



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

Teachers and Lessons

Theme Editor's Introduction

by Micala Sidore



Micala Sidore

When you ask tapestry weavers how they got started and what teachers influenced them, you hear what seems to me some of the richest responses about the medium we love. In this issue of *Tapestry Topics*, weavers describe their teachers of consequence, those who teach techniques and/or matters aesthetic and thought provoking. My influences have to include the 26 months I spent (in the mid-1980's) as an intern at *la Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins* in Paris - and Paris itself. The professional weavers provided me with standards by which I could plan and weave a successful tapestry - and with a community of folks, both professional and amateur (interns like me), with whom I could discuss and argue endlessly about the work - the successes and failures of historical and contemporary tapestries. They all helped to train my eye. The city of Paris provided me with endless museum and gallery exhibitions. I walked, looked and absorbed intensively, and established a habit of museum and gallery going that I continue to this day. Certainly such visits trigger ideas for my own pieces, but they also reduce the isolation in which I often work.

Micala Sidore has been weaving tapestries since 1979. She also writes articles, teaches classes and lectures about tapestries, throughout the US and in many other countries.

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Important Dates

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*. [Email Anne Jackson](#)

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

July 20, 2012 *A Weaverly Path: The Tapestry Life of Sylvia Heyden*; screening, 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. ATA sponsored session: *Political Strings: Tapestry Seen and Unseen*.

October 1, 2012 Submissions due: Winter Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation. [Email Lynn Mayne](#).

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

Co-Directors Letter, Spring 2012

Mary Zicafoose & Michael Rohde

This issue of Tapestry Topics addresses the essence of what underlies all we do as tapestry weavers. None of us would be weaving without the teachers we encountered, nor the lessons they imparted. Please take the time to read these excellent articles, as there are many gems to be found that will touch you. To quote past ATA Student Award winner, Erika Diazoni, "There is something about weaving that reminds me that I'm human. I think of my weaving as poetry."

Many of us have been fortunate enough to enroll in classes, or take advantage of other learning opportunities, and we know how important they are. This year ATA is launching a small, but mighty, Scholarship Program that will assist tapestry weavers within our membership who would like to further their textile/arts education but need some financial assistance. The ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study will be funded by our annual Valentine's Day Appeal. We have already received generous donations, but the number of students we are able to help depends on you. Any amount is appreciated and can make a big difference for that one individual who would otherwise not learn the lessons that will make the kind of difference that you will be reading about in this issue. We hope you have been visiting our website to follow the personal stories our members have shared about the impact receiving financial assistance has had in shaping their lives and careers. Please share your own:

americantapestryalliance.org/awards/rata-scholarship-for-tapestry-study/scholarship-campaign-share-your-story/

A separate, and already well-established program to encourage tapestry students is the ATA International Student Award, awarded once a year to a deserving applicant enrolled in an established program of tapestry study. The deadline for applications is April 15. If you know students who could apply, send them this link: americantapestryalliance.org/awards/ata-international-student-award/

Fun opportunities to view wonderful tapestries and connect with fellow tapestry weavers are coming up later this year. First are the bevy of ATA activities connected with Convergence, HGA's biennial meeting, this year in Long Beach, CA. ATA will be organizing *Pacific Forum*, with major speakers Archie Brennan and Jean Pierre-Larochette, as well as a slide show of images you have submitted. Submit your images online: americantapestryalliance.org/education/convergence/2012-digislam-online-submission/ Friday night is our informal, social gathering, *Pacific Breezes*, followed by a film screening sponsored by HGA and featuring tapestry weaver, Silvia Heyden. And, there is the opportunity to see many, many small format tapestries in "Pacific Portals", on exhibit at the nearby Long Beach Library.

