



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

Wedge Weave

Theme Editor's Introduction

by Connie Lippert

In 1978, Rachel Brown wrote in, The Weaving, Spinning, and Dyeing Book, that wedge weave was "rarely, if ever, used today". In 2011, it is uncommon to see a weaving exhibit where wedge weave is not represented. A common thread in several of the following essays is an encounter with wedge weave, a lasting impression, and a pursuit of the technique. Ann Lane Hedlund and Louise I. Stiver describe the history and the structure of Navajo wedge weaves. The view of a native weaver comes from Martha Gradolf. The widespread interest in wedge weave today can be directly attributed to a few teachers who researched, experimented and refined their technique and then passed it along to their students. Jim Bassler is one of those teachers. His article is followed by an article from one of his students, Mollie Fletcher. Martha Stanley is another weaving teacher who taught many students in the wedge weave technique. She was my teacher, and also taught Merna Strauch and Deborah Corsini, who relate their experiences learning from Martha. Finally, Michael Rohde and Donna Foley share their wedge weave stories.

Connie Lippert will teach a 2-day wedge weave workshop at Convergence 2012 in Long Beach, CA. Visit <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/35/> to read Connie's description of the wedge weave technique.



"Cataloochee (red line series)"
Connie Lippert
Photo: Chris Bartol

In This Issue...

Wedge Weave ~ Articles by: Ann Lane Hedlund & Louise Stiver, Martha Gradolf, Jim Bassler, Mollie Fletcher, Martha Stanley, Merna Strauch, Deborah Corsini, Michael Rohde & Donna Foley

Exhibition Reviews ~ *Coastal Fiberarts 2011 & A Weaverly Path*

Interview ~ Jean Pierre Larochette interviews Audrey Cowan

ATA News ~ 2012 Members Retreat, Laffer Online Curatorial Program, ATA Award for Excellence, ATA's Forums, ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study

In this Issue...**Theme ~ Wedge Weave ~ coordinated by Connie Lippert**

| | |
|--|----|
| Theme Editor's Introduction Connie Lippert | 1 |
| The Wedge Weave, Navajo-Style Ann Lane Hedlund & Louise I. Stiver | 4 |
| Artist's Statement Martha Gradolf | 7 |
| Contemplating Wedgeweave Jim Bassler | 8 |
| An Approach to Wedge Weaving Mollie Fletcher | 10 |
| Wedge Weave Martha Stanley | 11 |
| Exploring the Edges Merna Strauch | 13 |
| Alluring Wedge Weave Deborah Corsini | 15 |
| How and why did I start experimenting with wedge weave? Michael Rohde | 17 |
| Wedge Weave Donna Foley | 18 |
| Interview Jean Pierre Larochette interviews Audrey Cowan | 20 |
| Reviews <i>Coastal Fiberarts 2011</i> Erin Riggs | 24 |
| Review: A Weaverly Path: The Tapestry Life of Silvia Heyden, a film by Kenny Dalsheimer Lyn Hart | 25 |
| ATA Award for Excellence – Elizabeth Buckley | 28 |
| ATA News Co-Director's Letter | 3 |
| Laffer Online Curatorial Program | 29 |
| ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study | 29 |
| ATA Board of Directors | 29 |
| ATA Online Forums Linda Rees | 30 |
| Upcoming Tapestry Topics Themes | 31 |
| Currents, Waves & Rising Tides Registration Form | 32 |

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Important Dates

Now! Registration is open for the 2012 Member's Retreat. Register online [Click here](#), or see page 32.

January 15, 2012 Submissions due: Spring Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Teaching & Learning* [Email Micala Sidore](#).

January 15, 2012 Pacific Portals Entry Form due.

March 15, 2012 Pacific Portals Tapestries due.

April 1, 2012 Submissions due: Summer Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Surface* [Email Sharon Crary](#).

April 15, 2012 Student Award entries due.

May 15, 2012 Digislam entries due. [Click here](#).

July 15, 2012 Submissions due for the Fall Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Going International*.

July 20, 2012 *Pacific Breezes*; Networking Evening; Convergence, Long Beach, CA.

July 21, 2012 *Pacific Forum*; 2012 Speakers Forum; Convergence, Long Beach, CA.

July 21-24, 2012 *Currents, Waves & Rising Tides*; 2012 Members Retreat; Orange, CA.

September 19-22, 2012 *Textiles and Politics*, TSA's 2012 Biennial Symposium.

October 1, 2012 Submissions due: Winter Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Resources*.

October 19, 2012 ATB9 opens at The Dairy Barn Art Center, Athens, Ohio.

Co-Directors Letter, Winter 2011

Mary Zicafoose & Michael Rohde

This quarter we are fortunate to have an issue dedicated to the compelling topic of wedge weave, thanks to guest editor, Connie Lippert. One of the reasons the study of tapestry is so fascinating is that there is a variety of styles and innovative techniques within our medium. Wedge weave is a way of approaching tapestry that is technically unusual, visually provocative, and seen too seldom. It is very exciting to have an issue devoted to it.

As we write this letter, the final details of the new website are being put into place, and by reading time we hope you have all had a chance to investigate the new site at length. Our early previews have left us with a great feeling of pride. Many years ago, with great foresight, the original website, which was created by Anne McGinn was adopted by Christine Laffer. Christine's dedication, along with the help of many assistants, turned ATA's website into a vast storehouse of information, history and resources for the textile world. As time and technology moved forward, the site needed revamping, and Christine sought to re-appropriate her volunteer service in order to devote more time to weaving. Thanks to last year's Valentines Day Appeal, we were able to raise funds to transition to our new web site. Thanks to each and every one of you who so generously donated. We can all take pride in a job well done.

Speaking of the Annual Appeal, this year your Board has chosen to dedicate its sole fundraising effort to an oft expressed desire of our membership: *How can ATA help support tapestry weavers' education?* Young or old, everyone would like to add to their

expertise and knowledge of tapestry-based skills, but sometimes it is not within one's means. So, the 2012 Annual Appeal is dedicated to establishing an American Tapestry Alliance Scholarship program. Look for information on page 29, and on the [website](#). And, if you are able, please contribute generously to this excellent cause.

We hope many of you entered *American Tapestry Biennial 9*. Please also participate in *Pacific Portals*, the small format unjuried exhibit. The latter will be on display during Convergence at the Long Beach Library, Main Branch. We have been fortunate to have a very dedicated team for this exhibit: Merna Strauch, Karen Leckart and Nicki Bair. ATB9, with its requirement for a space that can display larger tapestries, was much harder to place in Long Beach. However, we are still looking. Let us know if you have any leads! We do have an exhibition contract with the prestigious Dairy Barn Art Center and are also working hard to follow up on the success of pairing ATB8 with the 2010 Textile Society of America Symposium. The next TSA Symposium will take place September 19-22, 2012 in Washington, DC. As you can imagine, D.C. is an even harder location in which to find exhibition space. Considerable effort has gone into locating a venue, and we hope, by the time this issue goes to press, to have good news on that front.

Registration is now open for the 2012 Member's Retreat. Try out our new online registration form. [Click here](#). We look forward to meeting you at the Networking Session and Members' Meeting during Convergence, and leave you with this thought: continue to weave wonderful tapestries, submit your work to our exhibitions, and spread the word.

The Wedge Weave, Navajo-Style

by Ann Lane Hedlund & Louise I. Stiver

Note: Text has been excerpted and adapted with permission from the publishers of "Wedge Weave Textiles of the Navajo", by Ann Lane Hedlund and Louise Stiver, American Indian Art Magazine Summer 1991, 16(3):54-65, 82.

During a brief period in the late 19th century, a few Navajo weavers experimented with the maverick technique of wedge weave. Before then Navajo weavers almost always used the more standard tapestry and twill weaves, in which wefts interlace at right angles to the warp yarns and to the main axis of their vertical loom. Breaking with the methods that dominated Navajo weaving for two centuries, wedge weave provides a unique instance in which weft yarns move, not at right angles, but diagonally across the fabric and at oblique angles to the loom.

Such eccentric wefts are not restricted to Navajo fabrics and occur in a wide range of textiles, from pre-Columbian Peruvian garments to historic Middle Eastern kilim carpets, and to modern tapestries from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. What is uniquely Navajo, however, is the use of the technique to pattern entire fabrics and to give them extraordinary visual depth. Curious, too, is the fact that wedge weave's occurrence among the Navajo predominates in the 1880s, appearing after 1870 and disappearing by 1900 (except for certain intentional revivals in the 20th and 21st centuries).



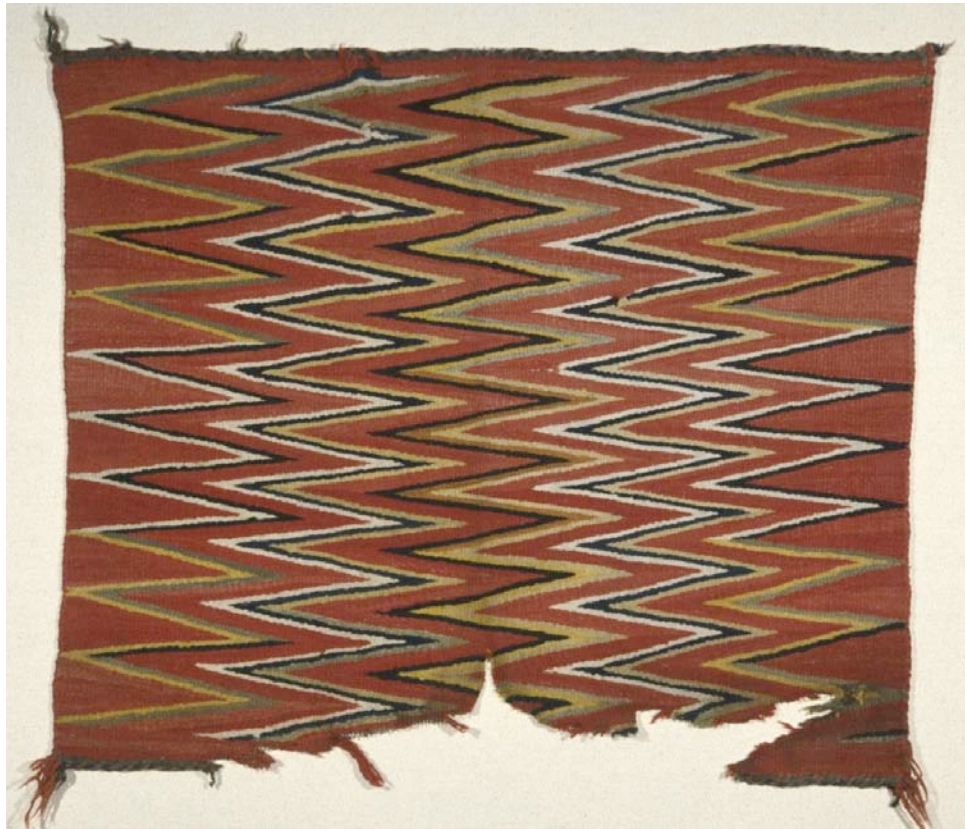
Navajo single saddle blanket, circa 1880-1890, 0.75 x 0.91 meters
Arizona State Museum cat. no. 22086
Photo: Helga Teiwes.

