



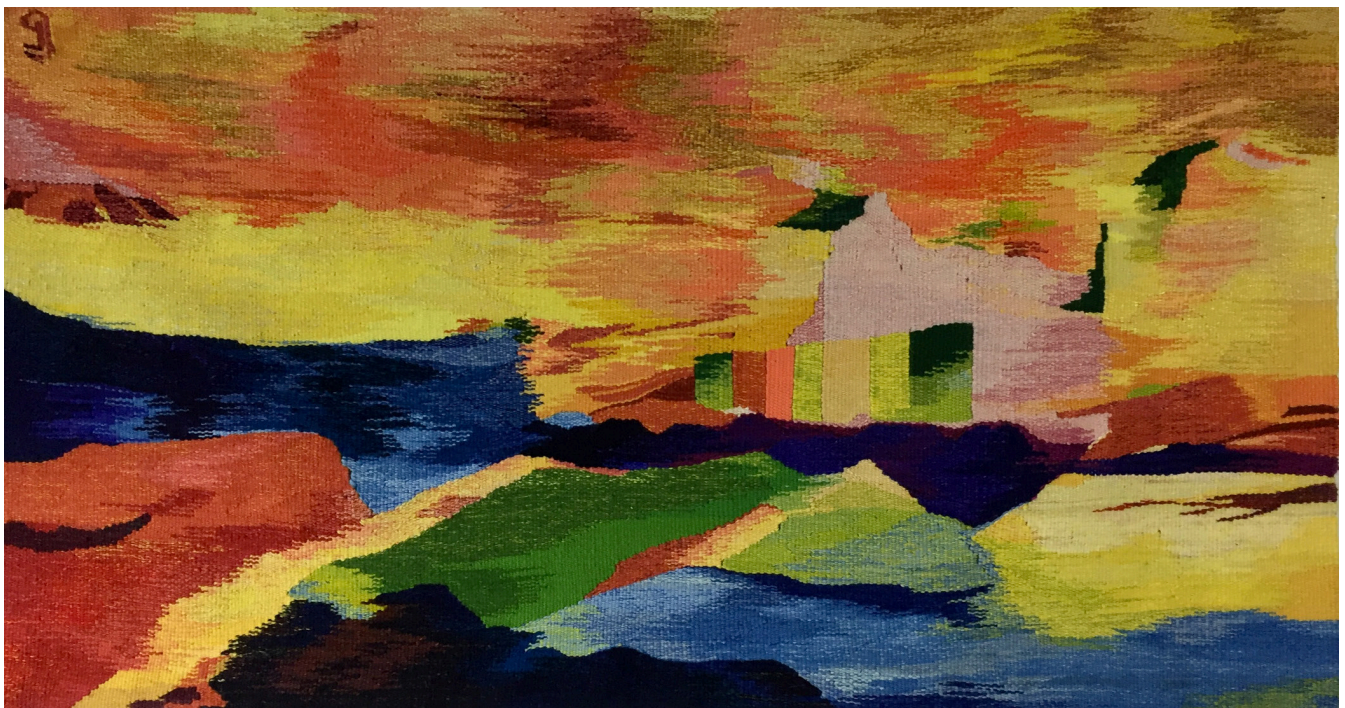
AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE



A TRIANNUAL REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

WWW.AMERICANTAPESTRYALLIANCE.ORG

Summer 2020, Vol. 46 Issue 2



The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving

HONORING TRADITION, INSPIRING INNOVATION

The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving

Doris Florig, Theme Coordinator

Directors' Letter3

The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving
by Doris Florig5

Thank you to Our Contributors6

Theme Articles

What You Bring to the Medium Is What
Matters: A Discussion of Art Versus Craft
by Laura Berlage7

What Is Tapesry For?
by Lin Bentley Keeling10

High Art? Low Art? Or Just a Hobby?
by Stanley Bulbach14

The Marie Cuttoli Collection at the
Barnes Foundation
by Jean Pierre Larochette19

Tapestry's Moment: The Critical Response
by Ellen Ramsey21

Are Textiles Art or Craft–What the
Critics Say
by Joanne Soroka25

The Timeless Expressions of the Weave
by Jean Pierre Larochette28

ATA Volunteer: Joan Griffin30

ATA Appreciates Having YOU as a Member!...32

ATA News33

Important Dates34

Tapestry Topics Themes and Deadlines35

Back Page37

Contact ATA

Administrative Manager: Maggie Leininger
manager@americantapestryalliance.org

Artist Pages: Sarah Warren
artistpages@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Awards: Dorothy Clews
ataaward@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Education: Terry Olson
education@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Exhibitions: Lisa Almeida
exhibitions@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Finance, Treasurer: Regina Dale
treasurer@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Membership, Secretary: Ginger Thomas
membership@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Promotions: Nicki Bair
promotions@americantapestryalliance.org

Director of Volunteers Molly Elkind
volunteer@americantapestryalliance.org

Director at Large, President: Susan Iverson
board@americantapestryalliance.org

Director at Large: Tommye Scanlin
resources@americantapestryalliance.org

eKudos: Virginia Taylor
ekudos@americantapestryalliance.org

Mentoring Program: Linda Disosway
mentoring@americantapestryalliance.org

Web Editor: Maggie Leininger
webeditor@americantapestryalliance.org

TEx@ATA Gallery: Valerie Kirk
webgallery@americantapestryalliance.org

Tapestry Topics: Leslie Munro
newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org

© 2019 American Tapestry Alliance, with permission from all contributing authors. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited without written permission. Requests to reproduce material in this publication may be forwarded to the American Tapestry Alliance.

Cover image: Joan Griffin, "Portal," 31 in x 59 in, 2017, photo: Joan Griffin. Cotton warp, wool weft, 8 epi.

Directors' Letter, Summer 2020

Dear Members,

Welcome to this interesting issue of *Tapestry Topics*, one that will prove to be thought provoking for many of us. Thank you to theme coordinator Doris Florig, and to the many members of ATA who shared their knowledge and opinions about the fine art of tapestry weaving.

Maker, designer, artist, craftsperson, weaver—there are so many terms that can be used to define what we do, who we are, and what we make. Is it art? Is it craft? Who decides? Does it matter anyway? When we visit museums, we frequently see the terms “Fine Art” and “Decorative Art” used to classify the collections. The variety of work being made in all media is overwhelming and the human urge to sort and classify is strong. It seems that this urge to label, and then put these labels into a hierarchy, is as compelling as the human desire to create. It is an important topic and one that will continue to be investigated and debated for years to come. In the meantime, most of us will continue to be passionate about what we create. We will trust that our audiences will find value in the ideas we explore and make tangible through the tapestry process.

2020 has not been the year most of us planned for! The Covid-19 pandemic has altered all of our lives in large and small ways. Our hearts go out to all of you who have suffered personal losses during this trying time. While the cancelling of all of the events in Knoxville this summer was necessary we are pleased to report that you will have a chance to visit Knoxville in 2022 when Convergence and the ATA meeting and Members' Retreat will be rescheduled.

At the end of June several of us will have finished our time on the Board of Directors, including both of us. Dorothy Clews the Director of Awards, Regina Dale the Director of Finance, and Susan Iverson the current President each served four years on the Board; Tommye Scanlin has been on board for two years; Lisa Almeida was Director of Exhibitions from

2019 to 2020. The newly elected members will be adding their insight, experience, and enthusiasm to this vital organization. They join the many members who are playing vital volunteer roles to make ATA the thriving organization it continues to be. It has been our pleasure to serve.

Many of us have been spending more time at home and more time in the virtual world. We hope you have enjoyed spending time on the ATA website where you can discover or revisit the many articles, exhibitions, and other resources available to members. For some of us, weaving has been a solace in these stressful times and we are fortunate to have additional time at the loom. Whatever you are doing please stay well and stay safe.

As always, we would like to thank the entire team that produces *Tapestry Topics*. Each issue comes to life because of the hard work and guidance of many volunteers. We especially thank Editor, Leslie Munro and her wonderful team of volunteers who worked to produce this issue: Robbie LaFleur, Patricia Jordan, and Pat Williams.

On behalf of the entire Board,



Susan Iverson
Director at Large, President



Tommye Scanlin
Director at Large

Thank You to Our Advertisers

Between & Etc.	betweenandetc.com/tapestry-market-place/	pg. 36
Canadian Tapestry and Texture Center	canadiantapestryce.wixsite.com/	pg. 29
Damascus Fiber Arts School	www.damascusfiberartsschool.com	pg. 27
Mirrix Looms	www.mirrixlooms.com	pg. 20
Meissner Sewing and Vacuum Centers	https://www.meissnersewing.com	pg. 35
Rebecca Mezoff Tapestry Studio	www.rebeccamezoff.com/	pg. 27
Schacht Spindle Co	https://schachtspindle.com	pg. 31
Selvedge Magazine	https://www.selvedge.org	pg. 9
Surface Design Association	www surfacedesign.org	pg. 18
weaversbazaar	www.weaversbazaar.com/	pg. 24

Advertise with ATA

Do you teach classes? Offer yarn dyeing services?

Sell weaving supplies or equipment?

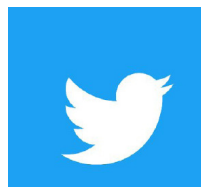
ATA is now offering advertising space in both *Tapestry Topics* and in the Membership Directory. Ads are good for one year and can be updated quarterly. Discounts are offered for members and for advertisers who take out ads in both publications.

Read more about our ads [here](#). Submit your ad online [here](#).

