

# **The American Tapestry Alliance Tapestry Topics**

**A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today Vol29 Nos2&3 Summer, 2003**

## **Mentoring and More Letter from the Directors**

**By Alex Friedman & Christine Laffer**

You have in your hands the latest ATA Newsletter. We have returned to a black and white printed version, one which will get to you quickly and efficiently. Please accept our apologies if you have experienced delays or frustrations obtaining the Newsletter over the past six months. We plan to continue developing web based articles with color images and links which you can read on-line or download in .pdf form.

There are a few changes to the printed version of the quarterly newsletter we would like to mention. The calendar pages of upcoming events, shows and opportunities will move to the web site so it can be kept current and correct. We also intend to reserve longer articles with color illustrations for the web site. They can be printed at your leisure for future reference.

To help us undertake this we have a new editor, Linda Rees. She has been an active tapestry weaver for a long time and has recently written a book on the late Muriel Nezhnie, yet to be published. She has lots of ideas for developing the breadth and depth of the newsletter and welcomes your ideas and comments. The newsletter guidelines are posted on the web site and the cover page of this newsletter. She welcomes members to submit articles and reviews.

We also have a new Treasurer as of July. Amy Kropitz of California has kindly agreed to take over from Joan Griffin who has served as our treasurer for the last three years. Amy is a new member of the American Tapestry Alliance and has lots of professional experience as an accountant. Already she

## **ATA Volunteers Introduced More on page ---**

New board member, Ellen Ramsey, is the chair of the membership committee. She has a BBA in Finance and an MA in Art History from the University of Iowa and has worked in the museum field for eleven years. Most recently, she was Membership and Annual Fund Manager at the Seattle Art Museum (1991- 1995). Ellen studied tapestry weaving with Mary Lane from 1998 to 2001. She lives with her husband and two children in Seattle, Washington.

has made suggestions of ways to make our finances available to those who are interested.

The **Mentoring Program** has been launched by Priscilla Lynch and now, as a member, you have a terrific opportunity to study any aspect of tapestry that interests you in depth. It is based on the successful HGA Teaching and Learning through Correspondence Program. The mentoring program is available to all members who have a basic knowledge of tapestry. If you want to be able to study color blending techniques of *hachure*, Southwest weaving traditions, or perhaps shaped tapestry with an expert, then Priscilla will locate a mentor to match your area of study. To find out more see the article on education in this issue.

The deadline for the **American Tapestry Biennial 5** is the 24th of November and promises to be a very exciting exhibition. Monique Lehman and her team are working hard to put the details in place. It will open in Denver in June of 2004 at the Center for Visual Art at the Metropolitan State College of Denver. The venue is near the Convention Center where the HGA Convergence will take place. We will also hold our biennial ATA General Meeting in Denver during Convergence, so please watch for more details and plan to attend.

Also, the American Tapestry Alliance will sponsor **Small Format Frontiers** at the Museum of Outdoor Art in Denver. It is an unjuried show, open to all, and we hope you will support it with an entry. The prospectus and entry forms for both exhibits are included in this issue and on the ATA web site. If you have any questions please contact Karen Crislip for more [informationkcrislip@bigplanet.com](mailto:informationkcrislip@bigplanet.com). The deadline is January 15, 2004. Note, the address has changed, so make sure you use the Colorado address when you ship your work.

**Other changes on the horizon:** Christine Laffer and Jeanne Bates are working hard to give the web site a makeover. This will make it easier to navigate and to provide you with the accessible, current information on our projects. The changes will include on-line exhibitions and Artists' Pages in the "for-members-only" section. An application form will come with your next newsletter. The site will also update more frequently. More images, more information, and more

interest in the site will help us meet our goal of increasing the number of visitors to our site.

There is, as always, a lot going on with American Tapestry Alliance to make it a better, more supportive organization. In addition to the newsletter and the Biennials, we would like to build our educational programs and offer more events like the March Symposium in Chicago that we co sponsored with The Gloria F. Ross Center for Tapestry Studies.

We have lots of ideas and goals we would like to achieve. If you have an expertise or even if you have a little extra time, we would welcome your help. Elsewhere in the newsletter is a list of all the committee chairs and their contact e-mails. Please feel free to ask questions and get involved. It is a great group to work with and if you feel isolated in your studio, it is a way to get connected.

Happy weaving,  
Alex & Christine

## **Greetings from the new editor** **By Linda Rees**

By way of introducing myself, I could refer you to page ( ) where Ellen Ramsey summarizes the typical ATA member. I fit the profile. For a few specifics, I still weave on the Macomber loom I purchased in the fall of 1965. Since the late 1970s I have focused exclusively on tapestries, either geometric or containing human images.

I believe in the importance of doing volunteer work as a way of structuring my environment to fit my perspective. My primary focus to date has been working on exhibitions. I hope to feature as many exhibits in which tapestry weavers participate as possible.

After two issues, it became apparent that an online version had as many limitations as advantages. The fact that I am now taking on the editorship is probably because I was one of the squeaky wheels. It was not that we "old dogs" could not learn new tricks but that we simply gained a better understanding of what works well on the computer and what is important to produce in print. Each media has its own strong points.

In the transition between editors, some articles may not have reached me. Please feel free to resubmit items meant for the Spring issue.

About five years ago I became acutely aware of how little written documentation exists about contemporary tapestry artists and trends. To my way of thinking, the ATA Newsletter serves as one of the few consistent means for recording what is happening in our field. I believe it needs to be in a printed version to insure that it lasts and is readable in years to come, when computer technology has moved on to new formats. It can be used as a research tool or just to jog our memory of when specific events took place. It also is still the most universal form of communication to ensure that all members will get the interesting information we hope to provide.