Our major exhibition, American Tapestry Biennial 9, will open in October at the prestigious Dairy Barn of Ohio. The Dairy Barn hosts Quilt National, the legendary mother-of-all quilt exhibitions. We are fortunate to have secured this exhibition

space, as The Dairy Barn is a well-respected and prime venue for textile art. ATB 9 juror Lee Talbot, Associate Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections, The Textile Museum, has made the selections for this exhibit and we congratulate those accepted. As usual, there will be a full color catalog, but absolutely nothing beats seeing tapestries in person. By all means, join us at this opening! Again, we want to thank every member who has donated time, money or enthusiasm to make ATA what it is. Because of you 2011 was a banner year and we anticipate nothing less in years to come. We leave you contemplating the sage words of Susan Weir, "Hidden layers of meaning and practices lie within a tapestry and the slow nature of weaving."

Ulrikka Mokdad

More than thirty years ago my mother took me to an old lady's house in the nearby town of Lyngby, north of Copenhagen. The old lady, who happened to be an artist, had a school in her own house where she taught children tapestry weaving. My mother had read about this lady and her tapestry school in the local newspapers and thought that I ought to learn weaving.



Tove Heyman at her loom

The lady was old and extremely fat; she always kept a cigar end in the corner of her mouth. She had sharp dark-brown eyes behind the glasses and a rasping voice. Her name was Tove Heyman. I was only 8 years old and felt totally frightened when my mother left me in this strange lady's care. Three other little girls had arrived already so we were four new tapestry children, as she used to call her students, who were going to start on the same day. At that time I did not yet know what a tapestry child was, and I had absolutely no idea that it was something very special. Far less did I understand how this strange old lady, Tove Heyman, (who proved to be quite nice) would come to influence my life and art as a child, as a teenager, and finally as a grown-up.

All the new tapestry children were told to put warp on little wooden frames with nails in each end. The warp was made out of thick linen thread. As weft we used rags that we cut ourselves with sharp pairs of scissors. Tove insisted that every single child should draw his/her own motif before weaving. We were not allowed to show up with photographs or paintings from books. Tove claimed that every child had an artist inside and that every one of us was able to draw something we had either experienced or dreamed about. And of course we could.

My first tapestry showed a green and blue tortoise with a purple hat on red background. The tiny piece of tapestry was clumsy and oblique like a pyramid. It was much larger below and the edges were terrible. But the little tapestry child was proud as a peacock, and so was her mother. Later that year the tapestry with the tortoise was included in Tove's great exhibition called "Danish Children Weave Tapestry," which was held in the Museum of Applied Art of Copenhagen, and where she exhibited tapestries made by her tapestry children during the 18 years she ran her school. I did not really understand what an exhibition was and was scared that my tapestry would have to remain forever in the museum. But fortunately the clumsy tortoise with the purple hat returned unharmed to my parents' house. I know my parents have kept it somewhere.

I was not fond of weaving with the rags and therefore Tove allowed me to borrow one of her wooden frames and take it home with me. There I



Ulrika Mokdad, *Woven Headshot*,
20.2" x 19.4", 2006,
Photo credit: Frantz Henriksen

wove small pieces on my own, with weft made of yarns. At her studio I wove larger pieces of tapestry in rags. My mother used to knit and gave me all the ends and the woolen yarns she didn't use. My aunt who had taught dyeing with plants one day came and handed a sack of all her old samples to me. Can you imagine what treasures were in her sack! Every time a new piece was finished at home, I would take it to show Tove and await her critique and judgment. Normally she would be quite positive, but sometimes she just didn't like the colors or the way they were mixed. She was always very frank and spoke her mind directly. She encouraged her students to do their best and being diplomatic about ugly colors or uneven edges was not her style. The tapestry children were told to weave backwards (undo the weaving) if they had made terrible edges or had been careless with their weaving.



Ulrika Mokdad, *Dancing Horses*,
11.5" x 16.2", 1984,

Photo credit: Hans-Jorgen Gregersen

Tove was not the kind of teacher who would constantly tell her tapestry children that everything they did was oh, so good. She really cared about the little pieces we made at her studio, and she wanted us to be serious about what we made. She did not praise our pieces often, but when she did praise someone's tapestry, she would send the person a large smile and her cigar end would almost drop out of her mouth and the ashes would fall on her voluminous bosom.

