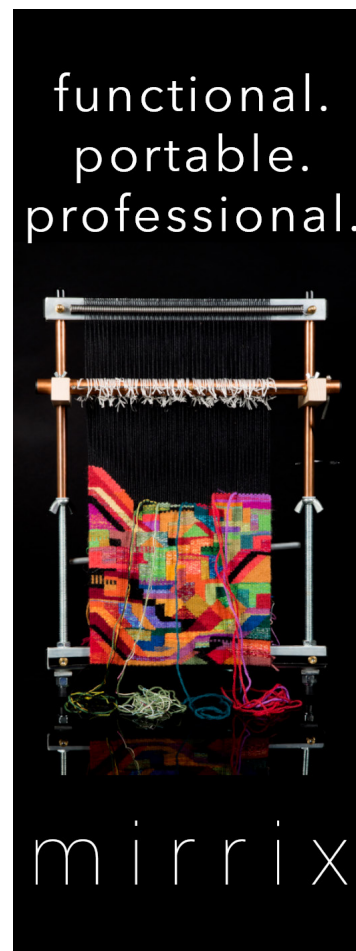


Linda Franco, "Coptic Pattern" third weaving,  
photo: K. Todd Hooker. Black ALV tapestry  
wool, colored linen.

warps as one, the weft would pack down deeper in the center than the outer edges requiring additional building up of the warp in that section randomly as to keep the soumak lines in the pattern. It became an exercise for me to find balance between pattern and trusting my eye to achieve the desired outcome.


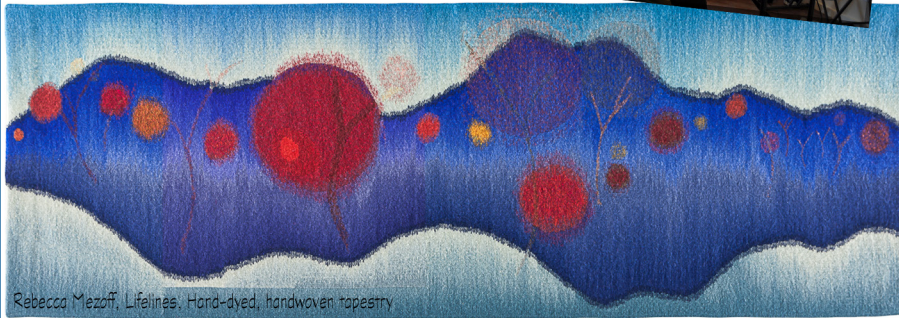
During this year period, I purchased *The Coptic Tapestry Albums and the Archaeologist of Antinoé, Albert Gayet* by Nancy Arthur Hoskins. Ms. Hoskins describes the tabby/tapestry setts of the ancient pieces she studied. Many pieces were woven in 56 epi for tabby and 28/2 epi for tapestry and even finer. Reading that makes me wonder if I can achieve that center flower detail and avoid most of the center packing by working in a warp sett she refers to. I suspect I could weave that very center flower motif in single warp threads and the other sections in two warp threads. There may be a fourth weaving of this block in my future.

I am very intrigued with Coptic designs and plan to graph and cartoon more pieces. Ken Wong, from the Wednesday Open Studio, has designed and built a reinforced copper loom with a leash bar so I can try pieces with finer warp setts. I am very excited about using it to attempt the next Coptic piece later this month—maybe a combined 40 epi tabby and 20/2 epi tapestry—and get lost in another tapestry study adventure. It is time to jump in with both feet to learn more of what I do not know.



[www.tapestryweaving.com](http://www.tapestryweaving.com)

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Rebecca Mezoff Tapestry Studio

A photograph of Rebecca Mezoff, a woman with glasses, sitting at a table in her studio. She is holding a small, light-colored woven object. The studio is filled with various weaving tools, yarn, and finished tapestries on the walls.A horizontal tapestry artwork titled 'Lifelines' by Rebecca Mezoff. It features a dark blue background with a wavy, light blue border. The central part of the tapestry is filled with various red and orange circular motifs, some of which are surrounded by thin, dark lines, resembling a network or a map.

Rebecca Mezoff, Lifelines. Hand-dyed, handwoven tapestry

Cultivate courage. Be curious. Create  
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A logo for Weaversbazaar, featuring a stylized 'W' made of vertical bars in various colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue).

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## My Soumak Journey

Kathe Todd-Hooker

I discovered line, dot, locked soumak, and the flying shuttle techniques in the late 70s. My journey into the exploration of soumak has taken over 40 years, and to this day I feel like every time I sit down at my loom it's a totally new exploration of adapting and creating those lines and usage into my tapestries. As time moves on, I keep discovering more nuanced ways to use soumak in my designs.

