



Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

www.americantapestryalliance.org

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Michelle Lester at the loom with her dog, probably mid 1970s.

Letter from the Directors

By Alex Friedman and Christine Laffer

Spring is in the air and we hope you have been weaving away in preparation for the next Biennial competition, but more about that later. For us the last few months have been a time of reviewing our mission and making decision about ATA's forward plans. We have asked Joan Griffin and Tommye Scanlin to review the 2002 Red Book, our strategic plan for the organization. You have also filled out a questionnaire and we can report that for the most part ATA is fulfilling the needs you have indicated, although we had only 22 returns. There were many good comments and suggestions about improving what we do, and there were a few criticisms as well. We appreciate all your responses. The Board will meet for a retreat in April to consider some of these ideas. In many cases we are limited in what we can offer by the number of volunteers available to help us. If you want to be part of a great team, do let us know about your interest.

We currently have a membership campaign underway as you will see by the insert. There are great prizes to be won by those who recruit the most members at all levels. If you did not receive an insert or would like more information, please contact Ellen Ramsey ew.ramsey@comcast.net

The **American Tapestry Biennial 5** exhibit in Guild, New Hampshire continued to draw people and was extended an extra 2 weeks to the 23rd of January 2005. It has been very exciting to have such a long exhibit and the reviews have

continued...

been very positive. At last report, over 4500 people saw it and many were very excited about the artwork.

On the 26th of March ATB5 will open at its final venue, the Rochester Art Center in Rochester, MN. The reception will be on April 2 with Susan Iverson giving the keynote lecture. There will also be a gallery tour with Joanna Foslien. We hope that many of you will plan to be there and bring your family and friends to enjoy it. If you miss this venue there is still the option of purchasing a catalog, available on line or from Kathe Todd Hooker at spider472@comcast.net.

For those of you with computer access, we hope the newly launched monthly eNews is a welcomed service to keep you informed. It is sent out at the start of each month with news and information that is more time sensitive than the newsletter.

Another new project that has been launched is an online exhibit. The first one is a joint exhibition "*FindingHome@tapestry.ca/au.*" curated by Linda Wallace in Canada and Dorothy Clews in Australia. It can be viewed on our web site, american-tapestryalliance.org under 'Exhibitions'. Our plan is to offer 3 or 4 web exhibits a year. The guidelines for these events are posted at the same site and we welcome curatorial proposals. We are excited by the possibilities of offering more ways to exhibit. It is not the same as seeing a live exhibit but is a good way to broaden the number of tapestries on view.

Plans are underway for the next American Tapestry Biennial (ATB6), which will open at the Urban Institute of Contemporary Arts in Grand Rapids, Michigan in conjunction with events at Convergence 2006. The two jurors will be Lotus Stack, Curator of the Textile Department of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and Shelly Goldsmith, Senior Lecturer, Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, England, and winner of the coveted Jerwood Applied Art Prize in textiles. Entry forms and guidelines are available on the website and from Peggy Strang, the exhibition Chair at frenchcreekfiber@comcast.net. This year we are allowing three entries but only up to two will be accepted.

Looking ahead, American Tapestry Alliance will

be 25 years old in 2007! We would like to plan a major event to mark the occasion. If you have a suggestion and would like to get involved, please contact Alex at AQSF@aol.com

Guest Editor Next Issue!



Micala Sidore

Micala Sidore will be our guest editor for the upcoming Summer issue of *Tapestry Topics*. She has selected "**Aesthetic Influences**," as the theme for the April 15th deadline. Micala explains below.

To tapestry weavers: Our conversations tend to center on questions of technique--but what about aesthetics? For the next issue of *ATA Tapestry Topics* (deadline: April 15th) I am looking for state-

ments, 200-750 words, about a particular tapestry, historical or contemporary, which has affected your work. How? Why? Please offer a reference for where this can be seen--what museum, book, catalog, web site, or...

I have a specific tapestry that I will talk about in the issue I edit. I will also print as many of your statements as possible, except where space considerations intervene. Feel free to email me with questions: Micala@HawleyStreet.com and be sure to put ATA in the SUBJECT LINE, or snail mail me at the address below.

Thanks,
Micala Sidore
Hawley Street Tapestry Studio
19C Hawley Street
Northampton, MA 01060 USA

Micala has maintained a high profile in the tapestry community for many years, has exhibited

widely, and served on the Handweavers Guild of America Board of Directors (elected 1997-2000, president 1999-2000). She has written over 35 articles since 1991 for a variety of periodicals such as *Fiberarts*, *Handwerken Zonder Grenzen*, *Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot*, the ITNET newsletter, and *Textilforum*. She has briefly described her background:

In 1979 I completed my first tapestry. Between 1984 and 1987 I interned at the Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins in Paris, obtaining a solid foundation in the techniques and aesthetics of traditional French tapestry. (I returned to les Gobelins for 3 months in 2002.) In 1988, at their request, I co-represented the studios at the International Tapestry Symposium in Melbourne, Australia. After Melbourne, I established the Hawley Street Tapestry Studio. Here I develop cartoons, weave tapestries, and give workshops. I have also invented and patented the TraveLoom®, a portable tapestry frame loom. The studio also serves as a resource center with a rich collection of books, slides, magazines, postcards and catalogues for visitors and students who wish to browse.

We can all look forward to the interesting thematic issue to come. Remember to send your submissions to Micala Sidore.

In this issue

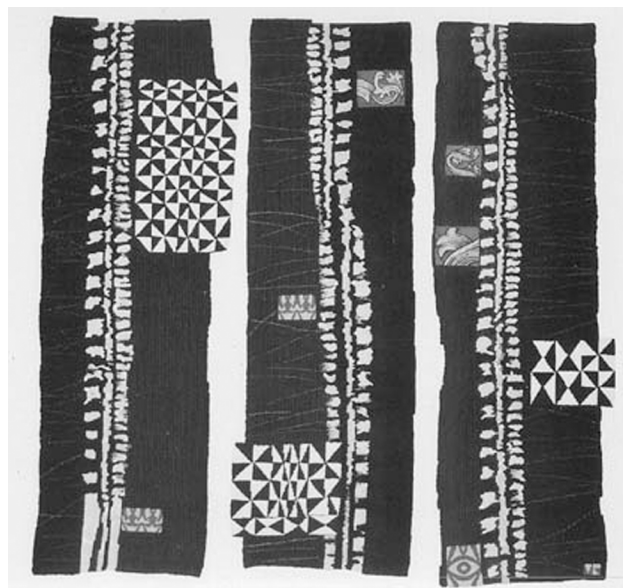
By Linda Rees

Responses to the Osinski Commentary: Only two responses came to my attention regarding the letters originally addressed to Monique Lehman about Thomas Osinski's remarks in the ATB5 catalog. Both were essentially supporting the notion that it is healthy for us to hear critical, as well as positive commentary. Here is one. Although it is directed more to the Larry Knowles review, it is also a vote in support for Osinski's position.

I feel compelled to respond to Larry Knowles "Self Worth and Self Knowledge: Reflections on ATB5" in the last newsletter. It was the best and most refreshing viewpoint I've read in a mighty long time. Right on Mr. Knowles! The article certainly got me thinking

about art and tapestry-as-art and beige-wall pieces. It made me laugh too. Wish all articles did as much. Lynn Heglar

About the Authors: This issue of *Tapestry Topics* has many articles written by non-weavers and weavers unfamiliar to most of our readers. **Nell Znamierowski** had a 50 year retrospective exhibit of her tapestries and other fiber art at the "Handweaving Museum and Art Center" in Clayton, New York, in 2001. Her article about Michelle Lester is a much-needed documentation of the prolific designer/weaver's career. **Warren Feeney** is the director of the Centre of Contemporary Art in Christchurch, New Zealand. His article about collaborations is followed by Marilyn Rea-Menzies commentary about her collaboration with other established New Zealand artists.



Marilyn Rea-Menzies. "Living in the South Pacific," 3 panels each 12" x 40" (30 x 100cm), 1995-1996 Design Concept: Michael Reed. Setts: 10epi, 5epi, the small inserts 20epi Cotton warp, wool, linen, cottolin weft. (See article p.9)

Have you ever wished that just once a reference to tapestry were really about tapestry, not just a metaphor about life or an allusion, perhaps to some complicated city map? Well, **Malcolm D. Evans**, a former public school teacher and administrator for thirty-six years, has done just that in a paper originally presented to educators. He uses an actual tapestry by Joanna Foslien to illustrate his observations. (Her tapestries have been in ATB1, 2, & 4.) Evans lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota with his wife Grace Davis Evans, a weaver and writer of icons

(Producing icons involves text in the form of poems and prayers as well as painting). He is the author of *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education: The Seamless Coat of Learning*, 1998, and editor, with George Allan, of *A Different 3Rs for Education: Reason, Relationality, and Rhythm*, forthcoming.

Courtney Ann Shaw, Ph.D. is currently Vertebrate Zoology Librarian/Senior Reference Librarian at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries in Washington, D.C. Tapestry weavers know her as curator of a major exhibit of contemporary tapestries, the 1989 exhibit "American Tapestry Weaving Since the 1930s and its European Roots" and her 1992 Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Maryland, *The Rise of the Artist/Weaver : Tapestry Weaving in the United States from 1930-1990*.