For more information, [email](#) us!

info@americantapestryalliance.org

ATA Social Media Links



For additional resources visit the ATA website page

The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving

Doris Florig

I have been troubled by the fact that there are amazing tapestry works of art out there and they are not seen in art galleries. In the summers, I live in Jackson Hole where the same old paintings of cowboys and Indians sell for tens of thousands of dollars year after year, and I never see tapestries for sale.

Is it because tapestries are so unique? Is it that the buyers of fine art are programmed to only seek out work that is produced by recognized artists? Does the buyer not have time to look around and see something new and different? I don't know? I need to know what others think. That is why I offered to be the coordinator of this issue of tapestry topics.

I used to think that tapestry weaving was looked at as women's work and overlooked for that reason, considered something that was done by little old ladies with nothing else to do. Perhaps the problem has been that women undervalue their work. Maybe things are changing now that women are coming out of the closet. We are demanding equal pay for equal work. I do know that my work receives more respect now that I no longer quietly say "the price is \$500." Now I say without hesitating, "the price is \$5,000."

After reading these submissions to *Tapestry Topics* I feel that the future of tapestry art is about to change in our favor.



Doris Florig is a fiber artist traveling the world, learning traditional weaving techniques from the indigenous people of a multitude of cultures. She specializes in tapestry weaving, fiber sculptures and dyeing all her own yarns. She has been weaving since the 70s and has been sharing her knowledge, teaching and lecturing throughout the years. Currently she is the leader of the **SAVE the REEF**, a five-year touring exhibition which is an international collaborative fiber art project with a conservation message.

www.weavingpeopleandnaturetogether.org

dorisflorig@gmail.com

www.2dfiberart.com

instagram dorisflorig

WEAVING AN ADVENTURE



Doris Florig

A fiberartist making connections naturally.

Stories of a nomadic contemporary weaver inspired by cruising the Caribbean and living in the Grand Teton National Park.

copyright 2016

Thank You to Our Contributors

Including Doris Florig, Theme Coordinator

Laura Berlage is a contemporary Renaissance woman living and working on her family's homestead farm in rural northern Wisconsin. With an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College, Laura delights in the intersections of narrative, image, and texture (including tapestry weaving in her studio yurt), with a focus on liberating the creative soul. You can learn more about Laura's fiber arts endeavors on her blog at www.erindaletapestrystudio.com. Laura is also an opportunity maker in the arts, as co-owner of North Star Homestead Farms and Farmstead Creamery & Café, a local artist gallery and performance venue.



Photo: Bryan French

Stanley Bulbach, Ph.D. is a New York City textile artist creating handwoven carpets of select handspun Lincoln wools and traditional vegetal dyes to be enjoyed in the traditional manner as tapestry art for the wall. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. Degrees in Ancient Near Eastern Studies at NYU's Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies. Over the decades he has written, published, and lectured extensively on scholarly research practice issues in the field of contemporary fiber art. www.bulbach.com

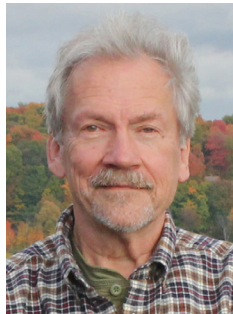


Photo: Dan Franklin



Ellen Ramsey is a Seattle based artist weaver. She blogs about tapestry artists and exhibitions at www.ellenramseytapestry.art/blog

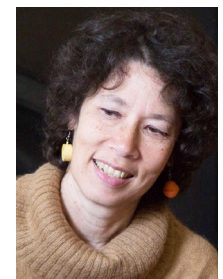
Lin Bentley Keeling creates coiled basketry vessels, tapestries and other weavings and teaches weaving and basketry. Her anthropological research focuses on art and identity, basketry, weaving and precontact fiber technologies in North America. She is currently developing a series of online courses in coiled basketry.



Jean Pierre Larochette was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the son of Armand Larochette, a third generation French Aubusson tapestry weaver. Jean Pierre apprenticed at his father's workshop and in 1963-64 studied and worked under the direction of internationally known French tapestry artist Jean Lurçat. He was co-founder and director of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop and teacher at the San Francisco State University textile program in the 1970s and 80s.



Joanne Soroka is a tapestry weaver and the author of *Tapestry Weaving: Design and Technique*. She was the Artistic Director of the Edinburgh Tapestry Company (Dovecot Studios) 1982-87. She has been weaving tapestries since graduating from the Tapestry Department of Edinburgh College of Art in 1976. www.joannesoroka.co.uk



What You Bring to the Medium Is What Matters: A Discussion of Art Versus Craft

Laura Berlage

“You’re so crafty!”

Should I launch into an informative lecture, or let it slide?

It’s a typical summer day at Farmstead Creamery & Café, our on-farm shop that also holds the Fiber Loft teaching space and serves as my gallery. The walls are warmed by detailed tapestries and punch needle pieces. Displays are draped with delicate and cozy handwovens, shelves of needle felted critters and book covers, and skeins of lustrous yarn from our sheep. Lots of eye candy for a fiber lover! But crafty? Why must that be the word of choice?

I can feel my hackles rise, but then I remind myself that this is the Midwest, where most people think of fiber arts as something their grandma did to pass the time. Very few have any understanding of the hours of labor involved in these pieces, as well as the skill and attention needed for their inception, design and planning. I dedicated a decade of research and seven years of weaving to just one of the pieces on the wall. That’s being crafty?

Please don’t think that I am about to launch on a tirade against craft. Every artist knows she must work on her craft—honing, learning, building new skills. Craft is the *doing* of the process. It’s technique. Craft is the building blocks of the projects. Even designers need to have a knowledge of craft in their field, so they don’t imagine something that simply cannot be made manifest through the desired medium. As I write this, I’m

crocheting a nest to send to wildlife rehabilitators in fire-riddled Australia. That’s craft. Craft is essential.

But here is the point, craft is not specific to a *medium*. Painters have to work on their craft. Actors have to work on their craft. Weavers too. The thing—a painting, a play, a textile—comes out of the process but is not itself a craft. Obviously, this word has been badly abused! Sometimes when I hear the “You’re so crafty” phrase, I secretly wonder about the other ways that word is used...like how it can mean sneaky, like all those little tiny rows with each individual color maybe means I have the attention



A night of art and creativity at Farmstead Creamery & Café, with the author (left on harp) joined by Om Shalom Trio for a night of world music surrounded by her tapestries. Photo: Frank Zufall, Sawyer County Record.

Included in the background is Laura Berlage, “Deceiving the Hunters,” 34.5 x 30 inches, 10 epi, 2017. Cotton warp, wool, alpaca, mohair, silk, and novelty threads weft with freshwater pearl, bead, and sequins embellishments. Currently on display at Farmstead Creamery & Café, Hayward, WI. Photo used with permission.

to plot a pretty stellar burglary...oh, that crafty Laura is at it again....

Back to the topic. When I was a graduate student at Goddard College's MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts program, we had many discussions about "What is art?" In this post-postmodern era (someday we're going to have a much better name for this, I hope!), where taping a banana or even just staying alive can be called art, is everything art or only some things? Who picks? What are the criteria?

Some of my fellow students were of the "everything is art and everyone's an artist" camp, but I resonated much more with the perspective that an object or an act becomes art based on the creator's intention.

This came up in conversation with Delight, a visiting weaver and fiber artist from New Zealand, who came to hear one of the Celtic Music Sessions we host at Farmstead Creamery. I took her and her host friends on a tour of my studio yurt, and we swapped stories, chuckled about yarn stashes, shared technique ideas, and admired looms like old friends.

As we wrapped up the afternoon together, I offered, "I'm sure you have experienced, as I have, that fiber arts are not always given the same respect as other mediums such as painting or sculpture. You find people describing your work as craft instead of art."

Delight sighed, nodding to this truth. She added, "And many people working in fiber arts are doing craft—which is great; we need those people too. But it's not the medium that makes something art or craft. It's not the 'thing' at all. The thing could be food or found objects or clothing or paint or whatever—but the thing does not make it art. What makes it art is what you bring to it as the maker."

If a look can say "I found my people," then that's what the two of us shared in that moment.

The same piece of music can be played mechanically, completely accurate to the score but otherwise lifeless. Or it can be played with such heart and expression that listeners are brought to tears. It's the same piece of music, but it's what the performer brought to the music that transformed it. The latter brought their passion, their sensitivity, their desire to share meaning and depth, and their willingness to be expressively vulnerable.

This way of thinking about art versus craft separates the "being" and the "doing." The life of an artist is a way of being, regardless of whether she is presently making anything that would typically fall into the category of art object. She is observing keenly, storing away in her heart and memory treasures and pains and messages that will bubble back out into form. That form may be what she knows or has available or what speaks best to that which demands expression. Working from this depth, any medium can be transformed into powerful, meaningful art.

So, lady in the gallery, I appreciate that you're trying to be kind in your own way by saying that I'm crafty. But it does miss the real mark. The viewer who offers comments like, "Oh, you really have an artist's eye," or "I can sense the movement in this piece," or "These pieces really speak to me"—those comments make my artist's heart sing.

If you find yourself perpetually met with the "what you do is craft" stigma, spend some time talking about your vision for the piece, your designer's eye, what you're trying to say. This lifts the discussion out of the field of project execution and brings the viewer (or potential client) into the being of the piece and you as a creative person. Your hackles may still rise, as mine do, so harness that energy to speak with passion about your work, your creative process, your "why" for tapestry weaving.