Tove used to read aloud from books or the tapestry children would invent stories and tell them aloud while weaving. In the afternoon we had tea served in metal mugs that became very hot. Tove simply hated plastic and could not stand to see a plastic bag inside of her house. We were told to buy sacks made of cotton or braided baskets to carry our rags and yarns. Perhaps this is why she also wouldn't let us have tea in plastic mugs. I came every Tuesday from about three o'clock until six. These Tuesday afternoons were the happiest times I experienced as a child.

Tove, as an artist, used to share her ideas and discuss her artistic inspiration with her tapestry children. Being taken seriously by a grown-up person was unusual and exciting, and we learned a lot from these discussions. At the same time we were able to follow her own large tapestries as they grew on her big loom, normally woven in her favorite material, the rags.

I remember once Tove had dreamed at night about her own funeral. Afterwards she wove a large tapestry based on the dream showing her funeral with lots of flowers, people singing in the church, the clergyman with his mouth wide open and, in the middle of it all, a coffin with her own head sticking out, trying to smell the flowers.

Another one of her tapestries depicts a fat lady on a bicycle. Tove wanted to ride a bicycle like everyone else, so one fine day she went out and bought herself a brand new one. But she had forgotten that she had not been on a bicycle for 25 years, and she didn't dare ride it. So she walked home with her new bicycle and then she placed it in front of her house. Tove soon wove a wonderful tapestry, depicting her riding the bike in an autumn landscape, though, actually, the bicycle never left its place in front of her house.

I guess the most important lesson I learned from Tove had nothing to do with colors or techniques. No, she taught the children much more essential things: what to do with life. Would we spend it on worries or experience every day as a wonderful present? She encouraged her tapestry children to think as free and creative persons rather than to search for the safety of money and well-paid jobs in their lives. She herself was the living proof that it was possible to have a good life



Ulrikka Mokdad

without these things. Many of her former tapestry children chose to make art an important part of their adult lives. Quite a few former students entered schools of crafts and design, several got into academies of fine arts and others became printers, weavers, filmmakers and teachers.

I have sometimes wondered what my life would have been like if my mother had never read about Tove Heyman's tapestry school in the local newspaper. But it is completely impossible to think of a life without weaving or without a tapestry loom mounted in the corner of the living room. And trying to imagine what my childhood would have been like had I not become a tapestry child is far too sad. Tove Heyman was my tapestry teacher from 1980-86.

Ulrikka Mokdad is a 40-year old tapestry weaver, who lives in Copenhagen, Denmark. She has exhibited in Denmark and abroad since 1997. Her exhibition activities include ATB 7 and ATB 8 in the U.S. Besides being a tapestry weaver, Ulrikka studies art history at the University of Copenhagen where she received a BA in art history and museology. Ulrikka has been a board member of the Danish Weavers' and Printers' Guild since 2003.

Lialia Kuchma

Thoughts on who my teachers of consequence have been: Matisse for his shapes, his colors, his subject matter and his choices of surrounding himself in his studio with fabrics, weavings, images and all sorts of still life. I especially enjoyed his pursuit of following the sun and elements of water and sky, not to mention his later period of the shaped cutouts. How has this helped shape my work? The intensity of the colors from which there is no combat but exhilaration; the simplicity of form, though, in the midst of many, a textural composition; the reconstruction of many an artifact or personal relationship into an esthetic of emotion.

Asian art, especially calligraphy. This is a teacher in which the hand must follow the content, the emotion, and its discipline must be evident especially in the loosest forms. In weaving, to attempt a graceful line is a challenge unless you're working at a jacquard piece or large-scale tapestry, as those little steps just want to interfere in the fluidity. However, under that challenge arises the manner in which one could present a feeling of grace, or of spontaneity, or of an immediacy found in the brush, pencil, or performance art. I continue to struggle with the discipline of weaving within a tapestry framework.