Mary Dieterich is familiar to readers as a tapestry artist specializing in silk miniatures. She served

as a juror for ATB3 and as a guest curator, specializing in ethnographic textiles, for the Heard Museum in Phoenix and Tempe, Arizona. She has been active in the Studio Artists Program in the Tempe Elementary Schools for the past four years, dedicated to providing a much-needed sampling of art education. **Lynn Mayne** is a member of Tapestry Weavers South (TWS) and the Tapestry Artists of Sarasota (TAOS) group. Her "Allergy Sufferers" is in the *Fiberarts Design Book 7*. She divides her time between Petoskey, Michigan and Sarasota, Florida and has written previously for Tapestry Topics. As for myself, I continue to enjoy finding out and writing about other artists who have work in the current ATB5 exhibit, such as Judy Ness. Recently, I was able to see her work in an exhibit in Eugene, Oregon where she lives. I encourage readers with opportunities to view the work of other tapestry weavers to share their observations with us.

SOFA 2004

By Christine Laffer

SOFA 2004 (Sculptural Objects and Functional Art Expo) in Chicago absolutely gave me a huge amount of raw information for where tapestry stands in the art world today. This exposition is entirely focused on giving commercial fine craft galleries the spotlight they crave. Competing with them are several national galleries present through the support of their governments. No museums or other types of non-profit or alternative spaces exhibit here.

Galleries pay for these booths and they relish the crowds and attention that SOFA offers in exchange.

Every booth was beautifully lit, the floor was carpeted, and the walls were custom painted. The galleries prided themselves on the way their booths looked and the excellence of the work they represented.

The attendance reached a record 34,000 during the three days that SOFA was open to the public this past November. Gallery owners were present all day long and were out there on the floor to shake hands and pull in new clients. Thursday night's opening event was touted as their best night ever -- lots of people, high energy, and good sales.

The good news is that fiber has improved its standing in this arena. About 18% of the galleries carried some form of textile art (17 out of 92 galleries). Prices for fiber art have improved, at least as compared to four or five years ago (running US\$2,500 to US\$6,000 for small to medium sized works, several artists were asking US\$10,000 and one or two US\$50,000).

Fiber had good visibility (occupying some choice spots). Several people attributed improvements in the status of fiber to the hard work done by galleries over the past few years. Snyderman-Works Gallery went "all-fiber" two years ago and made an impression on collectors, as has browngrotta Gallery. The organization, Friends of Fiber Art International, has made an impact by bringing fiber art collectors to SOFA through events and lectures.



ATA members, Helga Berry and Christine Laffer, captured after SOFA has ended. They are flanked by Joe Morton, Marilyn Murphy and Sunita Patterson of Fiberarts to their right and artist/friends of David Johnson on the right.

Michelle Lester (1942-2002) - A Personal Remembrance

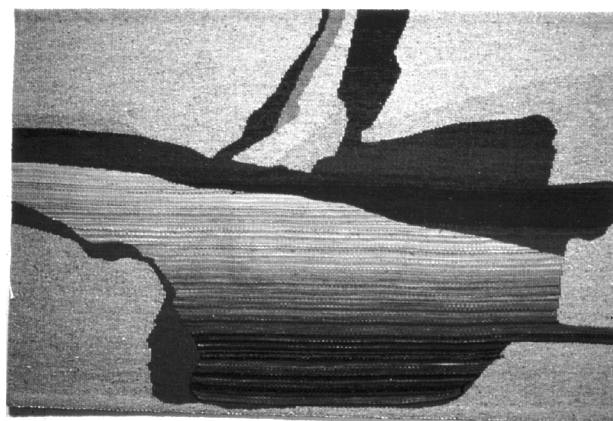
By Nell Znamierowski

Artists usually seek recognition or affirmation. Rare is the artist who does not announce in one way or another the status of the work they are involved in. The artist passes from the scene and if they are lucky, their work is posthumously recognized. Most often it too passes into limbo. When tapestry artist Michelle Lester died unexpectedly on October 2, 2002, I wrote a short obituary to place in all the weaving and fiber-related publications. In most cases I had to explain to the editors who she was. It is amazing, considering that she produced well over four hundred commissioned tapestries for corporate and home interiors, and maintained a New York City studio for about 30 years, with a number of weavers working for her.

Michelle Lester was an extraordinarily gifted artist who used the watercolor medium to render her ideas for tapestry designs. She faithfully transferred the spontaneity and immediacy of watercolor techniques to a woven format. Nature was a major theme for her. Paintings and tapestries were of flowers, trees, canyons, streams, beaches, scenes in all seasons - sometimes realistic, more often impressionistic or even abstract.

Color was an important feature in making her tapestries easily understood and liked by all the clients she worked with. Michelle's color palette played upon subtle nuances that perhaps were not seen by the ordinary eye but that were obvious to her. Unusual color combinations and a large variety of colors were her trademarks. Although she maintained a reserve stock of commercially dyed wool, to get what she wanted she dyed most of the yarn, using 100% wool with metallic and silk embellishments.

Michelle did her tapestry sketches in the relatively smallish standard watercolor paper size. These in themselves were finished works that could be mounted and put on exhibition as, indeed, late in her career they were. She transposed these sketches into tapestries ranging up to 30 feet long, with most falling in a mid range of 6 to 10 feet in length. Her corporate clients included Nieman Marcus (Los Vegas and Dallas), 3M Company (Washington, DC), Prudential Insurance (Georgia), Southwest Bell (Houston), Sheraton Grande Tokyo (Japan), Bankera Trust (New York), Honeywell, Inc., (Colorado), NYAS Medical Center (Saudi Arabia), Citicorp (New York City) and the list goes on. Her tapestries went into churches, banks, department stores, foundations, offices, newspaper buildings, hotels, private clubs, oil and chemical companies, tobacco conglomerates, industrial and automotive corporations, hospitals and medical centers, utility firms, marketing and advertising offices, financial and insurance companies. Add to all this the many worldwide commissions she did for private homes and the list of works is truly impressive.



Michelle Lester, "Ako Nights," 4' x 6'

continued...

A commission wasn't always one tapestry. IBM alone purchased 32 tapestries for its New York, New Jersey, North Carolina and Florida locations. Her earliest, and also her largest commission, was for Pan Am, 300 tapestries for the bulkheads of its planes. It was a convincing factor that she could make a living as a tapestry weaver. The design and

mended her for a similar position at the Fashion Institute of Technology. She was a gifted teacher who gave generously of her time and knowledge and in turn, the students gave her devotion and admiration. Some of them became "Michelle Groupies" who followed her workshops and exhibitions as well as worked in her studio.



Michelle Lester, "Canyon Break," 4' x 8', 1987

color palette was not her usual one but what was needed to fit into their overall decorating scheme. I seem to recall something abstract in round forms (a sun perhaps) in bright blue and red - so different from relaxing nature. However, from then on it was her designs and colors that got the commissions.

I first met Michelle in the late 1960s at a New York State craft fair in Ithaca, New York, where she was exhibiting flat-weave rugs. She was not long out of school with a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art in her native city, and an MFA in Design from Syracuse University. Michelle had been teaching in various colleges in the Finger Lakes region but she and her husband - also an artist, wanted to come to New York City to try their luck as artists there. The move happened around 1969 or 1970 and they settled into a loft on 6th Avenue that became home and studio. It was a big space that soon filled with looms as well as drawing tables and all sorts of art related paraphernalia. I hired Michelle to teach weaving at the Brooklyn Museum Art School (now closed) and later recom-

During this early period she kept weaving innovative flat-weave rugs with pile inserts, or leather weft and pile. At some point she segued into tapestries and by the mid 1970s the work that appeared in exhibitions was all tapestry. These first tapestries were of the earth strata and are semi-abstract but employ the color variety she became noted for. Often the ideas were based on the mesas and arroyos of the Southwest. Sketching nature as she traveled became a steady supply of designs for her.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Michelle's tapestries were part of many group shows and also solo exhibits in leading fiber galleries such as Hadler/Rodriquez (1977, 1978) and Modern Master Tapestries (1983) in New York City. She also had one person exhibitions in other venues such as Taos, Santa Fe, Kansas City, and Los Angeles. Commissions were coming in steadily so this necessitated hiring weavers and finding more space (particularly for the Pan Am project which took four and a half years to complete). There was a move to a much larger studio overlooking the Lincoln Tunnel and the Hudson River.

All was on an upward swing when the marriage began to falter. As it was dissolved, Michelle consolidated her resources and moved to a smaller studio home on West 17th Street, between 5th and 6th Avenue. She had custom-built looms installed. The largest one consisted of thick metal bars, nails in the floor and a scaffold that the weavers sat on. The platform was raised up as the weaving progressed. It was twelve feet wide. Most of the time she employed five weavers who she had specially

trained. When additional help was needed she used the "groupies" or student interns who came in and out, working for short periods of time. This became her place of most productivity. The commissions kept coming, thanks to her very good agents and the lure of Michelle's designs. Somehow, she found time to do lectures and workshops and some longer teaching commitments.

In 1988 I saw a painting by Michelle in the *American Artist* magazine, "*Watercolor Today '88*". It was also on exhibit at The French Culinary Institute in NYC. It was a beauty, and made me think that Michelle could have another successful career as a watercolor artist rather than using this as a vehicle for her tapestry designs. To a certain extent, she was already moving in the direction of paint by doing designs for fashion and home furnishing textiles, ceramics and fine china. In the 1990s the flow of commissions began to ebb a little and as it did, Michelle increased her commitment to painted designs by doing greeting cards, advertising, book illustrations and interior design renderings. She had begun to explore and study Chinese brushwork as a result of an earlier trip to Thailand. As she went further with this study, her painting flowed ever looser and this quick, sure stroke became evident in her tapestries.