I started working with Sharon Marcus at OSAC (Oregon School of Arts and Crafts) from 1976-1979. She was my instructor in a Marylhurst/OSAC joint degree program. Sharon encouraged me to explore flying shuttle techniques when I became unhappy with the width of my lines. I wanted to make lines in my designs that were less than two warps wide. Typically, in large format/large scale tapestries, vertical and angled lines, unless they run along the fell line, are woven no smaller than two warps wide. The smaller one weaves and designs, the wider two warps seem to be when trying to design or use them in a design. With vertical soumak I have more options in sizing the line and doing finer and more accurate thin directional and vertically angled lines.

My first AHA—I discovered not soumak, but that one could wrap single warps and sew them in place, or use joins such as shared warps and double weft interlocks. This added to my frustration; neither really worked for the free-flowing vertical sharp lines that I wanted for my designs. These lines always looked toothy on the sides of the lines—fuzzed lines and edges caused by the double weft interlocks. The single toothed joins and the sewing of wrapped warps lacked the sharp definition of the lines and lineal curves, and the smooth transitions in angles and curves without stair steps, that I saw in my mind's eye.

My second AHA—I discovered vertical soumak while reading about a Coptic technique called the flying shuttle, a romantic British term that makes me laugh as I visually picture escaping winged or weighted bobbins. I found a copy of an old article in a British textile journal that referred to it as British embroidery when describing Hopi dance skirt weaving, which absolutely made no sense at all. The technique was not embroidery, but a form of soumak.

As a student in the 70s there were maybe three or four books published in English and none were really technically oriented. In a *Shuttlecraft* monograph Harriet Tidwell wrote about modern tapestry technique in 1964. And there were the ubiquitous *Sunset* books on tapestry weaving that approached tapestry with a technique and fiber orientation rather than design as a fine art akin to a painting. My first "tapestry textbook" was a book called the *Mirror of History* by Francis Paul Thomson, who was trying to define tapestry by country and time period with a couple of sentences describing technique and practitioners. And, a very old book by Helen Candee in 1912 that occasionally dropped hints about techniques in the descriptions of the tapestry she observed and wrote about. A little later I read Roland Galice's *La technique de A à ... X ... de la tapisserie de haute et basse lice et du tapis de Savonnerie* (Paris: Les Lettres Libres, 1985). It is in French, but has great black and white pictures and diagrams. A few years later Nancy Hoskins wrote a wonderful book, *Universal Stitches*, originally published in 1982, that described the technique as an embroidery technique.

Later, I discovered that my French instructors called vertical soumak *arrondissement* and it was worked from the back of the tapestry using a mirror. "*Arrondissement* was a technique that had fallen out of usage as tapestry became more

modern, large and graphic. Soumak or vertical soumak were not considered weaverly technique and to be avoided.” (Field Journal notations, 1986, from an ATA conference panel discussion) Later—much later—I discovered that one could weave or knot whole textiles by doing soumak architecturally, but first for me came the verticality of Coptic flying shuttles. Soumak rugs have historical antecedents in the Middle East. Today it is beautifully practiced by weavers such as Geary Jones, David Johnson and many Middle Eastern weavers, both tribal and in workshops.

Editor’s note: *The Tapestry Book* by Helen Churchill Candee is available in various formats at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/26151>.

## My Soumak Journey: Continuing AHAs

**Kathe Todd-Hooker**

There are basically 3-4 methods of doing soumak and hundreds of variations, including rya. But (grin), most difficult is trying to make one’s way through the all the variations of spelling of the word soumak and the countries who claim it in one way or another: for example, Egyptian knotting, Greek knotting and Swedish knotting. That said, I usually describe soumak by what it does.

First, there is what I call architectural soumak. It usually follows the fell line of the weaving but can be knotted eccentrically along a fell line. It can create a whole cloth.

Second, there is soumak that is always connected to a fell line, but doesn’t create a whole cloth—just lines and outlines. It may move eccentrically-up and over a shape, at an angle over several warps, but it will follow the fell line. Soumak is great for smoothing angles, outlining shapes, and getting rid of stair steps and tothing. It can occasionally reorder or re-space warps. (Technically, rya techniques are

very related to soumak in process, so I generally lump it into soumak when I teach or write about soumak.) Architectural soumak—line or dot—can also be used as a finishing technique. I prefer to use knotted soumak, because it stays put better over time. This form of soumak is great for edging geometric shapes to get rid of tothing and holding things in place or just putting a dot or dots throughout a design. It can also be used to create surface texture.

The third form and my favourite is what I call vertical soumak. It’s an incredible line drawing tool and that’s the way I am most likely to use it in my tapestries. The technique is a way of creating vertical floats to create lines. The line of vertical soumak can move to any place there is a warp (with the exception of back into the woven area!) It has the ability to be right-handed or left-handed depending on which direction one turns around the warp. It can be any thickness physically or can become thinner or thicker depending on how many passes it travels between warp turns. It can even lace up the edge of a slit to create a line to outline a slit edge.

The fourth possible category contains the odd stuff: soumak patterns, graded lines, long-jump soumak, Cicim, pattern weaving, Hopi embroidery and so many more that I am finding and waiting to use as needed. More of a place to warehouse techniques that are unique, but need a place to be stored for future use.

