



Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

www.american Tapestry alliance.org

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About Time: Australian Studio Tapestry 1975-2005 Ararat Regional Art Gallery

by Debbie Herd

The Ararat Regional Art Gallery held the first exhibition of its kind in Australia, presenting a comprehensive survey of 30 years of Australian studio tapestry practice. The exhibit ran from August 12 to September 26, 2010.

Prior to 1976, the year which saw the establishment of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop (VTW), tapestry weaving was little known in Australia and mainly pursued by artists who were self taught or had trained overseas and migrated to Australia after World War II. With the founding of the VTW and extensive training through rigorous workshops held by Australian artist Belinda Ramson, a new art form was eagerly embraced and destined to take the stage as Australia's pre-eminent textile art. Ramson had trained at the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh along with Archie

Brennan who was appointed advisor to the VTW. Ramson and Brennan were integral in the merging of the visual arts with the new language of weaving.



Tess Crawford, "Reclining Lady" 1977-78,
wool and cotton, 87 x 10 cm (variable).
Victorian State Craft Collection on long-term loan to
Ararat Regional Art Gallery. Photo by Debbie Herd.

Many of the 23 works selected for "About Time" were woven by independent tapestry artists who have had an association at some time with the VTW. Chosen mostly from the Ararat Regional Art Gallery's substantial permanent collection, with selected loans from other public galleries and private collections, this exhibition shows the embrace of public galleries to collect and exhibit this new art form. It is a testament to the Ararat Regional Art Gallery's continued commitment to the acquisition and exhibition of tapestry in Australia.

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IMPORTANT DATES

November 30, 2010 Entry deadline for Small Tapestry International 2: Passages

December 12, 2010 Ads for the Membership Directory are due

January 15, 2011 Submissions due for Tapestry Topics Spring Issue: Exploring Color: coordinator Tori Kleinert (tktapestry@msn.com)

January 20 - May 1, 2011 American Tapestry Biennial 8, American Textile History Museum, Lowell, MA

January 20, 2011 5:30-7:30pm Opening of American Tapestry Biennial 8, American Textile History Museum, Lowell, MA

March 13, 2011, 2:00pm Lecture, American Textile History Museum, Lowell, MA, Susan Martin Maffei "Under the Influence, or Is It Just Inspiration?"

April 1, 2011 Submission due for Summer Issue of Tapestry Topics: Cartoons: Let me tell you a story... (*We still need a Theme Coordinator!* Contact Julie Barnes if you are interested: ata_julie@msn.com)

April 2 - May 2, 2011 Small Tapestry International 2: Passages, Weaving Southwest, Taos, NM

April 2, 2011 Opening of Small Tapestry International 2: Passages

April 3 - 5, 2011 Chimayo Weaving, taught by Lisa Trujillo, Weaving Southwest, Taos, NM

April 10, 2011, 2:00 pm Lecture, American Textile History Museum in Lowell, MA, Anne Jackson "Anne Jackson: Knotted Tapestries"

April 15, 2011 Deadline, ATA International Student Award

June 1- July 4, 2011 Small Tapestry International 2: Passages, Handforth Gallery, Tacoma, WA

Early Fall Small Tapestry International 2: Passages, Cultural Center at Glen Allen, VA

Do you use cartoons?

Julie Barnes

From the beginner to the experienced weaver, there are a variety of ways cartoons are and are not used in tapestry. Some of you probably design in many steps and create a cartoon that guides you through the whole weaving process while others detest the whole concept of cartoons. Whether you like or dislike them or have a way to do without them, ATA members would love to learn from you.

We still hope to find someone to coordinate the Summer 2011 issue theme about cartoons. Contact me at ata_julie@msn.com if you are interested in submitting an article or working with a few authors to coordinate the theme.

January 15, 2011 is the deadline to submit articles for the Spring issue. Exploring Color is the theme with Tori Kleinert as the coordinator (tktapestry@msn.com).

Helping to coordinate a theme for *Tapestry Topics* is a great way to network with other ATA members and share your thoughts and ideas. Please consider sharing your time and talents as theme coordinator for one of these upcoming:

- **Honoring Tradition**
- **Inspiring Innovation**
- **Wedge Weave**
- **Going International**

The *Tapestry Topics* team is looking forward to hearing from you — send your ideas to Julie Barnes (ATA_julie@msn.com).

Nancy Crampton is out of a job now with ATA. She was responsible for overseeing the printing and mailing of *Tapestry Topics* for the last few years. Thank you Nancy for a job well done.

About Time: Australian Studio Tapestry 1975-2005 Ararat Regional Art Gallery, continued

The exhibition opened with early works that clearly showed the era in which they were created: the learning of new skills by self-taught artists and a response to popular materials of the day.

Although not considered a traditional tapestry, Roma Centre's "Basic forms in black and white", 1975, (image unavailable) incorporates areas of different twills within the shapes and different textured backgrounds. Centre (an abstract painter) created a rhythm of geometric shapes in various tones of black, grey, white, and brown fibers.

Tess Crawford

Crawford's shaped tapestry piece showed the back view of a reclining nude lounging on a couch covered in brightly coloured, patterned patchwork of knitted and crocheted rugs. The couch area of the tapestry has been padded to give a sculptural effect along with the suggestion of the nude's body weight. A striking and unusual tapestry, it has the quiet soft tonal skin colours and pose of the nude suggesting peaceful sleep, resting against the vibrant riot of hues often depicted in Middle Eastern tribal rugs.

Marie Cook

Purchased with the assistance of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, 1978.

Marie Cook studied graphic design and was a founding weaver at the Victorian Tapestry Workshop; currently the head of the Art Department at South West Institute of Tafe, Marie was instrumental in setting up the Diploma of Art correspondence tapestry course which runs through Tafe. This tapestry shows Cook's embrace of a new medium in which to express her creativity. A geometric, abstract response to the female figure shows great confidence in design and technique, with the use of strong imagery and half passing used in the background to form a lively tapestry.



Marie Cook, "Sunbather" 1977, wool and cotton, 180 x 150 cm. Collection of Ararat Regional Art Gallery. Purchased with the assistance of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, 1978.

Kay Lawrence AM

Lawrence's tapestry explores the identity between the 'house and self', a row of houses across the top of the tapestry depicted in black woven outline, one named 'my house' as a testament to its identification. Below there is a roughly drawn plan of the layout of the rooms inside the house with a strong and imposing figure woven over the surface of the imagery. Woven from a drawing executed in conte crayon,

continued...



Kay Lawrence AM, "House / Self"
1989, cotton, wool, and linen,
135 x 165 cm. Collection of Ararat
Regional Art Gallery. Purchased with
the assistance of the Victorian
Regional Galleries Art Foundation,
1990. Photo by Terence Bogue.

this tapestry shows the mastery of Lawrence's ability to translate spontaneous mark making in drawing into an example of highly successful mark making in woven tapestry.

Valerie Kirk

Kirk draws on her interest in travel and culture in her response to the ancient landscape of Outback Australia: a bold and graphic composition with the white mullock heaps of the Andamooka opal fields that contrasts against the clear blue sky across the top of the tapestry. The center, woven in the jewel like colours reflected in Australian opals provide a background scattered with the bleached bones of prehistoric dinosaurs. The bottom of the tapestry is patterned with the shapes and colours of raw opals while the sides respond to the landscape of the outback but woven intermixed in the jewel-like colours of the precious stones.

Gerda Van Hammond

Gerda has long been committed to the discipline that it takes to produce large studio-woven tapestries. Her piece is a fabulous and striking tapestry translated from an abstract acrylic painting with its powerful central image of the cross. It is a sophisticated work. With the artist's use of colour blending,

the tapestry is a confident example of the possibilities of free-gesture painting and mark making translated into a successful, lively, rich, and thought provoking tapestry.

Displayed across a strong patterned red and bright pink background, Tass Mavrogordato has used images from popular culture in "It's Different for Girls" 1993 (photo unavailable). Cat woman, depicted ready to pounce at any moment, stands beside a fully clothed portrait of the artist as a modern woman of her time clutching her hands over her ears. Standing beside is a skeleton with her hands covering her eyes. Placed slightly behind is a self portrait of the artist naked with her hands covering her mouth. Scales, Arum lilies crossed like swords, and Alice in Wonderland's white rabbit playing the trumpet form the foreground along with graffiti like text, "It's Different for Girls." Mavrogordato's tapestry is a modern commentary of the status of women along with the tongue-in-cheek reference to hear no evil, see no evil, and speak no evil.



Valerie Kirk, "Bones and Andamooka Landscape" 1990, wool, cotton, lurex, and torn cotton fabric, 116 x 181 cm. Collection of Riddoch Art Gallery Mount Gambier. Photo by Debbie Herd.



Gerda Van Hammond, "Inner and outer searching"
1994, wool and cotton, 179 x 158 cm. Collection of the
Hamilton Art Gallery. Photo by Debbie Herd.



Kate Derum, "In the Heat of the Moment" 1998, wool, cotton, linen, 190 x 150 cm. Collection of Ararat Regional Art Gallery. Purchased with the assistance of the Robert Salzer Foundation, 2008.

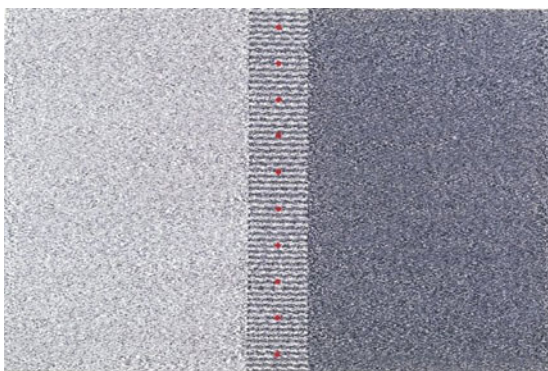
Kate Derum

Kate often combined the traditional composition and layout of Middle Eastern Prayer rugs to depict her response to the urban environment in which she lived and worked. In the work "In the heat of the moment" Derum's lively tapestry, bordered by collaged narrative scenes, shows the central image of a rotunda set in a backdrop of flames with the imposing head depicted on a pedestal keeping a watchful eye on the evening's events.