Our culture is what it is, defined by thousands of years of the oppression of female labor and imagination. Bring your piece of the discourse to a new level and inspire your conversation partner to join you. We can all be influencers. Keep heart, fellow artists!

selvedge WORLD FAIR



A CELEBRATION OF CLOTH, CULTURE & CREATIVITY



3-5 SEPT 2020, SUBSCRIBERS ENJOY 50% OFF TICKETS

What Is Tapestry For?

Lin Bentley Keeling

In 1990 the “International Tapestry Network, Exhibit 1” opened at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art in Anchorage, Alaska. Curated by Helga G. Berry, the exhibition showed a diverse collection of works by 35 artists from 17 countries and toured for two years to nine other venues in the United States. In her Curator’s Statement Berry wrote that she was compelled to organize the exhibition because of her commitment to tapestry. She believed that tapestry weavers needed “to claim recognition ... make history for tomorrow... look[ing] to the future instead of merely reporting on history.” Thirty years later we are still debating about how to make our art form relevant and visible to the larger world.

How do we go about that? What is tapestry in the twenty-first century for? I believe that we need to look at the broadest context for art and art making to understand what tapestry can be for. Beyond our aims of creating a place for tapestry in the fine art arena, tapestry has the potential to become what art was for many of our earliest ancestors—a means for individuals to relate to the world around them in more meaningful ways.

Let’s start by looking at what we mean by “the fine art of tapestry.” Usually we think about tapestry within the context of Fine Art—the commercial, art historical world in which the art object is the focus. This context is a top-down perspective/approach that has evolved in Western culture over the last 500 years. Inclusion in the world of Fine Art is controlled by a select few who decide

what does and doesn’t qualify as Fine Art and is heavily influenced by the past.

Turning the concept around, and looking at art through a bottom-up approach, we can look at fine art as the process of creation from the perspective of the maker rather than the consumer of art. In contemporary society this role is more individualized and more culturally diverse than it ever has been, but it exists in many ways in relation/ though it still exists in to the more conventional context of Fine Art.

Another bottom-up approach to understanding art is found in the anthropology of art which examines the cultural contexts of the objects and the role of art making within traditional cultures. Anthropologists have studied looked at how art works by studying small scale groups through to large scale complex societies. While this gives us a rich understanding of the different expressions of art in human



Lin Bentley Keeling, “Vista,” coiled vessel, 8.5 in x 17.5 in x 5.5 in, 4 rows per inch, 2013, photo: L. Keeling.

history, it is difficult to apply this approach to art in the contemporary world. The traditional roles of art still exist but in contexts that reflect their historical origins—in religious art and art related to the political state and society—roles art had in all human cultures. Most art in contemporary life exists outside these contexts. How do we understand contemporary art, including tapestry using this bottom-up approach?

In her research, Ellen Dissanayake has gone further back into human history to understand why art persists when many of the traditional reasons for creating art no longer exist. Combining evolutionary ethology—the study of animal behavior as a tool for survival, and philosophical aesthetics—the study of culture, nature and art, along with cognitive and developmental psychology and cultural and physical anthropology, she explores why art came into existence in the first place. She came to see art making as a “fundamental behavioral tendency,” a “universal inherited propensity in human nature to make some objects and activities special,” “as distinguishing and universal in humankind as speech or the skilled manufacture and use of tools.” Art making came into being because it in some way helped our ancestors to survive.

Dissanayake notes the lives of our earliest human ancestors were filled with anxiety about their daily sustenance and safety. Social ties and the ceremonies and ritual behaviors all human groups developed helped decrease these stresses, “giving order to the world ... [and providing] a sense of meaning and significance or intensity to human life that cannot be gained any other way.” Art practices and

the objects created through them were part of this de-stressing strategy. But, as reading and writing became the more common means of carrying and transmitting group values and knowledge art did not die away. Art became a means for holding and conveying emotional, spiritual and aesthetic value for the individual rather than for society. “Although much contemporary art is often deliberately ‘conceptual,’ anarchic, and private, its makers, like their Pleistocene predecessors, continue to artify important things and to make ordinary reality extraordinary.”

Although we don’t experience the same kinds of stresses that our ancestors did when they began practicing art, we do experience a great deal of stress. The slow meditative nature of tapestry



Lin Bentley Keeling, “Flora Folklorico”, coiled vessel, 13.5 in x 13.5 in x 1.5 in, 7 rows per inch, 2011, photo: L. Keeling.

weaving has been noted by many as a refuge from the stresses of life. I experience this, and my students have also mentioned this. As Dissanayake says, “I see evidence that under our shiny modern cultural veneer we are still vulnerable, biological Homo sapiens. To those who value it ... art is a way of possessing sacredness and spirituality in a profane world; art-in-everything or everything-potentially-art is a way of imposing coherence (shape, integration) on selves and experiences that have fragmented.”

So how do we apply this to fine art of tapestry? The intimacy and tactile experience of weaving tapestry connects to the individual in unique ways. I weave tapestries and coil basketry vessels because I cannot express what I wish to express any other way. I am drawn to the touch of the yarns, to the feel of the materials as I manipulate them. This is a physical, visceral, haptic experience that other art mediums

cannot give me. I imagine the same is true for you. This is as important to tapestry as the weavings themselves. It is why many of us weave. Sharing this with others can be the gateway to helping them appreciating tapestry as a formal art form.

Many people feel divorced from creativity. We have been taught in our culture that art is made by those gifted with creativity as part of Fine Art. When I talk with individuals about art and creativity, they often say they don't have talent, they aren't creative. If we talk about art and tapestry in the context of Dissanayake's approach, as a universal human behavior that is part of all of our heritage, we can help people access that part of themselves that has become dormant—the part that can help them through the practice of art making to cope with the stresses of their lives. By making tapestry more accessible, more common, we can in the process teach people about its history as an artform and share its special aesthetic qualities.

All of us can do more to make tapestry more visible and accessible. Share your work on social media, write about what the practice of tapestry does for you. Teach tapestry in your communities. Weave in public. Knitters do this all the time. Spinners also take their spinning out with them. Take a small loom and some yarn with you the next time you know you are going to have to stand in line or wait at the doctor's office. Let those who show an interest try it and if they show interest



Lin Bentley Keeling, “Firestorm”, coiled vessel, 10 in x 10 in x 3 in, 6 rows per inch, 1991, photo: L. Keeling.

in learning to weave, have ideas about how and where they can learn ready. Make tapestry weaving as visible and common as knitting.

Thirty years ago, Helga Berry urged us to develop public awareness of tapestry as an artform. Creating exhibitions and writing about tapestry as an art medium all work toward this. Another way to accomplish this, possibly in a more sustainable and important way, is to educate others about tapestry by helping them to create their own tapestries, helping them experience tapestry in their own hands. This doesn't dilute tapestry or bring it down. We will always maintain high standards for good tapestry production. As Dissanayake put it, "specialness often leads to 'goodness' in the qualitative sense, for beauty and complexity and utmost skill are end points

of specialness." By creating more tapestries, sharing what we do and why we do it and bringing more people to tapestry as a personal creative practice, we cannot help but expand tapestry's scope as an artform.

Works Cited

Berry, Helga G., "Curator's Statement," in Silver, Stanfill, ed. *International Tapestry Network Exhibit 1*. Anchorage, AK: The Anchorage Museum of History and Art, 1990.

Dissanayake, Ellen "'Aesthetic Primitives': Fundamental Biological Elements of a Naturalistic Aesthetics," *Aisthesis, anno VIII*, numero 1. Firenze University Press, 2015.

Dissanayake, Ellen, *What Is Art For?* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1988.



Lin Bentley Keeling, "Etude" 5.75 in x 5 in, 7 epi, 2015,
photo: L. Keeling. Cotton warp and weft.

High Art? Low Art? Or Just a Hobby?

Stanley Bulbach

This important topic has been raised by Doris Florig, who has worked in ATA over the years to encourage tapestry weavers and the ATA to examine our field of art's uniquely poor economic and professional opportunity and their impact upon our field's future.

Originally "Fine Art" was an attempt to differentiate visual art created by artists focusing solely on aesthetics, unencumbered by practicalities. The alternative category was "Applied Art," the category for art which required co-workers who were thought to dilute the original individual artist's seemingly pure inspiration and to contaminate the aesthetics with pesky technical specifications.

Over time, Fine Art has encompassed additional art forms such as sculpture, architecture, installations, etc., blurring the original distinctions. These new additions obviously do require technical requirements and/or collaboration.

In broad strokes, fiberists in the second half of the 20th Century strove in vain to find a position within this shell game of arbitrary fuzzy classifications. The result is that fiber art is usually categorized in the less significant Applied Arts category. Worse, fiber is judged and treated as even less significant than its sibling craft media arts—for example, ceramics, glass, or jewelry. Thus, our field is treated not even as second class, but as third class art.

After decades of theoretical jejune debates about art vs. craft, the craft arts have fallen upon dire times, losing museums, publications, organizations, etc. This has impacted our fiber field gravely. Friends of Fiberart has folded up. The Handweavers Guild of America has lost 2/3 of its membership size over the past generation.

Fiberarts Magazine was terminated due to "lack of support." The full list is even longer and more alarming.

The original definition of *fine art* differentiated *high art*, requiring refined tastes, from *low art*, the popular art of the unschooled masses. Yet, modern fine arts include, for example, multi-million dollar embalmed sharks, the Brooklyn Museum of Art's "Sensation Exhibition" that pitched vomit bags to museum visitors, and more recently, the exhibiting of bananas taped to walls with duct tape.