I never had formal training in weaving, especially tapestry, though I did take an intro-course in weaving. Tapestry was the method, which seemed to find its most satisfying union within my creative disciplines, and while I can recognize my faults and flaws, they are there in demonstration of particular periods within my life - a struggle, an emotional challenge, a process.

As to teachers, my teachers have remained the painters or poets or philosophers in whom I discover a clarification of why I may do what I do. Other teachers include Joan Mitchell, Cy Twombly, Agnes Martin. They instruct me in the process of line vs. color vs. proportion vs. emotion. That they work in a different medium is unimportant. What is essential for me is the reaction, the participation between the works and an internalization, which allows me to clarify my ideas using threads of yarn. There are so many ways to learn from our interactions in daily life that choosing one specific teacher is tough. After all, is not life a teacher?

As for what I wish I had learned much sooner, I would say that I wish I had the organizational tools or structural sense to grasp and implement the set-up process. I admit to being a very sloppy and inefficient preparer of the loom, though I do enjoy this part of the work. But I cannot seem to follow the many useful suggestions for a more efficient resolution.

To answer "why" in an intelligent manner has always been a struggle. As a result, I have always groaned and withered at the need of submitting a statement, as most of the time my response seems just so basic and simple.



Lialia Kuchma

While here in Baltimore [not home in Chicago, ed.] and not able to get at my loom, I am not restless since I prepared myself for this separation and believe that periods such as this are necessary for new or different pepperings into my mix. However, I did think [about teachers] a bit during my walks through the city. Basically, what I wanted to share is that I weave to pass the time. This sounds a bit dry, cold, uncreative or disappointing. But it is an activity that is an essential one in my life. My walks are also very important to me; they too pass the time. The destinations to, or through the city, the parks and the lake, insure my opening up to the elements, to my awareness of my emotional being. This process is not more secondary to the process of weaving and does not result in an object. But it clarifies perhaps what will result on the loom. This passage of time is what I choose to work with.

Lialia Kuchma was born in Ukraine and then raised in Chicago. "I lived in a multicultural environment where tradition and imagery were constant stimuli. I majored in art, and pursued printmaking, calligraphy, photography, Ukrainian woodworking, iconography, church ornamentation and tapestry."

Jean Pierre Larochette

What teachers had real consequence for you, as you became a tapestry weaver? I would say that first, the weavers at my father's workshop where I apprenticed [in Patagonia, Argentina, ed.]. These were members of the local indigenous community, with a rich textile culture of their own - which gave me a better understanding of the field. Then, my father, who insisted I should take tapestry weaving professionally and showed me you can make a living with it. Also Jean Lurçat, who, for two years in the early 60s, inspired me to see the medium as a contemporary art form (not just a classical home decoration medium, which was my father's specialty). Every painter/cartoon designer I worked with has been a teacher.

Working with Yael Lurie, a collaboration of over forty years now, has of course been particularly enriching. I owe much to the loom itself - the way the beautiful practice of weaving constantly teaches. And to the blessing of having met and worked with some of the most important weavers of our times.

Sharon Marcus

What teachers have had particular consequence for your work as a tapestry weaver? Helena Hernmarck; Robert Kasal, a Portland artist and teacher from whom I took a series of design classes was also influential because of his unrelenting high standards and stress on mastering the elements of design and color as the foundation for all design.

Helena's importance to my work was because of her emphasis upon the contrast of value in order for designs to read well in black and white and from a distance. Her use of contrasting texture in fiber type and size were also important. These ideas were consistent with my early interest and practice in black and white photography, so it was an easy transition to apply the same principles to tapestry design. I took a workshop from one



Sharon Marcus, *Secret Garden*,
44" x 69", 1985, cotton seine twine warp
and wool weft.

Photo Credit: Bill Bachhuber

of Helena's apprentices many years ago and as a result studied her tapestries very carefully. I applied those observations to all subsequent evaluations of tapestries I saw first hand or in books, and to my tapestry design. I have also been inspired by seeing historical tapestries, particularly from the Gothic period, firsthand.