Sara Lindsay

Sara was also a founding weaver at the VTW and is currently employed at the workshop as production manager. Sara's creative use of torn checked gingham material for the weft of the tapestry is disrupted by a central row of vertical red dots. The tapestry is quiet and contemplative with a strong Zen like feeling about it. The more one studies the tapestry the more one sees the subtle changes in colour values, not unlike the paintings by American painter Mark Rothko hanging in Rothko's Chapel.

A founding weaver at the VTW, Cresside Collette has had a long career in the field of tapestry. Her shaped tapestry "Uniting Venus and Mars" 2001 (image unavailable) woven in muted shades is from a section of a large scale charcoal drawing inspired by Botticelli's painting "Mars and Venus 1485". The piece responds to the way fabric drapes on the human body to conceal and reveal parts of the male and female figures.



Sara Lindsay, "In-Between #2" 1999, cotton, 120 x 180 cm. Collection of the Ararat Regional Art Gallery.

Tim Gresham

Tim is highly regarded for his proficient skills as a tapestry weaver and his commitment to the painstaking slowness of his technique. Also a professional photographer, Tim often features elements inspired by his photographs which are then translated into nonrepresentational tapestries. The hand of the master is obvious here. Contrasting passes build up quiet tonal values alongside the purposefully stronger areas of colour that somehow do not clash but blend perfectly. Two contrasting colours are hatched in oval-like shapes that are interlocked together forming a repeating pattern. What seem like perfectly woven circles when viewed from a distance, on closer investigation actually show soft hatching and optical illusion to form the circumference.



Tim Gresham, "Triptych from red" 2002, wool and cotton, Installation dimensions 100 x 360 cm. Collection of the Ararat Regional Art Gallery. Photo by Tim Gresham.

Mardi Nowak

A response to gender and identity in our over publicized world using of collage from images of celebrity and fashion, Nowak recreates the images in the slow, labor-intensive, and ancient medium of tapestry.



Mardi Nowak, "Playing the Game" 2005-06, linen, cotton, and wool, 60 x 90 cm. Private Collection, Melbourne, Australia.

Although some significant Australian artist weavers were not represented in this exhibition and it was impossible to review all the tapestries, the commitment of the Ararat Gallery to purchase and showcase tapestry is strong and will continue well into the future. Many emerging artists are beginning to produce works, and I am certain that there will be more high standard exhibitions shown in Ararat.

Greetings from the Co-Directors

As preparations for the Textile Society of America (TSA) conference reach heights of frenzy and anticipation, the first frost of the season has come to Nebraska. TSA's international textile conference is of particular significance to the American Tapestry Alliance organization and membership as it is the host and premiere site of our American Tapestry Biennial Eight (ATB8) 2010 exhibition. The coming together over a major tapestry exhibition is a new collaboration and partnership for ATA and TSA. Early autumn in the heartland of Nebraska could not be a better place for both organizations to get better acquainted.

The 60-page ATB8 exhibition catalog is stunning and features the inspired work of 105 tapestry artists who represent 15 countries. The catalog includes a review written by our esteemed juror, Rebecca A.T. Stevens, the Consulting Curator of Contemporary Textiles of the Textile Museum in Washington, DC. It is available for sale through the ATA website. The Elder Gallery at Nebraska Wesleyan University quickly sold out their order of catalogs before the conference's opening reception. Visit www.american-tapestryalliance.org/NandR/Catalogs.html to order your catalog before they sell out.

ATB8 explores the artistry and great depth of technical and aesthetic virtuosity of contemporary tapestry. But there is a story behind the scenes of this beautiful exhibition – the tale of the intricate and complex web of volunteers and their hours of commitment harvested to make a world-class tapestry exhibition a reality. Thank yous abound in every direction to all whose hand touched this endeavor. We are a volunteer-driven organization. This means that every opportunity that is extended to our membership is based on personal gifts of time and service provided by others. That said, resounding hoorahs, hats off, and deep gratitude is bestowed upon Susan Iverson and Michael Rohde for co-chairing ATB8.

If you are unable to see ATB8 in Lincoln, Nebraska, you will have a second chance in Lowell, Massachusetts at the American Textile History Museum (www.athm.org). ATB8 will be on exhibit there beginning January 22 through May 1, 2011. The opening reception in Lowell is January 20, 2011 from 5:30-7:30 pm.

We hope that you are all working on entries for our juried Small Format Tapestry exhibition, "Passages". Entries are due November 30 – more information may

be found on ATA's website (americantapestryalliance.org/Exhibitions/STInt/STI2_Passages.html).

While catching our breath from the ATA activity-filled summer and autumn, your board is immersed in discussion and plans of website redesign, scholarship programs, a comprehensive ATA visual rebrand, and planning for future exhibitions and workshops. As you will see in this issue of *Tapestry Topics*, we are celebrating the use of handspun yarns. We salute everyone who contributed to this issue, a milestone edition, in that we have officially moved to a paperless version of our *Tapestry Topics*. Thank you for your understanding and support as we heed the economy of resources and manpower.

We could not accomplish all we do, nor dream dreams for the future, without the generous support of our donors and membership. Thank you as always for your commitment to ATA. May the winter afford you ample time and inspiration to share your talents with the world.

Best wishes from your co-directors,
Mary Zicafoose and Michael Rohde

Handspun's Important Values in Fiber Art

by Stanley Bulbach, Ph.D.

This handspun theme presents a considerable challenge. We contributors are supposed to discuss our stepping out of the tapestry mainstream to use non-standard materials — handspun yarns — in our woven art.

The wisest way to discuss why we use non-standard materials is to begin by making sure first that everyone is familiar with the use of standard materials. And for each of us as individual weavers, the reasons why we select any of the materials we use are founded upon both avocational (hobbyist) and professional (commercial) considerations: professional even if only regarding where we can dependably purchase supplies and materials; and avocational even if only regarding our characteristically deep attraction to this art form.

Unfortunately, not much dialogue has been encouraged about our field's standard materials, what they are, why they are used, and what might be important about them. Yet probing dialogue like this is crucial for ATA members, especially if we want scholars to

research and record our field accurately, if we desire exhibition opportunities and audiences, and if we seek markets.

The issue of materials goes directly to the heart of one of our field's most important questions: "Why does the contemporary art establishment assign a lower hierarchical importance and value to woven imagery than to painted imagery?" Obviously, many answers lie in the specific materials we select for creating our art work.

So this theme is a rare opportunity to discuss ideas and information. All of the contributors to the ATA theme in this issue have volunteered to address their use of non-standard materials — handspun yarns. As the theme coordinator, I hope the insights they share help the ATA and its community open up wider probing discussions on our field's important issues.

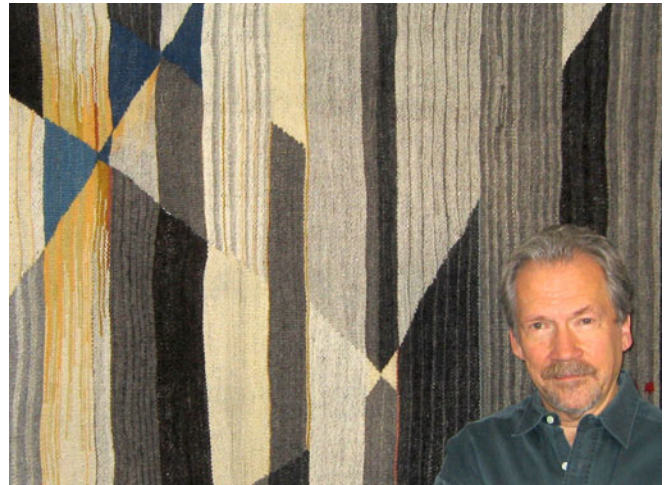
My Art Form

While my art work is flatwoven weft-faced, it is not technically classical tapestry, but a much older ancestor in the "tapis" family. It is traditional Near Eastern carpet weaving. And today, handspinning is the only way to secure yarns with the specific types of wool and yarn structure that made this ancient traditional art form so very special.

One of the key differences between traditional Near Eastern carpet weaving and classical tapestry art is that qualities of the materials used in the traditional carpet weaving bear much greater importance in the finished piece. Another difference is that the woven structure in traditional carpet weaving has a greater impact in the creation of the design and imagery. A third key difference is that the intended function of the carpet tradi-



Stanley Bulbach, "Third Sephardic Cemetery" 1997, detail, carpet bed, approx 6 x 3' Photo by Stanley Bulbach.



"Sixth Avenue" 2010, detail, prayer carpet, handspun lustrous Lincoln longwools, natural dyes and the artist, approx. 6 x 3' Photo by Stanley Bulbach.

tionally has an important influence on the design and imagery. Not only are these priorities personally important as an artist, they are crucially important for those who acquire my art work.

In the traditional carpet weaving arts I pursue, handspun yarns are the standard material. It was the unique characteristics and qualities of the handspun yarns and their relationship to the finished piece that seized my attention during my graduate studies of the ancient Near East. And in this traditional art form it is the handspun yarns that are crucial to the beauty, the animating spirit, the importance, and the value of the finished woven piece.

I always found weaving and textiles to be fascinating. Their structure, their composition, their history, their purposes, and their importance all captivated me aesthetically and intellectually. But when I first explored weaving, I used commercially available, industrially produced yarns. The final results disappointed me, but I didn't understand why. It wasn't until I was guided to look more carefully at traditional ethnic work that I realized that so much of the spirit animating the traditional work resided within the original materials themselves.