I have frequently written that our field seems to have boxed itself into an "Ugly Duckling" syndrome. We keep on seeking validation by gatekeepers who claim they execute expert professional research on tapestry, but rarely do so. We continue to find our field dismissed as an annoying stepchild that deserves to be traditionally under-recorded. But we are not ducklings. Like Hans Christian Andersen's tale, we are signets, and the work featured by ATA over the decades illustrates that impressively.

Seriously, what other field of professional research exists where the expert researchers demonstrate so little interest in examining germane materials brought to their attention? Where is an ATA vetted list of experts who agree to examine materials knowledgeably for ATA members? ATA efforts in 2012 to prepare such a list for the Textile Society of America could not verify such research existing in the U.S.

Nowadays, art museum curators commonly refuse to review any unsolicited materials. In contrast museums now work freely with commercial galleries and patrons, rarely disclosing those potential commercial conflicts

of interest adequately in the final published research. Is that why there's so little visibility and awareness about how financial conflicts of interest distort recent art research? Is the reason why fiber organizations now pay curators to "jury" our work because curators won't otherwise examine our field as part of their purported regular research practice? Is that why there is so very little discussion in ATA about what accurate professional research practice requires?

Many of us think that something here is extremely wrong. Outside the art world, accurate professional research requires transparency and accountability. That is why so many recommendations have been presented to ATA over the years urging these required elements.

Many ATA members state that fiber's poor status is caused solely by the notorious gender prejudice in today's financially soaring art world. But last year ATA-Talk would only refer to impermissible gender prejudice as the "elephant in the room" in a brief discussion thread. Has ATA ever had a probing discussion exploring what part of our plight is gender prejudice and what part is financial/economic prejudice? What if our field suffers from more than one kind of prejudice, amplifying the damaging effects?

ATA depends almost exclusively upon generous volunteerism and member donations. ATA has been impressively successful in providing inspiration, enjoyment, technical education, sharing opportunities, networking, and social benefits. But ATA is quite candid about its policies that brand us almost exclusively as hobbyists, in contrast to having any vital interests at all in professional issues such as loss of school programs, valued suppliers, etc.

ATA policy has even ruled against ATA interacting with the interior design, architecture, and luxury goods industries on the grounds that those are

beneath high art. However, ATA simultaneously brands us as lowly hobbyists. Does the rest of the world value hobbyism as high art or fine art?

Last year ATA took a mini survey asking if membership was either professional or hobbyist. In contrast U.S. Internal Revenue law acknowledges a middle category for hobbyists who sell what they create. The last detailed ATA member survey reported that a stunning majority of the membership (72%) wanted opportunities to sell their art work!

There seems to be nothing available to explain why ATA policy is so opposed to exploring effective economic and professional opportunity for our field. So again, who or what is holding back our field? It's clearly more than one issue.

There are some interesting current developments in New York. One involves the classical music world which had almost exclusively featured work by white European males, because traditional music research found only white European males ever composed or conducted classical music.

But following very vocal advocacy last year, the embarrassed New York classical music world suddenly discovered lots of wonderful classical music by female and minority composers, conductors, vocalists, and instrumentalists. This development shows that it is important to speak out constructively with the clout of a group to advocate improved research—it affects the programming in publicly-funded concert halls and art museums.

Similarly, the Galerie St. Etienne in New York has been publishing a series of riveting critiques on defective art research practice. The venerable gallery even held a public presentation on how inaccurate art research is abetting counterfeiting, giving rise to lawsuits for damages asserting fraudulent expert research. In the courts, judges

are increasingly asking who is doing required “due diligence” in the art world.

In the field of art research few admit to knowing that such a requirement even exists! But in 2017 this fatal research flaw was outed by the Fuller Craft Museum’s tapestry and turned wood exhibition, which described its focus as “populations that have been traditionally under represented.” This was a stunning admission, that these fields have not received the recognition that is due.

Isn’t it illegal, or at the least, unethical, for institutions receiving public funding, like art museums, to under represent populations just because that damaging practice has been “traditional?” Whenever any fiberist raises these concerns, that tapestry or fiber arts are under-represented within the world of art criticism, the concerns are met with silence. The very essence of academic research is openness and the ability to challenge how research is executed.

Auspiciously, an important opportunity is now available to the ATA movement. As professional art research is increasingly acknowledged to include major inaccuracies, the College Art Association (CAA) is finally inaugurating a Committee on Research and Scholarship. Here is an opportunity for contemporary tapestry art to be part of the discussion, about how it is researched and categorized in higher education in the U.S.

As elsewhere the major challenge here is that if only a few voices speak forth, they will likely be quietly escorted to CAA’s back alley door. What is clearly required is for ATA to seize this opportunity as a strong organizational voice advocating on behalf of contemporary tapestry in this CAA effort.

Over the past decade several formal ATA projects have been convened to develop formal recommendations to the Board. Most of the official recommendations have been declined

without clarification or membership discussion. One rejected recommendation was for ATA to exchange affiliated memberships with professional organizations like the College Art Association, the Alliance of American Museums, etc., to expand ATA’s ability to participate in securing transparency and accountability in the art research practiced upon our field.

Also, for ATA’s Five Year Plan, the Board tasked Think Tanks with presenting formal recommendations for the Board’s planning. One such recommendation presented to the Board was for an ATA Committee on Advocacy. Many other special interest organizations have advantageously encouraged advocacy, for example, nurses, doctors, teachers, architects, and professors. But the formal recommendation for an ATA Committee on Advocacy was rejected without comment.

The College Art Association asserts that it strongly supports advocacy. Its new Committee on Research and Scholarship is a golden opportunity for concerned ATA members to engage in something less elusive than parsing the ever-mutating category of Fine Art or tiptoeing around elephants in the room and other damaging prejudices.

Over the millennia fiber art throughout the world has undergone many changes. What has always remained the same is that it is a universal technology, art form, and commodity constantly renewing itself for all humanity, not just some parts of it. Today the field is presented as almost exclusively for women. But in almost all of its photos, the field is even more limited, not only by race and geography, but also by age and likely also by economics. Is exclusivity in so many ways the wisest way to achieve our field’s stated goals?

About 7% of ATA’s membership is in their 40s or younger. Most younger folk are wrestling with historic tuition debt, decreased employment

opportunity, a medical insurance crisis for young single parents, and more. Do we really believe we can successfully attract the needed younger generations for our field when cultivating it as only a hobby?

Why shouldn't our field have the professional and economic opportunity enjoyed by the rest of the art world, to support its future? These are not encouraging actuarial developments for ATA which is so undercapitalized that it asks for donations multiple times each year.

ATA now has the opportunity to work with professional organizations like the CAA to improve the accuracy of the research that records our

field's existence and achievements. Currently our challenge is not debating into what pigeonhole we should all be categorized. Today our challenge is that the professional research record brands us as almost non-existent in any category.

We do not have to be dependent upon unproductive categorization. And we do not have to be entirely charity dependent for our future. With accurate professional research that begins to acknowledge our existence, contemporary tapestry weavers would be able to gain important support for improved market and professional opportunity in the interior design, architecture, and luxury goods industries.



Stanley Bulbach, "Interwoven Over Millennia: East, West, Ancient and New" at the Richard Ettinghausen Library of the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University, 2019, photo: Dan Franklin Smith.

Surface Design Association

Innovation in Fiber, Art, and Design

The quarterly *Surface Design Journal* explores new ideas, emerging voices and leaders in the field

Membership includes:

- Grants + Awards
- Exhibitions + Conferences
- Workshops + Presentations
- Regional Groups +
- International Connections



www surfacedesign.org

Christine Aaron, *Vestiges II*, 2019

The Marie Cuttoli Collection at the Barnes Foundation

Jean Pierre Larochette

This spring the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, in collaboration with the Cite Internationale de la Tapisserie (Aubusson) will exhibit **Marie Cuttoli: The Modern Thread from Miro to Man Ray**, running from February 23 to August 23, 2020.

In 1932 Marie Cuttoli (born Marie Borges, 1879–1973) a French art collector and gallery owner, arranged for a tapestry to be woven in Aubusson from a Georges Rouault painting. The workshop she chose was Alfred Legoueix's and the tapestry "Les Fleurs du Mal," which is today in the Barnes Foundation collection. This experiment, having weavers reproduce modern paintings, was followed by similar commissions from works by Joan Miro, Pablo Picasso, Jean Lurçat, George Braque, Raoul Dufy and Fernand Leger, among others.

Marie Cuttoli was introduced to textiles in Algeria, her husband's country of birth. In 1922, in Paris, she opened a gallery-boutique, Myrbor, exhibiting rugs designed by emerging artists, Jean Lurçat among them. These early works were produced in traditional workshops in Algeria. A few years later, in association with gallerist Jeanne Boucher, she opened the Boucher-Myrbor gallery. It is there where Cuttoli curated exhibitions of the artists she would eventually invite to participate in her tapestry collection. The idea of a body of contemporary works woven in Aubusson came to her while visiting Jean Lurçat's studio in Montmartre. She was much impressed by two small needlepoints by Jean and his wife Marta. To persuade her cautious painters' friends of the soundness of her project, she commissioned a piece by Rouault, of great complexity, hoping that the outcome would be exceptional and convincing. Once in Aubusson she encountered opposition from weavers reluctant to embark on projects requiring total fidelity to painting. Finally, Alfred Legoueix, a highly regarded

master weaver interested in modern art, accepted the commission. Weavers views regarding the merits of certain projects, if rare, were not that uncommon. Years later, when Lurçat introduced the numbered cartoon—a design meant for tapestry, clearly outlined and color coded, not a painting—he encountered a similar resistance. The argument this time was a complaint for the lack of creative interpretation. In this regard art historian K. L. H. Wells in her essay "Artistes contre Liciers," mentions that weavers at the Francois Tabard workshop in Aubusson refused to weave a design by Josef Albers, "Hommage au carre" (Homage to the Square) for finding it "too mechanical and uninteresting".