When I first learned about the use of cartoons (from reading Great Tapestries) and made my own and used it for the first time it was a thrilling moment. Technically I also learned a great deal from studying with Michele Mesnage in France, and reading Roland Galice's, La technique de A a... X.. de la Tapisserie de haute et basse lice et du tapis de Savonnerie.

Everyone has her or his own path to learning and working as an artist. In my case the technical side of things has never been my first priority. I have ultimately found it most satisfying to begin with a conceptual foundation for a body of work, which usually arises from a combination of things e.g. personal studio and life experience, travel, library research, and lots of thinking and experimentation to arrive at what "feels" right. My work has gone through a variety of transitions as my interests have evolved. Teaching in an art college for many years had a great influence on my work because it was placed within a wider context than the world of tapestry alone. As a result I became increasingly curious about how I could "push" the tapestry medium and think of it in different ways than I had at the beginning of my career. I find it extremely exhilarating to pose problems for myself and solve them in the studio, and some of my happiest moments in life have been when that happens.



Sharon Marcus. *Site*, 16"x1"x32", 1998, linen and wire, Photo Credit: Bill Bachhuber

Elżbieta Kedzia

My favorite teacher was the Professor of Tapestry, who was also involved with graphic arts and sculpture. His name was Antoni Starczewski and he played the violin. He had a very strong personality and spoke a great deal to the students about art, life, and everything else. There is one book about him, published by the Museum of Art in Łódź in 2002 and called, Starczewski.

My favorite lesson was, Composition, taught by Wladyslaw Strzeminski. When I started my studies at the Academy, I had a great many difficulties understanding the words and the ideas that the faculty members used. But I had done well in secondary school, and I wanted to understand my lessons. At the beginning, maybe I was a bit too young to understand the language of art, though not the ideas of weaving and its specific rules. Now, I make sure that I use complicated concepts, though simple words, in my work with my students.



Elżbieta Kedzia, *Les Traces*, 71" x 94" 1996



Elżbieta Kedzia, *Les Niveaux*, 102" x 71", 1990

Elżbieta Kedzia earned her diploma with distinction from the department of Tapestry and Carpet at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Art and Design in Łódź. She is currently a professor at the Academy and head of the faculty of Textiles and Fashion. She has had 15 solo exhibitions and her works are housed in the National Museum of Poznan and the Central Museum of Textiles (Łódź) as well as in private and public collections in Poland and abroad.



Elżbieta Kedzia

Pam Patrie

I started studies in high school with probably one of the best teachers, a Reedie [someone who has attended Reed College, ed.], who taught us all The Italic Hand. Of course my first great Master was Lloyd Reynolds, the famous Reed college professor. That was my first experience at listening to Zen philosophy. I spent the whole summer in class with him.

It is clear that a good foundation program for art education is necessary. I started early with the Eleanor Olson High School, and I started life drawing at the Pacific Northwest College of Art school at 17, after starting art classes there at 14. Then, as a first year student, I found my stride, married my high school sweetheart and had a baby at 19, turning 20. This prompted my fast change to a media that would be compatible in the household.

I saw a recent graduate, Judy Nylin, fresh from Rhode Island School of Design working a board and nail loom rig with a discontinuous weft. I had given up the calligraphy for lack of interest and the hell it produces in a mind like mine. The lack of color was also an early hint that it was not for me.

The freedom of working and child raising and never skipping a beat in my work was my goal - and it worked. In my struggles, a friend, Rita Larson (of Pratt and Larson tile), stopped by and gave me, I think, the best blessing in my youthful attempts at designing these so called art weavings. She said I had good color sense. Rita has always been a creative genius in my mind and this was a huge boost. There are many others along the way who have given me good feedback. It is 43 years now and I am still in the game.



Pam Patrie with *St. Jacob's Ladder*

Donna Millen

Learning to Crawl Before You Can Walk: my adventures learning to weave tapestries - I have been a hand weaver for most of my life, but when I was nearly 60 I picked up Carol Russell's The Tapestry Handbook. For two years I worked through that book on my own, doing every exercise. Not once did she let me down; there was never a technique that left me stumped and unable to keep going.