Every minute of Michelle's life seemed to be devoted to artwork of one type or another. She had the necessity for it (to maintain a studio and staff in New York City is not cheap) and the energy. Those who knew or met her were amazed at her vitality. She was a short person who bubbled with life and ideas. I always thought of her as being so full of energy that she was in perpetual motion. She found a release of energy through motion by taking tap and ballroom dancing weekly at a dance studio, enabling her to keep up techniques learned in childhood.

This period of high activity left little time or thought to communicate with editors or magazines so they would know of her enormous output of commissions. Little by little, an artist slips below the radar. There was also another matter that took top priority in Michelle's life. Her grandmother,

mother and sister had all died of breast cancer and she was afflicted too. After many years and many operations, she appeared to be well. Through all of this she kept going and the studio kept producing.

Michelle so loved nature that she decided in the late 1990s to move to the country to a rather isolated locale in Beacon Hill, New York. In some ways it was not a wise move - a financial burden to keep up a car and a house that needed repair; a career misstep that isolated her even more from the networking of the big city. She claimed to like the isolation since she was a "loner" and this gave her the time to devote to her painting and designs. Soon she was making inroads into the art community of the area and nearby cities. She was teaching painting and design courses at Marist College and Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie, NY. She taught weaving and tapestry in workshops. She finished two large tapestries for the tobacco firm, Lorillard and was still going to workshops in Chinese brush painting.



Michelle Lester, "Pink Crocus," detail, 54" x 84", 1987

All this came to an end on October 2, 2002, when Michelle died at the age of sixty, of undiagnosed liver failure. Her premature death brought to an end the life of a woman who was totally dedicated to her art, and who managed to support herself through her art - whether weaving, designing, or teaching. I hope this remembrance will leave an imprint on the fiber community where her work is unfortunately so little known.

Recollections of Michelle

By Alex Friedman

I worked for Michelle for 1 1/2 years. I knew nothing about tapestry at the time but loved weaving. She was a somewhat vague teacher and I suspect had never had training herself. For me, it was trial and error. Although I only worked for her a short time, I felt I knew her well as she shared her living space with the studio. It was hardly very private and probably contributed to her failing marriage. (Her husband was off in a small corner doing his artwork when he was around. He was a truck driver to make a living. He had a lot of talent and was a good guy but lived rather in her shadow.) She was prolific and set a goal to weave 300 tapestries. Many of the exciting ones were very small and made of silk. I often wondered what happened to them.



Michelle Lester, "Summer," detail, probably 30' x 10', 1986 (Lincoln Properties, Morriston, NJ)

When I was there, November '74 (?) to Feb '76, she had a huge commission to weave tapestry for the new Pan Am 747s. There were 222 tapestries in the project, 37 planes with 6 tapestries apiece, four for the bulkhead in the first class cabins and one for each movie screen cover. I recall there was a further commission but I was no longer in her studio for that period. The designs for the first commission were made by Pan Am without knowing what medium they would be executed in. It was a rendering of the white sails of a clipper ship (the origins of the Pan Am Company.) against the blue sky with a two-tone sun and embroidered rigging over the sails. This imagery was for the four shaped tapestries that covered the first class bulkheads. The two other smaller pieces were also pre-designed. We called one 'Lorna Doone' because it reminded us of the cookies. The second one was a clipper ship against a colorful rainbow design.

The project included dying the yarns, weaving the pieces and then adding embroidered parts to finish the design. The blue sky was a major component of the tapestries. Michelle dyed most of the yarn for this and as time went on she was less interested in matching the batch color. The later dye lots were darker and showed some striation. Each was mounted on a board and had to be fire proofed, which caused a considerable amount of shrinkage until we started making them larger in anticipation. Four of us worked on the commissions for a year and a half, and it became very interesting to see how familiarity made it much faster to weave. We all worked on all the designs to keep fresh and prevent boredom. Each tapestry seemed to develop its own set of issues and personality. The camaraderie of the studio was wonderful. (Michelle enjoyed her tap dancing lessons and would demonstrate for us if we egged her on!)

After that project she had a series of smaller commissions and then had a show for which she designed the silk pieces. She did little weaving as time went on except when she had an important commission and then she would work all night.

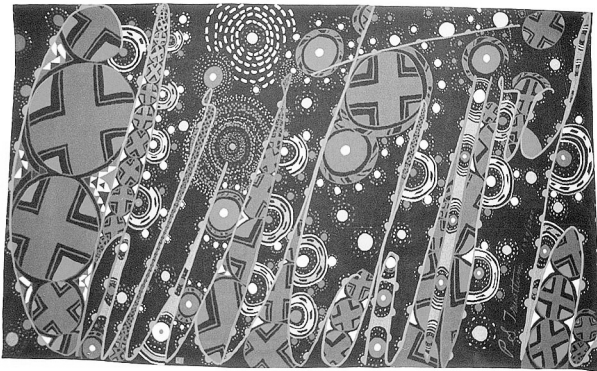
(Ed. note: We would like to have any more information that readers may have about Michelle or any of her tapestries for the ATA archives. Can anyone identify the weavers sitting on a tapestry with Michelle in the photo on our web site?)

Primary Connections

By Warren Feeney

Essay reprinted from the brochure accompanying the exhibition.

In the world of high culture, artists very rarely agree to share the same canvas in the realization of a work of art. This was particularly true of art in the twentieth century when European modernism continued to place emphasis on a nineteenth century romanticism that spoke of the 'uniqueness' of the artist's vision with paramount expression given to innovation and novelty. It was not until the late 1970's and the agenda of the feminist movement that collaborative ventures between artists were accepted as a valid, and in fact, highly political way of working in contemporary art. In "The Dinner Party" in 1979, Judy Chicago invited friends and colleagues to contribute inscribed and decorative tiles to a collaborative work that revolutionized contemporary practice and witnessed the realization of a post-modernist ideology.



Marilyn Rea-Menzies, "Millennium," 16'6" x 10' (500 x 300cm), 1999 - 2000 Design Concept: Philip Trusttum. Woven with the help of Alison Stanton and almost 3000 members of the Christchurch community, 7epi, Cotton warp, wool, cotton, linen, cottolin weft.

However, in the twenty-first century such works now seem more important for their politics than their art. Artists, who have followed Chicago's example in developing collaborative works, have frequently tended to make images that continue to beg two questions: Who does this work really belong to and who is it actually by?

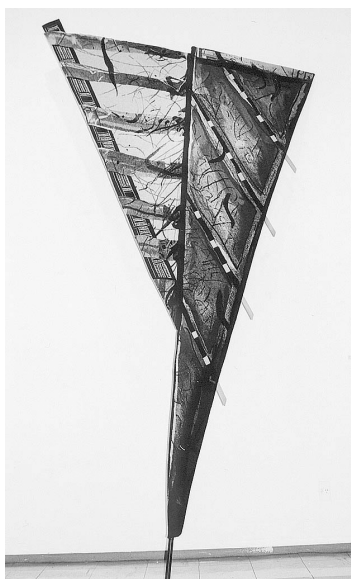
Moreover, when Jean Michael Basquait and Andy Warhol executed a body of collaborative

paintings in the mid-1980's cynics maintained that the union was a perfect coming together of publicity and hype. Warhol's art became visible to a younger generation of the art world unfamiliar with his screen prints and Basquait was introduced to a number of Warhol's wealthy clients. (Basquait did however manage to bring a level of humanity to Warhol's detached and ironic vision.)

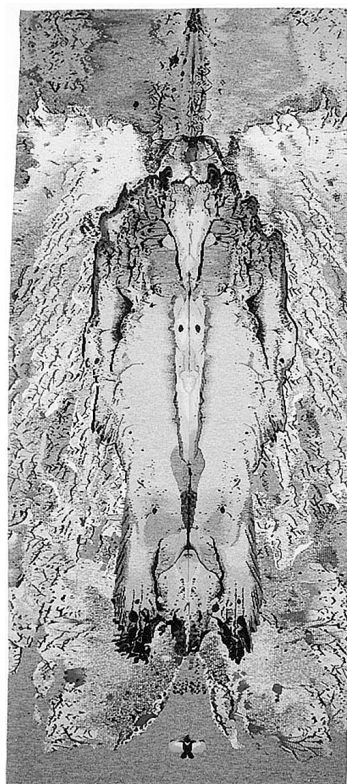
In New Zealand in the 1990's the best-known collaborative art works have been those completed by Gordon Walters and then recent graduate from the University of Canterbury, Chris Heaphy. Even though Heaphy seemed to address and speak to the 1950's modernism of Walters' art, there remained a sense of viewing two works of art within a single picture plane. Similarly, collaborative drawings and paintings by Peter Robinson and Tony de Lautour have shared commonalities in their content and execution, but ultimately the signature of each painter stands and looks towards the other.