The fidelity to the painted model that Cuttoli expected from the weavers required a fine weave and a great number of colors. This approach resulted in a notable increase of time of production. From one month per square yard for classic pieces – such as *Verdures* – to six to eight months per square yard for the Cuttoli editions. Rouault, hesitant to approve the proposal at first, asked for a clause in the contract by which if the experiment failed the tapestry would be destroyed. The outcome, you, the reader, my fellow weaver, can judge with a visit to the Barnes Foundation. As for Rouault, a dinner celebration was served the day of the unveiling. "When are you going to show it to me?" He asked Cuttoli. "How long is this agony going to last?" Once the last course was served and the tapestry unveiled, he was ecstatic: "It is the first time in my life that I am not betrayed!" Rouault would give Cuttoli fifteen more paintings.

The success of the Rouault tapestry positively impacted the artists Cuttoli planned to invite. From then on, they were eager to participate;

only Jean Lurçat and Joan Miro opted to propose cartoons designed specifically for tapestry. According to Lurçat, knowing the weaving process was essential for a good design. His opinion was based in aesthetical and commercial considerations. Lurçat thought of the role of the painter as both musique composer and orchestra director. The weavers were to “play” according to his strict indications. Commercially, he looked at the Cuttoli tapestries as expensive reproductions, out of touch with the art market of the day (the tapestries were often more expensive than the original models). He remarked that weavers were ruining their sight over these extra fine and lengthy productions “I must say,” he wrote about a tapestry after a Picasso painting, “the rendition was quite sensational, a tour the force, but in my opinion it represents the same interest that one may find in the work of a tamer training a nightingale to roar like a lion.”

To weave in the manner Cuttoli envisioned called for lengthy preparations, sophisticated techniques and fine warp sets. To imitate a brush stroke—a moment’s gesture by the hand of the painter—would require days, if not weeks of weaving. The resulting tapestries, though crafted with great skills, left some valid criticism. What was the point of weaving these expensive reproductions? Would these tapestries advance the art form?

When artists gathered around Lurçat and designed cartoons as models, life-size color-coded outlines, sought to walk away from painterly influences, criticism abounded too. Was this modernism? “I don’t care about the mode-rn,” stated the head of the weaver’s guild. “Tapestry is not a fashion!” (It was a play on words, the French *mode* meaning *fashion*.) Some saw it as invasive to the weaver’s craft, offending their professional pride. Weaving by numbers! But business was good, the designers were busy, and weavers prospered. The success was international. When in 1962 the city of Aubusson gave Lurçat an honorable citizen award,

celebrating the first twenty years of modern tapestry, the efforts of Marie Cuttoli were forgotten.

The approach of Lurçat and the early cartoon designers was a first step toward the liberation of tapestry from the dictates of painting. But it was still a long way to the artist-weaver creative process. In that regard the Marie Cuttoli experience can be seen today as a curiosity, a sensational tour de force as Lurçat called it. But we shouldn’t ignore the highly sophisticated and powerful works, that almost a century later, the collaboration of designers and weavers are achieving. A point in case are the surprising works currently coming from the programs of the Cite Internationale de la Tapisserie in Aubusson.



Tapestry's Moment: The Critical Response

Ellen Ramsey

*Who knew that weaving could rival painting in combined optical and tactile potency?*¹

Tapestry has not held a place of honor in the fine art realm since the Renaissance. However, in an age where artistic hierarchies and cultural biases are finally being challenged, and where inclusiveness is the dominant trend, it is not surprising to see textile art making inroads into the mainstream art world. Evidence is abundant: Perhaps the most talked about blockbuster exhibition of 2018 was the Tate's Anni Albers retrospective; The Met Breuer's exhibition of Mrinalini Mukherjee's fiber sculptures astonished art audiences in 2019; The Museum of Modern Art now has a room devoted to textile art; and the 2019 Venice Biennale was dominated by textile-based work.

Another example of this trend is that artists who design and weave true tapestry are being represented by high end commercial galleries in New York City and Los Angeles. Not in great numbers, but they are definitely there—and commanding jaw dropping prices. The three artist weavers who have garnered the most recent and consistent art world attention are Erin Riley, Christina Forrer, and Terri Friedman.² Their recent solo shows have been widely reviewed. I was curious to see how reviewers responded to the medium of tapestry. What preconceived notions about tapestry are we fighting against? What qualities do the critics appreciate about woven work? Do they attempt to reconcile the art vs. craft dichotomy, or do they just ignore it?

In reviewing the press, my first finding is that, above all, the art world treasures the unexpected—and these artists deliver. Tapestry weaving in and of itself is quite a novelty. However, it won't get notice at the top tier unless the imagery and methodology clash with the long-held stereotypes that plague the medium. Without fail, reviewers describe tapestry

weaving as a “gentle, feminine” art form, or associate it with refinement and decorum.³ The artists featured here use the tapestry medium to convey images and ideas that are more disturbing than decorous, and clearly that is key to their success.

Christina Forrer (b. 1978; works in Los Angeles) employs a low brow aesthetic to create images rife with interpersonal conflict. Her cartoonish people emit gaseous looking talk bubbles that



Christina Forrer, “Untitled (green background),” 119 in x 80 in, 2018, © Christina Forrer; courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York. Cotton, wool, linen, silk, and watercolor.

pierce through neighboring ears like invaders. Forrer's work in her 2019 exhibition at Augustine-Luhning Gallery in Chelsea adhered to the narrative and muralistic format of traditional tapestry but did so with completely untraditional imagery.

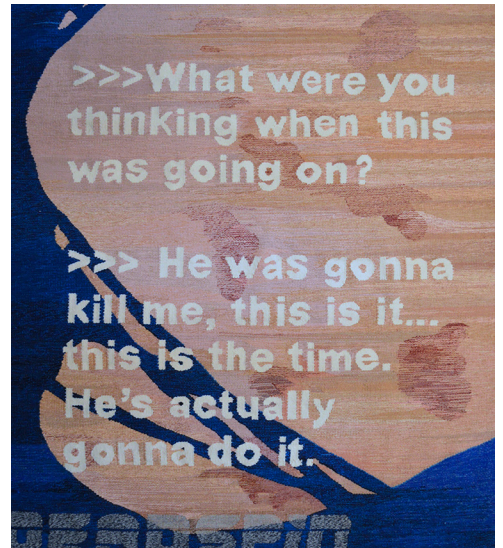
Throughout the show, Forrer offers a view of the human condition distinctly altered from her medieval predecessors. The saints and gods have been banished, and instead it is the ordinary person, enshrined within the tension of her warp and weft, who stares out from the work. The narratives are not noble or even pretty; and yet they are readily understood, reflecting the remoteness of the screen age, and the tumultuousness of living amid narcissistic ambition.⁴

Erin Riley (b. 1985; works in Brooklyn) showed work at PPOW Gallery in 2018 that focused on sexual violence. Her viewpoint is feminine in the extreme, but her objective, meticulous representations of rape kits, bloody tampons, and erotic selfies upend traditional notions of womanhood. That she proceeds using a medium often associated with women's work is important.

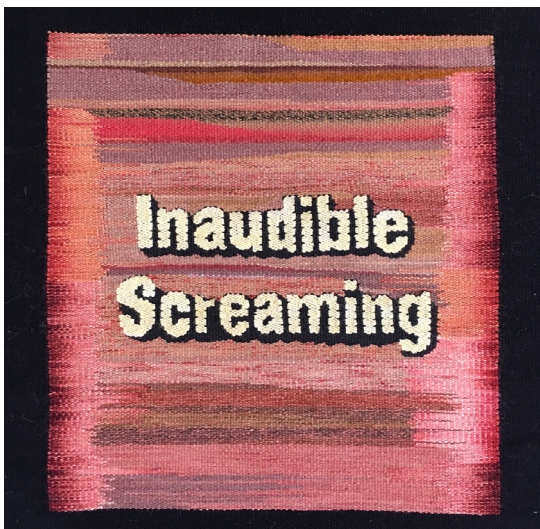
Riley's articulating the shorthand roles women get slotted into (rape victim, slut, a body, the shrill sound of screaming itself) in one of the more longhand forms of craft still going these days. The dissonance is instructive.⁵

Terri Friedman (b. mid-late 1960s; works in the Bay Area) works abstractly. Her work throws the art/craft dichotomy squarely in our face, forcing us to consider the established hierarchy. Her untamed surfaces, using cheap and often garish materials, might be dismissed if they were less artfully composed. At first I didn't get it, but then I came to see Friedman's weavings as so over-the-top "crafty" that they read as subversive. Taste and refinement are out the window, and yet her weavings are engaging and rewarding to look at. Her work is proof that there is power in making objects that are so counter-intuitive that they become something else.

The idea of keeping secrets or subverting the more obvious content is also apparent in the work of Terri Friedman who has created a series of woven fiber sculptures made from stained glass, acrylic, wool, cotton and metallic fibers. The work brings to mind the more obvious associations of quilting and weaving, art practices that have historically been aligned with art made by women, yet Friedman's sculptures are much too quirky to be considered simply "macro may art." These are complex, beautifully crafted pieces that speak more to the riotous, experimental interests of artists like Hannah Wilke and Louise Bourgeois, both of whom destabilized the notion of domesticity.⁶



Erin Riley, "Your Heroes Are Our Villians," 48 in x 54 in, wool, cotton, 2017, photo: Erin Riley, courtesy of the artist.