For several years after that, when in Vancouver, I would go to Barbara Heller's studio on Granville Island which is a small island right in downtown Vancouver. I got to see many of her tapestries in her studio/gallery. She has always been supportive of other tapestry weavers and, over the years, became a mentor for many of us.

In the late 1990's I began going to workshops, two to ten days long, given by Jean Farrington on Gabriola Island, not far from where I live now. Jean designed her home with tapestry weaving workshops in mind. Students could live in with a private room, make their own meals, and, best of all, weave all day, or even all night, if they chose. These were my first structured tapestry weaving classes, and I wanted to weave tapestries instead of learning techniques. Looking back now, I think I would have saved myself a lot of trouble if I had spent a lot more time practicing various techniques on sample warps instead of actually weaving a tapestry. Sort of like learning to crawl before you walk.

A few years ago I joined a tapestry weavers association called "Tapis" made up of weavers who live on or near Vancouver Island (British Columbia, Canada). Barbara Heller gave us a one-day design workshop in the fall of 2000. It was good to be able to bounce ideas off of someone who had designed and woven a vast array of wonderful tapestries. I clearly remember her saying to us, "This is your tapestry. It belongs to you and you get to make all the necessary decisions, no one else."

Our Tapis group had another workshop with Jane Kidd. I think Jane designed this workshop to advance our weaving practice from a very cerebral approach. We did not work on technique at all. She gave us worksheets with a series of questions for us to answer for ourselves. Questions that would help in a psychological way. The questions all related to what we all do in our heads when we first begin to think of a new tapestry, but which we don't usually write down. For example, one challenge under self-assessment was "Describe the work objectively using descriptive words". Another series of questions, called animating questions, included, "What personal experiences influence my ideas for artwork?" Now I keep Jane's notes handy so I can review her questions before I start to work on a new idea.

For the last three winters, starting in 2009, I have travelled to workshops in El Tuito, Mexico given by Jean Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie. The workshops were 10-12 days, and, happily, with few participants. Jean Pierre weaves from the back and I decided to make a serious attempt to do that. It was my choice. I weave from the back now, but I remain nervous about not being able to see effects directly while I work. I spend a lot of time getting up and going around to the back of the loom to check my work. That at least gives me some exercise and a needed break.



Donna Millen

My skill level advanced dramatically as a result of the workshops in Mexico. Everyone got as much attention as they needed. Yael Lurie, a marvelous artist herself, insisted that we draw every day. I balked at this because it took time away from the weaving, but I did some of my best drawings to date in that workshop.

The accomplished tapestry weavers I have worked with have all contributed something new and valuable to me and to my artwork. I look forward to weaving tapestries for the rest of my life.

Donna Millen lives in a rural community on Denman Island, a little island on the west coast of Canada. "Since I have always had a practical nature, tapestry weaving, which is not practical at all, must always compete with many homely activities in my life. I cook, I garden, practice yoga, try to keep fit, and to stay connected to my community. Tapestry weaving has become the challenge I need to stay vital and engaged."

Tommye Scanlin

Learning from good teachers is always a joy, and I've been fortunate to study with many good teachers. I always gained the most knowledge from instructors who both loved what they were sharing and who knew the subject intimately. Those instructors became my role models as I pursued my own career as a teacher.

My formal training was in art education and in weaving. During my university years, however, I had only one short sampling of tapestry weaving as part of a more general introduction to fiber arts. Therefore, my development as a tapestry weaver pretty much began as a self-created tapestry of learning that I wove together from many sources.

I began my exploration using Nancy Harvey's videos, *Tapestry Weaving, Levels I and II* and referring to her book, *Tapestry Weaving*. Nancy's book and videos (now also on DVD) continue to be valid ways into self-learning about tapestry.

As I found articles about tapestry, I collected them, either by making copies from the library holdings and putting them in a notebook, or by tabbing them with post-it-notes in past issues of my own magazines. Over the years my print reference resource file for tapestry has grown to be fairly extensive and I continue to add to it when I come across new materials.