The most common thing I hear from students: “Is soumak okay to use with tapestry?” Of course! My stock answer is that there are no tapestry police that are going to come and take your loom or chastise you for using soumak—just go for it. Have fun!

## AHA and Then Some!

**Kathe Todd-Hooker**

Sometimes something old becomes something new and is very wonderful thing. The ultimate AHA!

One day when visiting Mary Lane and admiring a beautiful tapestry I happened to notice the edge. It had a sharp turned selvedge that laid perfectly flat when finished. Little by little it dawned on me that this was something I had never seen before in the 42 years I have been weaving.

This something solved an ongoing annoying problem - making a sharp turn so a selvedge will lay flat and knife edged. I have found this to be one of the most difficult and rarely successful operations in small format tapestry.

You can iron the edge flat but the tapestry always poofs out over time, plus the ironing flattens the ribbed structure changing the look of the surface. Or you can braid the edge without a selvedge, but this leaves a white line along the edge of the tapestry unless the edge is covered by sewing twill tape over it. Still this is bulky and doesn't always lay flat.

So Mary Lane's tapestry with the perfectly flat selvedge and a sharp edge was a real AHA moment. It turns out the technique had been used at the Scheuer Tapestry Studio in New York during the 80's. Ruth Tanenbaum Scheuer was one of my first tapestry instructors in the late 70's and Mary had been one of the weavers at the studio. Don't you just love finding connections. I know I do.

In short, the perfectly sharp edge and turn back had been created by a row of line soumak, a woven pass and a half, another row of soumak and then a selvedge. When the tapestry is folded the pass and a half allows a perfect flat turn back on the line composed of the pass and a half of plain weave between the two rows of line soumak when turned.



Mary Lane, "Autumn Leaves," 40.5 in x 57 in, 1988, photo: Mary Lane. Cotton warp, wool weft



So, to begin a tapestry using this technique:

1. I twine the edge when I begin to weave the selvedge. This gives me a flat edge that won't sink into the hills and valleys when I braid the edge when the tapestry is off the loom. (This is actually an optional step.)



2. Weave a selvedge. The size is determined by the scale and format of the tapestry.
  3. Do a row of line soumak, beginning with a lark's head and ending with a pigtail. On a very large format tapestry you may want to start and stop the soumak every foot or so to even out the tension of the soumak and reduce the chance of a pulled-in, curved selvedge.
  4. Weave a pass and a half or two full passes all the way across the tapestry. Pig tail off to finish the weft bundle.
  5. Do another row of soumak. Sometimes, if there are extremes in colour variations to be woven above the soumak, I change out the colours accordingly. Start and end each new colour with a lark's head and a pigtail.
  6. Weave the tapestry.
  7. End the tapestry by doing the opposite of how you began the tapestry.
  8. I prefer to finish the tapestry with a Damascus edge that hides the warp ends on the inside of the selvedge when turned.
  9. After the tapestry is off the loom turn the selvedge to the back and stitch or finish.
- Enjoy your beautiful square turned edge.



Mary Lane's photographs of "Autumn Leaves" showing the Scheuer Tapestry Studio edge illustrate this article. In Mary's words:

"This technique involves a row of soumak, a full pass of weaving and then a second row of soumak. It makes a very square edge. You can see in the image I changed the color of the weft in the first row of soumak in order to make it match the last lines of weaving in the actual tapestry. That helps the hem 'disappear'."