Consequently, the exhibition "Primary Connections" featuring tapestries by Marilyn Rea-Menzies based upon working drawing by Michael Armstrong, Graham Bennett, Rudolf Boelee, William Cumming, Don Driver, Paul Johns, Julia Morison, Michael Reed and Philip Trusttum is a unique and compelling body of work. In each instance master-weaver, Rea-Menzies has genuinely and sympathetically responded to the artist's imagery and ideas, realizing a work that is the outcome of a reciprocal relationship. For example, in 1999 when Philip Trusttum submitted his working drawing for consideration to be developed into the Millennium Tapestry by Rea-Menzies his sketch consisted of a coloured line drawing on paper. When Rea-Menzies came to complete the tapestry she chose to celebrate the quality for which Trusttum's art is renowned, his use of colour. Instead of working from the neutral white background of the drawing paper, she chose a dark green tapestry backdrop to heighten and animate Trusttum's design.

In addition, the development of tapestries based on drawings from Graham Bennett, *A Matter of Degrees*, and Michael Reed, *Living in the South Pacific*, saw the artists contribute, not just a working idea, but also adding materials to the realization of



Marilyn Rea-Menzies, "A Matter of Degrees" 2003 - 2004
Design Concept: Graham Bennett.
Interpretation and weaving:
Marilyn Rea-Menzies 11'8"h
(350cm) x variable width. 16, 8
and 4epi. Cotton warp,



Marilyn Rea-Menzies, "Angel and Fly," 120" x 44"
(300 x 111cm), 2002 - 2003.
Design Concept: Julia Morison,
(one of New Zealand's major
women artists) 16, 8 and 4epi, cot-
ton warp, wool, cottolin, polyester
cotton, silk weft.

the work, with Bennett constructing a sculptural frame for Rea-Menzies tapestry and Reed painting on the completed woven surfaces.

The mutuality of faith and confidence required from both parties in each work has been critical to their success. Rea-Menzies commented that: 'the artists I worked with put a lot of faith and trust in my ability to interpret their design concepts in an honest and forthright way. I have to be true to their vision of the work whilst including something of my own in the interpretation'. "Primary Connections" succeeds perfectly in such intentions.

Marilyn Rea-Menzies Commentary

I started working on the collaborations back in 1995 with the Michael Reed design "Living in the South Pacific" (see pg. 3) as a way of introducing other artists to tapestry as a valid art medium. I found that I had no trouble in attracting other artists to the idea of creating design concepts for a tapestry. Some even contacted me once they realized that I was working in this way. I enjoyed the contacts and interaction that takes place within the collaboration. All of the artists trusted me to interpret their designs as I saw fit and basically left me to it. They would call into the studio three or four times during the weaving process just to check on progress and discuss what was happening. Only one of them, Graham Bennett, actually sat down at the loom and had a wee go at weaving. Graham was the most interactive since he also had to build the metal frame that enables "A Matter of Degrees" to stand. I found that all the artists were extremely good to work with, no hassles at all.

Working in this way also pushed my own boundaries. I have woven works and used techniques that I may never have attempted on my own, so it was a huge learning curve in that respect as well. Some of the works, most especially "Angel and Fly" posed a huge challenge as to how to interpret the design and still keep the integrity of the tapestry medium. I did this through the textures and varying setts to give a result that is not possible in any other medium. Graham's design, "A Matter of Degrees," was also a challenge because I had never woven a shaped tapestry on such a scale before. The right hand section of that work was placed at an angle up the warp, which necessitated finding a way to keep it even.

It is yet to be seen how this collaborative experience will influence my own work in the future. Already you can see the differences in the two works of my own that I exhibited in "Primary Connections." "She Holds the World," woven in 2000-2001, (See *Tapestry Topics* Summer, 2004) has a lot of graduated colour, hatching and shading in it. "The Exhibition Opening," woven in 2004 (see pg. 22) uses colour blending on the bobbin and no hatching. I really enjoyed weaving this piece as it was very quick to weave, just building the shapes. It was influenced by Will Cumming's small tapestry "Garden Chalice." Will had very definite ideas that tapestry should be strong and simple in design. The day he died (see web site

listed below) we had had a long discussion about "Angel and Fly," which I was weaving at the time, and he told me that he would not ever consider weaving a work like that.

I do not intend to work on any more collaborative work. The challenge now is to continue with my own and to produce work of equal quality to those in this exhibition. Working with these artists has helped to give me a high profile in New Zealand and to be taken seriously as an artist working at the top level.

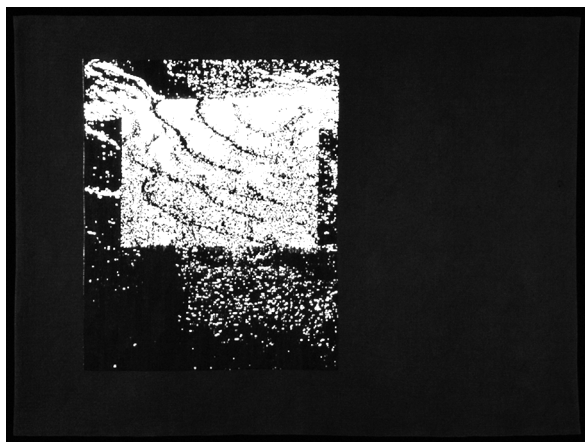
All of the items in this exhibit can be seen on Marilyn's web site, www.tapestry.co.nz.

APPRECIATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS: Learning To Go Beyond Perception

by **Malcolm D. Evans**

revised from original article published in the *English Quarterly*, Canadian Council of Teachers of English Language Arts. V 30, no. 1, (2004): 10-15

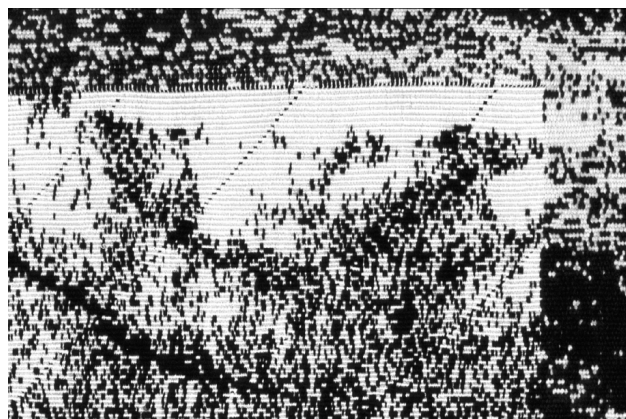
Have you ever wondered what word or words can categorize experiences in your life that cause you to say "wow", "omigod", or "eureka"? Try *appreciative consciousness*. Appreciative consciousness is our capacity for the heightened awareness and surge of emotion that occurs in both the immediate experience of a sense of awe and also in the more lengthy experience of engagement with a sense of purpose and commitment. Not all of appreciative consciousness is about unique experiences



Joanna Foslien, "The Ocean of Becoming," 52" x 70"

and the emotions attached to them. It is also about mental, physical, and spiritual awareness of the depth and significance of events. We can experience appreciative consciousness in our daily lives when we read a book that excites our imagination, when we deeply enjoy a work of art, or are delighted with an act of kindness.

Bernard E. Meland, in his *Higher Education and the Human Spirit* introduces this construct by saying, "This principle rejects, in effect, the premise of a given, static, universal order and seeks to come to terms philosophically and religiously with the creative character of the world." This consciousness taps the depth of our human spirit to enable us to experience with a high degree of receptivity the fullest meaning and understanding of events with which we are engaged. Appreciative consciousness is that awareness of something beyond perceived experience. It is not simply reading a book, but feeling the reality of the author's message emotionally, perhaps viscerally, and certainly more than cogni-



Joanna Foslien, "The Ocean of Becoming,"
detail #1, 52" x 70"

tively. It seems to be a good, clear, simple idea. But instead of being simple, appreciative consciousness involves a complex, highly personal, condition of feeling that surpasses the immediacy of sensory perception.

Appreciative consciousness is marked by a constantly changing mix of mind and body. What we perceive, what we already know, what we feel, and what we imagine are a wondrous stew that at times brings us to peak experiences of rapture or despair. That long established trilogy of mind, body, and

spirit is clearly present in appreciative consciousness. But Meland would have us re-think the separateness of mind, body, and spirit to embrace the unifying concept of wholeness—the fusion of our perceptions, our actions, and our emotions. If we turn to Joanna Foslien's tapestry, "Ocean of Becoming," we can begin to understand the wholeness of appreciative consciousness.

Looking at a photograph will never stimulate our imagination, like being in the presence of her original work. But let us turn to the photo accompanying this essay and think about what we will see: the use of color, representation of movement, contrast, depth of texture. Why is the white dense in some areas and sparse in others? She chose indigo as the dominant color of the weft. Why? Is it more than a representation of the ocean? These are the obvious visual perceptions. We are denied a concrete awareness of texture that would be present if we were viewing the tapestry itself. What more can we "see" in this tapestry if we now try to move from the simply cognitive toward the peak experiences that appreciative consciousness makes possible?

We will need to shift into a deliberate aesthetic mode of thinking. Now we take time to speculate on what we find in the tapestry other than form and color. One young Midwesterner told me that he saw rivers in the white. Is this because in a land of 10,000 lakes and the great Mississippi that this is the cognitive frame he brought to this experience? Foslien's work is named "Ocean of Becoming." I, as one raised by and fond of the sea, affirm the feeling of surf and foam. We can go beyond this level of analytic thinking to involve our emotions.