Erin Riley, "Inaudible Screaming," 24 in x 24 in, wool, cotton, 2018, photo: Erin Riley, courtesy of the artist.

My second finding is that the critics are genuinely as seduced by fiber as we are. The tactile qualities of cloth make a huge impression in the cold, white cube environments of the typical high-end gallery. Weavings are universally appreciated for what they contribute sensually as well as conceptually. In an art world where so much of the making is outsourced, there is a comfort and value in the hand made.

(Of Riley) I was drawn to the explicit subject matter of her works that were made almost soft and approachable through the medium of weaving. It is this softness that is needed when viewing the works in the backroom where the other reality of sexuality and femininity is domestic violence and sexual assault.⁷

Forrer chooses thick yarns full of nubs and variations in color, and the tightness of her weaving gives a sense of weight to the final creation, the warp and weft forming a length of warm and comforting fabric, a blanket that would survive many generations of use.⁸

(Of Friedman) The undulating, uneven patterns of the wall works Friedman has created in these past five years slightly resemble the disheveled elegance of the bright and busy Coogi sweaters popular in the 1990s.⁹

My final finding is that tapestry is cast as another form of painting by the galleries, the critics, and the artists themselves. The critics express a clear appreciation for the haptic qualities of weaving, but they also compare irregular surfaces to “expressionistic brushstrokes.”¹⁰ Clearly craft media still need the validation that such comparisons engender – at least in the market context.

These are art school credentialed professionals who were already successful in the art market as painters before extending their practice into weaving. Forrer’s show included one of her paintings as a not so subtle reminder. Of this group, Terri Friedman is the most insistent about the connection between her weaving and her past as a painter.

I use the loom to catch my big hairy voluptuous colorful paintings,” she explained, adding that she uses the palette of a painter. Instead of finding inspiration in the works of other textile artists, Friedman, a self-described feminist, looks to female painters for her inspiration.¹¹

All of this confirms for me that tapestry’s affinity with painting is both its greatest asset and its greatest liability. Pictorial tapestry for the wall sits firmly between art and craft. This fact makes tapestry art prone to marginalization at both ends of the spectrum, and so how we position ourselves within in the various different art markets out there can be tricky. Today’s greater acceptance of craft practices in the high-end art world is promising, but clearly the concept of the artist as weaver is not generally understood. I am grateful to Christina Forrer, Erin Riley, and Terri Friedman for breaking down the barriers and introducing contemporary tapestry to collectors.



Terri Friedman, “Eudaimonia,”
81 in x 42 in, 2018, photo: Josef
Jacques, courtesy of the artist.
Wool, acrylic, cotton, metallic fibers,
and stained glass.

Works Cited

1. Schjeldahl, Peter. Goings on About Town, Galleries_ Chelsea: Christina Forrer. The New Yorker, April 1, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/art/christina-forrer>
2. <http://www.christinaforrer.com>; <https://erinmriley.com/home.html>; <http://www.terrifiedman.com>
3. Vogel, Maria. "Christina Forrer's Tapestries Simplify Tales of Universal Conflict," Art of Choice, March 21, 2019. <https://www.artofchoice.co/christina-forrers-tapestries-simplify-tales-of-universal-conflict/>
4. Collins, Ann. *ArtSeen: Christina Forrer*, The Brooklyn Rail, April 2019. <https://brooklynrail.org/2019/04/artseen/Christina-Forrer>
5. Bradley, Paige Katherine, "Forget Deskillling: The Craft Invasion is ON in New York," Garage, June 14, 2018. https://garage.vice.com/en_us/article/qvnmvb/the-craft-invasion-of-contemporary-art
6. Wood, Eve. "Artists as Keepers of Radical Thought in Weight of Matter," at Roberts Project, Los Angeles," Riot Material, May 17, 2019. <https://www.riotmaterial.com/>
7. Dieter, Alexandra. "Erin Riley: The Personal is now Political Again," Gallery Gurls, June 25, 2018. <http://gallerygurls.net/reviews/2018/6/25/erin-riley-the-personal-is-now-political-again>
8. Collins, Ann C., *ibid*
9. Wood, Eve, *ibid*
10. Ollman, Leah. Christina Forrer, Art in America, January 27, 2017. <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/christina-forrer-62304/>
11. Fiore, Julia. These Artists Are Changing our Expectations of What Tapestry Can Be. Artsy.net, June 13, 2019. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-7-artists-weaving-new-tapestry-traditions>



weaversbazaar
High quality yarns for Tapestry Weavers

An artists palette of 100+ colours in 3 weights, worsted-spun
Also Nettle yarn, Linen, Silk, Equipment, Kits and more
Online shop www.weaversbazaar.com
+44 (0) 780 160 7286 for mail order

International shipping
Twitter [@weaversbazaar](https://twitter.com/weaversbazaar) Facebook.com/weaversbazaar

Are Textiles Art or Craft – What the Critics Say

Joanne Soroka

Those of us who create tapestries in the widest sense of the term consider that we are making art. While we may use a particular material for our medium, we are making statements and commenting on issues that are important to us in the same way a painter or sculptor might. However we are often annoyed or even angered by the way our work is perceived, especially by those who should know better, the art critics. Here is a sample of what some of the British ones have to say.

Tim Hilton, reviewing the exhibition **Loose Threads** at the Serpentine Gallery in the *Times* in 1998, says that the medium can't work as art under any circumstances.

...thread is not a vital medium. You can't do much with it. If you try to make sculpture, all your efforts will turn out something like a cushion. If you attempt an installation, it goes all wispy. And if you aim for two-dimensional art, the results, inevitably, will resemble painting. It is that thread cannot match the expressive potential of these other media.

[Exhibitions: As ye sew, ye can't paint | The Independent](#)

Here, even the headline misunderstands the medium, referencing sewing rather than weaving. Presumably many weavers have also had the experience of people thinking we do embroidery, as I have. But sewing?

Another critic, Waldemar Januszczak, writing in the *Sunday Times* in 2017 about the exhibition **Entangled** at the Turner Contemporary in Margate, England, thinks that the medium conjures domestic and amateur imagery, implying that it is not art. It actually suggests that his own imagination is limited and stuck in the past.

Textile art by women. If ever a territory had its work cut out setting the pulse racing, this is it. We live in a world where women are Nobel-

winning scientists, engineers, prime ministers, jockeys, stand-up comedians, marines. Yet here is a show still enwalled by the memory of the little woman in the corner dutifully finishing her quilts and her embroidery.

[Art review: Knotty problem | Culture | The Sunday Times](#)

Entangled was an exhibition which included some prominent women textile artists, including such luminaries as Kiki Smith, Sheila Hicks, Anni Albers, Louise Bourgeois, Sonia Delaunay and Eva Hesse. Some of these have had solo shows at Tate Modern or other world-class institutions. Yet a critic belittles their work in a patronising manner. He called Anna Ray's magnificent *Margate Knot* "a Jackson Pollock for the nursery," for example.

Most recently, Susan Mansfield reviewed the **Cordis Prize** show at Inverleith House in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, in the *Scotsman* newspaper in April last year. She seems to be



Catalogue for *Entangled*, Turner Contemporary, Margate, England, 2017

against any innovation in tapestry or having ideas-based work. Should tapestry be free of ideas then?

Innovation within a traditional craft such as tapestry can be dangerous. One is reminded of the fate of the tapestry department at Edinburgh College of Art which innovated itself out of existence: shifting away from textiles to 'the weaving of ideas,' it left weaving behind altogether and was renamed Intermedia.

[Art reviews: The Cordis Prize | Anne-Marie Copestake | Arpita Shah – The Scotsman](#)

While other reviewers have found beauty and creativity in what we do, these outdated and frankly weird views are at least puzzling. How can we deal with people who have these types of prejudice?

We may think that the more people see tapestry, the more they will understand its significance and depth. It is popular with the general public, but some critics seem to willfully disregard its worth. On the other hand, more than a century ago,

William Morris, the multi-talented artist, designer and radical thinker, thought that tapestry was equal to the other artistic media. Why have his views not prevailed?

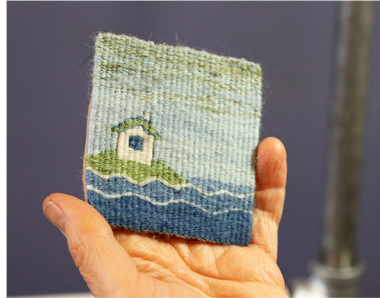
However, some more scholarly essayists such as Sarat Maharaj, writing in 1991, are more enlightened. He thinks of Arachne, the mythical woman who challenged the goddess Athena to a tapestry-weaving contest and won. (For her hubris, she was changed into a spider, so that she could weave forever.) For him, Arachne challenges the male bastions of art history represented by Athena and her authority. He writes, "We may see Arachne's space as a metaphor for avant-garde textiles practice – in which handed-down notions of art practice/genre/gender come to be cited and overturned, displaced and played out." (Sarat Maharaj, "Arachne's Genre: Towards Inter-Cultural Studies in Textiles," *Journal of Design History*, Vol 4, No 2, 1991, pp. 75-96) Sadly, though, Maharaj's thoughts will be read by only a small number of academics.

But his words give us hope.