## Anatomy of Planning an Exhibit

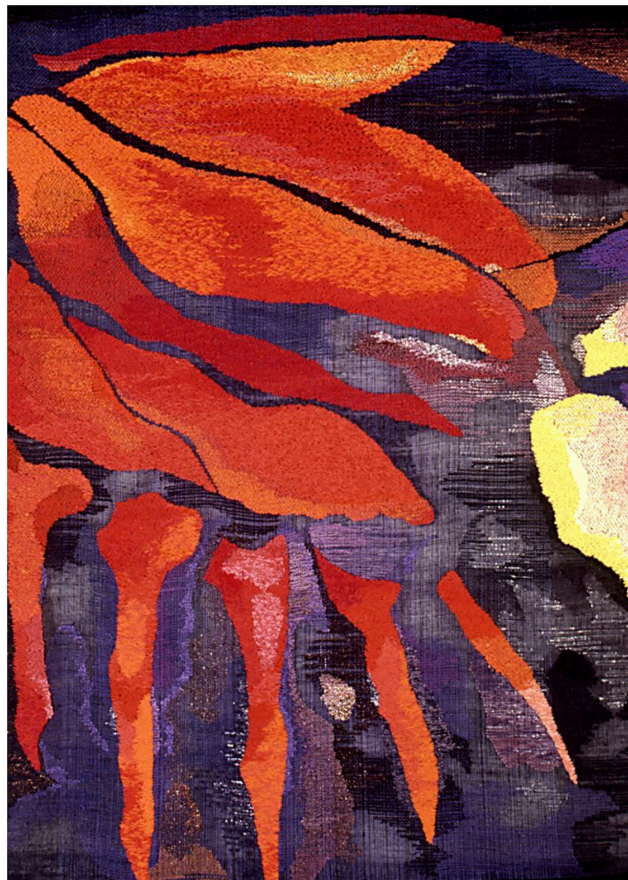
Alex Friedman

**IMPACT: Climate Change** was conceived as an exhibition that would focus tapestry weavers on a very topical subject. Nearly everyone has experienced an aspect of this external effect and would have something to express visually. It would provide tapestry artists an opportunity to use their medium as a voice to call awareness to pressing environmental issues. By exploiting the various techniques of tapestry, the artists have many possibilities for drawing attention to specific issues of their woven environmental commentary.

Tapestry Weavers West (TWW) averages a show every other year and this time Deborah Corsini and I proposed a very topical theme. To have a strong show we decided to invite another tapestry group to apply. We invited TWiNE (Tapestry Weavers in New England) as we liked the idea of East and West joining together to comment on climate change. (I had formerly been a member of TWiNE and knew many of their members.)

Deborah and I developed the proposal for the exhibit and with Minna Rothman's (a Boston based TWiNE member) strategic help we identified a gallery in Belmont Center, Massachusetts, on the East Coast, and the Mills Building in San Francisco in the west. With those venues established we set about writing the Call to Entry. I must admit I was a little nervous that there would not be a strong response, but I was gratified that we had over 42 artists submit 79 tapestries by the deadline.

It was curated by Kerri Hurtado of Artsource Consulting, who manages the art exhibits in the Mills Building; by Deborah Corsini, the former Curator of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles; and myself, the exhibition lead and a former Director and Board member of ATA and a longtime weaver. We selected 32 pieces that most closely adhered to the theme, that were well designed, and were woven to a high standard. Space was limited so we had to make hard choices.



"Heliconius" tapestry by Barbara Levine (pictured above) was chosen to receive the ATA Award for Excellence by jurors Micala Sidore and Karen Jackson. Photo: Mina Rothman.

The show opened September 8th in the Belmont Gallery of Art, with a wonderful reception on the 15th. Ten of the final 28 artists were present including four from the West Coast. To enhance the theme of the show the Director of the Belmont Gallery of Art (BGA), Rebecca Richards, organized two documentary films on the environment as well as an environmental speaker. I was pleased, as this is another way to build the audience for tapestry. There was also a local television crew to interview the BGA director and the two ATA jurors, Micala Sidore and Karen Jackson. The two jurors selected the

---

## HONORING TRADITION, INSPIRING INNOVATION

Award of Excellence during the opening week—Barbara Levine’s “Heliconius,” which addresses the extinction of this particular kind of butterfly, a metaphor for the critical times we are living in.

On December 16, **IMPACT: Climate Change** opened at the landmark Mills Building in downtown San Francisco, which has a marble lobby that runs through the middle of the building. It is often used as a public shortcut and this is where the show will be hung until March 13, 2020. The reception at the Mills Building on January 30, 2020 was attended by more than 70 tapestry enthusiasts.

The show has received a lot of interest both for the topical theme and for the wide range of styles and techniques in tapestry. If you can’t visit, there is a catalog available on the TWW website at [www.tapestryweaverswest.org](http://www.tapestryweaverswest.org).

Tapestry has a very long history as a narrative art form, and this exhibit extends the legacy with a very contemporary note. I am pleased to see tapestry move into a role in which fine art plays, by offering lively commentary on topical subjects. Of course, there are many tapestry artists who already do this, but it is nice to have an exhibit in which the medium itself is so expressive and the message so compelling.

Here are the details of the shows:

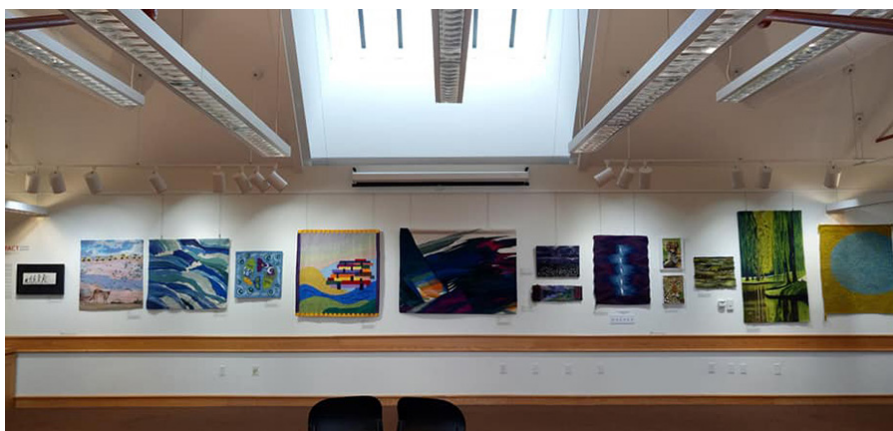
September 8 to October 13, 2019  
**Belmont Gallery of Art**—Homer Building,  
19 Moore Street—Belmont Center, MA  
[www.belmontgallery.org](http://www.belmontgallery.org)

December 16, 2019 to March 13, 2020  
**Mills Building**—220 Montgomery Street—San  
Francisco, CA 94104  
[www.tapestryweaverswest.org](http://www.tapestryweaverswest.org)



Mills Building exhibition in San Francisco, California (l).