Handspun Wools

By the 1970s there had already been a rebirth of handspinning in the West, but the field has never really developed effectively over the subsequent third of a century. Fiber organizations and organizational advocacies focused on handspinning as a hobby whose primary purpose was to be a pastime having fun with historic re-creation and "all natural" materials. There has

continued...

been almost no focus on handspinning as the creation of yarns with uniquely superior qualities that are highly desirable, valuable, and marketable. On the one hand, our advocacies have not encouraged basic market education and market development; while on the other hand, they ardently solicit donations to cover their organizational budgets.

The modern rebirth of handspinning in recent decades is founded upon the renewed availability of a very wide range of sheep breeds and their many different types of wools. It is also founded on varying the ways to prepare and spin the selected wools to create vastly different types of yarns otherwise unavailable. Within those two wide-ranging variables of material and technique, one can tailor-make wool yarns that are far superior for their final intended use than is the relatively limited range of standard industrially produced stock commercially available today.

Carpet Wools

In the flatwoven carpet traditions, the most prized works have been ones woven from yarns of the most lustrous of wools. Typically, those are “longwools” grown in higher elevations. The wool fibers for this carpet weaving have characteristics opposite of those used in most of the garment industry. For close-to-skin garments Merino wools are sought for their short annual growth of a couple inches, their extremely narrow fiber diameters whose softness does not cause itching, and their high crimp count which maximizes drape, breathability, and warmth.

The longest wools are from the Lincoln breed, which I use for my work. Lincoln fibers have very large diameters, have waviness instead of crimp, and have large plaques on the fibers which are highly reflective. The Lincoln fibers have very long annual growth of up to 18” in some flocks and have extreme tensile strength. Yarns from Lincoln wool



Stanley Bulbach, "Requiem" 1997, detail with fringe, flying carpet, approx 6 x 3' Photo by Stanley Bulbach.

are designed to maximize hardness and durability.

Custom tailoring hand-spun yarn includes designing or engineering how the selected fibers will be prepared and spun. This includes deciding whether the wools will be woolen or worsted spun or variations between the two. In woolen spinning, the fibers enter the forming yarn at a right

angle to the yarn, making a more coiled, more elastic, heat-trapping yarn. In worsted spinning, the fibers enter the forming yarn parallel to the yarn, making a more twisted, less elastic, harder, and cooler yarn.

In traditional carpet weaving, the worsted qualities are prized. Historically, those qualities were also preferred in tapestry weaving. With the rebirth of fiber art in the 1960s, tapestry weavers were also encouraged to use woolen spun yarns for the pronounced textures they created. Unfortunately many of those same yarns were liable to stretching, felting, and trapping visible dirt within the yarn structure. Over time, many of those materials incurred permanent damage, causing major curatorial issues and significant deterioration of market value.

The worsted spun yarns of Lincoln wool are the strongest and least elastic of wool yarns. They are also the most lustrous. These yarns produce weft-faced weaving with a surface that is highly reflective. These

yarns glow, looking significantly different as the light changes and as the viewer moves. As to the much thinner double-ply worsted yarns I create for my warps, they have a superior tensile strength and durability, perfect for the tightly strung warps this weaving technique requires.

In its industrialization and mass marketing, modern sheep farming has developed flocks of all-purpose sheep so that when harvested the crop can be used for whatever market purpose is most profitable. This meant white wool only. Any other colors and



Cory Simpson's Lincoln longwools fleece. Photo by Stanley Bulbach.

shades wanted by factories and stores were intended to be factory-dyed to achieve maximum control over uniformity. Under that pressure from the wool industry, most sheep with any colored wools were destroyed to prevent contaminating the large, genetically pure white flocks.

In contrast, one of my primary reasons for hand-spinning my yarns is the wide range of natural colored fleeces that have become available in recent decades from growers of small flocks specifically serving today's handspinners. Today many original genetic strains have been restored. I can now secure glowing Lincoln fleece ranging from sweet butter white through platinums and silvers through grays and charcoals to black.

The Flatwoven Design

As all tapestry weavers know, weft-faced flatweaving has a strong "grain" based upon its physical structure. Only the weft yarns are visible in the finished weaving and only they present the visible designs and images. But where those visible weft yarns are located and visible depends entirely upon the perpendicular warp yarns which are not visible in the completed design and imagery.

This means that the woven structure itself dictates greatly how design elements and imagery can be created and how they will appear. For example, this structure makes it perfectly easy to create a design of bands of color that run parallel with the wefts. But that same structure also makes it difficult and tricky to create similar design bands in the perpendicular direction, that is, parallel with the warps.

Classical tapestry art is characterized by creating designs and images despite that grain, as if painting freely in all directions on a canvas. In contrast, traditional carpet weaving tends to follow the preferences of the grain and avoid working against it. That process automatically distorts and abstracts the development of design and imagery.

Design elements created in this type of weaving can be understood as comprised of certain numbers of visible weft yarns engaging and covering certain numbers of warps going back and forth. Thus, when finished, these design elements can be easily repeated elsewhere simply by counting again. The repetition in pattern in this type of weaving creates rhythm as well. Therefore, an inherent musicality is yet another significant characteristic of the flatwoven carpet traditions.

But handspun yarns are never homogenous. While the patterns in this type of work engage the viewer as rhythmic repetitions, the handspun engages the viewer with its inevitable variations. Even when the handspun yarns are almost perfectly consistent in diameter, their color and shades inevitably have subtle gradations which draw attention. Those subtleties are the famous "abrash" that is so highly prized in the oriental carpet trade.

Thus, part of the lively animating spirit in this traditional art form is that the more exactly the weaver tries to replicate design elements, the more obvious their slight differences seem to step forward. This dynamic, of course, parallels one of the most engaging features of the craft arts — ancient and contemporary — the dance between the seemingly willful materials and the cunning of the human hand and eye.



Stanley Bulbach, "Sumac Auspices" 1983, detail, prayer carpet, handspun lustrous Lincoln longwools, natural dyes, approx. 6 x 3'. Photo by Stanley Bulbach.

A Magical Art Form

And so the replication of those abstractions, that limited palette of shades and colors, those uses, those arts, are all reasons why I weave with handspun from Lincoln longwools. The luster and glow of the yarns is unparalleled. Most contemporary art requires bright illumination, which is detrimental for fiber work, especially for protein fibers like wools and silks. But due to the use of luster wools, my work is most enjoyable in ambient lighting, even in moonlight. And the use of these handspun yarns creates a final art work that is sturdy and can be easily handled, washed, and remounted. This all adds significant market value to the work in addition to the visibly obvious inherent quality of the wools.

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But the real magic of this art form for me is not recreating what painters can do. The real magic for me includes the original functions and understandings of these traditional carpets. For millennia, the carpet-making arts created surfaces that transformed unfamiliar ground for nomads into homes with familiar gardens. They transformed mundane ground into hallowed spaces to pray and meditate. They transformed barren earth into auspicious birthing spaces. These arts dealt with the magic of surfaces and portals between various worlds of human consciousness and existence. They dealt with brute survival, with aspiration, with passion, and death, with worlds beyond.

I strive to recreate this magic with abstractions, patterns, their music, their colors, their shades, and of course the animating glow, all of which depends upon my handspun lustrous Lincoln longwool yarns.

Stanley Walter Bulbach lives and works in New York City. His undergraduate studies were in engineering and history of religion. His MA and Ph.D. from New York University are in Near Eastern studies. He creates prayer carpets, carpet beds, and flying carpets with contemporary designs from traditional techniques as a modern art for enjoyment on the wall. He is active as a community advocate and organizer in Manhattan. No one else in the field of fiber art has written or lectured more than he has on encouraging constructive dialogue to challenge the standards of current academic research applied in the official recording of our field's achievements.

Trail of Thread

by Pam Hutley

Picture this: a family-run cattle station (ranch) in Queensland, Australia, a stay-at-home mum with small children, a staff member from New Zealand who was a spinner.

I have been a knitter from a very young age. I had learned to knit, embroider, and eventually make my own clothes with my mother's guidance. I knit every spare moment, keeping my family warm in sweaters and beanies.

After more than 15 years working on the family's beef cattle station, I was feeling a little house bound as a full-time mother. I had recently acquired a spinning wheel. After reading an article in an alternative magazine, I decided I would like to add to my already quite self-sufficient life by creating my own yarns and one day learning to weave. Our wonderful staff member shared her knowledge of spinning and gently told me that the dirty, sticky, Merino fleece someone had given me, was not the best for a beginner.

I persevered and began my constant search for suitable fibre for spinning. I tried everything I could: very long adult mohair (with accompanying odour), silk from my home raised silk worms, dog fur, camelids, cellulose fibres, and wool, much of it with added texture — that being burrs, grass seeds, and manure. From all this fun, I found wool to be my favourite fibre.

My family and I moved from the station to our present home to better educate our children, and I was delighted to have access to a library. There I found Rachel Brown's *The Spinning Weaving and Dyeing Book*. What a revelation! Rachel's clear descriptions and illustrations made this book a most important reference and gave me the confidence to begin selling my hand-spun yarns.

From this book, I learned to be more selective about choosing fleece and spinning for specific projects. I was particularly drawn to the information for making primitive looms, and indeed wove on these for several years — collecting sticks from trees in my yard for a backstrap loom, cutting up cereal boxes for card weaving, and building a Navajo loom and warping frame. On this loom I wove small prototypes of saddle



Pam Hutley, "Odd Socks" 2008, hand spun wool warp and weft, all natural dyes, 55.5 x 84 cm. Photo by Pam Hutley.



Pam Hutley, "Drought" 1995, handspun wool weft, linen warp, Natural coloured wool, synthetic dyes, 78 x 58 cm. Photo by Pam Hutley.

blankets with hand-spun wool as weft, and re-spun commercial wool yarn as warp. In the mid 1990s, I purchased a Rio Grande loom from Rachel Brown in Taos, New Mexico. In doing this, I realised my ambition to own a weaving business, creating one-of-a-kind saddle blankets with hand-spun wool weft and commercial wool warp.