At the same time, I am completely excited about the Internet as a resource. Since subscribing to the Internet, I have been introduced to the works of tapestry artists all over the world, with the option of talking with them spontaneously about their weavings. There is no better way for getting to know what is being woven these days, without travelling to exhibits or studios. It would be impossible for the newsletter to provide the same quality of reproduction, nor should it try. We will try to coordinate with the web mistress to get color images of works featured in the b/w version on the web site. Let's embrace both formats for their role in sustaining the vitality of ATA.

### **New directions for the Newsletter?**

**Themes:** We plan to have two of the four yearly issues focus on a theme One of my historical interests concerns exploring how tapestry weavers in various regions have coalesced into organized groups. Recently the southeastern states have been particularly active in organizing exhibits and promoting these shows. I would like to have a representative from the various group, for example TWINE, TAPS, TWW and any others, describe their organization. Groups in other countries can submit information too, like the Canadian groups, TAPIS and the BC STARS Here are some suggestions for items to include: When was the group formed? Is membership determined by jury, unconditional, or by some other means? Has there been a particular weaver who served as the driving force of the group or impetus for the direction the group has taken? How

many members are in the group and how often do you meet? What is the range of geographic territory covered?

A second theme that has occurred to me would be about portraits that are more extensive than faces, more a statement about the body or gesture. I propose this theme for the Spring issue, a time when we start assessing how we will fare when the coats come off. As one aspect of the theme, I want to do a feature on artists working with nudes. Thus, I would like members who have woven nudes to please contact me about their work. I know there are many besides Archie Brennan and Jon Eric Riis. "Signs of a Shift" by Christine Laffer is an example of this focus on the body that is not a nude per se but makes a fascinating statement about the body. I encourage submission about any weaver focusing on body images.

**Reviews:** Having reviews in the newsletter is one way of recording our history. It also can elevate the tapestry medium's public profile. Copies of the printed reviews can be sent to the gallery. Getting the name of the gallery in print and knowing that an artist they are featuring is receiving major attention is definitely desirable to gallery owners.

I hope ATA members will consider writing reviews of tapestry exhibits, whether juried exhibits, one person or group shows, that they are able to attend, at home or as they travel. Writing a review, or any other item for publication in the newsletter need not be seen as intimidating. A few guidelines for submitting articles are detailed on page ( ). You do not have to be versed in classics or art history to write about your observations, nor do you need to quote poetry or allude to musical scores. We are looking for clear and descriptive observations about what the exhibit is like.

Of equal importance, please inform the web mistress, Jeanne Bates [abates@3\\_cities.com](mailto:abates@3_cities.com), when you are going to have an exhibit or will be included in a juried one. It is always encouraging to see members getting into shows and perhaps a way of adding extra interest to our travels.

## **Layered Images, the Tapestries of Elinor Steele**

## By Mary Lane

Elinor Steele weaves richly colored, striking tapestries that reveal a careful and methodical artistic process. The Vermont artist studied Fine Art at the University of New Hampshire and was a student of Archie Brennan at the Edinburgh College of Art. She is one of a growing number of artists who has embraced technology as an ally in design. Steele develops the designs for her tapestries in Adobe Photoshop, a powerful computer program that offers seemingly unlimited resources for drawing, painting and the manipulation of scanned images. A Wacom stylus (a mouse in the form of a pen) offers her greater control over drawn lines (from artist statements).

One of the fundamental working concepts in Photoshop is the use of layers. They allow you to separate and control different parts of the image independently. Because the layers sit on top of one another, like the strata in an archaeological dig, they lead naturally to the development of overlapping forms and merged images.

“Confetti Moon” and “Out There” are examples of Steele’s earlier works. They are broad square compositions consisting of overlapping, geometric shapes. The square is a very stable form, four right angles, and four equal sides. When designing for a square format the artist often rotates the image so that it conceivably could be viewed from any orientation. This is certainly the case with these two tapestries.

In “Confetti Moon” the artist continues to use four components by developing four layers in the image, three squares and one circle. The three squares sit flat like frames, directing our attention to the inner celestial orb, which, because it is shaded, hovers over them. However, the value changes in the small circles and the shading in the black and white squares create a positive/negative shift that punches holes through the layers, offering an additional interplay between flatness and space in the image.

In “Out There” the visual weight of the dimensional orb is balanced by the slashes which break through the three layers of square, circle, square. The animation of the surface created by the diagonal movement of the colors between the layers

is carefully calculated so that the directional force stays focused within the frame of the tapestry. Similarly, the use of the primary triad of red, blue and yellow adds to the sense of stability and completeness. In this tapestry the top lit shading on the central orb no longer allows us to see it as a moon. The subject of the image is form and color.

Geometric images such as “Confetti Moon” and “Out There” are related to the more complex mandala forms of Eastern art and religion which are used as meditational tools. The stability and inward concentration of radially symmetrical forms serve as a focus for self-contemplation. Color, in this kind of imagery, assumes a symbolic and emotional role, evoking strong moods and intensifying the viewer’s experience of the image.

Steele’s more recent work includes scanned images that have been manipulated in Photoshop. The artist has ventured beyond the fixed stability of the square, but her interest in balance, geometry and layers is still very much evident. In “Five Chairs” the vertical rectangle suggests the dimensions of the human figure, although the chairs themselves are empty. The image is cropped in such a way that the chairs closest to the viewer become framing elements in the design. They are a puzzle. What part of the chair is that? Which way does it face? We work our way out of the jumble of intersecting lines and forms in the foreground to the inviting pair of chairs offering a view of the ocean. The interplay between the cropped chairs and the complete chairs creates a tension between abstraction and representation, fragmentation and completion. Here the triad of red, yellow and blue is joined by green. (The color values were not appropriate for reproducing in b/w. See a color image on the ATA web site.)