Belmont Gallery of Art  
exhibition in Belmont Center,  
Massachusetts. (r).





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Christine Aaron, *Vestiges II*, 2019



## How to Make a Tapestry About Islamophobia

**Joanne Soroka**

I wanted to respond to Islamophobia, one of the great evils of our age. Along with everyone I know, I was horrified by the Christchurch mosque shootings on 15 March 2019, and the following day I was at the Cordis Prize for Tapestry conference in Edinburgh, where Lesley Millar was one of the keynote speakers. One of the things she discussed was the work of Norwegian artist Mari Meen Halsøy, who has worked in Beirut, 'healing' bullet holes by creating tapestry patches to cover them. I wondered how I could heal the hurt done to Muslims. How can a non-Muslim address this subject in a sensitive way?

I have owned two threadbare prayer rugs for over forty years. They are Turkish *kelims*, made in the same way tapestries are. Their use for prayer meant that they came to be a symbol of Islam for me. Maybe they could be the start of a work of art on my theme.

I thought about repairing them, metaphorically healing or making reparations to the Muslim community. After many false starts, I

remembered the Japanese technique of *kintsugi*, a way of mending ceramics by using gold to join the broken pieces together. Rather than hiding the fracture, it shows the history of the object, with the breakage undisguised. I decided

to use gold linen thread to mend the rugs, rather than trying to do a conventional repair. It would be impossible in any case to restore the rugs to their original state. The mending is in an open weave, distinguishing it from the tighter weave of the original rug. I would also not repair every hole or tear, to show that nothing is perfect, as Islamic rugs deliberately never are, and to metaphorically address the fact that much hurt remains. Besides the gold thread, there will be an additional interweaving of some of the original colours of the rug, in a ghostly repair of some areas.

Another aspect of this project is that I am collaborating with the original weaver of the rug, a Muslim woman. Although separated by time and distance, we have worked on the same piece to create something together.



Prayer rug completed, photo: Joanne Soroka.



Detail of prayer rug before repair, photo: Joanne Soroka.



Detail of prayer rug after repair, photo: Joanne Soroka

The act of weaving itself is about joining and connecting, and repair is about making whole. This becomes a work of art that addresses the issue of Islamophobia by thinking about healing and about connecting with those affected by standing in solidarity with them.



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## The Heritage Series

### Kathy Spoering

The *Heritage Series* tapestries began in my heart and at my loom when I inherited a box of my paternal grandparents' photos that my aunt was going to throw away. Most of the photos were tiny contact prints from photos my grandmother took with her prized Brownie camera (which I also rescued from the trash). The photos were all black and white, and were 2 x 2 inches in size. They were of my grandparents, whom I knew well and had a very close relationship with, especially as they aged. They showed images of stories I had heard, and some I experienced, as I grew up, in a small Kansas town filled with families of German descent.

Weaving these images into tapestries became important to me after I listened to a panel discussion which included Irvin Trujillo, Rachel Brown, and Donna Begay. The panel was asked how their 'heritage' influenced their work. Both Irvin and Donna discussed their cultural traditions concerning weaving, but Rachel said she felt, as an Anglo woman, she was more influenced by cultures other than her own, as her own heritage was not a weaving one. I understood her meaning, but it hit me more as if she had said her culture was not worth weaving. I have always felt the influence of small towns, big families (I am from a family of 8), and close community. I felt that these things were worthy



Kathy Spoering, "The Big Green Chair," 36 in x 56 in, ©2004.



Kathy Spoering, "Barbershop Buzz," 36 in x 56 in, ©2004.



of weaving—they were my heritage, and, as a weaver I think I then felt a passion, almost a responsibility, to let them influence my work.

When the first tapestry, “Watermelon Girls,” was exhibited in an ATB exhibit, I discovered that ‘my’ heritage was indeed shared by others. As I exhibited each of the pieces, viewers would come to me and tell me of their similar experiences. When I finally was able to exhibit all five of the tapestries together, a man stood staring at them for the longest time, so I went over to him and told him I was the artist. He looked at me and said, “I feel like you have woven my life.”

I weave because I love bringing my stories to life in my work. I am a storyteller. And my medium is tapestry.



Kathy Spoering, “Prairie Polka,” 36 in x 37 in, ©2000.