The Spinning Weaving and Dyeing Book also introduced me to tapestry weaving, but I only used this technique in my commissioned saddle blankets to weave in cattle or horse brands, or the client's initials. Another exploration at this time was dyeing. I had for years been dyeing with the leaves, barks, and flowers from the bush and my garden. While the colours I achieved had a certain beauty, they were mostly confined to soft yellow, beige, and orange. My saddle blanket clients preferred bright hues. Many requests were for colours and designs that coordinated with their chaps or the colour of the horse. So I purchased a supply of synthetic dyes and moved away from natural dyeing including the 'hunting and gathering' process.

I read about the wonderful pictorial tapestry weaving of Sarah Swett in *Spin Off* magazine. I had begun experimenting more with tapestry, and had woven "Drought", an emotional response to the constant dry weather exacerbated by some careless person setting alight what little grass was left in the mountains where we grazed our cattle. I was drawn to Sarah's work for several reasons: she wove with hand-spun yarns (both warp and weft), her knowledge and use of natural dyes, and that she wove in her weft ends so her tapestries were two sided (the back being the mirror image of the front). Since I wove in the weft ends in my saddle blankets, I also did this on my tapestry experiments, not knowing there was a different way.

I attended a workshop with Sarah during Interweave Press' annual Spin Off Autumn Retreat (SOAR), held at Lake Tahoe. Sarah shared her hand-spun and natural dyed weft yarns with the students in the workshop, and this created a turning point in my weaving studies — not only refining my tapestry techniques but the way I spun for my weaving. I found the finer yarns, used two or three together, enabled better control of hue, value, and image. At SOAR I also had access to a great variety of products to enhance my work, such as finally finding a supplier of natural dye extracts, and discovering different styles of drop spindles! So began my collection of these very practical tools I use on a daily basis.

So where has this trail of thread lead me?

I have a great studio space with my Rio Grande loom and several sizes of upright tapestry looms created from the design so generously shared by Archie Brennan. My current tapestry plans and cartoons reference my life on the family cattle station, honouring names of meeting places, watercourses, and the happenings that only my family know (they were not passed on when the station sold, and indeed would not have any meaning to anyone else). I have a series of new designs for my saddle blankets also referencing the knowledge and deep affection I have of the bush and the Brigalow country of Central Queensland.

My knitting is ever present, with designs from tapestries and saddle blankets finding their way into vests and socks.

To enable all these creative adventures to come to fruition, I spin weft yarn in various sizes: a tightly spun singles yarn that I make into two, three, or four ply warp for tapestry, and three-ply knitting yarns for sweaters, vests, and socks. I purchase a variety of high quality clean wool fleece from Australian suppliers. I dye all of them with the rich and dependable hues in extract form available from Earthues. I have many experiences to draw ideas from, and they all seem to be connected by a thread.

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Pam Hutley, "Gilgai" 2010, saddle blanket, double thickness, hand spun wool weft, commercial wool warp, all natural dyes, 79 cm square. Photo by Pam Hutley.

Pam Hutley lives in a no-longer remote rural area in Central Queensland, Australia. Instead of cattle and horses she has bags of wool, too many ideas, and not enough tapestries.

Spinning in the Rain

by Dorothy Clews

I like hand spinning, but have not used my yarn much in tapestries. Three years ago while trying to rehabilitate crusty, sandy soil that was over a layer of clay, I placed layers of any organic material I could find over the beds. I had done this to my new garden beds to help improve the soil and protect the dirt from heavy rain and searing heat. I used cotton trash from the local ginnery in some areas; and to my delight, some cotton seed germinated. The bushes produced wonderful fluffy bolls of cotton, both white and a little brown, all with only natural rainfall.

I started to spin the cotton in the evenings and was not sure what I would do with the yarn. I then saw a documentary about a cotton farmer in an isolated area of India where a seed company held the farmers in debt. With poor soils and a lack of seasonal rains, farmers were trapped by having to buy the seed and fertiliser through loans from the seed company. A minimal harvest would leave these farmers destitute. It made me think about the garden that I was trying to establish, with its poor soil and town-imposed reduced watering due to low water supply.

I am interested in regeneration/transformation in both my garden work and my tapestry work. At the end of each season the remains of the cotton plants are shredded and then added back to the soil. The roots of the cotton plants, because they have had to search out for water deep into the clay layer rather than relying on shallower frequent watering by irrigation, are strong and go deep into the soil. I can now dig in that part of the garden. Before that, planting the cotton needed a pickaxe to make a planting hole. The more traditional plants and shrubs planted around the cotton growing area are now finding it easier to put down roots in the loosened soil, and are protected from winter frosts by the dead cotton plants that are left.

With other artists in a small plane, I went on an incredible photographic trip over a vast irrigated cotton property to the south of my town. I was taken by the complex natural flood plain that was completely obliterated with ploughed dusty paddocks and a vast system of engineered channels and dams. After seeing this, the idea of making a series of tapestries recording annual rainfall each year was born.



Ripe cotton boll ready for harvesting.
Photo by Dorothy Clews.

I decided that I would weave long strips and stitch them together into a tight coil, echoing the corrugated patterns of the irrigated paddocks outside the town. The strips became a form of measure that are emphasised by the various qualities and colour of each cotton boll as it is spun and woven. The 'coil' repeats the circular patterns that the vast circular irrigators make. It also is reminiscent of the circular growth patterns of the trees cut down to develop the cotton properties and tree rings that record growth patterns. The rings are analysed by scientists to examine climatic conditions. Each year my goal is to have a round disk of tapestry woven of hand-spun cotton that would vary in size depending on the harvest. The collection of coils will then make up an installation of work. Rather than mounted conventionally on a wall, the discs will be laid out of the ground.

My artistic production became integrated with the mundane activities of daily living. Weaving took place in the studio, but the cotton preparation and spinning was done in the evenings whilst watching television. Compost was made to feed the cotton plants. Computer research and local knowledge was secured to find out when to plant based on soil temperature. In between more normal day to day activities, once the dew was gone, the cotton was picked. In the early dawn, composting or mulching was done to avoid the daytime heat of high summer. Time was spent viewing radar images at the Bureau of Meteorology website to see if there was any likelihood of rain.

It was not until the second year, and the making of the second disc of cotton, that I became aware of how



Last year's cotton plants, pruned and ready for this year's cotton crop.
Photo by Dorothy Clews.



Dorothy Clews, "For the season of 2008-09", installation work in progress, handspun cotton, seine twine, variable dimensions, and detail view right.

my studio practice had to change. Instead of starting on a tapestry at the beginning and working on it until it was completed, the cotton insisted that I work to a timetable dictated by the season. Spinning starts in February; by March weaving was begun, while at the same time I continue to harvest and spin. By April I would have strips of tapestry waiting to be stitched.

The second growing season was a good year for cotton. We had ongoing drought, but rain fell at the right time for planting during mid October and again just before December. Another good shower fell in February which was just enough to keep the cotton plants producing. That year I started working on "For the Season of 2008-09" in February and did not finish the woven and stitched disk until the following December.

This year the drought finally broke, but it was too late for a large cotton crop. My cotton seed went in the ground very late because of sandstorms. This year's tapestry "For the season of 2009-10" is not quite completed, but a mild, unusually damp winter encouraged the cotton to keep producing until July.

The last three years has underlined for me how much labour goes into making a cotton article, much of it hidden (in the coil) invisible to the casual viewer, except for the outside edge. The variations of quality in the cotton is revealed in the strips' slight variations in colour, texture, and spin, especially in the first "Season" where the soil had not been improved at all. It is possible to see where each cotton seed has been incorporated into the textile. The title "For the Season of..." is a reminder of the link cotton has to the fashion industry. It also refers to the growing season, harvesting, spinning, weaving, sewing and saving the seed for next year's crop.



Handspun

by Inge Norgaard

The birds outside are busy gathering in large flocks in the mild misty air. Flying up and down between the trees, they are readying themselves for their journey to the wintering places — chirping enchantingly.

That is the time when the wool is calling again “Spin, spin” and in old days, children would call out, “Spin me a tale!” and gather around the spinning wheel.

Once upon a time I went to a tapestry show in a museum in Denmark. The tapestries on exhibit were images of birds on the cliffs on the Faeroe Isle. They were woven by Annette Holdensen.

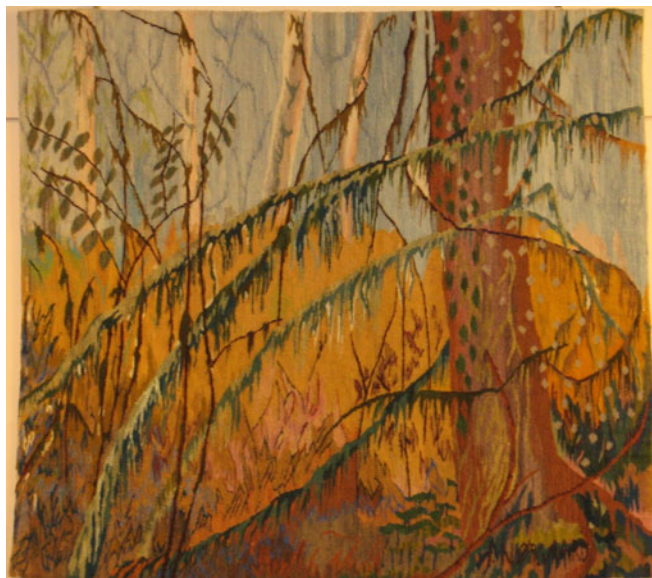
I had never seen anything that made such an impression on me. I was in love with the medium and the wonderful natural yarns they were woven with. This sent me on a journey of pursuing the skills to do work like this myself.