The term wedge weave, as Joe Ben Wheat noted (2003:124), was first used in print by Harry P. Mera (1939:3). This short-lived and quirky style acquired many other interesting names through the years. George Wharton James, noting the predominant zigzag patterns, wrote that wedge-woven textiles (as well as certain tapestry woven ones) contained the "lightning design" (1937:122). Charles Avery Amsden, observing the deflection of warps within the weave, used the term "pulled warp" (1934:51-52, Pls. 24-25). Gladys A. Reichard called one version of the technique the "scalloped edge" and another "overstuffing" (1936:118-120). Noting the negative indentations along the sides more than the positive scallops, William H. Clafin used "knock warp" (Wheat 1973-1991). George Pepper, in an unpublished 1923 manuscript at the Heye Foundation (now the National Museum of the American Indian), called it "lazy weave," an inaccurate appellation for any handwork that requires considerable time and knowledge. And, referring to an entire technical class of textile construction, of which Navajo wedge weaves are one example, Irene Emery used "eccentric" to describe the movement of wefts "that deviate from the horizontal and from their normal right-angled relation to the warps" in a tapestry weave (1966:83-84).

Wedge weaves belong to the larger tradition of late 19th-century Navajo textiles that include standard striped wearing blankets, fancy Late Classic sarapes, and Transitional blanket-rugs or rug-blankets. Aside from the distinctive warp/weft structure, the materials, construction details and basic design elements used in wedge weaving fall within the

same range as other Navajo textiles of the period. From Joe Ben Wheat's database of over 1500 Southwestern textiles, the forty-one wedge weave blankets that he analyzed from seventeen museum collections all share certain visual traits with other well-known native textiles—bands of natural-colored sheep's wool of the *diyugi* blankets, or everyday weaving blankets; eye-dazzling virtuosity of Germantown samplers and rugs; pastel colors and blocky oversize motifs of Hispanic Rio Grande Valley blankets and their Navajo relatives. In all of these types, indigenous aesthetics (natural wools, striped and terraced motifs, optical illusions, bright colors) combine with outside influences (serrate motifs, vertical design layouts, commercial materials), resulting in distinctive Late Classic/Transitional Navajo styles.

Given the range of traits they contain and despite their relative rarity, there is no evidence that wedge weaves were woven only by a few related or locally restricted weavers. Thus, wedge weaves are at once technically and conceptually unique and yet related to the wide-ranging products and trends of the last quarter of the 19th century.



Navajo blanket, circa 1880-1890, 1.75 x 1.34 meters
 Arizona State Museum cat. no. E-2722;
 Photo: Helga Teiwes

Technique & Design

Most Navajo wedge weave blankets begin and end with simple bands of plain weave in which wefts are interlaced in the usual fashion, at right angles to the warps. The formation of a small right-angle triangle in one corner of the web is the most common means of beginning the wedge in which wefts run at oblique angles to the warps, starting to create zigzag and other angular patterns. (An alternative form begins with a series of overlapping curved bands without an initial triangle. Joe Ben Wheat (n.d.:5) once likened this effect to “the weirdly eroded cross-bedded sandstone cliffs and canyon walls of the Navajo country.”)

A consequence of eccentric weaving, and a common characteristic of wedge weave, is the distortion of warps that normally run parallel to the loom's vertical axis. The warps are deflected by the influence of obliquely placed wefts, because there is a tendency for both sets of yarns to retain their right-angle relationship (Stanley 1989). If the path of the warps within a wedge weave is traced, the warps are deflected from the perpendicular in a diagonal line running opposite (that is, ninety degrees) to the direction of the weft patterning.

This warp deflection occurs as a natural consequence of the diagonally placed weft yarns. The wefts' tension serves easily to move the warps out of line. The weaver does not have to force the warps into a diagonal position as erroneously assumed by some authors. Undoubtedly, one of the weave's earlier names, "pulled warp," grew from this misunderstanding.

Scalloped selvages are another distinctive technical feature, caused by the skewing of warps and wefts. The tension caused by angling the wefts prompts this further distortion. The extent of scalloping appears to be directly proportional to the angle used in the wedge and the relative weights of the yarns; the number of scallops along the selvages equals the number of paired bands with diagonal wedge weave patterning.

In Navajo wedge weaves, technical structure and visual pattern are inextricably connected. The principal elements for most wedge weave patterning are a series of parallel diagonal stripes formed by the diagonal passage of colored wefts. Some blankets contain no more than bands of these simple diagonal stripes. In others, chevrons, zigzags and diamond designs are the natural outcome of the ways the wefts are interlaced in the fabric. In addition, isolated wedge-woven motifs may be incorporated into blankets with predominant plain or tapestry weaves.

Conclusion

Our earlier article, "Wedge Weave Textiles of the Navajo" (Hedlund and Stiver 1991), describes much more about the origins and influences, history and contexts, aesthetic principles, and the range of materials and a specific typology of Navajo wedge weaves. We also pondered why weavers were attracted to this exceptional form and explored various possibilities. Back then we posed the question whether any active Navajo weavers would take an interest in pursuing this technique, given that it was one more time-consuming variation of an already labor-intensive craft. Indeed, since that article was published, a number of Navajo weavers have picked up the challenge and produced fascinating contemporary wedge weave textiles. In sum, wedge weaves have proven a wonderfully expressive medium for Navajo weavers who have seen the potential for complex combinations of pattern, color and materials.

Ann Lane Hedlund directs the Gloria F. Ross Tapestry Program, located in the Arizona State Museum on the campus of the University of Arizona, Tucson. She also serves as a curator of ethnology and professor of anthropology at the University. She has conducted ethnographic fieldwork among Navajo weavers and is the author of many publications, including Navajo Weaving in the Late Twentieth Century: Kin, Community, and Collectors and Gloria F. Ross & Modern Tapestry.

Louise Stiver is a museum consultant whose previous positions include: senior curator, New Mexico History Museum/Palace of the Governor; curator, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture; and grants administrator, Historic Preservation Division in Santa Fe, NM. Ms. Stiver holds a B.A. in Anthropology and M.A. in American Studies from the University of New Mexico.

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Artist's Statement

by Martha Gradolf (Winnebago)

Weaving connects me to the ancient ones, those who have gone before and those who guide me now. One of my first conscious memories of color evolved from the winding of yarn into balls for my mother. She knitted rhythmically as I watched. More than four decades later I am still inspired as I recognize and relate to the ancient rhythm that has played out in the hands of all weavers since the beginning of time.

My one-of-a-kind woven wall hangings often embody a subtle message. Ironically the "unseen" message can unravel and reveal itself "visually" just as I am finishing the piece. There is often more at work than just my own consciousness. Other energies intertwine with our own in the same way fibers wrap around each other to make a length of yarn. There is truth to "we become what we do."

Native American issues such as history, stereotypes, and spirituality lend themselves to us. I weave the beauty and truth of our many cultures into webs, and I weave to make my family proud. It is my duty and desire to stay open to inspiration and to nurture this ancient legacy as it recreates itself again in a new and contemporary form.

"Ocean Woman"

This piece was inspired by a trip to my Winnebago cemetery. Seeing a grave stone marked with the name, "Ocean Woman." I had to create a weaving in her honor, a Winnebago Grandmother.



"Ocean Woman"
17" x 34.5"
Martha Gradolf
Photo: Martha Gradolf



"Who is Indian?"
41" x 22"
Martha Gradolf
Photo: Martha Gradolf

"Who is Indian?"

I created this piece after a couple of my artist friends were having a difficult and painful time getting into Indian Markets. They are not "enrolled" members of federally recognized tribes, yet they are Indian. I decided to weave a piece and address the issues of blood quantum and who is Indian. This continues to be an emotional and a divisive controversy among Native Peoples.

Martha Gradolf is a Native American Indian Artist based in Southern Indiana. She is an enrolled member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Her political, message-driven, non-traditional art, involves hand-woven textiles and mixed media. This contemporary art reflects the past of her people in an attempt to understand the present and future.

Contemplating Wedgeweave

by Jim Bassler



"Rebozo"
36" x 44.5"
Jim Bassler
Photo: Mark Davidson

It was while living in Oaxaca, Mexico, in the early 1970s, that I discovered wedgeweave quite by accident. Having dyed a silk ikat warp to be woven in 3-inch wide strips, I decided to alter the ikat image into a variety of diagonal shifts. The epi allowed the weft to show and in order for the weft to follow the diagonal line of the ikat, I began to weave on the diagonal. As a novice at weaving and still able to hear the voice of my weaving professor, Bernard Kester, to be mindful of straight selvages, I was concerned about the scalloped edges and bubbly surface emerging from the divergent directions my wefts were taking. I finished the piece, "Rebozo," and later added indigo dyed ikat strips without the diagonal shift, in order to avoid "the problem." Wedgeweave was left out of my vocabulary, for a while.

In 1980, having taught at California State University, Long Beach, UCLA and Appalachian Center for Crafts in Tennessee, I became aware of the dimensional qualities that were being achieved in contemporary fiber art. Some were created through inventive woven structure, but often these dimensions were supported through the use of Roplex and/or other synthetic paint-on solutions. It was

then that I recalled my early experiences with diagonal weaving. By physically forcing the yarns into contradictory directions, I knew I could create not only scallops but extraordinary dimensions to my weavings. Starting in 1980, I created a series of ten tapestries using 4-inch wide silk warp strips. What was unique about this body of work was not only the wedgeweave, which could make a 4-inch wide strip expand to 5 or more inches, but also the method used to dye the warp.

Prior to weaving, the warp was stretched on a padded print table in 4-inch wide units. A multitude of acid dyes was prepared, each color having a number assigned to it. For the first piece, five colors were selected through chance throwing of dice, an idea borrowed from John Cage. This established the color for "Wedgeweave #1". I then threw dice to determine the sequence of color on each strip. Once a color was identified, a wedge-shaped template was put on the warp and that area was painted with the dye. Once the dyes were applied and fixed, the warp was put on the loom and the wedgeweaving began.

This entire process was amazing in that it allowed me to make spontaneous decisions on how to react to a field of color created through chance, not by conscious decision. It allowed me to break away from so many of the rules of school and life. I freed myself to make my own rules. It might be of interest that "Wedgeweave #5" was installed ten years ago, as part of a blown-up photomural in the New York City subway stop at 53rd Street and 5th Avenue. It is still looking pretty good today, and is a fine example of wedgeweave, right before your eyes, in the New York subway.



Photomural of "Wedgeweave #5"
in the New York City subway



"XYZ"
Jim Bassler



"Net with Ikat"
50" x 32"
Jim Bassler
Photo: Mark Davidson

Finally, in the late 1980's, I saw a magnificent exhibit of Navajo wedgeweaves in the library in Dallas, Texas. As a result, I began to do some research on the connection between the Navajo and the process. By the mid-90's, I was teaching a course in the Fowler Cultural History Museum, UCLA, entitled *Textiles of the World: the Americas*. At first I concentrated on what I knew best, which were the ancient and contemporary textiles of Mexico and the Andean Cultures. However, as I researched the museum collection, I introduced the North American cultures. It was then that I discovered how inventive the Navajos really were, not only as weavers but also as merchants. The wedgeweave was an innovation introduced about 1888, but, to the eye of the tourist getting off the trains, looking for rugs to buy, the scalloped edges and the erratic shapes of the wedgeweave rugs were too much for the puritan mind. They were not popular and did not sell. By 1890, the Navajo had discontinued using this process, and it had to wait until 1970 when I unknowingly discovered it in Oaxaca. I used wedgeweave, almost exclusively, for twenty years, precisely for the same reasons the Navajo gave it up.