In “Composition with Barns” the simplification of form and the lack of anecdotal detail focus our attention on the geometry of the buildings. The absence of humans lends the image a melancholy air. The presence of a person, however, is implied in both the human made structures and the ordered geometry of the composition which reveals the presence of the artist’s hand. The beautifully expressive horizontal swath, suggesting fields and crops, offers a more spontaneous counterpoint to the controlled geometry of the buildings and the rectilinear framing of the image.

Steele's tapestries convey a strong commitment to compositional balance and a deliberate use of color. The rigorous control found in the earlier pieces gives way in the later work to a more lyrical direction which accommodates both control and spontaneity, abstraction and representation.

Mary Lane is an artist and art historian living in Olympia, WA.

## **A Mountainside Studio**

**by Karen Crislip**

Both the serenely aesthetic setting of my Colorado studio and its interior environment are very important to me since I spend a great deal of my life there. I use mostly wool, cotton, and silk fibers in my weaving. Everything in my studio is as natural as possible, from the oak floors, wooden looms, baskets and boxes used for storage, to the cotton lace curtains and the vines decorating the windows. I have a desk looking up the mountainside, a forest setting with trails used frequently by deer and elk.

Space was another important factor I considered in designing my studio. I was able to place windows on all four sides and still incorporate plenty of yarn storage and display space. I built in oversized drawers with a Formica counter and space for a two-drawer file cabinet. Shelves above a portion of the counter accommodate my fiber library, and the space above the lowered bathroom ceiling holds warping boards, rattles and other long objects. I am able to hide looms not currently being used and items such as easels, display panels, etc. in a built-in closet.

The oversized storage drawers hold my accumulated drawings, paintings, lithographs, sketches and cartoons as well as sewing notions, fabric for linings, art and office supplies and, of course, linens for the futon and bathroom.

On an inner wall, I have an old armoire that opens to display skeins and balls of yarn. The armoire also holds instructional materials, a sewing machine, small student looms, empty frames, stretcher bars, etc.

Flexibility was purposely built into my 15" x 30" studio space. An old drafting table can be tilted for designing and then used flat for selecting yarns, weaving on table looms, or finishing woven tapestries.

I work with an apprentice year-round and am able to set up separate, efficient workstations to meet daily needs for both of us. All furniture, except one large eight foot loom, can be easily moved. I have a task chair on rollers so that I can move slowly from one end of my large loom to the other or move quickly between workstations to help my apprentice or a student with a problem.

The natural light is very good. However, I have movable, overhead spotlights on beams as well as halogen lamps for cloudy days and night weaving.

I have used my studio for meetings of fiber artists as well as for studio open houses and cutting-off parties. The futon sofa can become a queen-sized bed for visiting artist/friends and family members who say that they like sleeping surrounded by fiber and art!

My separate workspace on the mountainside provides privacy and enables me to work uninterrupted. There is no phone or computer. I can leave everything and anything exactly where I want to when my workday ends. My studio is my personal creative "home" which I only open and share at special times -- and I have the only key!

## **Two Cutting Off Ceremonies**

Ed. note: *San Francisco Bay area weavers, Nancy Jackson and Tricia Goldberg described their rituals for cutting a tapestry off the loom to the online tapestry list owned by Kathe Todd Hooker, June 2 & 3, 2003.*

**By Nancy Jackson**

Cutting off ceremonies are rooted in gratitude, primarily. Practically speaking, they also provide opportunity to advertise, educate and unveil the hidden artwork. Gratitude, however, is the root and most important part of the event. Because making a tapestry is a lengthy and complex process with many phases and sometimes many weavers involved, it is

fitting to acknowledge the behind-the-scenes support group that allows such amazing work to be accomplished. Husbands, friends, tapestry weavers, other kinds of artists, and publicity people all contribute to making a tapestry possible, but especially the husbands. They do so much and must be thanked. My husband takes on almost all the household chores when I start a large project, such as "The Incarnation Triptych," begun about 18 months ago. What a saint! He deserves an event focused on thanking him.

The traditional cutting off ceremony, as I experienced it repeatedly with Jean-Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie, begins with invitations sent by the weaver or artist. I send about 50 and usually have about 45 responses, which packs my very small home/studio. Over the years, strangers have come to know one another as they come again and again to these unveilings. The events are pot-luck with guests bringing hors d'oeuvres and wine to share with the crowd. I provide champagne for immediately after the cutting moment.

When guests arrive, they "eat, drink and be merry" for about 45 minutes to an hour. Then I call them to the loom where I say a few words about the weaving process (artwork, cartoon interpretation, color selection, warping, winding bobbins, etc.,) and also about the project itself (how it started, perhaps the source of my idea & how it developed). Previous to the event, I have decided on 4 to 5 people who will be asked to cut some of the threads. Following the introductory remarks, I offer my gratitude to these who have been significant in supporting the particular tapestry being cut off. After my remarks are complete, I invite these people one-by-one, to cut threads. My apprentice, Christina, cuts the next to the last threads and I, as the artist, complete the cutting to release the tapestry from the loom. The tapestry is held near the floor for viewing from above (symbolic of birth) and then it is mounted on the wall.

It is hard to relate the power of these moments unless you have experienced such a thing for yourself. Quietness usually follows for a while as the guests view the tapestry and visit quietly about it. In the meantime, the champagne is distributed and then the party begins again and there is much talking and enjoying of food and drink.

I encourage all tapestry weavers to open their home/studios to these events so that many people can come to know what a wonderful thing making a tapestry is.

### **Tricia Goldberg's Cutting Off Party**

I love celebrating, and celebrating rituals, though I don't often have the occasion to. Maybe this is why I love cutting-off parties so much. I have joked that I weave tapestries so I have an excuse for a party.