When I first saw this tapestry my response, without much thought was, "it's evocative." What made me make such a statement? It was not rational, and not illustrative of analysis and criticism. Yet, my heart, my feelings, told me in totally unvoiced ways that this is more than a fine example of technique; I felt something more than mere appreciation. I felt a communication, a partial awareness of the artist's feelings of flow, of spiritual communion, of transcending her loom in an experience beyond technique and design. Foslien gives us some insight in this message on a signboard at a recent showing of her works.

The Dorset Tapestries

The companion set of three indigo and white tapestries were designed in Whitchurch Canonorum, Dorset, England. An idea drawn from Picasso permeates much of the work - that is, to look at things from many different angles: from above, from below, from outside looking in, from inside looking out. Images are layered just as there are many possible layers of insight. Space and depth infiltrate the flat surface probing feelings of disorientation. There is an intention to produce a sense of movement, which is an enigma, because images and fragments of images are all frozen in time. Time itself is measured in the regular accretion of the cloth. The history of weft over warp, weft under warp ad infinitum is laid out in a regular pattern. The unfathomable and unreachable are similarly marked off.

We are fortunate to have the artist's remarks and the opportunity to know something about her intent. Her language about looking at things from different angles, layered images, intentionality, and the "unfathomable and unreachable" open up vistas blocked by our conventional awareness. The very heart of appreciative consciousness is to deny the limitations, and go beyond mere sense perception. We can open ourselves to the potential offered by appreciative consciousness. The actualization of that potential requires more than an emotional blooming, important as that may be. It requires more than objective analysis. It requires a disciplined awareness, attention, and will.

Let's depart from textiles for a moment to consider the work of Nobel Prize winner Barbara McClintock (1902-1992) who possessed several of the qualities that are associated with appreciative consciousness and the idea of going beyond or transcending oneself. It is said that she possessed a special talent for recognizing the order of seemingly random changes in cells. She, I would say, projected her thinking beyond observation to imagination. She said to colleagues, "Listen to the plant." In her situation this is more than a metaphor; she was so in harmony with her observations that it is said that she thought like the genes she was observing. The evidence of appreciative consciousness in her life's work caused others to think of her as a mystic

genius. She knew things that were unexplainable, not unlike the inadequacy of words to describe transcendent experiences in our own lives.

Appreciative consciousness requires the openness to embrace the unknown, the intuitive, and ephemeral in confidence that by going beyond ordinary perceptions we exercise a higher level of our humanity. One of McClintock's greatest gifts was her flexibility and receptivity to the unknown. This woman exemplifies the presence of appreciative consciousness in a world-class scientist. Her life is one of which artists as well as scientists should be aware.

We cannot go beyond if there is nothing from which to depart. A fine scientific education was the foundation from which McClintock could move on to her discoveries of totally new facts about mutant genes in maize. Her discoveries opened the way to new understanding of genetics, plant pathology, and cytology. She had a clear, rather modest, sense of who she was and what she was about. We may call this her personal sense of reality. That sense of reality is foundational to appreciative consciousness. Life experiences and self-understanding provide grounding for the transcendent experiences associated with appreciative consciousness.

Going beyond requires not only an understanding of our foundational knowledge but also an understanding of how that knowledge was acquired. Each of us engages in a learning process—a process that opens the way for appreciative consciousness. Self-discipline is essential for going beyond in science, art, or any serious endeavor. This is an orientation of the mind toward full utilization of one's knowledge and ability to seek and be open to experience beyond direct sense perception. Joanna Foslien speaks of herself in the design stage of her tapestry weaving not as an artist or creator but as a

"channel" for a creative force. Barbara McClintock spoke of "feel for the organism."

It would seem that appreciative consciousness is a state requiring a high-level harmony of both sides of the brain. Discipline of affect and cognition brings about the appreciative perception of which Meland writes. Thinking about warp and weft are

necessary but not sufficient; the discipline required for going beyond the given requires directed insight, imagination, and an openness to feelings and intuition. Going beyond does not just happen. It is the result of a holistic self-discipline, not always clearly recognized, that enables one to transcend sense perception, conventional knowledge, and assumed limits of mind and body.

Appreciative consciousness requires that we respect and celebrate the tension of opposites. Appreciative consciousness does not mean denying the dualisms in the world. Going beyond means departing from the self-imposed shackles of dualistic thinking to seek a unity of transcendent experience. We readily think about the concreteness of color, form, or texture yet it is the feelings

evoked by a tapestry that fuel the experience of going beyond. It is commonplace to deal with the quantity and form of maize but it is the affective elements—beauty, wonder, excitement—that pertain to appreciative consciousness. Lastly, perhaps most importantly, the refinement of our sensitivity and acceptance of our human spirit are needed if one is to advance toward a condition of appreciative consciousness.

Foslien, J. Exhibit (December, 2003). St. Paul, MN: The Undercroft Gallery of Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church.

Meland, B. E. (1965) *Higher education and the human spirit*. 2nd Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



Joanna Foslien, "The Ocean of Becoming," detail #2, 52" x 70"

Freedom's Symbol: Feather Tapestries

By Linda Rees and Judy Ness

During the ATB5 reception at Convergence 2004 in Denver, I found my eyes gravitating time and again to the bold feathers depicted in "Grace Notes," the diptych by Judy Ness of Eugene, Oregon. I later discovered that Judy also had tapestries in two HGA sponsored exhibits, "Queen of the Plains" and "Mountain Magic" where she had won the first place award for another feather image, "Beloved."

I contacted Judy Ness before going to Eugene. Although I did not have time to meet her personally, I was able to see many of her tapestries exhibited at a local gallery. There were at least ten of her tapestries and rugs in a second floor gallery in the Fifth Street Market. One large 5' x 8' geometric rug based on the Fibonacci series was on the wall, two others, including a beautiful, deep red and blue Krokbragd one, were on the floor. However, what dominated the space were feather images. "Paradise" and "Practical Magic" were directly across from the entry and looked incredibly convincing in their fluffy feathery presence. "Mallard: Element Is Essence," "Secret Life," and "Beloved," were off to the side. "Llano," a soft muted geometric wall hanging woven prior to the feather series, also caught my eye for its subtle quietness.

All the work was beautifully woven. For my particular type of curiosity and compulsion to classify, however, I would have liked a reference, through the title, to the type of feather each one is. Of course for other viewers, the fact that the titles refer to what book was on Judy's tape and in her mind as she wove might speak to their curiosity, once they know the source of the title. But it requires a "telling" for the connection to be made and it is less easy to put an image to the name than if the type of feather was included. For Judy, using book titles is important. "My first flights into freedom came from reading, from other people's realities, and the connection to this cycle is probably so personal I haven't really expressed it well verbally."

In her e-mail conversations she gave me details about her work and a charming glimpse at her personality and interests. Here is her commentary.

I had a good year in tapestry. I did get pieces into Convergence's "Queen of the Plains" and "Mountains Majesty," with a 1st Place in that one. Very nice. The ATB5 inclusion of "Grace Notes" was the star in my crown. As the years went by I wondered if I would ever weave at that level, and it has meant a lot to me to be included. Several years earlier after submitting slides to an earlier ATB and not being accepted, I took heart when the fabulous weaver, J. P. Larochette, encouraged me to keep trying. The current acknowledgement has given me the nerve to quit a full-time job to give more time to weaving. I have learned skills that allow me to establish a home-based business marketing books for publishers and helping independent bookstores with graphics and web services. I collect books, and play mandolin and sing in a country folk trio with my husband as a hobby.



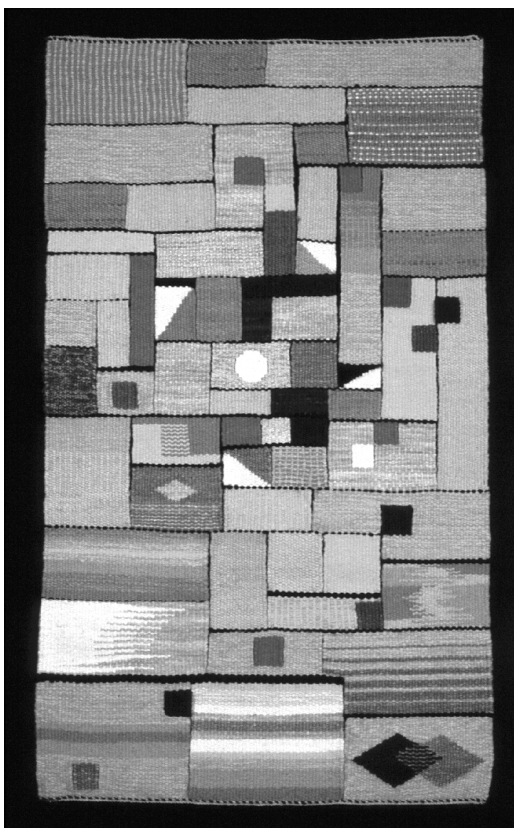
Judy Ness, "Paradise,"
36" x 13", 2002



Judy Ness, "Grace Notes,"
55 x 29", 2003

Barbara Pickett, head of the Fibers Department in the School of Art at the University of Oregon was my teacher for a BFA '97 and MFA '00. I taught there during graduate school for three years, and still teach weaving at the UO Craft Center. Regional weaving and spinning conferences employ me to teach occasionally. I enjoy my student's unbounded energy, and teaching helps keep me in touch and connected with other weavers.