Jim Bassler received his B.A and M.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles. From 1975 to 2007, he taught design fundamentals and fiber related courses for the Department of Art and Design, UCLA. In 1980, he established the fiber program at the Appalachian Center for Crafts in Tennessee. In 1995, he initiated the course, Textiles of the World: the Americas for the Fowler Cultural History Museum, and taught until he retired in 2007.

An Approach to Wedge Weaving

by Mollie Fletcher



"Flowers"
17" x 11"
Mollie Fletcher
Photo: Sean Doerr

Wedge weaving first came to my attention after a workshop and lecture given by James Bassler (former professor at UCLA). I was then inspired to research the origins of wedge weave and discovered the "Eye Dazzlers" created by Navaho weavers in the late 1800's. I was amused to find that some of the weavers at that time felt that those wedge woven blankets were "badly" woven because of the scalloped edges that are a result of the warp being distorted by the angles of the weft.

Having woven tapestries for many years, I was intrigued by the idea of a weft-faced fabric with the weft woven on the diagonal, also known as eccentric weft. All kinds of possibilities present themselves; one can control the length and angle of the weft, and can change color at will. I discovered that wedge weaving could be very versatile.

I believe that all weavers owe a huge debt to historical textiles and in my case those would be the fabrics woven by the Coptic Egyptians from approximately 200-600 AD. These cloths (usually made into tunics) consisted of a plain weave linen ground with square, rectangular, or round inserts of tapestry woven images. The images were a mélange of Greco-Roman, Early Christian, mythological, and decorative scenes woven in wool. These ancient textiles survived due to the arid climate of Egypt.

My work over the last several years has borrowed the Coptic format, with plain-woven grounds, often a twill brocade, plus little "windows" of tapestry woven imagery. These "windows" might contain images of the natural world as I see it, or could be simple color studies. What is interesting to me is the contrast between a linen ground containing lots of patterning and texture with that of the flat woven tapestry in wool. Space dyeing or painting the warp and weft, often in indigo, emphasizes the sense of layering. On a few pieces, I have added needle-felted detail to the tapestry.

Once I discovered wedge weave and understood how easy it was to engineer, I swapped out the plain weave ground and replaced it with a wedge weave ground. By doing this, the ground became much more energized (think "eye dazzler") and the potential for a new kind of patterning presented itself. Rather than the normal 90-degree relationship between warp and weft, there are now diagonal lines of weft, which can become an important design element, or can be left tone-on-tone. Space dyeing the weft adds another visual element. Also, instead of a rectangular piece of weaving with straight selvages, the edges become scalloped. The challenge is to find a balance between the subject and color of the image, and the graphic nature of the ground.

From a technical standpoint, I like to use 20/2 natural linen for the warp and weft set at 12-15 epi. The wool for the tapestry is usually Paternayan needlepoint yarn, mostly because it is readily available and comes in so many colors.

To conclude, looking at historical textiles for clues about woven structure can provide endless possibilities for re-interpretation. James Bassler utilized other historical/ethnographic structures including some really terrific scaffold weaving. Techniques like shibori and ikat have been around for thousands of years, yet use of these techniques pop up in contemporary textiles all the time. Textile history has been a rich resource for me, and I'll continue to look for ways it can inform and enrich my work.

Mollie Fletcher has an M.F.A. in fiber from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. An adjunct faculty member in the Center for Creative Studies Crafts Department, she is a widely published expert on textiles and has exhibited her fiber art and lectured throughout the United States.



"Leaf"
9.5" x 10"
Mollie Fletcher
Photo: Sean Doerr

Wedge Weave

by Martha Stanley



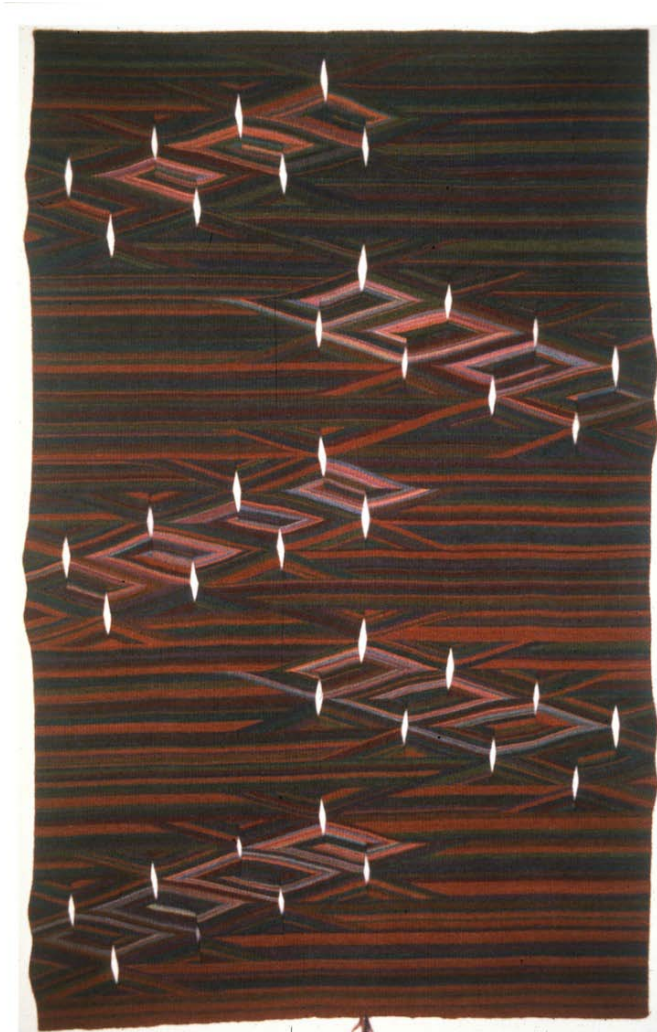
Untitled Slit Wedge Weave
72" x 46"
Martha Stanley
Photo: Martha Stanley

Wedge Weave is my kind of weave, the white water rafting of weaving techniques. You weave it, using the best skills you have, thinking you're on top of everything. Gradually it starts taking over; you are not in charge, but a collaborator. That's the best place to be, as a collaborator. There are such wonderful surprises that occur in wedge weave. They are what make it more interesting to the viewer after it is done. Much more importantly, they surprise you during your weaving. If you are doing your best and something better starts happening, you know you are on the right track. The cloth becomes more than just your work. It is a collaboration among all the participants (yarn, weave, sett, loom, design idea, color, weaver) and is becoming alive.

I met wedge weave while reading Peter Collingwood's first book. I was concentrating pretty hard as I read about each of the techniques he described. When I got to wedge weave my fingers started dancing; they wanted to do this. I had to try it. For the next 15 to 20 years I wove little else. Looking back on those times, I see some changes in my role as weaver/designer that I'd like to share.

For a wedge weave rug of any size beyond sampling, it is quite difficult to design with any precision. There is such flow in the process of weaving that referring to a design on paper becomes an interruption. If something had to change at a specific place, I

would wrap that warp thread loosely with a piece of sewing thread. When the diagonal weaving reached that warp, I would make the change. The significant thing was that I did not have to look away from my focus. As weaving progressed, I could easily move the sewing thread up the warp.



"Up a Lazy River"
8' x 5"
Martha Stanley
Photo: Martha Stanley

As I began to use more and more color, I kept each color on a separate shuttle. There were several problems with this. First I had to juggle a number of shuttles, which was tedious and confusing. Then I began to wind each color on the same shuttle, breaking one color and slip-knotting the next one on to it. Not only were there fewer shuttles to handle, but also something even better happened. It became more interesting to wind the shuttle. I might not wind on a lot of color changes at once. But, it sensitized my color change choices without making them at exact places in the scheme of things. Now I was getting little surprises all the time as I wove. And I did not have to break the flow of weaving to keep the color changes interesting. Because what I wound on the shuttle first was woven off last, occasionally I forgot about this and the colors would come off in reverse order. I came to realize the value of having design less explicit and more suggestive through such "misses." And I became more sensitive as a shuttle winder.

The bold diagonals of the weft in wedge weave are countered in a very convincing way by the shadow-like meanderings of the warp threads as they strive to assume right angles to the weft. This subtle whispering of the warps in the middle of the cloth shows more boldly as scallops along the selvages. I came to think of this as two-dimensional sculpture and wanted to tweak it. My goal was to use design as a way to show what wedge weave could do when pushed - not by breaking the rules, but by stringently following them. One of my main tenets as a rug weaver is to keep the rug flat, not buckling on the floor because of conflicting designs within the cloth. As long as all the warps are deflecting in the same direction clear across the cloth in the same horizontal plane, you can be pretty sure the cloth will remain flat.

In addition, I wanted to introduce opposing diagonals of weft into the same horizontal band and still keep the cloth flat. After trying out several ideas, I came up with slits. Slits allowed the warps to deflect in the appropriate directions and the slits opened up to become narrow diamonds! I was thrilled. The designing on paper began with where to place the slits. I knew how to weave the diagonals so that these diamonds would occur. It allowed a whole new set of "pure wedge weave" designs to evolve.

My quest over 35 years of rug weaving has been for techniques, yarns and designs which would be both durable and interesting to look at so that a rug could last - even become part of time.

Exploring the Edges

by Merna Strauch

Triangles and diagonals often show up in my tapestries — no wonder I am intrigued by wedge weave!

Ideas for using wedge weave, eccentric weft woven in bands, have been sprinkled throughout my notebooks for almost thirty years, but apparently they took a long time to incubate. The seeds were planted in 1985 at a guild talk in Los Angeles given by Helga Kaplan Miles and, a few years later, in notes from local rug weaver Joanne Beckwith. Peter Collingwood's 1968 The Techniques of Rug Weaving, also provided accessible, clear information, including diagrams.

My loom caught up with my notes in 1990 when I wove two tapestries that included small areas of wedge weave. My references were notes from the two weavers mentioned above and Collingwood's iconic book. It was fascinating to see what this oblique bit of weaving did to the pieces, whether it proofed out an area, or disturbed the selvedge. I put those experiments aside for a while, but my interest in wedge weave didn't wane. When an opportunity to take a workshop with Martha Stanley at Washington's *Fiber Forum* presented itself in 1995, I jumped on it. We had a lovely small class, a knowledgeable teacher and congenial students in scenic surroundings, and best of all for me, a taker of copious notes. Bobbi Chamberlain, a fellow Tapestry Weavers West member, was planning to (and did) write an article for that group's newsletter. Bobbi's notes, complete with diagrams, became my new source material.

I've been fortunate enough to see late 19th century Navaho wedge weave rugs in a few large, comprehensive exhibits over the years. The Southwest Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History have all had exhibits of Navaho and Pueblo textiles. Those rugs and blankets were alive; the power and energy emitting from them are visceral. Standing in a room surrounded by these textiles was very exciting, and thumbing through exhibit catalogs later can bring some of that back.

The very nature of wedge weave raises technical issues. Martha addressed some of those in class. Usually bands of oblique wefts go all the way across the textile in the same direction. The next band goes back in the other direction. But if those bands come toward each other, or go away from each other, from opposite directions, what happens? Martha gave us good examples from her own work of the results — either bulges or open slits.