I became a student of the renowned tapestry weaver Inge Bjorn and later Annette Holdensen, who showed me tapestry weaving, spinning, and dyeing with plants. I loved the quietness of these tasks. It was calm, meditative, and in touch with nature. It kept me grounded and at peace.

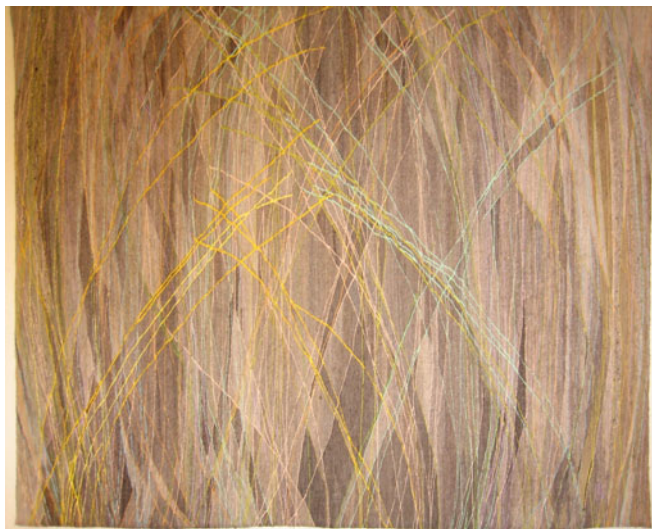
I learned to travel light. I used what I could find and made tools as needed which gave me a freedom to move easily. Finding wool on fences and on the ground, I could pick it up and spin it with any straight stick and a bit of clay or stone as weight. I could make a loom of two pieces of wood, a warp, and a piece of iron to weigh it down. I was in business. This was a wonderful way of being able to create art on the spot, inspired by what surrounded me.

In my studio I spun on a castle wheel. This type of wheel was easy to take outside and sit in the sun or along in a car to teach students. It was easy and great to work with. The secret of teaching was first learning the rhythm of the wheel and your foot. Then add your wool and fingers. Keep the fingers loose on the wool, do not over spin, and pull gently. This way students can learn to get a bit of yarn in a couple of days, and like bicycling, they never forgot, once they learned it.

I liked to spin the fleece unwashed and uncarded. The lanolin in the wool made it very smooth and easy to spin raw. I would choose the best wool I could buy, and usually bought a whole fleece or two at the time.



Inge Norgaard, "Northwest Sanctuary" 1998, handspun wool, 52 x 56"

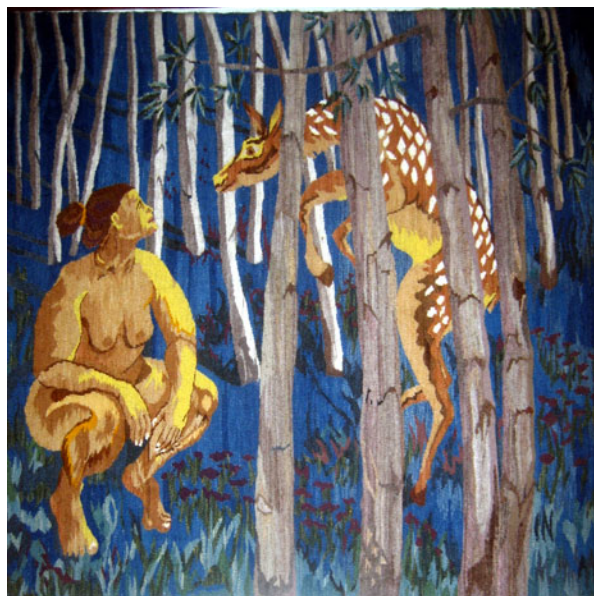


Inge Norgaard, "Grasses" 2002, handspun llama, 60 x 78"

There is a big difference in the various wools. I usually chose long fibers with a beautiful shine.

It also saved me a huge amount of time to spin it raw. This was important since I used mostly home-spun. Leaving it raw, the color of the yarn became a little less uniform, which I loved. After the yarn was spun, I soaked it in warm water with a tiny bit of ammonia for an hour or so to take any dirt out. Later I washed it like any other wool. I like the very finely spun wool. I love details, so often my warp in the later years was 9 or 10 ends to the inch.

Hand-spun yarns do not tend to create flat or dead spaces in tapestry because of the texture of the yarn and the subtle variation of the color. I used these yarns in my mythological works, and they fit the theme perfectly. I could also use them in my political work, and it would soften the message, so people would take time to look.



Inge Norgaard, "Dearest" handspun wool, 42 x 43"



Inge Norgaard, "Energy or Falling Water" 2002, naturally colored wool and silk, 72 x 61"

From Hoof to Woof

by
Genie Greenlaw

Economics was the initial factor that led me to weave tapestry with my own hand-spun. A source for suitable yarn wasn't an issue for me until quite a while after completing my first tapestry at the end of a weaving class. At that time, equipped with only a simple frame loom and limited funds, I was discouraged by high prices and large put-ups. Then I re-discovered what I had spun, and figured that would be a beginning, even though it was only in natural shades and not the bright colors I craved.



Genie Greenlaw, "Polar Bear" handspun wool

I continued to be a spinner over the years, and have access to a sheep and wool festival, trusted vendors on two spinning chat lists, and friends with sheep, another factor had developed that encouraged me using my hand-spun for tapestry. An appreciation for fleeces with various characteristics and colors, and ready-to-spin colored roving, has led to a considerable stash that calls to me from the basement. It is satisfying, and an amusement quite separate from the tapestry weaving process, to decide what color and/or characteristic I want in a yarn and to spin it: similar to walking through a candy store.

There are few characteristics I can think of that could be created in a hand-spun yarn that can't be found in one commercially prepared. However, I often feel a connection to the weavers of ages past who followed through with the whole process of sorting the raw fleece, cleaning, carding or combing, and then spinning.

Only one specific feature comes to mind that I haven't seen in a commercial yarn: the natural variation of color within a fleece. Colored sheep often have several shades in its fleece that can be spun to produce a serendipitous color change in the yarn when weaving. (See "Polar Bear" foreground, "First Love" upper background and entire sky in "Moon Goddess". I had dyed light gray Romney pink, and for the upper blue sky I carded it with some purchased blue roving.) Separated, of course, you would have various shades from that one fleece that would work well together. (See backgrounds in "For Dad", "Polar Bear", and "Mammoth". Figures, foreground, and frame in "First Love".)

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The first yarn characteristic I worked with was thick and thin: a yarn usually produced by new spinners due to lack of control, and created with some effort by more experienced spinners. I enjoy the extra challenge it sometimes presents, and the structure it adds to the texture. This yarn was used more in my first tapestries and does not show up very well in photographs.

Using Romney and Corriedale, I have been able to get a soft, thick surface (See *"Moon Goddess"* and the light green in *"First Love"*). The double coated Dine, or Navajo, Churro produces both a soft under coat and an outer hair coat, and when spun together gives a stiff hairy yarn that worked well for the *"Mammoth"*. The cliff in *"Mammoth"* was woven with my handspun, two-tone gray plied yarn.

Right now, I'm spinning some Gotland to help me depict a rock surface. It is medium gray color that has a lovely sheen. I am looking forward to seeing the woven results.

As a handspinner, I have never advocated the reliance on the features of any yarn to replace technique and skill. But tapestry, to me, is an arena of play and amusement for the artist, as well as a platform for improvement and learning, unless of course, one is weaving a commissioned piece.

As I spin and plan my next two tapestries, I hope to be able to rely more on technique than in the past. It's time for me to evolve more while weaving with my hand-spun yarns.



Genie Greenlaw, *"Moon Goddess"* handspun wool



Genie Greenlaw, *"First Love"* handspun wool



Genie Greenlaw, *"Mammoth"* handspun wool

Genie Greenlaw lives with her husband, three cats, and an indoor jungle in the middle of North Carolina. Her first tapestry was forced -- it was one of several required off-loom weaving class assignments. Her original goal was to learn to weave rugs and cloth. Genie's hobbies now include tapestry weaving, natural dying, and spinning cotton on a charkha.



Genie Greenlaw, *"For Dad"* handspun wool

LAYERS OF MEANING – A Workshop with James Koehler

by Jan Austin

“Tapestry Enchantment” was the title of the 2010 ATA Tapestry Retreat. The notice said “energize your inspiration and stay enchanted with tapestry...” Three days of tapestry workshops in Santa Fe, what could be more inspiring?

I signed up for James Koehler’s workshop, “Layers of Meaning.” I had heard so many glowing reports from his students over the years, and my expectations were high.

The workshop description said “The strength of an image is a key component in the success of a tapestry. In this workshop we will explore design tools and tapestry techniques that will enhance the image by adding layers of meaning....” I can always use more tools, and layers of meaning sounded intriguing.

We were asked to decide on a concept, subject or symbol, and to bring supporting materials. My subject was the moon snail. I have collected their shells on Cape Cod Bay for years. They have a spiral in the center of the shell that remains intact long after the shell is broken. I brought along a small box with three shells.

I was enchanted with New Mexico, and St John’s College was a perfect retreat venue. I loved my room, the campus, the view, the food, and the company. On



Jan Austin's moon snail drawing.

the first day James gave a slide lecture in the morning, and Lynne gave hers in the afternoon. I had many AHA! moments during these lectures. After James’ lecture, we got settled in our classroom and he explained his flow chart, “Components of a Completed Work – Design Principles.” This material may have been new for some, but was excellent review for others. It was far more organized and comprehensive than anything I encountered in art school 40 years ago. More AHA! moments, and copious note taking ensued.