I was a rug weaver for several years getting through school and doing the art fair thing. It's for the young and strong; my wrists are just not what they used to be. I made a decision to weave as an art form and my focus is tapestry. However, after stat-



Judy Ness, "All the Kings Horses," 36" x 22", 1999

ing that so definitively, three 5' x 8' organic cotton rugs are currently being woven for a corporation on the East Coast. Scandinavian weaving interests me. This spring I look forward to a Norwegian Textile Tour hosted by the Norwegian-American Heritage Museum, the Vesterheim, based in Decorah, Iowa. The big rug commission is making the trip possible.

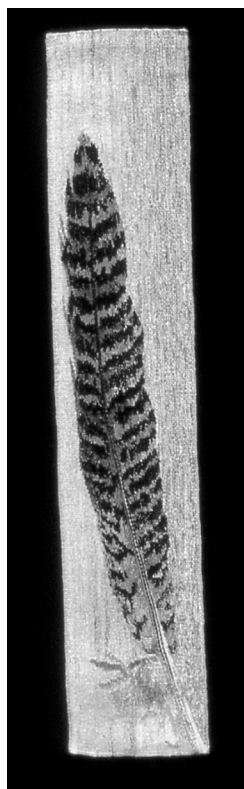
Another love is the Navajo textile tradition. I visit my teacher, Sarah Natani, in New Mexico about once a year.

My first membership with ATA was during graduate school, probably 1999. Some generous soul donated my membership fee because I could not afford it, and I wanted to enter the ATB jury process. I did not get in, but never forgot the favor. I hope to pass it on if given the opportunity.

Why feathers? I'm not really a feather person, so it surprised me I was interested. Looking back I understand that the feather image became an unconscious symbol of freedom for me. After graduate school, studying and teaching at the University of Oregon, having had the luxury of being steeped in art and fiber everyday, I didn't want the momentum created in that nurturing environment to be curtailed. Still, financial needs were pressing, and I took a job in the book industry that occupied much of my time for the next four years. As time went by I wove less and less. The grief generated over letting go of the intensity of involvement in textiles was a withdrawal. I felt I had failed myself. The feather image was a sign of hope. I found the first one in my mother's yard the day I was leaving Iowa after a rare visit. It was the only thing I felt I could take away without being diminished. I carried it home, and thought about it, what it meant. The feather is the element of a bird, and bird is flight, and flight is freedom. So the feather became the essence, the quintessential icon for my hope to be free. Freedom I sought in a lot of things, personal, professional, cultural.

It seems to me that if you look carefully at an element, the smallest version of a thing that is recognizable and represents the larger object, the essence of the whole can still be seen. The hawk feathers are encoded with the beauty and terrible fierceness of the raptor. You could almost see the dinosaurs still haunting in the passion of the color and the strength of the forms. There is so much present for the imagination and the spirit. Technically, weaving a thing that is curved and 'light as a feather' is not easy. It was a challenge to try to express the gossamer threads of fluffy feathers at the base of a quill, to keep the grace in the quill's line, and to blend the colors with contrast and with

subtlety. What a heavenly challenge. Make it light, make it float, I would repeat to myself as I wove, as if the mantra would imbue itself in the actions of my hands as I interlocked the yarns. More feathers came to me. People I didn't know handed them to me, they were sent in the mail, friends seemed to press them on me with surprising care and intense good wishes. Somehow they knew I needed them. And the feathers and wings cycle is not done. A miniature tapestry of a little jellyfish, a flyer of pre-historic seas, is due in a show soon. Will I be able to make it float and sway, conveying its illusive movement determined by the forces of invisible currents? The anticipation is delightful.



Judy Ness,
"Secret Life,"
54" x 14", 2003

Ancient Sources for Contemporary Work: The Art of Louise Wheatley

By Courtney Ann Shaw, Ph. D.

I first met Louise Wheatley of Joppa, Md. when she presented "Miniature Tapestry Weaving: An Artist's Perspective." It was a slide lecture held in tandem with the "Timeless Connections" exhibition at The Textile Museum, Washington DC. (See *Tapestry Topics*, Fall, 2004)

Louise is grounded in an appreciation of the cultural and historical importance of weaving in ancient societies and old traditions. She started her training while in her mid teens, apprenticing at The Textile Museum under Textile Conservator Joe Columbus. She absorbed the conservator's careful and meticulous use of hands, focusing for hours and days on the fabric of diverse cultures, often working on fragments of fabric. The process fostered an

appreciation of weaving that holds its integrity even when it is a small fragment of its former self. She learned spinning and weaving from her "mentor", fellow intern Nobuko Kajitani, who became Textile Conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Later, Louise worked on a Pre-Columbian collection at Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University before free-lancing at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Her work is remarkable for the extremely fine weaving (up to 60 threads per inch), the use of tapestry roundels, and the use of images close to her heart and home. Her interest in natural history, especially gardening, is evidenced in much of her work, whether it be a large "Crow Blanket," that commemorates pet crows she once had or the surprisingly realistic "Shells." "Seed Manta," purchased by The Baltimore Museum of Art, contains two strips of various seeds between panels of plain handspun, the central panel having a roundel of tapestry woven root vegetables. By contrast, Ms Wheatley has a fascination with satellites and space, inspiring her to create "Curved Space," a series of satellite images of the earth suspended on a wire frame. (See online color version for images.)

While an amateur naturalist who feels that observing her plants grow can impart knowledge not found in books, Louise also gleans images from literary sources. She likes her weaving to be an interlocking of these gatherings with her daily experiences. Biblical images, e.g. David and Abigail, may be used with an image of artichoke leaves from her garden. Doing weaving that takes a long time fosters incubation, allowing for more images to show up. She recalls Christopher Alexander in *The Nature of Order* saying "Process itself...a budding, as a flowering, as an unpredictable, unquenchable, unfolding through which the future grows from the present in a way that is dominated by the goodness of the moment."

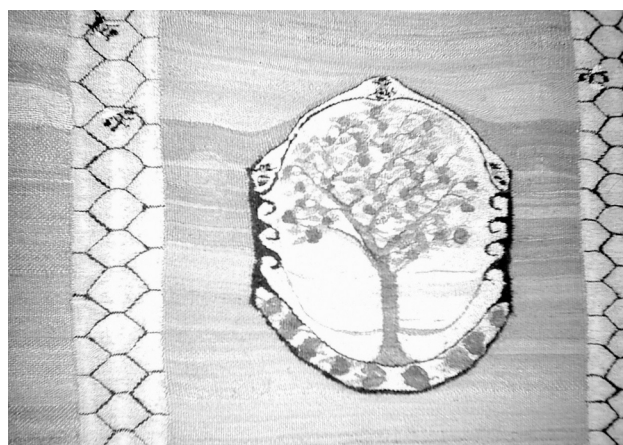
An idea comes to her to weave a marriage blanket using images from Osip Mandelstam's poem equating kisses with bees leaving the beehive. Weaving narrow honeycomb patterned strips with intermittent bees she is listening to Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams* on a tape and takes from the story the image of specific apple trees in the orchard which the elderly Spanish woman call

"Semilla Besada" - the seed that has been kissed - because these trees are especially prolific. Wheatley ends up weaving a roundel of an apple tree in the central panel of the blanket with the words "Semilla" on one honeycomb strip and "Besada" on the other.

A Hebrew psalter at The Evergreen House, Baltimore, was the inspiration of two weavings: A scroll, "Voice from the Whirlwind," (see back cover) taken from the Book of Job, shows a series of various animals. My personal favorite is "Voice from the Whirlwind II," a book with a metal cover her nephew created. Each page is a finely woven tapestry, finished on both sides, so that as the pages turn a clear image is shown. The centerpiece shows a series of wild asses cavorting. No words can express the intricacy and fineness of this scroll and book.

She takes great pleasure in the many aspects of creating textiles in the same manner as ancient weaving. Her middle-eastern color palette of beautiful indigo blue and Chinese lacquer red is stunning. Her goal is to be intimate with the whole process, as she really wants to understand what it took to create such perfect textiles. For over 30 years, she has been spinning her own yarn. There is no question as to what fibers and dyes to use. Louise enjoys growing flax and cotton along with many dye plants: woad, madder, weld, four different kinds of indigo, and various types of coreopsis, purchased from seed catalogs. However, she also utilizes weaving supply houses, such as Mannings in Pennsylvania, which carry vegetal dyes. She is very susceptible to "exotic fibers" silks, hemp, and Sea Island cotton, the down from muskox, and alpaca. Why bother to hand spin fibers? She feels the process is meditative. There is also a strange dichotomy between spinning the finest and most consistent thread possible, while knowing that it is the small imperfections that give the woven cloth the subtle look and feel of hand-spun cloth.

Louise has a number of looms: A large mortise and tenon loom from Crete, made of olive wood, a small antique Romanian vertical tapestry loom, and a second small metal Shannock tapestry loom. She also has a four-harness loom used for weaving yardage. In general she prefers to weave even large areas of handspun plain weave that incorporate small areas of intensely fine tapestry weave on the more laborious but less limiting tapestry looms.



Louise Wheatley, *Semilla Basada*, detail, 82" x 78", 2002

Weaving on less technical looms can be, to quote Walter Benjamin, "The nest egg of the imagination." She finishes the back of her weavings but does not worry about uneven borders and does not always use cartoons.