How can the places where the bands meet be kept flat? What if the bands themselves are discontinuous? Can wedge weave be successfully combined with classic tapestry techniques other than in stripes? Can a piece have one scalloped edge as the result of wedge weave and a straight selvedge on the other side? My explorations for the last ten years have



"Edges Series: Purple"
15" x 12"
Merna Strauch

been directed to finding answers to these questions. Some answers lead to more questions and some solutions came with their own issues, so the game continues. I'm neither a speedy nor prolific weaver, but I love solving problems and am continuing to enjoy discovering new aspects of combining wedge weave with traditional tapestry techniques.



"White Strips"
13" x 3"
Merna Strauch
Photo: Merna Strauch

Triangles, diagonals, complexity, edges — what could be more interesting to continue contemplating?

Merna Strauch has a background in mathematics and has been weaving almost forty years. Process fascinates her and she is happiest weaving when there is a problem to solve or a question to explore.

In 2001 I wove some 3" x 14" monochromatic black strips, using 5 different black yarns and including sections of wedge weave. They were so much fun to weave that I followed that by weaving some white strips. Those had the added value of teaching me about the contrast between different whites; some absorbed light and some were more reflective. The strips, albeit interesting, didn't answer my underlying questions.

A rectangular piece followed, combining a large area of plain tapestry weave on one side with wedge weave bands on the other. The resulting scalloped edge on the right played against the straight selvedge on the left. Weaving that piece brought some surprises though. I like to weave straight across rather than building shapes but the wedge weave areas beat down differently than the tapestry areas. Extra picks had to be added judiciously in order not to disturb the wedge weave formulas. I also like to weave somewhat intuitively, without a cartoon. Using wedge weave provided a different structure to my work.

A workshop with Mary Zicafoose on ikat tapestry added another piece to the mix. Ikat necessitates more planning and less reliance on weaving intuitively, but the outcome is more than worth it. My next pieces combined ikat dyeing, wedge weave, and traditional tapestry. I loved the complexity in both the process and the finished pieces, and have continued to play with these dynamic ideas. Instead of my usual wool warp and weft, I've been using linen, both natural and indigo and fiber reactive dyed, in my most recent small pieces.



"The Edges of Doo-wop"
5.5" x 5"
Merna Strauch
Photo: Merna Strauch

Alluring Wedge Weave

by Deborah Corsini

Forty years ago I walked into the weaving studios at the Rhode Island School of Design and was seduced by the magic of the looms and the fascinating intertwining of the warps and wefts. It was at that very moment that I realized that my art would be woven, and my journey has led me to explore a number of interesting techniques from ikat (dyed warp faced weaving) to tapestry, the primary focus of my work. From the onset I have been especially inspired by the elegance, graphic beauty and simplicity of Navajo textiles. The first textile book that I ever bought was The Navajo Blanket by Mary Hunt Kahlenberg and Anthony Berlant. (Praeger Publishers, Inc. 1972) Although most of the photographs are in black and white, I was completely smitten by the dazzling array of pattern, scale and the juxtaposition of design elements of stripes, stair step patterns and variations of zigzags and lines. Even in black and white, I could see the keen sophisticated design and illusion of depth, foreground and background that was created in the work of the Navajo. This first introduction to Navajo textiles has been the foremost influence on my own work as I pursued tapestry weaving. My tapestry work is Navajo inspired, and I have intuitively utilized elements of their design sensibilities in my work — graphic line, balance, illusion of depth, strong pattern variation, and color.

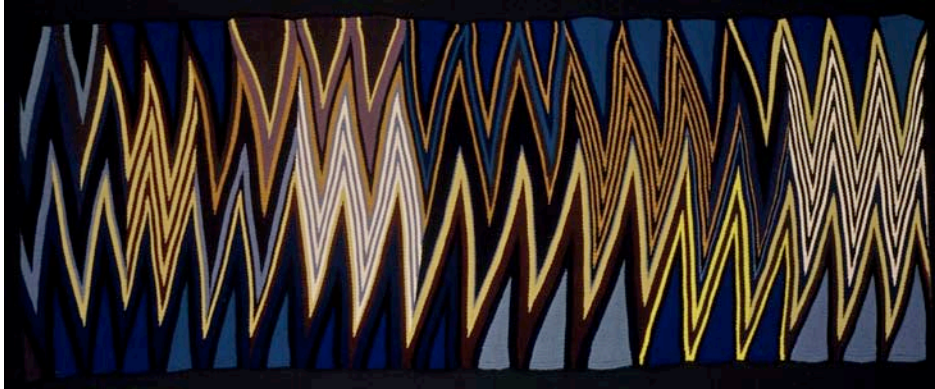


"Into Tumucumaque"
42" x 29"

Deborah Corsini
Photo: Richard Paradosky

The Navajo Blanket defines wedge weave as "a variation of the tapestry weave rather than a technique" and pictured four graphic examples (again in black and white). It was a curiosity that was always in the back of my mind as I continued to weave and evolve. Although I am primarily self-taught, I have taken a number of workshops with wonderful teachers including Archie Brennan and Susan Maffei, Jean Pierre Larochette and Martha Stanley. Stanley is a California based weaver artisan, and an exemplary craftswoman and technician who has investigated rare textile techniques including wedge weave. I had seen examples of her incredible work in exhibitions and became even more fascinated with the technique. In 1995 I had an opportunity to study wedge weave with Stanley in the lovely setting of a Taos adobe. There were four students and we brought our looms outside to weave under the blue New Mexico sky. It was an amazing week filled with learning the technique, as Stanley has investigated it, and exploring the creative possibilities. At a field trip to the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture in Santa Fe we saw and experienced actual Navajo wedge weave examples in their collections. The week was a comprehensive introduction to wedge weave, stimulating and profound. I returned home excited and renewed but also to my full time job as the Creative Director and designer for a textile manufacturer. Six years later, in 2001, I made the decision to leave my position and devote my time and energies to my own studio work.

Wedge weave is a bit of a maverick process. In a twenty-year time span starting in the mid 1870's some Navajo weavers began experimenting with this technique in which the weft was woven at an angle to the warp. Perhaps they experimented with this as a way to produce zigzag pattern designs in a faster manner although this method of weaving is not necessarily a quicker approach to tapestry.



"Night Life"
28" x 72"
Deborah Corsini
Photo: Richard Paradowsky

Examples of Navajo wedge weave include: pieces that cover the entire field of the blanket; those broken with broader plain weave bands of solid color; and some that incorporate bits of tapestry. In every other aspect wedge weave blankets have the same characteristics of other Navajo work. That is, they are four selvedge weft faced textiles, woven on an upright loom, using handspun wool wefts and warps, and of a similar sett and size. It is not known why Navajo wedge weaves were woven in a brief

window of time in the mid 1870's – 1890's. Perhaps it was the traders who discouraged this technique because the irregular edges were contrary to the look of a well-made commercial blanket.

Wedge weave is an eccentric weave. To start a band, a small triangle is built up on one edge of the weaving. In each subsequent pass two warps are added at the bottom of the triangle and the weft returns around the selvedge warp at the top of the triangle until the band is high enough. From then on across the warp, after two warps are added at the bottom, two warps are dropped at the top of the band so that the band remains the same height. The weft continues to be laid in on the diagonal that was established with the first triangle as the band progresses to the opposite selvedge. The second band starts at the other selvedge (with another small triangle) and the building process is reversed. The technique creates bands of weaving where the warps are pulled in one direction in one band and then in the opposite direction in the next band. The scalloped edges are the naturally occurring effect of this technique.

It is the scalloped and irregular edged shape that is part of the charm of this technique. The weaving itself also has a cadence and movement to it, different than traditional tapestry weaving. Weaving across the warp and back again, building band upon alternate band of linear design possesses its own momentum. The structure of the weave and the pattern are intimately connected. For contemporary tapestry weavers the creative possibilities of pushing this technique are unlimited. For the past ten years I have been investigating wedge weave and its variations and it continues to be a constant source of interest and expression.

Wedge weave has also encouraged me to explore color and the graphic variety of stripes and pattern. I have made large-scale pieces in wool and small experimental works in cotton, silk, jute, linen and plastic. I have taught wedge weave in workshops and to my tapestry students at City College of San Francisco. I have collected Navajo books with singular wedge weave examples and images by contemporary artists. It's interesting to see how many new weavers are discovering the process and the allure of this fascinating technique.

Deborah Corsini is the curator of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles.



"Spring Training"
40" x 34"
Deborah Corsini
Photo: Richard Paradowsky

How and why did I start experimenting with wedge weave?

By Michael Rohde



"Aeolus"
Michael Rohde

Most of my work has been, and continues to be, tapestries and earlier rugs that range from 24" x 24" to 5' by 8' feet, sometimes even larger. My primary loom is a Cranbrook, that I have used since it was new in 1980. It has an 8-foot weaving width. Furthermore, my work is most often geometric, as I chose early on to work within the limits of the technology of the loom, with warp and weft at right angles to each other. Any attempts to weave simple curves have been less than successful, as more than one teacher will attest to my trials in their workshops. Occasionally, I do like to work on a smaller format, but scaling down my larger designs does not translate well.

A complex path to led me to the limited wedge weaving that I have done and with which I continue to experiment. First, I had been intrigued by four selvedge weaving, but had only woven a small Navajo rug in a Sarah Natani class and an even smaller sample in a workshop with Archie Brennan and Susan Maffei. Second, I cannot sit still with my hands doing nothing - be this at a weavers' business meeting, on long bus trips while traveling in remote countries, or while sitting, listening to music or books on tape. So, before a month long trip to China, I took Archie Brennan's pipe loom design and scaled everything down to a loom that was seven by twelve inches,

imminently portable. The system worked perfectly for me, so now what to weave. I had Susan Martin-Maffei's four selvedge instructions, and since I was on vacation, why not try something new: wedge weave. I fell in love with it at once. The angled lines that come naturally out of the technique, and the scalloped edges of the finished piece were worlds apart from what I had striven for for years, namely straight selvedges and right angle designs. On that trip, I finished weaving over a dozen 5" x 5" pieces.

These and all subsequent work have been mounted for presentation, by sewing the piece to foam-core, covered with black linen cloth. Usually they are shown as single pieces, but sometimes in multiples related to each other. Lately I've been working with silk weft, which has given me the excuse to dye up 200+ shades of naturally dyed yarns.

Will I ever move to larger sized wedge weave? I don't know, but I do know that so far I have made over fifty of these small weavings, and haven't reached a stopping point as yet for this scale.

Michael F. Rohde began weaving in the mid 1970s, and has mostly been a weaver of rugs and tapestries, using yarns that he dyes, often planned or a specific piece. He is currently Co-Director of Member Services of ATA.