Kathy Spoering, “Croquet Coquette,” 36 in x 53 in, ©2002



Kathy Spoering, “Watermelon Girls,” 40 in x 50 in, ©1999.

## Tips and Tricks: Lessons from the “Cat Tapestry” and More

Robbie LaFleur

When Theme Coordinator Kathe Todd Hooker asked if I wanted to write a “Tips and Tricks” article for *Tapestry Topics*, I had just finished an *instructive* small tapestry. Isn’t every weaving a learning experience? I gathered a few thoughts and lessons from my latest experience. These tips, aimed more at beginning tapestry weavers, are also perfectly illustrated by other articles in this *Tapestry Topics* issue.

**Weave a Story.** What will ensure a tapestry, especially a small tapestry, will remain close to the heart of a relative or a purchaser? I think it needs a story. Tapestry weaving is a slow endeavor. If you are going to devote time and attention to a creation, make it personal. When I was designing a tapestry of our two cats last summer (see photo below), my husband was skeptical, worried that it was a little too “cat lady.” (Since that time, more than one person assured me that a cat lady has at least four cats.) I told him that when my household belongings are passed down, more than one grandchild will want to keep this image of the two tuxedo cats they remembered as small children. He agreed.

(Kathy Spoering, who wrote “My Heritage Series,” probably has many family members hoping her tapestries will end up with them.)

**Document your work.** This spring I mounted an exhibit of tapestries from Sweden and Norway, part of the collection of Minneapolis collector Carol Johnson. Most were Ebay finds. Many were likely done by beginning weavers from commercial patterns. I found it a little sad that all these tapestries traveled far from the families of the weavers, anonymous weavers. Here is a tip—no, an *admonishment*—label and date your work.

**Take the long view—often.** Our real cats look quite similar, but on close examination you can see differences in their eyes and face shapes and chin markings. While weaving the head of the first cat, I obsessed about getting his slightly slanted eyes and the white markings on his chin just perfect. I planned to weave the top of his head in a nice semi-circle, and estimated how far each of the first two steps should go before weaving the flatter part of the semi-circle in single-thread pointed dove-tail. Oh, the eyes! The chin! I nailed it. Then I looked at the messy irregularity of the top of the head, the part I assumed would be easy and fine. I thought long and hard, but there was no way I would rip out the whole head to improve the top of it.

My mistake was working on the trees to the exclusion of noticing the forest. A useful phone app might be one that booms out at regular intervals, “STEP AWAY FROM THE LOOM.”

On another small Norwegian horse head tapestry, I wove a whole lovely section with nice curves before realizing I wove it in blue instead of white. Here’s another tip from personal experience—even if the tapestry is small and OF COURSE you will remember where all the colors go—color in your cartoon.





**Unweaving is your friend.** I strive for perfect edges in tapestries and other weavings. I never want the content—whether it is color or design or an image—to be overlooked because the viewer is distracted by messy work or crookedness. Is that mistake you made going to continue to bother you? Unweaving is your friend. It is an important and integral part of the weaving process. See the diamonds in the center of the tapestry? They may look simple, but I managed to miscount more than once and had to unweave and weave again to get the points the same size.

My devotion to working towards perfection is paltry compared to Linda Franco's admirable year-long study detailed in "A Novice Attempt to Graph and Weave a Coptic Pattern." Her article also points out the value of having a talented mentor, when she solved an intractable problem by talking with Kathe Todd-Hooker at a regular gathering of weavers.

**On the other hand, let it go!** I think every weaver has had the experience of looking at a piece ready to come off the loom and seeing a mistake—a line that should have been extended just a bit more, or a curve too flat or pointed. Then you corral someone close at hand, "Look, can you find the mistake?" Often the answer is no.

When I showed a friend this tapestry and lamented the irregular cat head she said, "No—that's perfect; it looks like cat fur." That's what friends are for.

**(Almost Instant Small Tapestry Mounting.** I figured out an almost-instant mounting when I decided to

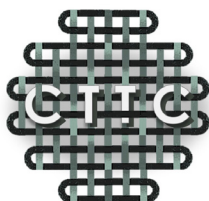


enter a small tapestry into the Minnesota State Fair at the very last minute. It worked so well that I made the same sort for the cat tapestry. I cut a narrow piece of wood the width of the weaving, stapled on the "hook" side of a velcro strip, added a hanger to the center, and applied it to the back of the cats. The sticky velcro grabs nicely to the back of the wooly tapestry, and because the tapestry is so small and lightweight, I don't think it will fall off the wall. It also stands away from the wall slightly, a look I like.

Every tapestry=new lessons and challenges. But if not, why would we return to the loom?