Louise is totally enraptured with ancient sources. The first thing that she brought to show me at our second interview were marvelous photographs of ancient Greek and Etruscan loom weights and one of a fragment of finely spun and woven cloth. They were from a visit she took to the University of Pennsylvania, Museum of Archeology and Anthropology. She got excited when pointing out impressions of a man and of an owl holding a distaff or spindle over a basket. It was amazing to her to actually see a fragment of cloth with such finely spun threads and a heading band, indicating that it was woven on a warp-weighted loom.

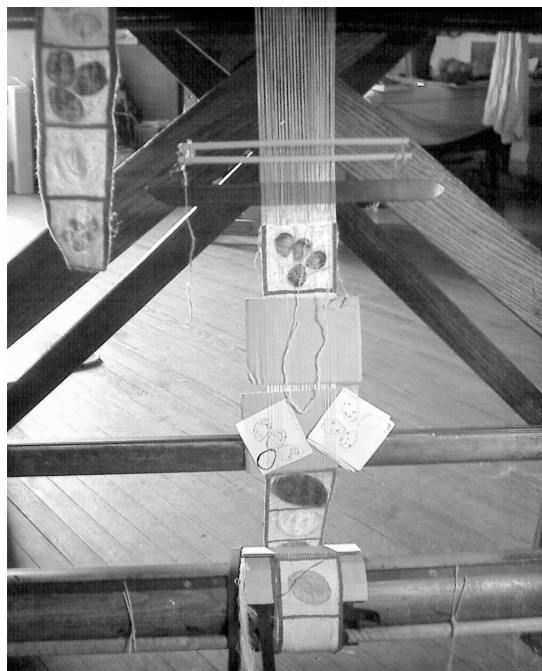
She created small clay weights with her own imprint of a heron, owl, sturgeon, and snake. The



Louise Wheatley, "Wild Asses" centerfold, 4.25" x 9.5", from "Voice from the Whirlwind II," Book, 5" x 6" x 2", 2001

continued...

snake, with a bird coming out of its mouth, was inspired from a metal handle called to her attention while touring the Etruscan Exhibit. Ms Wheatley had dug the clay for her weights from the edge of the Susquehanna River. She hopes to make at least 30 of them so that she can set up her own warp-weighted loom. They are yet to be fired.



One of Louise Wheatley's looms

The project all began when Susan Edmunds, a weaver and scholar of classical Greek, shared her work with Louise on a DVD she was making with Prudence Jones and Gregory Nagy called "Text and Textile: An Introduction to Wool-Working for readers of Greek and Latin." The idea behind the DVD was to give classics scholars a clearer understanding of the many terms that crop up in Greek and Roman literature derived from the textile process.

Meeting with Louise at her farmhouse. What a treat! Her inspirations are all around. She had even made Springerle cookies using designs of ancient symbols she had carved into the wooden molds. Her "secret" garden of cotton, flax, with dye plants, flowers and herbs is housed in a barn shell of field-stone. A barn loft houses her looms and spinning wheels. She feels that the Industrial Revolution has lifted so many processes out of our hands. Tapestry weaving is one of the few weaving processes that has not been automated.

When Louise goes up to her weaving studio, she relishes the time needed to spin and weave, not out of sentiment but out of the experience that these processes are integral to making textiles, that have, as Christopher Alexander would say "life." Tapestry weaving becomes a place to enter into a different relationship with time. When learning from young to old, you are going to know so much more than one can say. Some knowledge is beyond verbalization but will be understood by that culture. She quotes Marilynne Robinson as saying "enjoyment of the duration of time is an ancient earthly pleasure not common to our present lives, but one that can be cultivated, remembered, and necessarily embraced if one wishes to create anything even close to the refinement and subtlety found in ancient textiles."

Recently Louise went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see the exhibit, "The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830 of late Incan and colonial textiles of Peru" She was awed by these ancient textiles where the most complicated techniques are woven on the most basic of looms, the back-strap - finger weaving, tapestry, warp picks, and double weaves all in one piece. With tapestry the sky's the limit.

Review: *The Coptic Tapestry Albums of the Archaeologist of Antinoe*

Author: Nancy Arthur Hoskins

Publishers: Skein Publications and the University of Washington Press, 2004. 159 pages. \$55.00

By Mary Dieterich

Margaret Seagrove, writing of the Coptic textiles held by the City of Liverpool Museum in 1965, acknowledged that there was comparatively little written about Coptic textiles, partially because they have been an archaeological study, not easily categorized in a clearly defined sphere. She goes on to say that apart from the technical aspects, the subject matter of the textiles should be of great relevance to those interested in art history.

Now, in 2004, Nancy Arthur Hoskins, in her impressive volume, has undertaken a comprehensive

investigation of Coptic textiles that should appeal to textile historians, archaeologists and certainly weavers.

The textiles are studied from both the secular and sacred viewpoints, an approach reflected in the research begun by the author in 1974. The basis of this research is two albums of Coptic textile fragments collected by the French archaeologist, Albert Gayet. The albums were donated to the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington, more particularly to the gallery's Textiles Study Center.

Nancy Hoskins is no stranger to intense and focused research. The information presented ranges from discussions of the individuals who contributed to Coptic textile history to detailed accounts of tracking Coptic textiles throughout the world's museums. The text includes illustrated explanations of tapestry techniques as utilized by Coptic weavers between 30BC and AD639, as well as instructions on modern techniques to replicate their practices. In each area, meticulous attention is paid to historical sequence and documentation. There are densely linked references to ethnological topics such as the distinguishing practices and beliefs of the Coptic people.

The book is divided into three main sections, followed by the author's "Connections and Conclusions," appendixes, an extensive bibliography, and the index. In Part One the reader is introduced to Albert Gayet, whose fame was gained through his excavations of the burial sites at Antinoe' (the French name for the ancient Egyptian city of Antinoöpolis). Albert Gayet made eight campaigns to Antinoe' between 1896 and 1903, each of which is discussed in terms of Gayet's working habits, his professional peers, and listings of excavated discoveries. The section closes with speculations on the Gayet estate and the puzzling facts surrounding previous ownership and whereabouts of the Gayet tapestry albums themselves.

Part Two is a technical section on the Antinoe' textiles illustrated with diagrams and line drawings. The emphasis is on recreating the process that produced the spirited Coptic tapestry weaving. It includes the fibers employed, fabrics produced and garments fashioned from those fabrics. Explanations focus on the dating of textiles, weaving as a workshop and cottage craft and loom meth-

ods. It also covers Coptic textile variations that include brocaded textiles, resist-dyed textiles, taquete', sewing and embroidery and loom shaped garments.

In Part Three, the author presents precise physical characteristics of the Gayet albums themselves, with description of the care and repair requirements necessitated by the condition of the albums. Hoskins discusses curatorial methods used to correlate fragments and accession records, detailing the outline for the catalog entry system. One of the most intriguing presentations is a list of album fragments which coincide with matches found in museums throughout the world, and where those museums are located. The cover collages decorating the albums are described in terms of image description and production methods. The book has forty-eight beautifully produced colored photographs showing the glowing color and intricate design detail of the fragments contained in the albums.

In assessing the readership to whom this book is directed, it could be said that its first appeal may be to the ethnographic researcher with an interest in textiles. That is not to say that the practicing weaver cannot be included. There are copious descriptions of techniques, design illustrations and application ideas to be studied and utilized. This information is valuable for practitioners of several disciplines, which in turn enhances its contribution to all.

The terminology of archaeology and ethnographic symbology may not be familiar to many readers despite their expertise in weaving terminology. For that reason the volume would be enhanced by the inclusion of a definitive glossary. Too, many interesting and instructive quotations, included in the original French, will not be accessible to the reader unfamiliar with the language, yet are important elements providing background and ambiance.

In her approach to the subject of Coptic textiles, Ms Hoskins has represented a wealth of information on the times and the salient characteristics of textile production in the early centuries of Egypt. She is correct in attributing to contemporary tapestry weavers an interest in and respect for historic tapestry heritage. In this work, she has done all who weave a service by making Coptic influence accessible.

Tapestry Weavers South Gather in Florida

By Lynn Mayne

Fourteen members of Tapestry Weavers South (TWS) met in Sarasota, Florida for three exciting days that included a Sharon Marcus workshop, our local tapestry exhibitions, and a tour of the Ringling Museum. The four member Tapestry Artists of Sarasota (TAOS) hosted the event from October 21 to 23, 2004.

Francoise Hack, assistant curator, lead the tour of five 13' x 16' cartoons painted in oil by Rubens in about 1625 for his largest and most complex tapestry cycle, "The Triumph of the Eucharist." She also took the group through the recently restored mansion of John and Mable Ringling with special access to some 17th and 18th Century tapestries that are normally off-limits to the public. She introduced the group to the museum's library and showed a video that documented cleaning one of their tapestries. She explained that the library's extensive collection of books and catalogs is available outside of Sarasota through inter-library loans. The museum is always looking for funds to continue with the cleaning and restoration of the collection of tapestries, which were collected and stored in Florida before the days of air conditioning and climate control.

Lunch at the Banyan Cafe on the museum grounds preceded a short car pool to the Temple Beth Shalom to see five 3' x 10'6" tapestries woven by TAOS: Pat Looper, Lynn Mayne, Becky Stevens, and Terri Stewart. They were designed by a graphic artist, and temple member, to represent the five books of the Torah and were installed in the sanctuary in 2000. TAOS hosted a cocktail buffet for TWS at Becky Steven's house the first evening, offering a chance to see Becky's studio, loom and artwork along with husband, Dick Stevens' digital photography.