"Four Relics"
16" x 16"
Michael Rohde

Wedge Weave

by Donna Foley



"Late Summer Trail"
55" x 35"
Donna Foley
Photo: Donna Foley

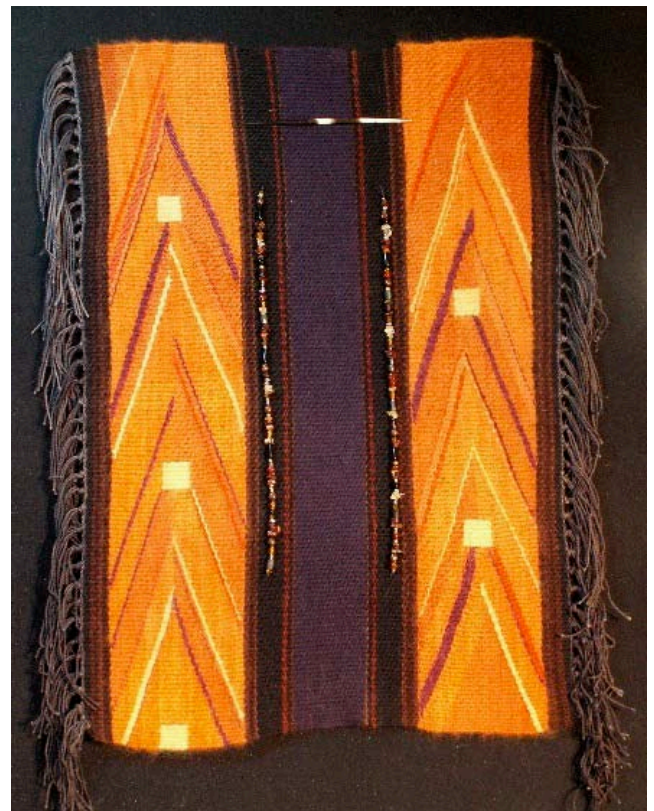
Since then, it has become one of my favorite techniques. The weavings have such wonderful movement to them. The process is very engrossing, yet it progresses at a nice pace. I feel it works wonderfully with the natural dyes I use for my yarns; small dye lots, afterbaths and plant experiments can all be worked well into a piece. Wedge weave loves serendipity! I plan to incorporate it into some of the natural dye classes I give as a way for my students to work with color.

With more than 25 years at the loom, Donna Foley is still utterly fascinated by the interlacement of colors and textures in weaving. Her Lincoln Longwool sheep and natural dyes are the springboard for her tapestries & rugs. Find her online at:

fourdirectionsweaving.com

I first saw this wonderful weave structure in a class In Rug Weaving given by Peter Collingwood. During the class one of the other students brought in a beautiful weaving in natural browns and golds that immediately caught our attention, especially Peter's. She went on to explain the wedge weave process to us all. Although wedge weave is included in his amazing book of rug techniques, I don't believe it was a structure Peter had spent much time on himself. The piece had a wonderful beauty. I went home to weave shaft-switched rugs, but what had actually fascinated me the most about the class was the wedge weave piece.

At that time I wasn't able to find anyone weaving this technique, but I kept a look out and was rewarded by a series of photos of Martha Stanley's wonderful rugs. I did a few small pieces on my own and then was delighted to take a mini workshop with Connie Lippert during Convergence in Grand Rapids.



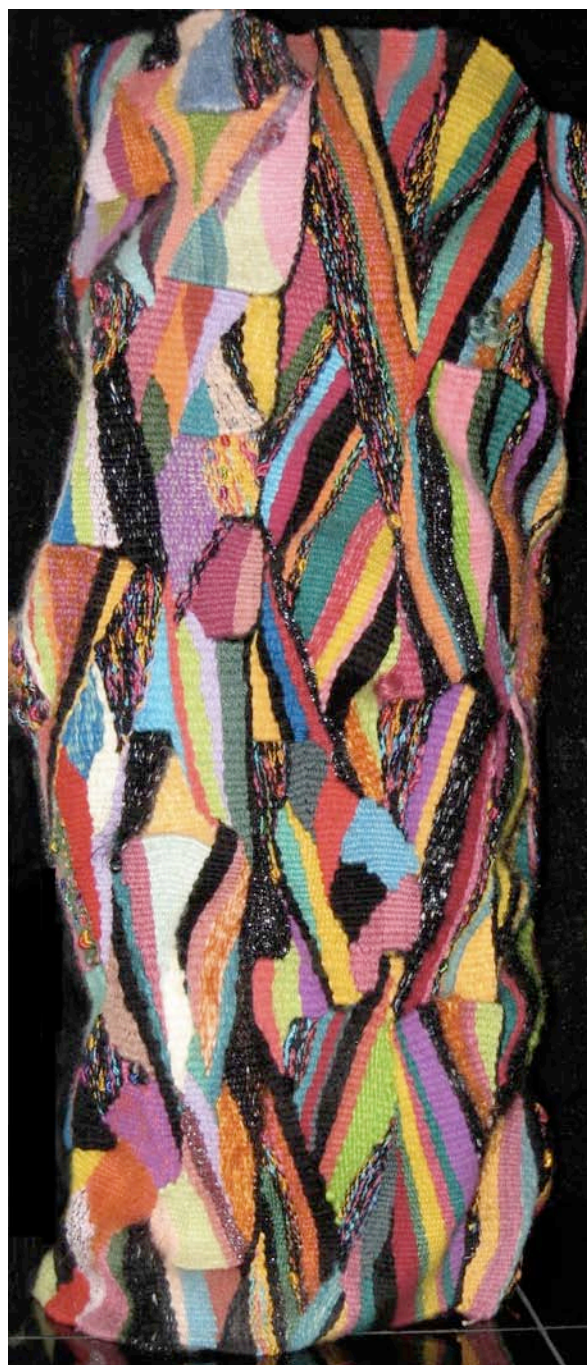
"Kopavi Trail"
23" x 16"
Donna Foley
Photo: Donna Foley



"Sneaker Wave"
30" x 18"
Janette Gross
Photo: Janette Gross



"Wedge Sample"
10" x 10"
Kim Kerley
Photo: Kim Kerley



"Single Malt"
Deborah Weir

Interview : A Conversation with Audrey Cowan

by Jean Pierre Larochette

Jean Pierre: In the summer of 1979 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art presented Judy Chicago's monumental installation "The Dinner Party". Part of that installation included a table runner that you wove. The cartoon was based on the Unicorn Tapestries and dedicated to Eleanor of Aquitaine. I believe it was around that time that we first met at the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop, where a set of six banners for "The Dinner Party" were woven by a group of volunteers.

This spring, 32 years later, the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City celebrated the unique collaboration that evolved since that initial collaboration with the exhibition *Judy Chicago Tapestries Woven by Audrey Cowan*. The body of work you have created is remarkable. In a time when most of the work in tapestry is done by designer/weavers you have dedicated yourself to a single designer. You have sponsored a very particular social cause – a commitment that is rare in our field – and, within traditional lines, you have explored techniques and methods to fulfill your own, distinctive vision. Also there is much to be said about your love, total dedication and respect for tapestry, which permeates your work and is, in itself, radiant. Can you talk about the beginnings of this passion? How did tapestry find you?

Audrey: I only wove one tapestry for "The Dinner Party" and that was the Eleanor of Aquitaine runner. I had worked in other media, and had done some needlework and was creating contemporary weaving. I was familiar with Judy's work, and decided to become a Dinner Party volunteer. I was originally assigned to create needlework, but Judy knew I had some weaving background so she asked me to help a young woman who was struggling with the technical aspects of producing the finite detail of Judy's Eleanor design. A couple of days later, Judy called to say that the young woman had given up in frustration, and said, "You'll do it, won't you Audrey?" Having more guts than brains at the time, I agreed and then asked myself, "What do I do now!"

I set up a loom in my home, studied books on weaving techniques used at Eleanor's time, and with no other formal training, began weaving. Not knowing that traditional Aubusson weavers worked from the back of the warps, I instinctively worked from the front, with an outline of the cartoon behind my warps. To add to the challenge, Judy had only created a drawing for the right hand side of the tapestry. When I asked for a cartoon for the left side, she asked if I could just reverse the pattern to create the symmetry she desired. Somehow the finished product emerged successfully and was often singled out for praise by the critics.

It was not until after "The Dinner Party" was completed that I attended your San Francisco Tapestry Workshop for a month of formal training. I vividly remember our final assignment: Design and weave a one-foot square tapestry. Your critique of



"The Creation," from the "Birth Project"
42" x 168"

Designed by Judy Chicago, Woven by Audrey Cowan
Photo: Donald Woodman

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my work reinforced my commitment to Aubusson tapestry when you said, "Audrey, you paint with yarn."

Jean Pierre: After completion of the Aquitaine 30" x 30" piece, your next collaboration was "The Creation," a sobering 42" x 168" tapestry. One can only imagine your excitement - and concerns! - entering such a large project. Many aspects of the material Chicago supplied you for the weaving of this tapestry are traditional, such as the full-scale, painted paper cartoon. Also, much in the manner of the instructions that were often given for the weaving of medieval tapestries, she wrote a text entitled "ReCreation Myth." It reads: "In the beginning there was nothing / for all was dark and chaotic / Then out of the chaos emerged a sigh / and this sigh became a moan / and this moan became a wail / and this wail became the scream of birth..."

I assume you stitched the cartoon behind the warps sideways, the top to your left, and commenced the tapestry. "In the beginning there was nothing." The first foot or so of weaving is almost pure black, with random touches of color. Then in a steady, very patient way, increasingly you started breaking the dark surface with lighter tones within the wake-like lines spiraling in a striped vortex. It is in this first portion of the weaving that you established the language, the rhythm, the systematized approach that would carry the piece to its completion. The result is powerful. Could you take us back to that time, your thoughts and concerns?

Audrey: After the completion of the Aquitaine tapestry for "The Dinner Party," Judy and I had become interested in working together; she creating and painting the imagery and my weaving it. We both felt the same way. Together we could create beautiful tapestries with her gift of design and my love of weaving. She decided that we should become partners, although not many artists did that with their weavers.

With a studio at home and a family to care for, I strove to weave every day. My family was always supportive of my dual roles of mother and artist, and both children put a stitch into each of my weavings so that they could symbolically be a part of the experience. It took three and a half years to complete "The Creation."

Judy lived in New Mexico, so she flew to L.A. three or four times a year to see how the work was progressing and to plan the next segment to be woven. In your observations about the opening vortex, you mention that it begins almost entirely black with just a few random touches of color. In fact, there is not a single stitch that is entirely black, as Judy's incredible sense of color called for subtleties that I wanted to weave as faithfully as possible. In the beginning of our collaboration, I was apprehensive when she visited, anxious that I had succeeded in achieving the vision of her imagery and color. In fact, throughout our 30 years together, she never asked me to rework any part of a tapestry.



"The Fall," from the "Holocaust Project"
Designed by Judy Chicago, Woven by Audrey Cowan
54" x 216"
Photo: Donald Woodman

Jean Pierre: In the collaborations of painters and weavers in the recent past we find many different visions and approaches. At one end we have the characteristic Gobelin's understanding that once a painter's work has been selected the tapestry is the weaver's responsibility. At the other end there is Jean Lurcat's view, by which the painter acts as an orchestra director, creating a very technical cartoon. Others have successfully proposed a closer collaboration, one in which a given image is worked into tapestry by both the painter and the weaver. All are, in the words of Pierre Baudouin, seeking "the absolute tapestry". In that search for the best integration of the painter's intention with the weaver's work many different technical nuances have been developed. I am thinking along lines of textural effects, methods of color gradation, direction of the weaving (working sideways or from the bottom up), working from the reverse or the front, pinning the cartoon or inking the warps. Each image, in other words, will call for a different interpretation and approach. Can you describe for us your own experience?