Joanne Soroka "For Irena Sendler", 48-51" x 73", 2016, 7 epi, shown in the Cordis Prize exhibition, Inverleith House, Edinburgh, 2019

Fringeless: Four selvedge warping with
Sarah C. Swett
(produced by Rebecca Mezoff)



fringeless




www.tapestryweaving.com

Cultivate courage. Be curious. Create

Audrey Moore and Terry Olson

Tapestry and Navajo Weaving,
Spinning and Dyeing,
Ravenstail Twining


**Damascus
Fiber Arts
School**

503.558.1727
www.DamascusFiberArtsSchool.com
Located near Portland, Oregon

The Timeless Expressions of the Weave

Jean Pierre Larochette

In the multiple debates over the true nature of tapestry, whether seen as an art or as a craft, we rarely hear the opinion of those who know it best. Whenever mentioned, the weaver's art is portrayed as a given skill, *savoir faire*, a traditional endowment.

The following are two of my favorite aphorisms that shed light on the complexities of what goes into a tapestry. They are by designers, not weavers, but who knew tapestry well. I find them inspiring.

On the micro level of the weave, the parts, the process, June Wayne wrote:

So, if a weaving tells a story, let the story rank as literature, if weaving uses symbols, let them resonate as poetry...Let every thread bear witness.

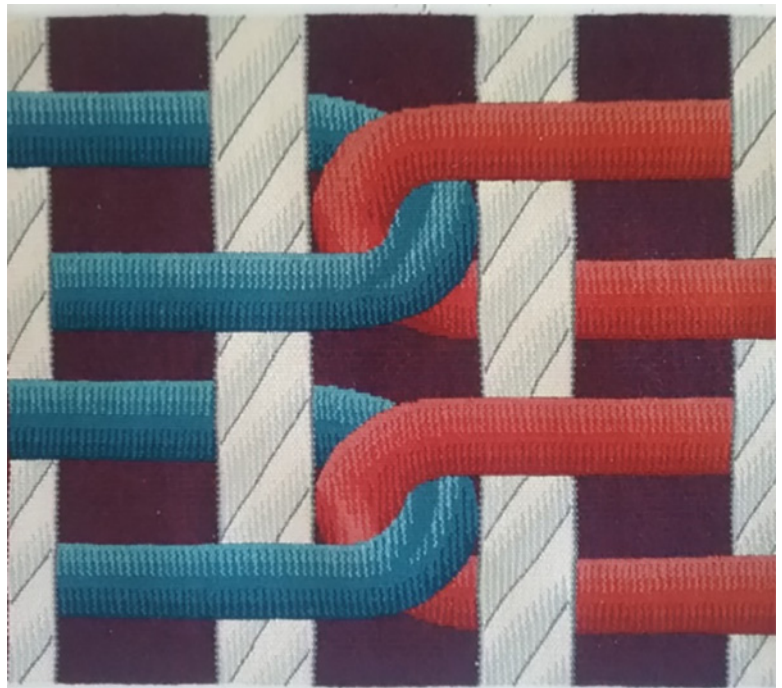
Letting *every thread bear witness*: the idea touches upon the significance of the story told, tapestry as a depository of culture - personal or collective - where the story is elevated in the magnificent theater of the mural cloth. *Bear witness*: The microcosmos of the thread, the minute crossing of warp and weft, contains all stories as a drop of water is said to contain the ocean. Embedded in the movements of the thread are symbols of balance and harmony. The art of tapestry reflects the beauty of that careful interaction, which the weaver repeats like a sacred mantra.

On the macro level of a tapestry, the sum of the parts, its materiality and the story being told, Jean Lurçat wrote:

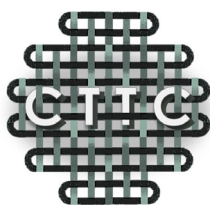
Well, it is a fabric, no more or less than a fabric...it is heavy with matter and heavy with meaning.

In Lurçat's mind tapestry was a coarse earthly cloth, fertile ground for his monumental, vital compositions. It distanced his work from the delicate, decorative pieces much in fashion at the turn of the twentieth century. The poetic spirit had to be expressed with vigor, vibrantly. He purchased Japanese brushes to create his cartoons. Turning the drawing line into a form of calligraphy, he included poems. Each tapestry became a song: he called his largest work "The Song of the World."

Much as with a sonnet, a poetic form which is dictated by structured rhythm, tapestry shines when the eloquence of the message is supported by the harmonious cadence of the parts, the imprint of the weaver's hand and heart.



Jean Pierre Larochette, "Untitled # 3," 16 in x 16 in, 2020. Wool and cotton on cotton.



Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre

2020 TAPESTRY WORKSHOPS & RETREATS



**COLOUR
BLENDING**

**NATURA
TEXTURA**

**2D & 3D
WEAVING**

- Interested in Full-immersion tapestry studies?
- Are you interested in History and Culture?
- Would you like to explore Canada's beauty?

THEN JOIN US! LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE!

SPRING

March 22-29

2020 Artistic Getaway-
Costa Rica

April 17-20

Colour Blending Tapestry
Techniques
4-Day workshop

SUMMER

July 10-13

Natural Dyes & Tapestry
Colour Blending
4-Day workshop

August 7-10

NATURA TEXTURA: Tapestry
designing & weaving
4-Day workshop

FALL

October 9-12

NATURA TEXTURA: Tapestry
designing & weaving
4-Day workshop

****4-Day workshops- \$495.00
CAN**

**** All Materials Included**

****Lodging/Transportation not
included**

Airport pickup available upon
request

Instructed by Ixchel Suarez

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.

Founder of the Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre

For info & bookings visit canadiantapestryce.wixsite.com/cttc/weaving-workshops

CanadianTapestryCentre@gmail.com - (905)-257-2446

ATA Volunteer: Joan Griffin

What brought you to tapestry weaving?

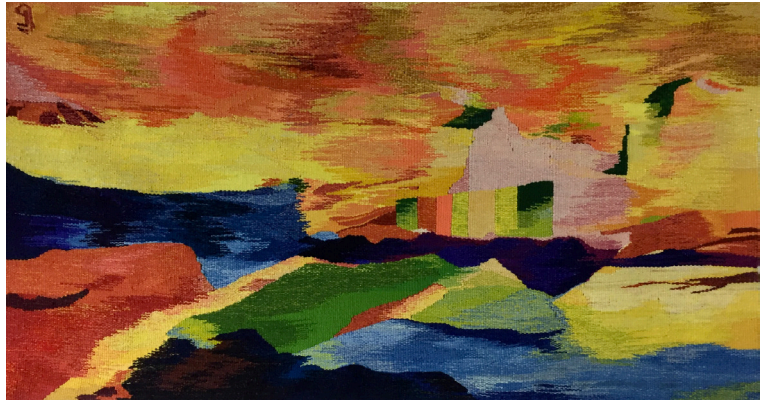
During college I had an introductory textile class but put that all aside to focus on watercolor painting. Later I wanted to try textiles again, worked a bit with multiple harness weaving but missed imagery. Once I had an introduction to tapestry that was it, and 40 years later, I am still focusing on tapestry. I like the combination of the ability to focus on images as well as the texture involved. I have been fortunate to study with Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei as well as Mary Lane and Joan Baxter. I have worked in a range of sizes from 4 inches square to 8 feet wide. I rely on my painting background for my sense of color.

How did you find out about ATA?

In the early days any information about a tapestry organization was very exciting. I don't remember the exact year I joined ATA but easily late 80s or early 90s when our founder Jim Brown was still involved. It has been a long and interesting journey to follow the growth of ATA.

Describe what you do for ATA.

I first joined the board of ATA in 2000. A few years later there was a reorganization of ATA since we needed a more detailed plan on how to operate due to rapid growth. The board decided we needed a Volunteer Coordinator, so I took that job and remained a board advisor. After about 14 years, I retired as Volunteer Coordinator and became an advisor to the board. That is my current volunteer job for ATA as well as mentoring weavers as part of our mentoring program. I also serve on the Painter-Brown Scholarship panel this year.



Joan Griffin, "Portal" 31 in x 59 in, 2017, photo: Joan Griffin.
Cotton warp, wool weft, 8 epi.

What do you value about volunteering for ATA?

Having volunteered for ATA for 20 years I find the connection with weavers from all over most exciting. I have made lasting connections with so many weavers that never would have happened without volunteering.

Living in Virginia and influenced by my local environment or travels, I slowly weave my tapestries one landscape at a time. I also teach beginning and intermediate tapestry workshops in my studio several times a year.

joangriffintapestry@gmail.com

<http://www.joangriffintapestry.com>



INTRODUCING THE ARRAS TAPESTRY LOOM

BETTER BY DESIGN

GENEROUS SIZING

20" weaving width and a continuous warp of 45".

Sett springs included:
4, 5, 6 & 8 dent

Handy cartoon
holder

Shedding device can be
set for left or right hand
operation. Includes 100
Texsolv heddles.

Adjustable
tensioning beam

Set the loom height and weaving angle that is most comfortable for you; legs fold for travel or storage.



The Arras Tapestry Loom is a modern loom that celebrates the enduring appeal of traditional tapestry weaving.

Superb tensioning, shed control, and sturdy construction are designed for the rigors of tapestry weaving. For longer warps, an optional beam kit is available.

Meet the Arras Loom at www.schachtspindle.com

Coming in spring 2020.

**SCHACHT
SPINDLE
COMPANY**

6101 Ben Place
Boulder, CO 80301
schachtspindle.com



ATA Appreciates Having YOU as a Member!

We know that you have many ways to spend your money and we are very thankful that you value a membership in ATA. We also hope that you take advantage of the many benefits of membership.