Last summer, when I was close to completing a large commission of a sunflower, I was so delighted I was almost finished that I began to fantasize the finishing, shipping it off, getting a pleased note from my client, etc. The logical thing was to begin planning the cutting-off party. I was so excited about this big project that I invited dozens of people.

I should explain that I almost always work right up to my deadline, whatever it is, but this was a little extreme. I was asked at the last minute to do extra work with a part-time job, and I had no choice.

Two days before the party I started being a little worried. Soon that worry turned into a full-fledged nightmare feeling of "Oh no, there's nothing to be done." I wove all night before the party, slept one hour, and wove all day except for cleaning and preparing food.

Then, as people began to arrive in the afternoon I kept weaving and cheerfully announced I'd be finished soon. At 10:00 p.m. I accepted the fact that I wasn't going to be done, so I relaxed for a while and went to bed.

I wove all day the next day and a few friends came by in the evening for pizza and a more appropriate, modest party. It was a wonderfully humbling experience, known now as the "non-cutting-off party."

I always have cutting-off celebrations for my students. I take pictures of their work and we toast with wine and refreshments. It is my thank-you to them, and an acknowledgment of their hard, concentrated work.

## Discovering an Ally - Michelle Fricke

by Monique Lehman

Michele Fricke can be found at the center of textile action, busy organizing, lecturing, or publishing. She was the exhibition chair for the Surface Design Association Conferences held in Kansas City in 2000 and 2003 and is the director of education for the organization. She is associate professor of art history at the Kansas City Art Institute where she specializes in the history of crafts and ancient and renaissance art. Thus, Fricke is in a position to influence future generations of art historians and curators who might display less prejudices about showing fiber in major art galleries and museums.

At the 2003 Surface Design Conference held in June, she coordinated over 30 textile exhibits. In the exhibits that she curates she likes to feature artists who take their fiber work to the extreme edge. At one show she paired 6 textile artists with six poets, and created visual poetry.

Not everyone knows that Michele Fricke is also a tapestry artist. Her black and white composition, "Mindscape," shown at the fiber faculty show is intriguing. In this composition she has used a wide variety of techniques. By limiting her weft colors to black, white and gray, she exposes the purity of tapestry. Fricke explores the unlimited possibilities of tapestry without imitating any other art media. The traditionally woven tapestry is very contemporary.

The 30" x 20" weaving is made of 8 narrow strips. Each strip has 12 squares. Every one of the 96 squares has it's own story. There are no repeated patterns in the entire piece. Yet harmony exists in the well balanced composition of positive and negative spaces with equal value.

Fricke's fiber work has been shown in exhibitions across the country and is represented in many private collections. She has written articles for *Fiberarts* magazine, *Surface Design Journal*, and *Ceramics Monthly*. She received KCAI's "Excellence in teaching award." Before coming to KCAI in 1988,

she taught at Northern Illinois University, St. Mary's College, and the University of Nevada. She was co-founder of the Nevada Institute for Contemporary Art.

## Memorial Tapestry Project

<http://www.tapestryart.org/MemorialTapestry/english.htm>

by Monique Lehman

Ed. note: *A little over a year ago, Monique Chmielewska Lehman had the idea to create a tapestry to honor those who were affected by the tragedy of 9-11-01. She set up the Memorial Tapestry web site to solicit tapestry weavers to join in her project. Because her invitation was presented in several languages, she was able to contact tapestry artists all over the world.*

*Weavers were asked to create their designs in a 10" x 10" unit, or multiples of that. The combined units measure 6'x20' but weighs less than 20 pounds. The tapestry is currently at the Soundscape Gallery in Santa Rosa, California, in conjunction with the "Tapestry Today" exhibit sponsored by Tapestry Weavers West. ATA member, Debra Erickson is working on video documentation of the Memorial Tapestry and its artists.*

*Throughout the project, Monique's energy and skill in public relations have been impressive. The individual tapestries may be viewed at the web site listed above. Here is Monique's statement about the project.*

When I was watching the world falling apart on September 11, I started to think as a weaver and a woman, "How can I repair what was done?"

On that tragic day, the focus of my life changed. I no longer saw value in decorating buildings and rich houses. I wanted to find all the weavers in the world to create an artwork together. I wanted to speak with respect for those whose lives were affected by the events of September 11 and to bring back common sense and humanity to the world.

Weaving tapestries is a healing process. I wanted to give this opportunity to speak out to everyone, especially those who never participate in exhibits

because they can't afford the entry fee or don't speak English. I remembered times when my family in Poland had a monthly income of \$30 and I couldn't even imagine participating in any international events.

The response was overwhelming. Eighty artists from Australia, Austria, Argentina, Bulgaria, Canada, England, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, Rumania, Slovenia and the United States are participating in the project.

Every time I received a package I felt more strongly that creating this project was the right thing to do. Some tapestries made me cry. Others brought hope. And still others amazed me with the depth of their concepts. Many artists are famous professionals; others are showing their work for the first time.

So many ideas, so many countries, so many ways to weave. Galleries across the country are sending requests to show the tapestry. My intention is to show it all over the world. I would like everyone to see this tapestry. I stitched the tapestry in groups of 10 so it would be easy to hang at different exhibition spaces.

The first showing of this 6' by 20' tapestry was at the Kansas City Art Institute during the Surface Design Conference June 5-8, 2003.

#### **North American Venues:**

July 5 to August 30, 2003, Soundscape Gallery in Santa Rosa, California.

July 2004, Handweavers Guild of America Convergence in Denver, Colorado.