Looking back at my notes, I see an example “Elaboration: don’t use it unless it does something.” Yes, indeed; although, other teachers have made this point, one needs to be reminded. I recognized many ideas that were already lurking half formed in my head, and it was exciting to see them fully described. Under “Form Generation” there are three styles listed:

- Idiosyncratic: a method that is controlled and self-conscious
- Aleatory: using randomness and chance, it can be chaotic.
- Aleatory with External Constraints: a combination of the other two. AHA!

This part of the workshop was extremely informative and practical, although perhaps a bit overwhelming. That afternoon we began work on our own designs, and James talked to each of us about creating layers (of image and/or meaning) in our designs. In our conversation about moon snails, he suggested the word MOON — it’s hard to believe I had not thought of that obvious association! My design process does not involve a lot of thinking, so after the initial excitement, I could not imagine how the moon could be incorporated into a design with the snail and decided to forget it. That evening in my room, I drew the shell again. I felt my drawing needed more depth and decided to draw the shadow. Then, it jumped out at me: the shadow of my broken moon snail shell was a perfect waning moon!

Over the three days of the workshop James gave us handouts and spoke about many topics, both technical and philosophical. How to make layers in space? James gave us an annotated list of nine methods. Then class brainstormed and came up with nine more. We talked about form perception, quality, and symbols. He explained how he warps the loom and how he finishes his tapestries. He diagrammed the mathemati-

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Lynne Curran and James Koehler with the Tapestry Enchantment participants.

cal progression of three colors using three strands in the weft with hatching. He read aloud to us from, among others, Robert Henri's classic *The Art Spirit*. He advised and encouraged us with respect to our designing and weaving.

What did I get out of it? Inspiration, insight, encouragement, example.

Albert Einstein wrote, "Example isn't another way to teach, it's the only way to teach."

James provided an example of a completely focused and dedicated artist. It's impressive how hard he works. With all his success, he is not content to rest on his laurels but continues his efforts to improve. He uses technical innovations to remove any distractions from the image. His attention to detail and pursuit of excellence are inspiring. James lived up to his reputation as a generous teacher. He joins a very small and select group of teachers who continue to live in my head and help me to find my way.

James Koehler's new book *Woven Color – The Tapestry Art of James Koehler* was introduced by co-authors James Koehler and Carole Greene at the 2010 Convergence Convention in Albuquerque, NM in July 2010. "Part biography, part philosophy – with enough "how to" thrown in to keep the weavers salivating for a promised technical book in the future – this work is as captivating as his colors." – from the Foreword by Sarah Swett. *Woven Color* is an 8 x 10 hard cover with dust jacket, 296 pages and 291 illustrations. Orders can be placed through <http://www.jameskoehler.com>.

The Wit and Wisdom of Lynne Curran

by Mary Roth-Davies

Usually you know what you are going to do in a workshop. You know you are going to learn about design, process, or technique — but not this time. Lynne deliberately gave us no instructions on how to warp our loom, what colors to bring, or if we should have designs ready to go. It was exciting to be going into a class with so few expectations. It was like a mystery ready to be solved.

I met Lynne Curran for the first time at the get-acquainted cocktail party at Convergence. What I saw was a petite woman with a sweet face and charming accent. I immediately liked her open smile and energy. I introduced myself and noted that I was looking forward to the next few days. "But," I said, "I am still not sure what we are going to do. The synopsis was a bit vague." Lynne just smiled and said, "I know."

She started off by showing us some of her work and talking about designing from the heart. Her work was whimsical and fun; the subject matter included her chickens, cats, and garden. It was inspiring to see such fun images. Her philosophy is that tapestry does not have to be serious nor does it have to be some important idea. It can be fun and funny, it can be a flight of fancy, or it can be a little joke. I was caught up in the idea immediately.

Once we started the workshop, our questions came fast and furious. What EPI should we use? How thick



Lynne Curran (center) discusses EPI, technique, and color analysis with Dianne Horowitz and Betsey Snopce.



Lynne shows the class how to add a warp to change the shape or spacing of a tapestry.

should the warp be? What type of weft should we use? Lynne gave no permission nor did she direct. No, no, no, she would not tell us what to do. It was up to us. How freeing, how scary, like flying on a trapeze without a net!

Then Lynne laid out what we were going to do for the next two and a half days. We were all going to participate in a group project. A scanned image of an illuminated tapestry creating 17 1 x 1 inch squares. Then she blew them up into 2 x 2 inch black and white images. Each of us got both pieces — the object of the assignment was to reproduce our own piece and see how it related to the whole piece. It was an exercise in observation and color analysis. What we found was that each of us interpreted our piece of the image differently. Some saw green while others saw turquoise. It was interesting to see how our own perception influenced our technique, color choices, and response to visual stimuli.

In between, we got lightning fast demos of eccentric weft, utilizing the flying shuttle, finishing and framing, repairing broken warps, and adding warp to change shape size and spacing.

It was her use of eccentric weft that really crystallized the class for me. I am a student of the Archie Brennan school of thought, but as I watched Lynne weave over open warps and create diagonals and movement with the weft, I was delighted. The first time she wove over an open warp I thought, “No, she didn’t just do that.” Then when she did it again and I saw the results, I was hooked. “I love this woman,” I proclaimed. Lynne showed us you could work with the

grid that sometimes binds us by using eccentric wefts. Again, I felt energized as if she had just released us all from a straight jacket.

I asked some of my classmates what they thought of the class, and I think that Pam Done said it best when she noted, “You must design around what you know and love so it is a reflection of who you are.” She summed up my own feelings on the class by telling me, “I hope Lynne knows what a joy it has been to be her student this week. It is joyful and playful and meaningful.” I couldn’t have said it better myself. Thanks Lynne.

Exhibition Review by Ellen Ramsey Dialogues: Tapestry and Human/Nature

July 5 - August 20, 2010
South Broadway Cultural Center Gallery
Albuquerque, New Mexico

The “Dialogues” exhibition of the Tapestry 3-2-1 Artists turned out to be the “must see” independent show at Convergence 2010. The show presented a superb collection of work in a well-lit and spacious gallery. (If you attended Convergence you know just how rare such an experience was this year.) The exhibition also served as an example of the possibilities that can emerge from a sustained artistic dialogue between like-minded artists.

Comprised of three Americans from Albuquerque and Santa Fe, NM (Elizabeth Buckley, Katherine Perkins, and Lany Eila), two Canadians (Elaine Duncan and Linda Wallace), and one Australian (Dorothy Clews), the 3-2-1 Artists are the product of the globalization allowed by the Internet. This international contingent initially “clicked” amidst the chat on the Tapestry List. Two group projects, *Finding Home* (Canada/Australia. See “Past Web Gallery Shows” on the ATA website) and *Doors, Gates, and Windows* (Canada/New Mexico. See TT article Fall 2008) further fueled their artistic friendship. Their participation in the first of Dorothy Clews’ online critique groups cemented their aesthetic chemistry. Via years of idea sharing and critiques, they influenced and encouraged each other’s work in subtle and wonderful ways. As a result, their exhibition was harmonious despite some drastic differences in style and technique among the six. The theme Human/Nature evolved organically from their interactions.

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Group photo of the Tapestry 3-2-1 Artists from L to R Linda Wallace, Elizabeth Buckley, Lany Eila, Katherine Perkins, Elaine Duncan. Australian Dorothy Clews was unable to be at the opening. Her "Field Trials" hang on the wall behind the group.

The centerpiece of the show was the first ever combo presentation of Linda Wallace and Dorothy Clews' famous "compost" work. Much has been written about the *Infertility Series: Diminishment of Hope* tapestries by Linda Wallace and the *Field Trials* series by Dorothy Clews (See "Doors, Pathways, Journeys, Seeds" TT vol. 32 no. 2, Summer 2006 and "Earthly Aesthetics" by Mary Lane, "Fiberarts" magazine, Summer 2010), so it was truly special to see these bodies of work together and in their entirety. Having seen two of Linda Wallace's *Non Gravid* pieces in a previous show, I knew seeing the entire series of eight tapestries together would be especially moving. As the tapestries disintegrate over time, from the relatively intact *Non Gravid 4 April* to the utterly obliterated *Non Gravid 28 August*, the gradual deterioration conveys the powerful sadness behind her conceptual take on the burial process. Clews' *Field Trials* are completely different in approach and display and are also surprisingly colorful.



Dorothy Clews, Pulse Panel series (detail), 2008, handmade paper, seine twine, artificial silk, hemp, sun, rain, earth, micro-organisms, time, 46 cm x 1.6 m. Collection of the artist.



Dorothy Clews, Pulse Panel series (detail), 2008, handmade paper, seine twine, artificial silk, hemp, sun, rain, earth, micro-organisms, time, 46 cm x 1.6 m. Collection of the artist.

Clews' work looks at the end product of composting the tapestries under various conditions and soil types. Each piece is a record of how, in the end, the woven work becomes so intertwined into the fabric of nature that it becomes almost plantlike in appearance. Colorful threads are used to stitch down the fibers on handmade banana paper, so the tapestry fragments come to resemble drawings. I loved that they were not framed and were instead allowed to float freely off the wall. Her *Pulse Panel Series* carries the couched threads from piece to piece across the wall through space to create a more monumental impact.

The unexpected pleasure of seeing Lany Eila's *Any Time Now: One Family's Soft-book Primer of Anticipated Catastrophes* helped to mitigate my disappointment that the *Biennial* was absent from Albuquerque. There was enough visual "meat" in this collection of nine small tapestries to sustain me for a very long time. The more you look, the more techniques you find: textbook examples of classical hachuring and demi duite, pulled warp shaping, clever open space and warp manipulations, embroidered text, and even little seed beads here and there. They bend and float off the wall with no visible means of support. Amazing! The poignant sub plot of children coping with a parent's



Linda Wallace, "Non Gravid 28 August" from the Infertility Series: Diminishment of Hope, and detail view. 2009, linen warp/wool and linen weft, 20" x 16" x 1.5". Collection of the artist. Photo by Tony Bounsall.