The Sharon Marcus tapestry design workshop: "The Relationship of Structure and Technique to Idea," involved each participant's mind and hands for the next two days. Sharon was inspiring and supportive in attempting to push us to experiment and question. Using multiple slides, and actual examples, she showered participants with ideas and

then moved around the room to work with us one-on-one. Sharon has a knack for helping individuals push an idea further than usual and to see something in a different way. The first day emphasized flat pictorial tapestry and we were encouraged to select one of three design assignments "outside of our comfort zone," to use a method of design new to each of us. Day two was about material and structure and aimed at getting away from the flat two-dimensional tapestry format. Some participants sampled techniques on portable looms and others made 3-D paper or canvas models. Students drew, painted, cut, and pasted.

Following the feedback session at the end of the first workshop day, we traveled north to the neighboring community of Bradenton. There at the Art Center Manatee, we viewed "Art in Fiber 2004" by TWS (33 tapestries by 18 artists) and "Image and Allegory" by TAOS (31 tapestries by 4 artists). Sharon Marcus presented the ATA award to Patricia Williams for her tapestry "Orion." Patricia talked about her piece and other exhibitors were encouraged to talk about their work too.

The last evening of the workshop, participants showed slides of their work and told how they might incorporate ideas from the workshop into future projects. The interaction and communication was an important element in the Tapestry Weavers South workshop/retreat/exhibition. For many of us the three days were an opportunity to spend time with tapestry artists with whom we have communicated by email or whose work we have seen. Getting together in person was special.

ATA Award Winner, Pat Williams

By Lynn Mayne

Sharon Marcus, who selected "Orion" for the ATA Award, at the exhibit "Art in Fiber 2004" by TWS members, said that she especially liked the use of mixed materials, the movement of the figure, and the ambiguity of the situation portrayed.

Pat is a busy, funny, dedicated tapestry weaver whom I just met at our TWS event in October. I have e-mailed her a few questions and she was

generous enough to share these answers with me to report to ATA.

Q: What kind of loom do you use?

A: My beloved Fireside. (48" wide)

Q: At the TWS viewing of the exhibition, you mentioned it [Orion] was inspired by a dream. Do you record your dreams upon awakening - In the middle of the night?

A: I usually get up at 4:30 AM Morning is my favorite time of day. I'm refreshed, coffee perks me up, and no one else is awake. At that time I'm still in touch with my "night feelings/dreams." My hand hovers over a piece of paper and I draw whatever comes to mind-like those people who do automatic writing.

I have a stack of Arches hot press paper already torn into various squares or rectangles that average around 5" x 7." At that size I can draw out a picture and finish it in about an hour. Sometimes it's only a pencil drawing of an idea and I'll save it until later to color. I use a combination of watercolors (background) and color pencils. Quick. I have several boxes of drawings that I can look through whenever I need to design another tapestry. Like a great big savings account -- all those drawings make me feel RICH.



Pat Williams, "Orion," 30" x 50", 2004, mixed wool, metallics, lurex with seine twine warp

Q: What is your creative time of day?

A.: 4:30 AM until I have to go to work (I teach art at a high school) or go somewhere else. This gives me about 1 1/2 hours in the morning. I will draw and/or weave, write in a journal. I often weave for maybe an hour at night, but it is not a good time for me to be creative.

Q: I noticed in the workshop that you apparently design by drawing. Which is more satisfying, the designing or the weaving?

A: Once I've chosen a drawing, I work it over quite a bit by making an outline [in] pencil, copy it on a copier 6 -8 times and use the copies to play with colors and rearrange shapes. By the time I've made the cartoon I've worked it over enough that I can relax and enjoy the translation to the web. So far, a high level of excitement is maintained the whole time I weave. Which is more satisfying? Weaving.

Q: How do you find time to weave with a full time teaching job?

A: I do what's most important.

Member News

By Ellen Ramsey

Recruit a New Member and Win!

Enclosed with this newsletter is a special membership recruiter form that you should **not** throw away. Help us build our membership and everybody will win! Please read the enclosed prize flyer. You'll see that for each new member you recruit between now and June 24th your name will be entered into a prize drawing with over 40 available prizes. Recruit the *most* new members and you'll win a free Hagen loom courtesy of Norsk Fjord Fiber!

But the best part is that everybody who participates is guaranteed to win something: the members you recruit will receive a bonus 10% off coupon from Fine Fiber Press in their welcome packets, and you will receive a \$5 discount on a two year renewal of your own membership from ATA just for participating. Former members of ATA that you recruit to rejoin will be considered "new" for the purpose of the prize drawing if they have been lapsed for six months or more. Gift memberships that you purchase count as well.

We need to broaden our financial and volunteer base. Imagine that ATA is structured like a pyramid. The foundation of this pyramid is our membership - it drives *everything* that we do. The broader our base, the stronger and higher our pyramid will be. With more members our revenue will grow, we will



Marilyn Rea-Menzies, "The Exhibition Opening,"
44" x 107" (110 x 267cm) 2004

Results will be published in the fall newsletter and all participants will receive their membership renewal coupon with either their newsletter or their renewal notice (which ever comes first).

Good luck and have fun meeting others and winning prizes! Please contact me with your questions. I'm happy to help! Ellen Ramsey (206)440-8903 ew.ramsey@comcast.net

have a bigger pool for volunteer help, and it will enhance our chances of getting grants. I believe it is possible to double our membership, but I'll settle for a goal of 100 new members by the end of our fiscal year. **We need your help to make it happen!**

Here's what you do:

Make copies of the enclosed recruiter form. You can also request that more originals be mailed to you. Contact Ellen (see below)

Write your name on all your forms where it says "Name of Recruiter or Gift Purchaser."

Recruit, recruit, recruit! Take forms with you to workshops that you attend or teach. Get on the agenda at your local Guild meeting or put a notice in their newsletter. Are you going to Rochester for the opening of ATB5 April 2nd? If you meet someone new, just ask if they would like to be contacted about membership, then follow up. Carry a sample Newsletter with you to events and meetings so you can show people what they can expect to receive - and do not forget to mention the special one time discount from Fine Fiber Press!

Collect Payment and mail it to Janet Austin by the June 24th deadline. We recommend that if you do not know the person you are recruiting that you collect the money at the time of recruitment. Please make all checks payable to ATA and please include forms with all checks.

Reap your Reward! At the close of our fiscal year on June 30 we will prepare for the prize drawing. (This may take a while because there will be so many memberships to process, right?) Winners will be notified in July and drawing prizes mailed.

ATA extends a **huge** thank you to our contributing sponsors:

Norsk Fjord Fiber (Noel Thurman)
Schacht Spindle Company (Jane Patrick)
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Image Line Publications (Linda Rees)
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(Kathe Todd-Hooker and Pat Spark)

ATA Welcomes Gallery Circle Members

In preparation for our debut at the SOFA Chicago Exposition last November, ATA launched a new membership category especially for commercial galleries who represent tapestry artists. We are pleased to announce that the following galleries accepted our invitation to Gallery Circle membership in 2004:

Gail Martin Gallery, New York
www.gailmartingallery.com
Etherington Fine Art, Vinyard Haven
www.etheringtonfineart.com
Prime Gallery, Toronto
www.primegallery.ca
Weaving Southwest, Taos
www.weavingsouthwest.com

Membership in ATA's Gallery Circle is by invitation and is completely free to participating galleries. We offer member galleries a link on our website,

resource brochures to share with clients, referrals and other promotional opportunities. If you are represented by a gallery, please let us know so we will send them an invitation. Ellen Ramsey ew.ramsey@comcast.net

Thank you Circle Members

ATA extends a warm word of thanks to the following members who have recently joined, or renewed for the first time, at Circle level: Studio Circle: Andrea Bartholf, Deborah Corsini, Marcella Dziennik, Julia Mitchell, Shelley Socolofsky, and Mary Zicafoose. Curators Circle: Leslie Whitcomb. Collectors Circle: Helena Hernmarck.

The Circle has welcomed over 80 members since its start in December 2003 and is now one of our most important sources of funding for ATA programs. Thank you all very much for increasing the level of your support. (applause!)



By Jan Austin

Announcing a new question and answer column for the ATA website and newsletter to be managed by Janet Austin.

Guidelines: questions should be about some aspect of tapestry, and preferably thought provoking and of interest to other readers.

Email your questions to Jan at nitsuanaj@yahoo.com,
or mail to: 154 PineHill Rd.
Wakefield, RI 02879, USA

Contact ATA

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ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

Send payment to: ATA Membership
c/o Janet Austin
154 Pine Hill Road
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Tapestry Topics



Louise Wheatley, "Voice from the Whirlwind, "
Scroll, opened 10" x 30", closed i 10" x 3.5", 2001

visit our website
www.americantapestryalliance.org

Next Issue:"Aesthetic Influences"

Submission Guidelines

Next deadline: April 15, July 15, October 15, January 15

Send all items to: **Micala Sidore (Guest Editor)**
Micala@HawleyStreet.com
Hawley Street Tapestry Studio
19C Hawley Street
Northampton, MA 01060 USA

All photographs and electronic images should include size, date completed and photo credits.

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

Exhibition reviews: We seek articles that describe the show with insight and critical observations. Describe the overall sense of the show and explain the parts that contribute to this sense.

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