#### **European Venues:**

December, 2003 Biennale Internazionale dell'arte Contemporanea Florence, Italy,  
<http://www.artestudio.net/casa1.htm>

January – June, 2004, The Tapestry will be shown in Warsaw, Poland at the Art New Media Gallery and the Contemporary Museum of Art, and then during the 11<sup>th</sup> Triennial of Tapestry in Lodz before returning to USA.

## **Where Can You Study Tapestry?**

### **By Priscilla Lynch**

In the United States there are no schools with extensive programs devoted to the study of tapestry. Learning tapestry in this country can therefore become a rather hit or miss endeavor. While degree granting university art and textile departments and craft schools may offer tapestry as a part of their general fiber curriculum, its importance often depends on whether there is a faculty member with a special interest in tapestry.

The HGA web site ([www.weavespindye.org/html/schools.html](http://www.weavespindye.org/html/schools.html)) and All Fiber Arts web site ([www.allfiberarts.com/cs/classes.htm](http://www.allfiberarts.com/cs/classes.htm)) both offer links to many of the non-degree granting craft or art schools. Information on workshops sponsored by local, regional and national conferences can also be found on these web sites.

The ideal way to study tapestry is with a master tapestry weaver or in a school program devoted to tapestry study. Jeanne Bates' web site ([www.revolution.3-cities.com/~abates/meanderings/tapestry.html](http://www.revolution.3-cities.com/~abates/meanderings/tapestry.html)) has links to several master weavers interested in teaching. Unless you are lucky enough to live near an excellent teacher or have the resources to travel for an extended time, this may not be an option for you.

The Winter 2003 ATA newsletter included an article about the TAFE correspondence course offered in Australia that provides a unique opportunity to study tapestry technique and design in great depth. You can check their web site for more details – [www.swtafe.vic.edu.au/](http://www.swtafe.vic.edu.au/)

The ATA Mentoring Program, as presented below, also allows students to study from home. Set up as a correspondence program, the student can work with a master weaver on a chosen topic. I would like to encourage you to consider applying as a student or share your knowledge and experience with students as a mentor. Application details can be found on the ATA web site or by contacting Priscilla Lynch at [jplynch@iserv.net](mailto:jplynch@iserv.net).

Education is a life long endeavor and tapestry weaving with its complex technical and artistic skills to master can be especially daunting. Hopefully some



of the resources presented above can facilitate your quest.

### **Description and Goals for ATA Mentoring Program**

The mentoring program is designed for intermediate tapestry weavers who want to pursue an in depth study of a tapestry topic with guidance and mentoring from a more experienced tapestry weaver. An intermediate weaver is defined as someone who can warp a loom and who has woven several small tapestries or samplers. This is meant to be a self directed and well-defined program of study. Students are encouraged to narrow the range of study so that it can be completed within one year.

To enroll, interested students submit an application form and \$30 administrative fee to the Mentoring Committee Chair. The chair matches the student with a mentor. The student, with guidance from the mentor, decides on the specific course of his/her study. Any expenses incurred - postage, phone calls etc, are the sole responsibility of the student. Mentors are volunteering their valuable time and students need to be considerate of this.

### **Student's Responsibilities**

- 1 A one year time commitment (could be extended by mutual agreement)
- 2 Submit title and description for in-depth well-defined study project
- 3 Prepare a list of realistic goals and objectives to complete in 1 year
- 4 Describe any finished project that you hope to complete
- 5 Propose a timetable for submitting samples, drawings, etc.
- 6 Pay for any expenses incurred during the program
- 7 Submit a final report to the ATA Mentoring Committee

### **Mentor's Responsibilities**

- 1 A one year time commitment (could be extended by mutual agreement)
- 2 Help the student set realistic goals for this 1 year time frame
- 3 Provide direction, support and expertise as the student requires
- 4 Recommend additional sources for information and research

5 Evaluate progress during the course of study by critique

6 Submit a final report to the ATA Mentoring Committee

### **Application for Study**

Submit the following information

Name

Address

Telephone (day and eve)

E-mail

Administrative fee: \$30 check or money order payable to American Tapestry Alliance

1 Describe your tapestry weaving experience - workshops, classes, years weaving, number of completed tapestries

2 What specific tapestry topic would you like to study?

3 Why are you interested in this topic?

Please send the information to

Priscilla Lynch, Committee Chair

PO Box 340

Saugatuck, MI 49453

jplynch@iserv.net

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE SEEKS VOLUNTEERS**

I am looking for volunteers to coordinate and conduct data collection. There are two general areas we would like to research:

1) TAPESTRY IN INSTITUTIONS. The goal of this research is to build a list of tapestries in museums for our web site with links for further information. In addition we would like to establish contact with museum curators to learn about specific tapestry research being carried out in their institution and any role ATA might play in the process.

2) EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING. The goal of this survey is to identify colleges, universities, and craft schools, which offer opportunities for study, teaching and exhibition. In addition, we would like to prepare a list of members (and CV's) who would have an interest in this educational clearinghouse.

The information collected in these programs would be an invaluable resource for our members. Individuals working in their own locale and on their own time schedule could do much of this research. If you have an interest in helping ATA with these important projects, please contact me.

Priscilla Lynch, PO Box 340, Saugatuck, MI 49453,  
(269) 857-5614, [jplynch@iserv.net](mailto:jplynch@iserv.net)

## Exhibits and Reviews

### Fluid Fibers

#### by Tommye McClure Scanlin

“Fluid Fibers: Moving Creations by Southeastern Fiber Artists,” was held at the Jacqueline Casey Hudgens Center for the Arts, Duluth, GA, January 30 through May 15, 2003. The juried exhibition sponsored biennially by the Chattahoochee Handweavers Guild of Atlanta was open to fiber artists in eleven southeastern states and the District of Columbia.