Individual Membership Benefits:

- Promote your work and workshops!
 - Listings in ATA's monthly **eKudos**
 - Listings on ATA's **[Tapestry Instructors](#)** webpage
 - Social Media Spotlights on member instructors
- Get inspired!
 - ***Tapestry Topics***, ATA's triannual newsletter
 - Digital files of ATA's **Digislams** and out of print **catalogs**
- Connect!
 - ***Let's Talk Tapestry***, members only Facebook Group
 - Subscription to ATA's monthly **eNews**
 - ***ATA-Talk***, members only email list
 - **Membership Directory**
- Save money!
 - Reduced entry fees for ATA's [exhibitions](#)
 - Reduced registration fees for ATA's **workshops**
 - Discounts on exhibition [catalogs](#)
 - Discounts on [advertising](#)
 - Discounts on tapestry equipment and supplies from selected businesses

Studio Circle Benefits:

- All Individual benefits listed above, plus:
 - Your own [Artist Page](#) on ATA's website
 - 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**

Schacht Spindle Company

As a current ATA member, you will receive a 20% discount when you order our new Arras Tapestry Loom. This loom is coming Spring 2020 and is available for pre-order now. To order, please call Schacht at 800-228-2553 and use discount code ARRAS2020.

Tapestry weaving has remained unchanged for millennia. The Arras Tapestry Loom embraces these age old traditions with a modern, thoughtfully designed loom. Function, aesthetics and comfort create a sturdy loom that is a joy to weave on.

Our mission is to spend each and every day making useful and beautiful tools that enhance our customers' weaving and spinning experience. We work to accomplish this goal through innovative problem-solving, creative ideas, skilled woodworking, craftsmanship, and friendly, knowledgeable customer service.

Meet the Arras:

<https://youtu.be/oRNM9odk0iM>

Learn More:

<https://schachtspindle.com/product/arras-tapestry-loom/>

Questions: carriem@schachtspindle.com

ATA News

Small Tapestry International 7: Elements: Deadline for Entry is August 15, 2020!

This year, the deadline for entry is a bit earlier than usual due to a wonderful opportunity to expand our audience through a partnership with the American Association of Woodturners Gallery of Art. The exhibition will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota. Thanks to a generous donation from the Teitelbaum Family Trust, ATA offers awards to two selected artists. The juror for the show bestows the awards on tapestries that (s)he considers to be of exceptional aesthetic and technical quality. The First Place Award is a \$300 cash prize and Second Place is a \$200 cash prize. Go here to enter now: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/small-tapestry-international/small-tapestry-international-7-elements/>.

Renditions: Unjuried Small Format Show is now virtual!

In light of Covid-19, ATA transitioned the in-person exhibit that was supposed to take place in conjunction with Convergence to our on-line format. We received nearly 250 entries from around the world! While we are sad that we will not get to experience this exhibition in person, it is an honor to display the work of so many wonderful small format tapestries. A catalog will be available and can be purchased any time after August 1, 2020. Details are here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-catalogs/>. The exhibit will be live in July 2020, so please check out our website here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/small-tapestry-international/> to view the work at your leisure.

Congratulations to Marge Allik, 2020 International Student Award Winner!

ATA is pleased to announce the winner of the International Student Award is Marge Allik. Marge will receive \$750 and complimentary membership of the ATA. Successful applications were received from Maryliis Teinfeldt-Grins, Liisi Anderson, Claire

Pixie Aunison, Helen Kangro from Estonia, and Yun Shen from Taiwan, who will receive a complimentary membership.

Marge Allik says of her work are inspired by the present time. "The situation in the world forces us to spend more time in nature and enjoy the spectacle it offers. Nature is a wonderful artist who paints beautiful patterns on land, water and air with a playful ease. One just has to notice. The current forced withdrawal from the daily carousel brings simple, natural things and needs into focus. Nature teaches us to enjoy and appreciate the process of creating again." View Marge Allik's work here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/awards/ata-international-student-award/> and read more about her in our Educational Articles here: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/educational-articles-on-tapestry-weaving/>.

American Tapestry Biennial 13 Opens October 11, 2020 at San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles

We are fortunate to have Highfield Hall work with us to re-schedule the installation of ATB 13 to February 9, 2021 due to the constraints that Covid-19 created. In the meantime, we look forward to seeing the 37 works of art in October by the following artists:

Don Burns, Martha Christian, Jean Corder Clarke, Gabriela Cristu, Ariadna Donner, Bernard Foucher, Helena Figueiredo, Joaquina Marques, Carla Tavares, Gisela Figueiredo, Lurdes Branquinho, Heather Gallegos-Rex, Joan Griffin, Janette Gross, Birgitta Hallberg, Louise Halsey, Mette Hansen, Peter Harris, Barbara Heller, Stephanie Hoppe, Susan Iverson, Ruth Jones, Karen King, Lis Korsgren, Lialia Kuchma, Tal Landeau, Margo Macdonald, Marni Martin, Sonja Miremont, Julia Mitchell, Patricia Nelson, Judy Ness, Suzanne Paquette, Christine Pradel-Lien, Michael Rohde, Tommy Scanlin, Kathe Todd-Hooker, Alta Turner, Dorothea Van De Winkel, Sue Weil, Cheri White, Patricia Williams

Congratulations to our New Board Members!

This year, ATA is delighted to have the following join the board:

Shelley Socolofsky, Board President

Shelley says, "Having been a member of ATA and a tapestry weaver spanning four decades, I was thrilled and excited by the possibility of working more closely with my colleagues to steward an organization that has held steady my passion for so long."

Sue Weil, Director at Large

Sue writes about her nomination: "ATA is a special organization—one that creates and supports community among tapestry weavers around the world. I am so grateful for the many opportunities I've been afforded through ATA sponsored workshops and exhibitions and the many ATA artist members who have become personal friends and whose work I admire. It would be an honor to give back to this community through volunteering my time and skills."

David Heustess, Director of Exhibits

David is interested in serving on the ATA board in order to "assist with exhibition opportunities for ATA members, to meet and work with other tapestry artists, to share with and give back to the tapestry/fiber arts community, to learn more about the various approaches to this medium, to gain experience and learn from being a board member."

Janette Gross, Director of Finance

When asked why she is interested in serving on ATA's board, Janette said, "I believe I have the expertise to be Finance Director. It is important to give back to an organization I believe in and one that supports me in my artistic pursuits."

Molly Elkind, Director of Volunteers

Molly is passionate about teaching elements and principles of design for tapestry and other fiber arts. Now based Santa Fe, NM, she travels nationwide to teach. She is excited to act as our

board liaison to help guide the many members who offer and provide so much support to ATA!

Murray Gibson, Director of Awards

Murray Gibson has been a tapestry artist for more than 35 years. He first studied with Jane Kidd at the Alberta College of Art, Calgary, Alberta and graduated with honors in 1985. After 10 years of studio practice Murray returned to university and received his MA in Textiles studying with Janis Jefferies at Goldsmith's College, University of London, UK. He continues his studio practice and teaches an introductory level tapestry course at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, NS.

Important Dates

July 1, 2020

Small Tapestry International 7: Elements Call for Entry Opens

July 15, 2020

Renditions 2020, Unjuried Small Format Show Goes Live

August 1, 2020

International Student Award Educational Articles Now Live

August 15, 2020

Small Tapestry International 7: Elements Call for Entry Closes

September 15, 2020

Emerge Award Materials Due for Southern Hemisphere

October 1, 2020

Tapestry Topics Deadline for "...a bit of weaving: Archie Brennan's Legacy

October 11, 2020

ATB 13 Opens at San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles

Tapestry Topics Themes and Deadlines

“... 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

Call for Theme Coordinators

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

Tapestry Topics Team

Editor	Leslie Munro
Copy Editor	Robbie LaFleur
Layout	Patricia Jordan
Proofreader	Patricia Williams
Web Preparation.....	Maggie Leining
Mailing	Ruth Manning
Indexing	Kim Mumbower



MEISSNER SAVINGS COUPON
Exclusive for Guild Members!

20% OFF

IN-STOCK ACCESSORIES & NOTIONS*

*Discount taken from MSRP on in-store purchases. Not valid with any other offers. Selection varies by location. In-stock items only. Some restrictions apply. See store for details.






www.MeissnerSewing.com



Visit us at our NEW home at 4688 Meridian Ave.

Now with more space for in-store events, fabric, and more of the products you love!



MORE CLASSES AVAILABLE!







PROUD TO BE AN AUTHORIZED DEALER
Availability varies by store.








Sacramento 2417 Cormorant Way (916) 920-2121	Folsom 98 Clarksville Rd., Ste. 130 (916) 984-7071	Roseville 9250 Fairway Dr., Ste. 110 (916) 791-2121	Santa Rosa 1455 Santa Rosa Ave. (707) 575-5259	San Jose 4688 Meridian Ave. (408) 264-4880
--	--	---	--	--

Between & Etc.

*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.

*604 1st Avenue East
Albany, Oregon 97321, USA
541-917-3251*

*www.betweenandetc.com
kathetodddhooker@comcast.net*

The Back Page



“Five Swans”, designed by Otto Eckmann, made by Schule für Kunstweberie, Scherrebek, 1896-1897, wool. Bröhan Museum, Berlin

Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved 16 March 2020.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tapestry_%27Five_Swans%27,_designed_by_Otto_Eckmann,_made_by_Schule_fur_Kunstweberie,_Scherrebek,_1896-1897,_wool_-_Bröhan_Museum,_Berlin_-_DSC04157.JPG