Audrey: Instead of weaving from the back in the traditional Aubusson way, we decided to trace the outlines of Judy's cartoon and put the tracing behind my warps. I placed her original cartoon on an armature to my right as my reference for color and shading. It gave me the best chance to really translate her beautiful colors. After the Eleanor weaving, I always worked sideways.

All of our weavings were woven with Paternayan yarns. I used so much of their yarn that they set me up as a wholesale dealer! In addition, I used crewel, Aurora silk and gold thread. I wove on a high warp loom and found it to be the most comfortable for me. I occasionally used bobbins, but to translate the constant color changes it usually made more sense to use my fingers. Needless to say, after 30 years of weaving such detail, my fingers are a bit arthritic. Ah, the sacrifices we make for art's sake! No matter the size of the cartoons, there was little change in warp-sett to accommodate the details.



I usually wove 5 days a week, but at crunch time it often turned into 7 days. Once the family was out of the house in the morning, I worked for at least 4-5 hours. The most challenging piece was "The Fall," especially as the exhibition deadline neared and the subject matter became extremely intense. Pressed by the deadline and the personal passion for the imagery, I drove myself as much as 12 hours daily for the final month.

Our collaboration is the quintessential definition of a symbiosis--the two of us together produced art that required the combination of our unique talents, art, which neither of us could have produced alone.

Jean Pierre: I think that the merit of your collaborative work, of what you have achieved in the naming of this collection of tapestries, has many notable components. For example, looking at "Power Headache" (24" x 20", 1986) I am moved by the finesse of your interpretation. The handling of form and color transitions, your fondness for detail juxtaposed to the strong composition of the image, is captivating. You know how to follow a woven line to its very conclusion, to a point of color, or to the subtle marking of a slit left open.

Then there is the added dimension of your commitment to a social cause. How interesting that it was the Eleanor of Aquitaine piece that led your life long dedication to

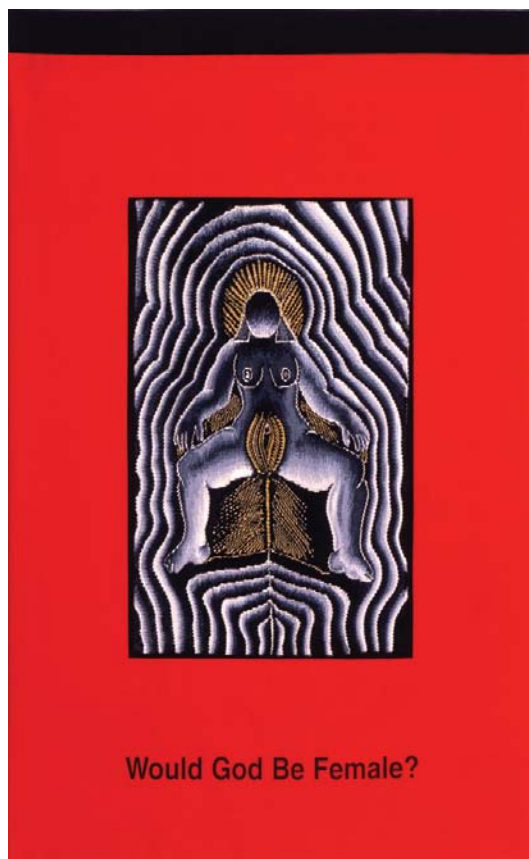
"Power Headache" from "Powerplay"
24" x 20"

Designed by Judy Chicago, Woven by Audrey Cowan
Photo: Donald Woodman

tapestry as a medium to support feminism. It was Aquitaine who sponsored the Courts of Love, a movement that was to play a major role in shaping the moral values of the society of her time. The Aquitaine region is right next to Aubusson, also a center of the legendary troubadour's activities. These poems and songs inspired 15th century Henri Baude, who wrote social commentary texts to be woven in tapestry, "Dictz moraux pour mettre en tapisserie", a true predecessor of your collaboration "What if Women Ruled the World."

As you know, traditionally the names of designers and workshops are the ones recorded, rarely the names of weavers. Yet a certain amount of credit and recognition has been given to weavers in modern times, helping to restore, in this heavily industrialized era, the dignity of that which is done by hand. With your artistry, love and dedication you have achieved something very special in this area too. Is there something you would like to add regarding the role of the weaver today?

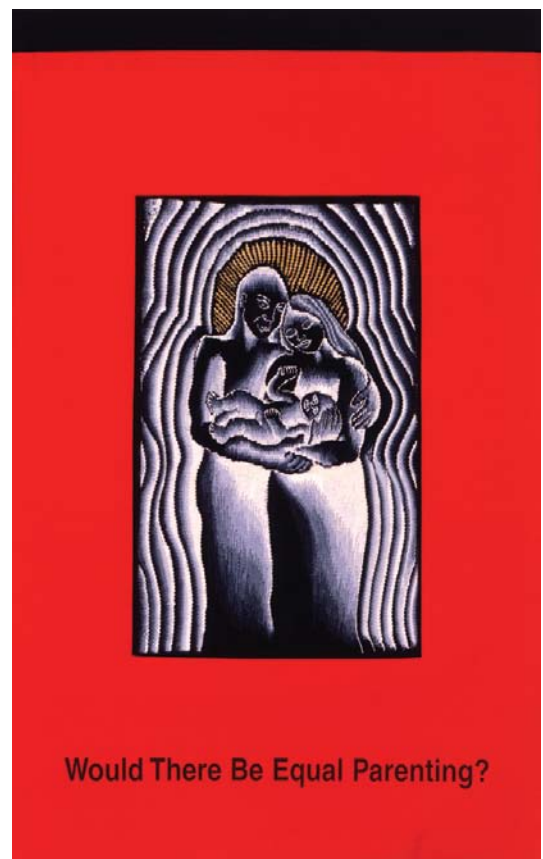
Audrey: I feel that it is very important that the artist who designs the cartoon respects the weaver's need to feel that his or her work is vital in creating fine tapestry. I can only hope that more artists encourage the weaver to feel this connection to the finished art. To me, how the weaver translates the beauty of the artist's design makes the final product even more compelling. Perhaps weavers must be stronger in making the artist understand that the conversion of the cartoon to the finished weaving is a joint endeavor. There is as much to be said, for the new generation of weavers, for entering a symbiotic relationship with the creator of a cartoon, as there is for creating and weaving their own designs. There is profound artistic fulfillment either way.



Would God Be Female?

"Would God be Female?"
from "What if Women Ruled the World"
20" x 12"

Designed by Judy Chicago, Woven by Audrey Cowan
Photo: Donald Woodman



Would There Be Equal Parenting?

"Would There Be Equal Parenting?"
from "What if Women Ruled the World"
20" x 12"

Designed by Judy Chicago, Woven by Audrey Cowan
Photo: Donald Woodman

Coastal Fiberarts 2011: A Show for Inspiration and Admiration

By Erin Riggs

Clatsop Community College hosted the first annual fiber art exhibit titled *Coastal Fiberarts 2011*. This show was collaboration between the Astoria Arts Association, Astoria Visual Arts and the CCC. Cheryl Silverblatt a board member of the Astoria Visual Arts and Kristin Schauck a CCC Art Instructor coordinated this lovely exhibit.



Cheryl Silverblatt
Photo: Erin Riggs

This exhibit was open to all fiber art mediums and was juried by Barbara Setsu Pickett, Professor Emeritus of the University of Oregon Fiber Department. Out of 72 fiber art pieces submitted by 51 artists, three monetary awards were given: "Best of Show" was awarded to Kathy Spoering for her *Barbershop Buzz*, a lovely and detailed tapestry of a traditional barbershop. There is exceptional attention to detail, from the barber's traditional tools to the background mirror reflecting the scene. It imparted a nice feeling of nostalgia in the image coupled with exquisite handwork and detail. "Best Use of Fiber" was awarded to Pat sparks for her "Calla Lily Group I". The highlights on the leaves and expert blending of fibers in the background really gave a feeling of light interacting with the plants; it was a pleasure to look at. "New Directions in Fiber" awarded to Melany Berry for her "Heron Mask". I was really impressed with this wearable woven mask. I never would have imagined it possible! Elegant and graceful, just like a live heron.

The second I stepped into the CCC gallery I was floored! Every place I looked I saw inspiration and beauty. As a novice weaver I cannot speak to technique but I can speak about inspiration and beauty. Boy was I inspired!

Cheryl and Kristin did a marvelous job of displaying a wide array of fiber arts in all sizes, shapes, and textures. Exhibited were fiber works from embroidery to quilt work to tapestry and macramé. Also the techniques were wonderfully variable, from very traditional handwork to new use of techniques in fiber arts. The variability in themes was outstanding as well, pieces were thoughtful or serious and reflective, others were fanciful and fun and sexy, and all were beautiful. The show revealed to me the depth of tradition and possibility of the future of fiber arts. As a novice weaver I became very excited about all of it! I found inspiration in every corner.

The variety of fiber arts in the exhibit was certainly one of the many strong points about Coastal Fiberarts 2011. The venue at CCC was great, but up on the hill not much foot traffic came through. Although it was off the beaten walking path, it was well worth the short .5-mile walk up 16th from Hwy 30. I will certainly visit the next Coastal Fiberarts show-and get a little exercise in the process!

Thank you Cheryl Silverblatt and Kristin Schauck for putting on an exhibit of such variety in fiber arts and for expanding my horizons as well. I look forward to next year's exhibit.

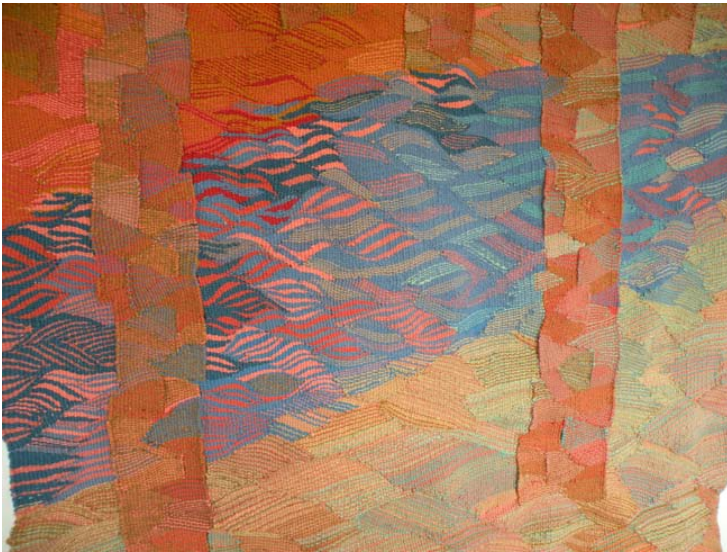


"Color Study"
Catherine Beard
Photo: Erin Riggs

Review: *A Weaverly Path: The Tapestry Life of Silvia Heyden*, a film by Kenny Dalsheimer

by Lyn Hart

How does one peer into the mind of an artist, into the deep recesses where creativity and vision abide? What would be visible there? How could it be described and made tangible enough for others to see? The answer is time. Time spent observing what the artist sees, how what she sees affects how she pursues her artistic vision, how the artist lives life day-to-day. Time spent listening to seemingly intangible concepts. Spending enough time that the artist is comfortable working and speaking unselfconsciously while being observed. And then, taking the time to distill all of the observations down to an essence that sheds a sparkling, enticing light on the artistic process; leaving enough unexamined and unspoken so that the wonderful, glorious mystery of the creative process is preserved. Kenny Dalsheimer's *A Weaverly Path* captures a privileged and intimate slice of time observing Silvia Heyden, providing an unprecedented opportunity to see and hear what she experiences during a period of deep involvement with her Muse, the Eno River. Heyden's quest is not to weave a representational depiction of the river, but to interpret the river's fluid patterns, shapes, sounds, and ever-changing nature, to represent its movement and flow with the yarns of her tapestries.