Twenty-four fiber artists from nine states were represented by a variety of fiber works. Selected items ranged in style from traditional hand weaving techniques as in the overshot weaving “Home Again” by Judith Krone, Tucker, GA, to innovative approaches as in the installation “Viaductress” by Erika Lewis, Athens, GA. It was done in hairpin lace technique using plastic tape strips attached to a tall rigid copper frame. Loose ends of the plastic strips blew in the breeze, aided by a small fan.

In addition to the works for the wall in both surface design and weaving, there were several basket forms, four garments and a beaded necklace. Three of the garments were of handwoven fabric, while one was a pieced, quilted, and slashed garment.

Woven tapestry was represented by two works from Pat Williams, Clarkesville, GA, and another by juror Jon Eric Riis called “Black and White.” Riis selected Williams’ tapestry, “The Beginning,” for the First Place Award. The piece is skewed in proportion, with a too-tall woman squeezed, partly kneeling, into a too-small space. One hand braces herself against a wall while tendrils of what seems to represent yarn

drift around, some flying from her hand while others lie, worm-like, on the floor. To the left of the woman is a tall and narrow window through which we see a landscape that holds a full clothesline, a cat, sky and clouds. All but the overly large woman, who stares with crossed eyes and contorted body, seem ordinary. A visual tale is being told here, but is it about the woman or is it about the world beyond the window?

Williams’ second tapestry in the exhibit seems to continue the narrative. Titled “A Good Marriage,” it shows two figures presented frontally, in a formal “portrait” pose. Both woman and man wear similar expressions of crossed eyes and neutral mouth position. Is this couple happy or sad; are they contented or puzzled about their lot in life? The woman wears a green floral patterned garment, as does the woman in “The Beginning,” indicating that this most likely is the same person. Are the women in both tapestries self-portraits? Pat Williams skillfully conceals the answer while at the same time raises questions about the status quo in marriage, in the home, in the everyday tasks like doing laundry.

When asked to comment about the exhibit Riis said “...I wish there had been more entries (and) the slides, too, were not always the best. I know there were a few ‘odd’ pieces in the show, but I wanted to show some diversity and foster the beginning fiber artists.”

Riis exhibited a five panel tapestry. In a review of the exhibit for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Pamela Blume Leonard states: “The most provocative piece in the show is Riis’ own ‘Black and White.’ ...The point...is that black and white are melding in our society--and not just as a matter of race. Previously fixed ideas are upended by new ideas or discoveries.” (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Friday, February 28, 2003)

Typical of Riis’ tapestries, “Black and White,” is a remarkable technical tour de force. Five small panels, 17" x 12" each, hang side by side making a long, narrow work. Images of a head and face “morph” from a white man on black ground through three transitional combinations of features and contrasts to a black man on white ground. I was drawn to the piece upon entering the gallery and the strength of the concept, the image, and his technical ability certainly show a master artist and craftsman at work. (Ed note: *The tapestry is now on display in*

*Frankfurt, Germany in the exhibit "Body Language: 9th Triennial for Form and Content - USA and Germany." It will open in New York City in November.)*

His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally for over two decades. Jon Eric Riis has recently been the focus of articles in the summer 2003 issue of Fiberarts Magazine and the spring 2003 Surface Design Journal.

Chattahoochee Handweavers Guild has a web site at www.chgweb.com, and exhibits and other activities of the guild are listed on the site. The next regional juried exhibit sponsored by CHG will be in 2005 and I would hope to see even more tapestries the next time around--as well as the ATA Award presented to one.

**Karen Benjamin receives ATA Award**

Karen Benjamin was awarded a year’s membership in ATA for her tapestry “Checkerboard Moon” at the “Fiber Celebrated 2003” exhibit held in conjunction with the Intermountain Weavers Conference in Prescott, AZ in July. The exhibit, juried by Mary Dietrich, Diane Gilbert, and Barbara Kiger, was open to fiber artist throughout the United States. Congratulations, Karen.

**ATA volunteers introduced - Director of Member Services, Alex Friedman**

I fell into tapestry weaving by accident. I was looking for a job in NYC that would allow me to exercise my new passion for weaving. I found Michelle Lester who was seeking weavers to help her execute a huge commission for Pan Am to make tapestries for a new fleet of 747s. It was exciting to be part of a major project but weaving for someone else was eventually no longer a novelty.

I set up my own studio which has been part of my life where ever I have lived. With eight moves to date, uprooting has been a challenge. But I have met many weavers and feel globally connected.

ATA has long been one of the threads of my life and now that the kids are grown, I decided this was the time to offer something back. ATA has big ideas and I hope I can begin to help the organization to achieve them.

**Treasurer, Amy Lynn Kropitz (nee Fincher)**

In the process of exploring sculptural basketry weaving, I decided early last year that I needed a loom. I made a small frame loom, and loved weaving on it. From there, I made a rather large loom and since then have worked on tapestries only. My first 'real' piece was for Monique's Memorial Tapestry Project.

After reading about the tapestry program at Southwest Institute of TAFE on the tapestry list and in the ATA newsletter, I took the leap and joined up. I am now weaving homework assignments.

I am honored to have been offered the Treasurer position for American Tapestry Alliance, and glad I could accept it. This position also includes a seat on the Board of Directors. From what I have seen so far, ATA is in an exciting phase of initiating many new programs which will benefit its members and bring public awareness to the tapestry field. It is an inspiring time to be a volunteer!

I have worked in finance and accounting for many years. I currently hold a Controller position at one of the few remaining ‘dot-com’ companies in the San Francisco Bay Area. My previous background includes finance positions at San Diego State University and the American Red Cross. I do hope that my past experience can be used to help expand ATA into many new directions.