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*Ixchel Suarez has been in the Tapestry field for 37+ years. She holds a History of Art Diploma, MBA in Museum Studies and extensive studies in textiles, natural dyes and patterns. Her work has been presented internationally. Docent at the textile museum of Canada for 10+ years. Her work is inspired by nature, photography and the use of non-conventional materials.*

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## ATA Volunteer: Leslie Munro

### What brought you to tapestry weaving?

My first hands-on tapestry courses were with Anthea Mallinson, a West Dean Graduate, who taught in the Capilano College Textile Arts Department. What I took away from these were a healthy respect for tapestry technique and, more important, an understanding of the expressive potential of tapestry.

I am fortunate to belong to a tapestry group of fifteen weavers which meets weekly, and TWIG, the Tapestry Weavers Interest Group, which meets monthly in Vancouver. Virginia Baldwin is the driving force of both groups. I've also been able to take short workshops with Tricia Goldberg, Joan Baxter, and Ruth Jones. Continuous learning is important, be it reading, visiting exhibitions, or continuing to train with experienced teachers.

I weave small tapestries and am just starting to fabricate what I see in my mind's eye.

### How did you find out about ATA?

Anthea's course also included a brief history of tapestry, information on suppliers, and an overview of organizations supporting tapestry weavers including ATA, the Canadian Tapestry Network (CTN), the British Tapestry Group (BTG), and the European Tapestry Forum (ETF), among others.

### Describe what you do for ATA.

I volunteer on *Tapestry Topics* as the Editor, a role that brings together all the elements of the newsletter so the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And I get to work with a lot of talented people.

Each issue has new volunteers who contribute as Theme Coordinators, Authors, and Reviewers. Without everyone there would be no newsletter. Then, a truly dedicated group of volunteers edit, proofread, design, distribute and index the newsletter. These are the people who are listed in each issue as the *Tapestry Topics* Team.



Leslie Munro, "Limpet Grazing Trail," 11 in x 11 in framed, 8 epi, 2019. Wool weft, linen warp.

### What do you value most about volunteering for ATA?

I enjoy being part of a large, diverse group of people, mostly ATA members, who care about tapestry. They include weavers, artists, makers, curators, writers, teachers, and volunteers.

Leslie Munro lives in British Columbia, dividing her time between Pender Island and Vancouver. Her background is in museum exhibition design and audience research.



Photo: Eve Pollard.

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  - Digital files of ATA's **Digislams** and out of print **catalogs**
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  - Subscription to ATA's monthly **eNews**
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  - Discounts on tapestry equipment and supplies from selected businesses

### Studio Circle Benefits:

- All Individual benefits listed above, plus:
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  - Social Media spotlights of your Artist Page
  - Free **Mentoring Program**
  - **Donor recognition** in ATA catalogs

### Curator's Circle Benefits:

- All Individual and Studio Circle benefits listed above, plus:
  - **Early registration** for workshops

### Collector's Circle Benefits:

- All Individual, Studio Circle and Curator's Circle benefits listed above, plus:
  - **Complimentary catalogs**

## ATA News

### Welcome to the Newest Board Member!

Please help us welcome Molly Elkind as the new Director of Volunteers! During the last board meeting, the Board of Directors created a new board position to assist with managing the volunteer needs of ATA. We are excited to welcome our newest Board Member, Molly Elkind, to spearhead a greater effort in recognizing the valuable efforts of our volunteers as well as helping ATA maintain smooth operations with the help from our volunteer support system. Molly has been shadowing fellow board members to learn the ropes and is now ready to dive into the deep end! Help us welcome Molly aboard.

If you would like to contribute any of your talents to ATA, please reach out to Molly at [volunteer@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:volunteer@americantapestryalliance.org) or fill out the skills survey here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/about-us/volunteers-and-staff/skills-survey/>.

### Latest Educational Article is live!

Curious about how the post card exchange, Here and (T)Here went? Check out the online article that features all of the post cards that were mailed to partners around the world here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/educational-articles-on-tapestry-weaving/here-and-there/>.

### Renditions: Unjuried Small Format Exhibition Entry Deadline March 31, 2020

Are you attending Convergence in Knoxville Tennessee this summer? Would you like to see one of your tapestries on exhibit during the event? Then consider submitting your tapestry to the

**Unjuried Small Format Exhibition.** This is an ideal opportunity for experienced and inexperienced exhibitors to showcase their tapestry experimentations. Size is limited, but materials are not! Check out the entry details here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/unjuried-small-format-tapestry-exhibition/>.

### Digislam Deadline May 25, 2020

If you would rather not share your tapestry in person at Convergence, but wouldn't mind sharing a picture, consider submitting a photo to the 2020 Digislam. This online digital platform provides Convergence attendees a chance to see the vast array of tapestries that are out in the world to be appreciated. It is free and open to all who want to participate. Details are here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/convergence/>.

### Speakers Session and Members' Meeting at Convergence, July 27, 2020

Join us in Knoxville to hear from two incredible tapestry weavers who will be teaching our members' retreat workshops, Jennifer Sargent and Fiona Hutchison. We are honored to have them share their work with us this summer. Also, don't forget to attend our Members' Meeting to hear all that we have planned for 2020 and beyond! There is no additional charge to attend either the Speakers Session or the Members' Meeting. See you in Knoxville!