Lany Eila, "Any Time Now: One Family's Soft-book Primer of Anticipated Catastrophes" 2009, linen, cotton, beads, metallic thread, supports, 42 x 32 x 2". Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.



Lany Eila, "Any Time Now" (detail), 2009, Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.

irrational fears shares a heavy-hearted element of introspection with Wallace's *Diminishment of Hope* tapestries.

Elizabeth Buckley, Katherine Perkins, and Elaine Duncan presented work that bordered on abstraction and vibrated with brilliant color. Their work complimented the monochromatic pieces and managed to fit in with the adjacent work because of sub-

tle commonalities to how all the work was approached and presented. Again, series work took center stage. Elaine Duncan showed eight 8 x 8 inch abstracted details from nature in beautiful maple frames. Katherine Perkins captures birds-eye views of nature in works like "Winter's Edge". Notably, the view is made more intricate and interesting by the addition of delicate embroidered threads on top of the tapestry. This embellishment related visually to Clews' nearby celebration of thread. Nearly two thirds of the work in the show included some stitching. These simple touches added up to more than the sum of their parts. I especially liked Elizabeth Buckley's "Window and Web" as an example of how the addition of a few simple stitched lines can give a 1 x 7 inch tapestry the impact of much larger work.

Among the many lessons I learned by seeing this wonderful exhibition: don't be afraid to stitch, work in series, think outside the box when mounting small work, be true to your heart, and above all, find your aesthetic soul mates in order to create group shows that sing like "Dialogues: Tapestry and Human/Nature."



Elizabeth J. Buckley, "Window and Web" 2008, mothproofed wool, pearl cotton and silk on cotton warp, 1 x 7". Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.



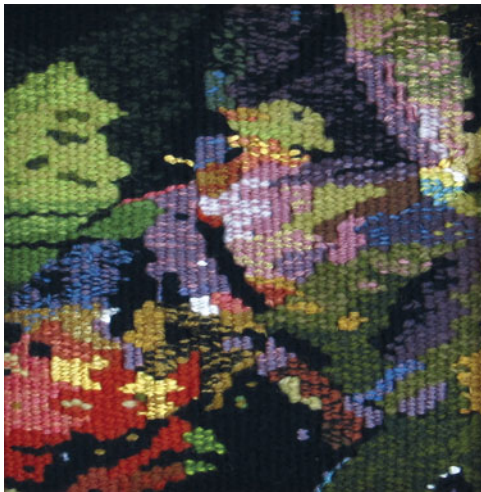
Katherine Perkins, "Winter's Edge" 2010, Hand dyed wool on cotton warp with surface design in silk, 8 x 11". Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.

Did You Know?

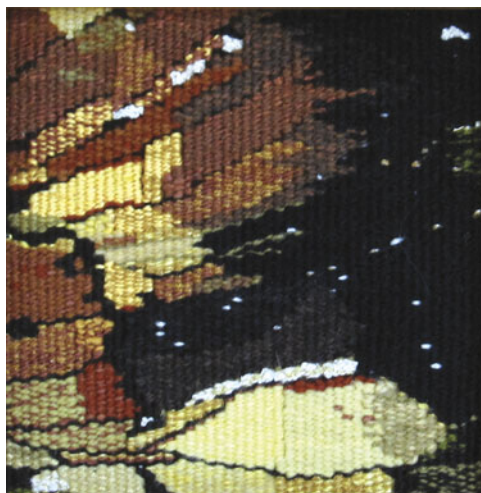
by Brenda Osborn

Did you know that ATA has a Public Relations Committee? This is a huge job for a committee of only one person, yet at the moment this important committee is 'manned' entirely by Elaine Duncan. You might say that Elaine is busier than a bear in a beehive with this important undertaking. ATA volunteer and tapestry artist Linda Wallace confided that Elaine spends many hours working for ATA each month, saying that Elaine is one of the most organized people she has ever met; otherwise, it would take several people to do the job she does, all by herself.

In order to get the word out, Elaine maintains a database of over 500 outlets that include galleries, universities, schools, publications, regional groups, curators, educators, writers, and even collectors. When she took over this job three years ago she had a list of about 200 contacts, and she has been busy refining the list and grouping them into categories ever since. With this list ATA can target particular groups for different events and announcements.



Elaine Duncan, "Waterlilies on Pond" from the Art in Nature series



Elaine Duncan, "Rocks Under Water" from the Art in Nature series



Elaine Duncan and her work at the Dialogues: Tapestry and Human/Nature exhibit in Albuquerque, NM

When there is news about ATA events like exhibitions, a call for entries, educational retreats, students awards as well as ATA Awards of Excellence, distance learning opportunities, web exhibitions (literally every venture ATA has), Elaine sends out an email blast to the appropriate contacts from her database. She is also the ATA contact whenever magazines or journals request more information for details and photographs.

Elaine maintains an ATA Facebook page and writes posts to keep our membership updated on events. She also compiles presentation books that are used for soliciting space for exhibitions.

With all that ATA does, Elaine is always busy keeping the rest of the world aware of our events. She describes her role as "having my fingers in almost everyone else's pie!" "When I first took this job, I was overwhelmed with the amount of activities that ATA is involved with, and it took some time to see the ebbs and flows, and the rhythms of the schedule. My job is made so much easier by having wonderful people to work with on the board and the key volunteers. I have also learned so much regarding computer skills in this work." In her generous way Elaine says she took on this job as a way of giving back, and she feels she has received more than she's given. In actuality, it is wonderful to acknowledge how much ATA has benefited from Elaine's generosity!

Elaine's professional life is no less busy. Take a look at her website (www.elaineduncan.com). Her gallery of work is inspiring and her blog posts are both entertaining and educational. You'll also see an impressive list of classes in tapestry and natural dyeing that she teaches from her studio "La Casita de la Tapiceria" in Errington, British Columbia, Canada as well as in Mexico. Looking at her lineup made me want to jump on a plane to visit, especially when I read about the wonderful potluck dinner she arranged for her students and their spouses at Englishman River Falls Park at the end of a class session!

She has been weaving since 1969; teaching since 1975; and she is a member of ATA, HGA, the Canadian Tapestry Network, and her local guild. She is dedicated to tapestry weaving and becoming the best artist she can be. Elaine spends her non-ATA hours weaving, either on Vancouver Island or in Mexico, along with teaching and mentoring others. Elaine also volunteers as a mentor in the ATA's Helping Hands program. She dyes nearly all the yarns she uses in her work with natural dyes, using techniques she also teaches to others.

This summer during Convergence, Elaine exhibited work in a group show called **DIALOGUES: TAPESTRIES AND HUMAN/NATURE** at the South Broadway Cultural Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, along with five other artists. Linda Wallace, whose work was also shown in that exhibition, said, "I think Elaine, aside from being very, very organized, is one of the most patient and giving people I've ever had the pleasure to know."

ATA at Convergence 2010

by Becky Stevens

Convergence in Albuquerque, New Mexico had all the ingredients of a successful conference: good turnout of participants, a vendors market with all our favorites and many regional suppliers, diverse class offerings and many exhibitions in the conference center as well as the surrounding area.

There were some outstanding tapestry exhibitions in the area. **Interwoven Traditions: New Mexico & Bauhaus** with ATA members Rebecca Mezoff and James Kohler, joined by Cornelia Theimer Gardella, was a reverent response to the principles of practicality and aesthetic concerns of the Bauhaus.

Dialogues: Tapestry and Human/Nature by ATA members, Elizabeth Buckley, Lany Eila, Kathy Perkins, Elaine Duncan, Linda Wallace, and Dorothy Clews was a joyous expression by this group of artists who continue to push the boundaries of their personal expression in tapestry.

Tapestries by ATA members were seen in several HGA exhibitions. In **Small Expressions**, Jan Austin, Joyce Hayes, Tori Kleinert, Maximo Laura, Merna Strauch, Linda Wallace, and Kathe Todd-Hooker all exhibited with Kathe taking home first place for "So Sought After". The wearable art exhibit, **Walk in**

Beauty included Regina Vorgang's full-length tapestry wrap that would keep you warm in style. Niki Bair, Kathe Todd-Hooker, Nancy Taylor, Tommye Scanlin, and Linda Weghorst had work in **Eye Dazzlers**. Susan Hart Heneger and Michael Rohde exhibited with the group California Fibers.

The ATA sponsored small format **Enchanted Pathways** exhibition was an hour away in Santa Fe, but it drew a great response for the opening and throughout the whole time it was on display. 180 small tapestries hung like a treasure-seeker's bounty were on display at the William and Joseph Gallery. Individual expressions of the theme **Enchanted Pathways**, as well as group responses, revealed the great variety of ideas and techniques that make contemporary tapestry relevant.

There were many other exhibits, but it was impossible to see everything in the limited amount of time we were there. The big disappointment of course was that no venue of appropriate size was available for **American Tapestry Biennial 8**. It has since opened at the Elder Gallery in Lincoln, Nebraska and will travel to the Textile Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts in January 2011. (Catalogs are available for sale on the ATA website.)

In addition to the members' business meeting, ATA added to the mix of Convergence events with a networking session and symposium. In an effort to include curious non-members, the board welcomed all who wanted to learn about tapestry and our organization. A warm welcome to the new members who joined on the spot and others who took membership information with them!

The Enchanted Evening networking session was a great opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. You could also learn about the regional groups which had information tables and a representative on site. The Sunday symposium "Unraveling the Creative Strand" with Lynne Curran and James Koehler introduced these tapestry artists to the Convergence audience. The ATA sponsored three day workshops following Convergence are reviewed in this newsletter issue.