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ATA would like to thank the following members who made financial contributions in addition to their membership dues in fiscal year 2003. Your support makes a difference and is deeply appreciated.

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## ATA: Who Are We?

### By Ellen Ramsey, Membership Chair

A recent member survey conducted via email sought to answer this burning question: What would a statistical profile of a typical ATA member look like? We had some hunches, but wanted something more definitive. Our profile results tell us that the average ATA member is a 50 something woman, an advanced professional tapestry artist who has been weaving tapestry for twenty or more years, who exhibits and sells her work, but does not seek commissions or teach tapestry to others. Do you fit the profile?

With only 53 surveys returned out of 200 sent, the following results are certainly biased in some ways, but it is a place to begin. These members did take advantage of this forum to voice important opinions and suggestions that will certainly help to shape our organization in the coming months. (Thank you!!)

<u>How long have you been a member of ATA?</u>	<u>Self-assessed skill level:</u>		
Less than 2 years 33%	Beginner 11%	Work outside studio	Y 32% N 68%
About 5 years 37%	Intermediate 39%	In another field?	
About 10 years 10%	Advanced/Master 50%	Gallery representation?	Y 12% N 88%
About 15 years 10%	<u>How learned tapestry (all answered a combination of more than one)</u>	Seek commissions?	Y 35% N 65%
20 or more years 10%	Workshops 74%	Have work in collections?	Y 64% N 36%
<u>Involvement:</u>	Self taught 41%	Teach tapestry to others? (mostly Workshops)	Y 31% N 69%
Professional 52%	Art or fiber degree 28%		
Hobbyists 31%	Yrs. of private inst 17%	Have your own website? (but many "will soon")	Y 24% N 76%
Students 12%	<u>Age?</u>	Gender?	M 3% F 97%
Other 5%	20-29 0%	(The actual percentage of men is closer to 5%)	
<u>Number of years in field</u>	30-39 4%		
Less than two 8%	40-49 28%		
Approx. five 30%	50-59 43%		
Approx. ten 8%	60-69 20%		
Approx. fifteen 8%	70+ 5%		
Approx. twenty 28%			
Thirty or more 15%			

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**DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES**  
TreasurerAlex Friedman\*  
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[Alfincher@Yahoo.com](mailto:Alfincher@Yahoo.com)**CHAIR Membership**  
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[clauggo@infosel.net.mx](mailto:clauggo@infosel.net.mx)  
[triciagold@express56.com](mailto:triciagold@express56.com)  
[rugweaver@aol.com](mailto:rugweaver@aol.com)  
[hartsus@aol.com](mailto:hartsus@aol.com)  
[kcrislip@bigplanet.com](mailto:kcrislip@bigplanet.com)**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**Proofreader  
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Ellen Ramsey  
Hester Reik  
Lynn Heglar[LERees@aol.com](mailto:LERees@aol.com)  
[actran@islandnet.com](mailto:actran@islandnet.com)  
[ew.ramsey@comcast.net](mailto:ew.ramsey@comcast.net)  
[drhester@earthlink.net](mailto:drhester@earthlink.net)  
[kamco@seanet.com](mailto:kamco@seanet.com)**DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

Christine Laffer\*

[claffer@christinelaffer.com](mailto:claffer@christinelaffer.com)**Graphic Designer & Layout Editor**

Elinor Steele

[esteele@gmavt.net](mailto:esteele@gmavt.net)**WEBMISTRESS**Web gallery  
Web editorJeanne Bates  
Michael Rohde  
Christine Laffer[aBates@3-cities.com](mailto:aBates@3-cities.com)  
[rugweaver@aol.com](mailto:rugweaver@aol.com)  
[claffer@christinelaffer.com](mailto:claffer@christinelaffer.com)**CHAIR Planning**

Anne McGinn

[apmcginn@aol.com](mailto:apmcginn@aol.com)**CHAIR Promotions**

Promotions research

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Barbara Heller\*[JGWeaver@aol.com](mailto:JGWeaver@aol.com)  
[bheller@infinet.net](mailto:bheller@infinet.net)

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## New and Renewing Members-----