## Important Dates

March 1, 2020

**TE@ATA Opens**

March 31, 2020

**Unjuried Small Format Exhibition Entry Deadline**

April 5-11, 2020

**Volunteer Appreciation Week!**

April 15, 2020

**International Student Award Entry Deadline**

May 1, 2020

**Board Elections Begins**

May 15, 2020

**Digislam Entry Deadline**

May 31, 2020

**Board Elections Ends**

June 1, 2020

**Tapestry Topics Deadline: Every Picture Tells a Story**

October 1, 2020

**Tapestry Topics Deadline: Archie Brennan**

## Tapestry Topics Themes & Deadlines

**Every Picture Tells a Story, don't it?  
June 1, 2020**

From medieval times to the modern day, allegory, symbolism and narrative have been fertile ground for tapestry weavers. Let's take a look at historical precedence and modern day practice. Methods of communication to larger audiences has changed much in the last 1000 years. Then, tapestries could be used to communicate power or celebration, victory in battle, religious lessons and cautionary tales. Now, communication about current events, entertainment, politics is communicated almost instantly via social media, and in case you missed it, on the nightly news.

What role does story telling play in contemporary tapestry, with its slow and deliberate delivery? How has the use of symbols to communicate meaning changed? Are current symbols universally

recognized - or do they tend to be more personal and elusive? As the individual tapestry artist practice continues in our own time - what is the role of narrative and allegory? Who are the artists using symbols to indicate meaning, and where do these symbols come from? Tapestries have been called "mobile murals" indicating both the usual scale of a narrative tapestry as well as its portability. Can small-scale tapestries—so popular today, tell a story as effectively?

If you plan to submit an article, please contact Theme Coordinator, Nancy McRay, [nmcra@mac.com](mailto:nmcra@mac.com)

**"... a bit of weaving": Archie Brennan's Legacy  
October 1, 2020**

Archie Brennan's passing in 2019 marked the end of a productive, creative and influential career that encompassed many roles – from artist weaver, to studio director, to dedicated teacher. Archie's influence is felt by most of us, whether directly or indirectly. This issue of *Tapestry Topics* will be a chance for you to share how Archie's work and teachings have influenced your tapestry making. Submit a nifty trick you learned from Archie; techniques that have become the bread and butter of your practice (or perhaps are applied less frequently, but of special power); ideas that influence the kind of imagery you explore in weaving; principles that guide your choice of loom, loom preparation, weaving methods, etc. Please contact Mary Lane, Theme Coordinator, if you would like to submit to this issue. I hope you will. Short submissions are welcome. [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com)

## Call for Theme Coordinators

Do you have an idea for a theme? Would you like to be a Theme Coordinator? Email: [newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org)

## Take Your Tapestry to the Next Level!

Attention Circle Level members! We have a limited number of openings in ATA's **Mentoring Program** for students who would benefit from a one-on-one learning relationship with an instructor. Participation is free for Circle level members.

Read more about the Mentoring Program on our website: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/tapestry-weaving-instruction-mentoring-program/>

*"At first, I was trying to make my weaving too much like the photo and got discouraged. [My mentor] continued to give good direction and support that helped me begin to relax and let my weaving become my own. I got more confident in creating shapes and blending colors. This has been such a great learning experience and I am so grateful for this opportunity."*

—Victoria Moore

*"I know that I've been taken beyond [my original goals]. I feel relaxed and free to pursue my concepts."*

—Sally Reckert

Not a Circle member yet? Read about all of the benefits of Circle memberships: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/membership/>

### ***Tapestry Topics Team***

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*Publishing books as Fine Fiber Press  
Online & brick and mortar. Retail by appointment.*

*Between & Etc.- Sales of tapestry bobbins (9 variations), bones, beaters  
a newly designed M.E. style metal tapestry beater, grattoirs, warp,  
specially designed tapestry tools, produced locally and Alr Norwegian Tapestry  
yarns. A market place for used tapestry equipment and books, as acquired  
or placed on consignment.*

*And of course - Books written by Kathe Todd- Hooker and Pat Spark:  
Tapestry 101, Line in Tapestry, Shaped Tapestry, So Warped (with Pat Spark)  
And some books by others (Linda Rees, Nezhnie - Weaver & Innovative Artist)*

*Watch for - Tapestry and Friends will be available in June.*

*We offer all levels of instruction; design and making it happen!  
Or by private instruction, where you create your own agenda of learning.  
Instruction can be one on one, group or workshop. I also offer private critiques  
and consulting, and am available as an itinerant tapestry instructor,  
traveling around giving workshops and private instruction.*

*And, yes, gr! It is both small format and large format.*

### *Between & Etc.*

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## The Back Page



Archie Brennan, "The Lymerer - A Reconstruction"  
(Hunt of the Unicorn—a detail)  
75 in x 34.5 in, 2003