"Eno From Above"
Silvia Heyden
Photo: Lyn Hart



"Eno From Above," detail
Silvia Heyden
Photo: Lyn Hart

Throughout the film, Heyden discusses the challenges and discoveries that mark this journey. The film consists of vignettes carefully woven together, vignettes that capture moments of time throughout the year Dalsheimer spent working with Heyden. The flow of the film mirrors the visual dynamics of a Heyden tapestry... full of movement and changing colors, never still, changing direction, yet all the while maintaining a unifying undercurrent. The coalescing force both in the film and in Heyden's work is the Eno River. Heyden's visits to the river mark the seasons as she fully experiences it by hiking, sketching, and immersing herself in its refreshing pools. Each activity feeds her understanding of the river's nuances, and each visit finds her as amazed and excited as if it were the first, as she constantly puzzles out what she is endeavoring to capture in her work. The carefully chosen music flows through the cinematography like a constant current, either setting the tone or creating a subtle accompaniment, at times lively, at times contemplative. Heyden's voice provides the narrative.



"Weaverly Current"
Silvia Heyden
Photo: Kenny Dalsheimer

Brief retrospectives of her childhood, young adulthood, and the beginnings of her career as an artist are included in the film, which will afford viewers who may not have read her 1998 book, The Making of Modern Tapestry, insight into the events that have shaped her as an artist. Descriptions of her childhood in Switzerland and young adulthood in Nazi controlled Berlin describe situations and events that many people could not comprehend today. Heyden also recounts her experiences studying under Johannes Itten and Elsi Giauque in the School of Design in Zürich from 1948 to 1953. Johannes Itten, the school's director, required all students to spend their first year taking his courses in Design and Form, following the Bauhaus tradition and providing the underlying structure for the remainder of what they chose to study. She identifies Elsi Giauque, "the lady of textiles", as her "real" teacher during her later studies; it was under Giauque's tutelage that Heyden discovered her desire to become a tapestry weaver. Later, as Heyden married and she and her husband began to raise their family, her weaving became an integral part of their lives together.

Hey

den expresses her current philosophy in regard to tapestry weaving as having expanded greatly from what she originally described in her book, stating that she expects it to continue changing as long as she is alive and able to weave. She believes strongly that tapestry exists as its own art form which should not be compared to paintings or created from drawings or photographs, but which should instead evolve by looking at the world through "weaver's eyes". Tapestry designs should be composed using motifs that communicate movement, unlike other art forms such as painting, and she describes her creative process as a reversal – not weaving as she draws but instead drawing as she weaves, filtering out anything "unweaveable". The technical realities of weaving are not impediments, but are challenges that stimulate creativity. Heyden exudes enthusiastic excitement as each new tapestry is cut from the loom. That enthusiasm is equally strong when she visits her earlier works in the scene at Wake Forest University's Scale Art Center. Here she views her massive tapestries *Passacaglia* and *Chaconne*, originally commissioned in 1977 by R.J. Reynolds Industries and later donated to the University. Both works embody the importance music holds in her life, yet she is adamant that she is not weaving music but is weaving the colors and patterns she sees when she hears music, something made possible because she has synesthesia, a neurologically based condition in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second



"River Down"
Silvia Heyden
Photo: Lyn Hart



Silvia Heyden at her loom
Photo: Kenny Dalsheimer

sensory or cognitive pathway.

The opening reception of Heyden's solo exhibit of her Eno River Tapestries, held at the Horace Williams House in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a visual swirling cacophony. The vibrant tapestries displayed together radiate a dynamic and tangible energy even as one views them on film. Dalsheimer successfully captures the entire impact of the exhibit, from the excitement of the guests and Heyden herself as she discusses her work, to the beauty of the tapestries, seen from both a distance and in close ups that capture the hues, textures, and weave structures. As anyone who has attempted to photograph textiles well knows, this is not an easily accomplished feat.

Within the spare beauty of her home, built specifically to accommodate summer and winter studio areas, Heyden's large loom is the centerpiece. Her earlier woven and crocheted works and more current tapestries soften the space. Throughout the film, Heyden works in different stages of the weaving process: designing; warping; choosing yarns from her enviably large stash of Swedish linens and wools; weaving; cutting off and contemplating finished tapestries. She also welcomes into her home a small number of weavers from the regional group, Tapestry Weavers South, who listen intently and scribble notes furiously as she discusses her philosophy of tapestry weaving. They eagerly examine several of her recent works, and observe her weaving a current commission.

Dalsheimer's cinematography is wonderfully vibrant and clear, accurately representing both the sometimes shocking colors of Heyden's work and the subtle, tranquil, and contemplative colors of the river scenes through each season. The weaving scenes are luscious, so closely filmed that one can see the hairs and feel the coarseness of the linen warp, watch the colors vibrate as they are woven in, perceive the faint scrunch of the weft as it passes through the warp, and hear the familiar squeaks and clatter of harnesses moving to and fro. Dalsheimer chose to film a few weaving scenes in black & white, giving the viewer's eye a rest from the vibrancy of the yarns and directing awareness to the dance between warp and weft, focusing attention on the beautiful grace of hands that have made these movements thousands of times over decades of weaving.

The power of observation over time. The time Silvia Heyden takes to observe the Eno, to understand its pulses, rhythms, and nuances leads her to a high point in her pursuit of using forms and motifs to represent fluidity in her weaving. The time Kenny Dalsheimer took to observe Heyden in her element, to understand the medium of tapestry and to not rush in the crafting of this film, have resulted in a rendering of the creative process that is inspiring and thought provoking.

As of this writing, A Weaverly Path is currently being submitted to US and International film festivals. Plans are underway to sell DVD's and to make the film available in the fall of 2011 for public screenings and community events. Email info@aweaverlypath.com if you wish to be contacted when the film becomes available. View a preview trailer of the film here: <http://aweaverlypath.com/see-the-film/>.

Heyden's book, The Making of Modern Tapestry, is still available for sale. Contact: Silvia Heyden, 3101 Pleasant Green Road, Durham, NC 27705

Lyn Hart began weaving tapestry in 2006. In 2010, Lyn was the September Artist-in-Residence at Grand Canyon National Park's North Rim; she is currently working on a tapestry of a life size condor for the Park's Visitor Center. Her journey in tapestry is evolving significantly through intensive study with Silvia Heyden.

ATA Award for Excellence

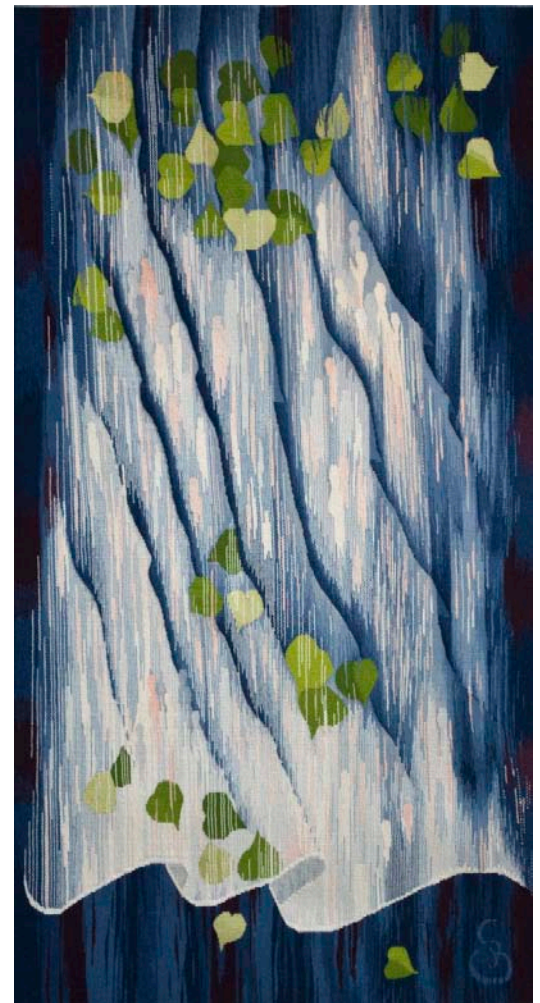
ATA's Award for Excellence was presented to **Elizabeth Buckley** for her tapestry "Dialogues Through the Veil" at the exhibition *Fiber Celebrated 2011*, organized by the Intermountain Weavers Conference at the Center of Southwest Studies gallery, Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, July 21st thru September 24, 2011.

DIALOGUES THROUGH THE VEIL

The space between now and then
Opens
Like a window
Into the moment,
Inviting the presence of
Mary, the poet,
Ann, the peacemaker,
And so many others,
To leave traces
Of their thoughts
In these threads.

Currents of time and air
Flow
Into this veil of mist and memory;
This waterfall of light
On cottonwood leaves
Beside my studio.

400 hours made visible.
Like beach patterns
Of ocean on sand.



"Dialogues Through the Veil"
48" x 25"
Elizabeth Buckley

With a background including multiple-harness production weaving and a degree in art, Elizabeth bridges both the weaving and art worlds. She lives in the high desert southwest of Albuquerque, New Mexico, amid the Navajo and Hispanic Rio Grande weaving traditions. She was curator of the international show "Dialogues: Tapestry and Human/Nature," on exhibit in conjunction with Convergence 2010. (Review in "Tapestry Topics", Winter 2010). Her tapestries have been shown in numerous juried and invitational exhibitions throughout the United States and Canada. She has written articles for "Tapestry Topics" and been published in: FiberArts Design Book Five and Carol K. Russell's The Tapestry Handbook: the Next Generation.

Elizabeth's approach to tapestry making involves working in multiple layers and dimensions to create visual poems of blended colors and light. Thematic in her work is the undercurrent of time in terms of millennia; time of the forces which molded earth's canyons and mesas, oceans and mountains; time filled with the spirits of those who have come before.

In addition, Elizabeth is a dancer of modern dance, singer and writer. All of these disciplines enter into her work as an artist.

ATA News

Christine Laffer's gift to establish an Online Curatorial Program

In the heart of summer 2011 the American Tapestry Alliance board received an innovative opportunity from past president and past webmaster, Christine Laffer. Christine made a generous monetary donation to ATA that is earmarked to fund a special program within ATA's Web Exhibitions. Her vision is to offer notable stipends to individuals who could stimulate a broader and more innovative platform for our online exhibition programming. Her hopes are that this program will increase the prestige of contemporary tapestry and provide a venue for critical review in the field. This very specific donation, given in her name, extends Christine's legacy in tapestry permanently on ATA's website.

The importance of our website as a vehicle to promote contemporary tapestry and provide services to our membership increases every year. Taking the time to think about how to increase the professionalism and stature of the website's programming, as Christine is doing with the web exhibition program, will benefit the entire field.

We are thrilled that Christine offered this gift to ATA. It is a very exciting development for us organizationally, both in terms of stimulating greater depth and vision for the web exhibition program and in terms of providing a model for named giving opportunities, which is a way to be commemorated for specific anchor donations.