Ann Arndt 1448 NHeights Lane Sheridan.WY 82801, 307 672-6639 <a href="mailto:aarndt@rcn.com">aarndt@rcn.com</a>	Vicki Ehlers 1015 110th Ave Roberts, WI 54023 715 749-3119 <a href="mailto:vehlers@scc.k12.wi.us">vehlers@scc.k12.wi.us</a>	88811-570 Criciuma S.C., Brazil, 48-4337737 <a href="mailto:eohulse@zipmail.com.br">eohulse@zipmail.com.br</a>	<a href="mailto:gunnel_oresjo@qwest.net">gunnel_oresjo@qwest.net</a>	Rialto, CA 92377 909 820-3515 <a href="mailto:jctapestry@earthlink.net">jctapestry@earthlink.net</a>
Anne Berg 42 Hall St, #3 Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 617 524-4470 <a href="mailto:anne@stfrancishouse.org">anne@stfrancishouse.org</a>	Linda RFinkelstein 8540 E McDowell No 114 Mesa, AZ 85207	Karen Hust, 1170 Prospect Ave Hartford, CT 06105-1124 860 231-9955 <a href="mailto:khust1@attbi.com">khust1@attbi.com</a>	Barbara GRichards 2160 Devil's Gulch Rd Estes Park, CO, 80517- 9713 970 577-9728 <a href="mailto:barbrichards@airbits.com">barbrichards@airbits.com</a>	Marilyn Whitney 1127 I St., Salida, CO 81201 719 539-6317 <a href="mailto:marilyn627@chaffee.net">marilyn627@chaffee.net</a>
Traudi Bestler 16026 Excelsior Blvd. Minnetonka, MN 55345 952 974-3798 <a href="mailto:bestler@aol.com">bestler@aol.com</a>	Carole Greene 882 Brent Drive Cupertino, CA 95014 408 973-0453 <a href="mailto:fibers@pacbell.net">fibers@pacbell.net</a>	Patty Keubker Johnson 101 WASH St POB250 Roberts WI 54023-0250 715 749-3373 <a href="mailto:pjohnson@presenter.com">pjohnson@presenter.com</a>	Tamar Shadur 7 Eaton Ct Amherst, MA 01002-2827 413 256-3432 <a href="mailto:tamarshadur@hotmail.com">tamarshadur@hotmail.com</a>	Frances AWilliamson P.O.Box 11429, Olympia, WA 98508 360 754 6500 <a href="mailto:fawinoly@aol.com">fawinoly@aol.com</a>
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Marit Cranmer P.O.Box 366 Conway, MA 01341 413 369-4435 <a href="mailto:maritcr@cs.com">maritcr@cs.com</a>	Francine Houston 39 Paulander Dr #28 Kitchener, ON N2M 5K6, Canada, <a href="mailto:ladyoftara@rogers.com">ladyoftara@rogers.com</a>	Jill Nicholson 788 ENew York Dr Altadena, CA 91001 <a href="mailto:jenworks@pacbell.net">jenworks@pacbell.net</a>	Alta Turner P.O.Box 358 New Baltimore, NY 12124  518 756-2763 <a href="mailto:altaturner@earthlink.net">altaturner@earthlink.net</a>	Victoria Zacek 7982 Blue Rd, Barneveld, NY 13304 315 896-2969 <a href="mailto:vicknit@aol.com">vicknit@aol.com</a>
	Elke Hulse RUA Presidente Kennedy 650/201	Gunnel Oresjo 2217 Scotch Pine Ct Loveland, CO 80538 970 667-8206	Jeanne Walker 1285 W.Cheshire St	

## Address Changes -----

Marcia Ellis 5565 Idlewood Rd Santa Rosa, CA 95404 707 539-0115 <a href="mailto:mellis@sonic.net">mellis@sonic.net</a>	Bette Ferguson 6 Enebra Pl Santa Fe, NM 87508 505 466-3890	Mary Liggitt 703 E Desert Jewel Drive, Cottonwood, AZ 86326 928 634-7983	Jerome Regnier phone: 413 586 2345	2801 Powder Point Rd Nanose Bay, BC V9P 9E9 Canada 250 468-2308
Karen Flesvig Chu 1003 SBriarwood Rd Carbondale, IL 62901 618 457-2676	Susan Lawson, P O Box 6565, Tucson, AZ 85728-5657	Melinda Lowrey 43 Vineyard Circle Sonoma, CA 95476 707 935-3411	Judy Schuster 2020 Avon Ave, Cambria, CA 93428  Linda Wallace	

## E-mail Address Changes -----

Liev Beuten-Schellekensy okabeuten@hotmail.com	Kari Guddal kariguddal@hotmail.com	Allison Judge fiberist@sbcglobal.net	Jon Eric Riis <a href="mailto:Riisjon@Bellsouth.net">Riisjon@Bellsouth.net</a>	Becky Stevens db.stevens2@verizon.net
Martha Christian ddmchristian@msn.com	Birgitta Hallberg birgitta.hallberg@mail.dk	Jan Landrum HJLL@earthlink.net	Patricia Sindewald psindewald@cox.net	Beverly JW Weaver BWeaver@LRS.com
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Sylvia J Everett WTable@bellsouth.net	Kathe Todd Hooker Spider472@comcast.net	Ellen Ramsey ew.ramsey@comcast.net	Elinor Steele esteele@gmavt.net	



## Guidelines for submitting articles to Tapestry Topics:

Fall, 2003 issue will focus on Regional Tapestry Groups. Deadline for submissions: October 15, 2003

**Deadline for Articles:** October 15, January 15, April 15, July 15

**Send material to:** Linda Rees, Newsletter Editor

Via e-mail to: LERees@aol.com

Do not send as attachments, especially photos without prior approval from editor

Photographs and Articles on CD, Zip drive or typed via US mail to:

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**Please include photographer credits with all images.**

### Feature Articles:

Preferred maximum length is 2000 words. Shorter articles are very acceptable. An e-mail or phone call to the editor at any stage of the writing is welcomed and advisable if you are unsure about fitting the guidelines. All submissions should be typed and double spaced. Reference material should be documented in a bibliography or end notes.

Of most importance is to provide an informative account that is easily read and accurate. All articles will be subject to editing for size requirements and coherency if necessary, although it is our preference to present the material as submitted.

Photographs and illustrations will appear in black and white but it is OK to submit color photos or slides. Please check with the editor before submitting images electronically. Scanned images should be at 300 dpi.

### Exhibition Reviews:

Exhibition reviews will generally be shorter than feature articles Preferred maximum length is 1000 words.

The reviewer should present a clear picture of what the viewer experiences. Give accurate information about the gallery including name and location. Also, give details about the exhibit as to number of artists included, number and general size of the work, and a general descriptive sense of the style and character of the work. What strikes the viewer most immediately? If an artist's statement is available it might be relevant to include a brief quote or general synopsis of the rationale for the show. Mention if the exhibit has a catalog. Consider what you would like to have described to you if you could not be there.

In the process of visiting the exhibit, make sure to thank the gallery staff, especially the owner if available, for having the show. Mention to them that the exhibit is being reviewed for the newsletter. Find out if they have many fiber exhibits and what the public's response to this showing is.

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Effective January 1, 2004 ATA membership dues will increase to \$35 per year for both US *and* international members Dues will be uniform worldwide.

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