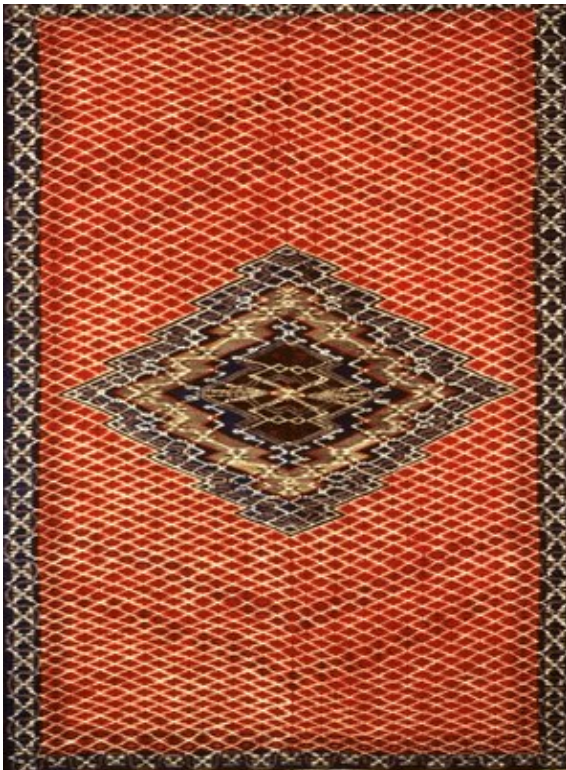
Convergence is a great opportunity to learn new things and see inspiring exhibitions. The weaving tradition is strong in New Mexico, and it is well publicized, enabling the visitor to find many places to view hand-woven tapestry. It was also a wonderful opportunity to meet so many ATA members at Convergence Albuquerque!

Chimayo Weaving

taught by

Lisa Trujillo

American Tapestry Alliance's 2011 Educational Workshop



Passion in the Web



Tellin Tales

Chimayo weaving is a 20th century outgrowth of the 400-year-old Rio Grande tradition. Chimayo weaving allows for a great deal of spontaneous design decisions, keeping the creative process true to the possibilities of weft, warp and loom, and opening up limitless opportunities for creativity. Using elements and techniques from its older source, Chimayo weaving offers an easily adaptable style that results in eye-pleasing designs. Solid backgrounds highlight colorful stripes and bold geometric center designs. Larger pieces include secondary tapestry designs as well. Chimayo techniques combine shuttle work with tapestry weave and can also include *jaspes*, inlaid lines that create designs between the tapestry designs.

This class is an opportunity to learn the principles and techniques of Chimayo weaving and design. These can be applied to any kind of pattern or image. The skills learned in this class can be used in all the Rio Grande Weaving styles, but the process involved in Chimayo weaving involves the most spontaneity. It involves less planning and more at-the-loom creativity.

This workshop is suitable for both beginning and more experienced weavers.

April 3, 4, 5, 2011

Chimayo Weaving coincides with the opening of *Small Tapestry International 2: Passages. Passages* opens at **Weaving Southwest**, Saturday April 2, 2011. Please join us at the opening reception from 5:00 to 7:00pm.

Weaving Southwest

106A Paseo del Pueblo Norte
Taos, NM 87571

Lisa Trujillo, along with her husband, Irvin, own Centinela Traditional Arts, a tapestry gallery located in Chimayo, New Mexico. Their workshop/gallery specializes in Chimayo/Rio Grande weavings featuring handspun yarns, custom dyed with natural dyestuffs. Lisa's work has won awards and has been included in museum shows across the country. Her experimentation involves a fusion of cultural influences. Lisa teaches and demonstrates as part of her commitment to keep the traditional techniques alive.

Enrollment is limited. Early bird registration must be received by February 15, 2011. Retreat fees for non-ATA members include a one-year membership to ATA. Full refunds, less a \$50.00 administrative fee are granted until March 15, 2011. No refunds will be granted after that date. Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$25.00 fee. For extra copies of this form, visit www.american Tapestry Alliance.org

Name _____ Phone _____

Cell phone _____ email _____

Address _____

Emergency Contact (Name & phone #): _____

___	Early Bird, ATA member (by February 1, 2011)	\$ 230.00
___	Early Bird, non-ATA member (by February 1, 2011)	\$ 265.00
___	After February 1, 2011, ATA member	\$ 255.00
___	After February 1, 2011, non-ATA member	\$ 290.00

___	Check, or money order, in US dollars enclosed (payable to American Tapestry Alliance)
___	Credit card (MC /VISA) information entered below
___	PayPal (Log on to paypal.com. Send the payment to americantapestryalliance@gmail.com and mention "Trujillo workshop")

Cardholder's Name (print please) _____

Credit Card # (MC/VISA) _____ Exp. Date _____

3 digit Security Code _____ Cardholder's Signature _____

Suggestions for housing and a materials list will be sent after registration. **Please wait to make air travel reservations until you hear from the workshop coordinator.**

Return form to: Marcia Ellis / 5565 Idlewood Road / Santa Rosa, CA 95404 / USA
Questions? Contact Mary Lane: (360) 754-1105 / marylane53@mac.com

Kudos

Compiled by Merna Strauch

please send items to mstrauch@mac.com

Connie Lippert's wedge weave tapestries will be exhibited with photographs by Brian Kelley in "Shutter/ Shuttle", an exhibition at the Pickens County Museum in Pickens, South Carolina from December 4, 2010 - February 10, 2011.

Connie was awarded a \$51 grant by the South Carolina Arts Commission for the 2011 fiscal year to allow her to attend the recent Textile Society of America (TSA) conference Oct 6-9, 2010 in Lincoln, Nebraska where she presented the paper "*Contemporary Interpretation of an Unusual Navajo Weaving Technique*".

Alex Friedman's tapestries are at the Marin Cancer Institute in Greenbrae, California, in "A Show of Hands", Oct 11, 2010 - January 7, 2011. The show includes "Flow 3".

Tradition and Innovation showcases the tapestry art of **Nancy Jackson** & Susan Gangsei at the Luther Seminary Museum and Archive in St. Paul, Minnesota, October 1 - December 1, 2010.

Michael Rohde is exhibiting widely. Works on display include "No Terra Incognita" in the exhibition "From Lausanne to Beijing" in Zhengzhou, China Oct 22 to Nov 6, 2010. "Water" will be seen at the Textile Museum in Washington, DC as part of **Green: the Color and Cause**, April 16 - Sept 11, 2011, and "Winter/Lake Biwa" will be on view at the Art Institute in Chicago Nov 3, 2010 - Feb 7, 2011 as part of a selection from their permanent collection.

Jennifer Sargent's mixed media diptych "The Shafts Sink Home" and Kristin Sæterdal's "Kaboom I" are included in **Fiberart International 2010**. The exhibit was in Pittsburgh, PA until August 22, 2010 then on tour at Memorial Art Gallery of Rochester, Rochester, NY, April 30 - July 3, 2011 and San Francisco Museum of Craft + Design, San Francisco, CA, October 13, 2011 - January 15, 2012. Both artists are also in ATB8.

Tommye Scanlin's "Leaf Dance" was given the first place (cash!) award in the **American Craft Today** exhibit, on view Oct. 2 - Dec. 18, 2010 at The Bascom in Highlands, North Carolina. In her remarks, Juror Carol Sauvion called "Leaf Dance", completed in 2009, a 'masterpiece'.

Regina Vorgang recently exhibit several large tapestry rugs, including "Sunlight", in *Origins*, a collaborative show with her husband, photographer Scott Miles, at the Buenaventura Gallery in Ventura, CA. Exhibiting the rugs and photographs side by side, the viewer can see the scene and the abstracted interpretation of that scene in the weavings. This project is a collaboration between husband and wife who share creative expression in different media.



Connie Lippert, "Cataloochee (red line series)" 32 x 24" linen, wool, natural dyes



Tommye Scanlin and Juror, Carol Sauvion.



Tommye Scanlin, "Leaf Dance" wool and cotton, 54 x 53"



Regina Vorgang, "Sunlight"
wool and linen, 36 x 60"



Rebecca Fabos, demonstrating a box easel. However you do it, getting the loom off the lap frees the body.

We apologize for the image caption error in Karen Piegorsch's article "When Teachers Embody Ergonomics" in the Fall 2010 issue of Tapestry Topics. The corrected caption with the image is reprinted above.

ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

	1 year	2 years
Individual	\$35	\$65
Studio Circle	\$60	\$110
Curator's Circle	\$125	\$225
Collector's Circle	\$250	\$450
Student*	\$25	\$45

*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

Send payment to: ATA Membership
c/o Diane Wolf
18611 N. 132nd Ave.
Sun City West, AZ 85375
(480) 200-1034

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PayPal option:

Use the "Send Money" tab on the PayPal website and send your payment to americantapestryalliance@gmail.com with a description of what it applies to. Make your check, money order or credit card form payable to ATA.

American Tapestry Alliance
PO Box 28600
San Jose, CA 95159-8600

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Tapestry Topics

Guidelines for submitting articles to *Tapestry Topics*:

Deadlines ~ Note that issue themes have changed publication sequence!

January 15, 2011: **Exploring Color:** coordinator Tori Kleinert
(tktapestry@msn.com)

April 1, 2011: **Cartoons:** Let me tell you a story...

July 15, 2011: TBA

October 1, 2011: TBA

Send all items to:

Juliet Barnes at ATA_julie@msn.com or
2485 Heights Drive
Ferndale, WA 98248

Phone: 360-380-9203

All photographs and electronic images should be accompanied by the following information:

Size, date completed, and photo credits.

Articles should be under 1000 words. Submission will be edited for clarity and space requirements.

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

Newsletter committee: Asst. Editor/Proofreader: Mary Colton, Layout:
Elinor Steele, Kudos: Merna Strauch, Web Posting: Christine Laffer



Alex Friedman, "Flow 3"

visit our website:
www.americantapestryalliance.org