We are moved by the generosity and comprehensiveness of Christine's plan and how it speaks as a model for future donations. Her vision will benefit current tapestry weavers and serve as inspiration for future practitioners. It is a marvelous example of her dedication to the field of contemporary tapestry and to the work of ATA. Thank you, Christine Laffer.

American Tapestry Alliance Scholarship for Tapestry Study

ATA is pleased to announce the inaugural Scholarship for Tapestry Study award. This scholarship is for any American Tapestry Alliance member who wishes to pursue study in the field of tapestry weaving. The application may be for study in workshops, courses, with individual tutors, or in institutions of higher learning. A Scholarship Committee will determine the number of awards granted, and the amount of the awards. Full funding of an application is not guaranteed. The American Tapestry Alliance reserves the right to withhold the award in any given year. The 2012 Valentines Day Appeal will start the funding for this new program. For more information: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/rata-scholarship-for-tapestry-study/>.

Kudos

ATA's Kudos has transitioned fully to a monthly email format. Contact Merna Strauch: mstrauch@mac.com, to submit information about your shows, awards, etc. eKudos is published on the third Saturday of every month.

ATA Board of Directors

ATA is currently soliciting applications for our Board of Directors. Board members represent ATA's leadership. They make policy decisions and are actively involved in programming. Board members must monitor and respond to regular communication through the board email list. Specific skills needed at this time are in the areas of exhibitions.

The benefits to board membership are many. Working with a talented and committed group of people to offer tapestry weavers educational and exhibition opportunities, and to promote the field to others, is rewarding and fun. Board members work with tapestry weavers around the world and build lasting friendships and artistic alliances. Sharing your talents and resources adds to the vitality of ATA. WE NEED YOU! Current board members would be happy to tell you more about the experience of being an ATA board member. For more information about the ATA Board of Directors, or for an application, contact Elaine Duncan: elaine@elaineduncan.com

ATA Forums, Linda Rees, Coordinator

ATA's online Forums are a hub for members' input and conversation. Some topics generate pages of discussion - as did the intriguing question "How can I go from yellow to blue without getting green?" An example of a long-lasting benefit that grew out of the Focus Forums is the 3+2+1 group, who produced the exhibit, *Tapestry and Human/Nature*, in 2010 (See TT Winter 2010). The alliance between these artists was forged when they all took part in an online Critique Group.

When I recently agreed to coordinate the ATA Forums, I knew very little about their potential as a tool for interaction. The process of joining and participating seemed confusing. However, once I realized that I could benefit from the discussion, I found it easy to get involved. Because I have first hand knowledge of how valuable these conversations can be, I have chosen to work on invigorating the Forums.

Open Discussion Forums: Shorter questions and conversations cover a range of topics. You can read the existing topics in this section without even logging in. This is a great resource that might have a gem tucked away for you.

Focus Forums: These discussions extend over a longer period of time and center around a specific subject. The online format allows the entire conversation to be accessed and searched. The following Focus Forums are currently underway: *The Business of Weaving*, moderated by Doris Florig, and *Political Lines*, moderated by Christine Laffer and Dorothy Clews, now in its third year. Members interested in either forum can contact the moderators to ask about joining.

2012 Focus Forums: We are soliciting proposals for Focus Forums starting in January 2012. We encourage even those who feel they are beginners to consider being the moderator of a Focus Forum. Christine Laffer and I can assist as advisors, if desired. The Focus Forums are small groups of people with similar questions joining together to explore ideas in depth. All discussion is for the group's benefit, with the potential to share insights with a broader audience in the future.

Proposed 2012 Focus Forums:

Color Commentary and Queries - Seeking a Moderator. Open to all skill levels. This Forum will include weekly commentary from talented tapestry artists and an exercise to be executed. The exercises will involve yarn-based exploration.

Writing as a Means of Seeing More - Moderated by Linda Rees. Open to all skill levels but should have access to the web and tapestry catalogs. This Forum is geared towards sharpening our perceptual skills through writing about contemporary tapestries. When we put observations into words, or justify how we feel about an artwork, it can clarify our own aesthetics.

How to Register

Before posting on ATA's Forums for the first time, you must register. This ominous sounding requirement actually has a very positive outcome, namely insuring a spam free communication channel.

- 1) Registration – <http://www.americantapestryalliance.org/phpBB2/index.php>. Click on "Register" on the top left. As you fill in the required fields, be sure to include the code word "ATA" under "interests."
- 2) Approval - The administrator must approve your registration. The process can take a few days. (Volunteers aren't continually online; it only seems that way to them.)
- 3) For speedier approval email: ataforums@americantapestryalliance.org with the content "Awaiting forum approval" After approval, enter your tapestry related comment or question. Once registered and approved, members simply log on to post. Stop by to visit the Forums on a regular basis.

- 4) Joining a Focus Forum requires an additional step: email your registration user name to the facilitator of the topic you are choosing.

For more information, contact Linda Rees: lerees@comcast.net

Tapestry Topics Information

Themes & Deadlines ~

Teachers & Lessons **Deadline: January 15, 2012**

What teacher(s) have had particular consequence for your work as a tapestry weaver? Why? How? What lessons do you remember as being particularly significant in terms of your practice of making, designing, weaving? What lessons do you wish that you had learned much sooner? Send your queries to Micala Sidore, Theme Editor: Micala@HawleyStreet.com

Surface **Deadline: April 1, 2012**

Do you stretch the definition of tapestry by enriching your work with surface techniques and/or embellishment? Share your motivations, techniques and your work. Send your queries to Sharon Crary, Theme Editor: crarys@att.net

Going International **Deadline: July 15, 2012**

We would love to include more news from outside the United States. Let us know what's happening where you live. Share your work.

Resources **Deadline: October 1, 2012**

What are your favorite magazines, blogs, websites? What about your favorite source materials, and sources for materials?

Specifications ~

Electronic images must be accompanied by the following information: Size, date completed, and photo credits.

Articles should be under 1000 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 exhibit and explain the parts that contribute to this sense.

Submissions ~ Send to the Theme Editor for the issue. Other articles can be sent to: Mary Lane/ 703 Foote Street NW/ Olympia/ WA 98502, USA marylane53@mac.com

Newsletter Committee ~ Asst. Editor: Mary Colton, Layout: Mary Lane, Web Posting: Mary Lane. Thanks to Pat Williams for proofreading the Winter Issue.



"Kulliy Laranja"
23" x 17"
Janette Gross
Photo: Janette Gross

Currents, Waves & Rising Tides ***Study with the Masters***

ATA's 2012 Members Retreat

Whether your ideas come with the force of crashing waves or percolate in an undercurrent of gentle motion, discover the expertise that Master Weavers Archie Brennan and Jean Pierre Larochette will impart during ATA's 2012 Member's Retreat. A confluence of ideas and inspiration will offer participants a rare opportunity to learn from and interact with each of these esteemed instructors. Don't miss this opportunity to gather with old friends, meet new friends, and immerse yourself in an ocean of tapestry, creativity and fun.

ATA's Educational Retreat will be held July 22-24 at Chapman University, Orange, CA, following HGA's Convergence 2012. Check in at Chapman begins late Saturday afternoon. Both private and shared rooms are available and include all meals.

You Won't Know Where You Are Going Until You Get There!

Archie Brennan

Rather than preparing a design on paper beforehand, I have long been fascinated with having the actual weaving process suggest and direct the design, find the imagery and influence the journey up and across the warp. A new world opens up. Then let your sketchbook react to what you have woven!

Participants will set up a long narrow warp and chose a subject that invites an open journey. You will be surprised at how this approach encourages inventive, creative thinking that explores the inherent language of tapestry.

"Marc II"

Front and Back: A hands on workshop

Jean Pierre Larochette

"The Points in Between"

Participants will view the fundamentals of cartoon designing, such as the relationships between the elements of composition, scale and format. Weaving from the front or back? A guide to understanding tapestry structure. We will be viewing techniques of geometry and free forming; methods of color shading; large format/small format concerns.

Participants are encouraged to bring a sample of their work for an open discussion on the characteristic of different approaches. These conversations will include brief presentations by invited guests.

Archie Brennan became an apprentice at the Dovecot Workshops in Scotland at the age of 16. His apprenticeship lasted until 1954 after which he traveled and studied in France until 1956 and did graduate and post graduate studies at Edinburgh College of Art from 1958 until 1962. From 1962 to 1977 he established and developed the Graduate and Post Graduate Department of Tapestry and Fibre Arts at the Edinburgh College of Art and in 1963 became Director of the Dovecot. He lead the design team for embellishing New Guinea's new parliament building and served as a consultant during the formation of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop in Australia. Since 1993 he has lived in the United States where he continues to weave, teach, and spread his love of the medium in as many where ways as possible while continuing to ask himself "I wonder what would happen if . . ."

Jean Pierre Larochette was born in Buenos Aires, the son of Armand Larochette, a third generation French Aubusson tapestry weaver. Jean Pierre apprenticed at his father's workshop and in 1963 and 1964 studied, and worked under the direction of internationally known French tapestry artist Jean Lurcat. Jean Pierre was co-founder and director of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop and taught at the San Francisco State University textile program in the 1970s and 1980s. Jean Pierre has collaborated with his wife and designer, Yael Lurie, for over four decades and across three continents. Based in Berkeley, California, they have exhibited and taught internationally. They have completed numerous commissions for temples and have works in public and private collections through out the United States, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina.

Registration Enrollment is limited. Complete the registration form and mail, along with your payment, to Marcia Ellis, 5565 Idlewood Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, USA. Early bird registration must be received by April 15, 2012. Registration closes May 31, 2012. Retreat fees for non-ATA members include a one-year membership to ATA. **Full refunds, less a \$50.00 administrative fee are granted until May 31, 2012. 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.americantapestryalliance.org Questions? Contact Erika Scott: erika.scott@cox.net

Register Online!! [Click here](#)
Or, mail in this Registration Form

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Email: _____ Roommate's name: _____

*Teacher preference (number in order): either instructor _____ Brennan _____ Larochette _____

Emergency Contact (Name and phone number): _____

| | Registration Fee | Sa pm - Tues am Room & board | Tuesday night Room & dinner | Total |
|--|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| ATA member, Early Bird, single room | \$300.00 | \$300.00 | \$65.00 | |
| ATA member, Early Bird, double room | \$300.00 | \$255.00 | \$50.00 | |
| Non ATA member, Early Bird, single room | \$335.00 | \$300.00 | \$65.00 | |
| Non ATA member, Early Bird, double room | \$335.00 | \$255.00 | \$50.00 | |
| ATA member, late registration, single room | \$335.00 | \$300.00 | \$65.00 | |
| ATA member, late registration, double room | \$335.00 | \$255.00 | \$50.00 | |
| Non ATA member, late registration, single | \$370.00 | \$300.00 | \$65.00 | |
| Non ATA member, late registration, double | \$370.00 | \$255.00 | \$50.00 | |

Payment: Check enclosed _____ Credit Card # (MC or VISA) _____

Security Code: _____ Expiration Date _____ Cardholder's Signature _____

PayPal: (Log on to paypal.com. Send payment to americantapestryalliance@gmail.com & mention "retreat")

**Teacher preferences will be assigned according to date of registration.*

Register online!! [Click here](#), or mail form to: Marcia Ellis / 5565 Idlewood Road / Santa Rosa, CA 95404 / USA