Postcards and brochures announcing tapestry exhibits or events serve as another wonderful resource. I've now got three bulging file folders of these items and add to them whenever I receive anything in the mail that's related to tapestry. I sometimes use these files as discussion-starters when I'm beginning a new class, by asking students to riffle through the images and pull out several that speak to them in some way.

After I'd been doing tapestry for five or six years in my self-taught mode, I began to seek out tapestry workshops. To people who say they're so removed from tapestry teaching where they live and/or they can't easily get to events like Convergence or ATA retreats - I say, be creative, ask a teacher to come to you by scheduling a class that others will also be eager to attend!

In the many workshops I've taken, I've never been disappointed with the instruction. Indeed, I've often found the experience to be quite important to my progress at the time. Even when the information presented wasn't what I needed (or really could understand) right then. Later on, there it was, as I'd recorded it in my notebook. My notebooks from various workshops have become an extremely valuable resource.

Of all of the teachers with whom I've studied, Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei have had the greatest impact on my development as a tapestry maker. I've studied with Archie and Susan in several weeklong workshops over the past two decades, as well as eight weeks with them at Penland School of Crafts.

As individuals, and especially as a team, Archie and Susan have an exceptional depth of knowledge about tapestry making. They've shared their expertise with students for many years. In each experience I've had with them, I've found their teaching to be demanding - no easy answers come from them, for, in tapestry, almost always, it depends... as Archie so frequently answers a student's question. Yet the lessons I've been presented with by Archie and Susan stay with me. In fact, I frequently find myself saying, when I reach a problem point in my tapestry, "What would Archie do?" Or "How would Susan handle this?" I know the reason their lessons are so clear and on point are that they both understand tapestry making so completely and thoroughly.



Tommye Scanlin. *Quilt Fall*,
42" x 24" , wool,
Photo Credit: Trevor Morris

In workshops, Archie and Susan expect students to make notes and drawings of techniques from their lessons; they don't provide lots of teacher-made handouts. I've referred to my own notes from their workshops often. For instance, the notes I made about how to make leashes, combined with my sketched diagrams, were what made it possible for me to set up my loom with leashes after the workshop was over.

Archie and Susan's one-on-one interaction with students has provided the tools for successful tapestry making for many years as they've taught workshops and hosted the Wednesday Group. Now, fortunately, Brennan and Maffei have produced a set of DVDs in which they demonstrate and discuss many of the aspects of tapestry making that they've shared in their teaching.

Włodzimierz Cygan

I have had two very important teachers: Antoni Starczewski and Janina Tworek-Pierzgalska. Both are well known as Lausanne Biennial participants. Studying, I hoped to learn as much as possible from Starczewski, who as a person was much closer to the person I am, but as a professional artist, Tworek-Pierzgalska was the real master. Neither was an author of any important publication. There are some texts in catalogues written by Pierzgalska and there are very interesting diaries that Starczewski wrote, but these were published only in part, in catalogues published after his death.

I remember a visit in Pierzgalska's private studio, watching the way she warped on the frame. This formed the beginning of my consciousness of the warp as an important part of the weaving. As a professor, she was a wonderful organizer of student exhibitions and this was very stimulating for us. She liked students, but also expected very hard work from them.

Starczewski was not terribly welcoming. As an artist, he had much more to say than Pierzgalska did, but he was also difficult, malicious and had a very special sense of humor. Students respected him, but they were also in fear of him.

Neither were weavers, but both led tapestry studios at the school: Starczewski directed the Tapestry and Carpet Studio, and Tworek-Pierzgalska, the Unique Textile Studio. Both were graphic artists and that is clearly visible in their textile works, as well as in their students' works. This is true of my work as well. Although there are no particular influences, I very often see that some of my work comes from my fascination with the artistic achievements of both my masters and numerous talks and consultations we had during my studies. Both have since died.

What would I want someone to understand about my practice? I want the viewer to feel a special kind of the connection between the ideas and the materials and how I construct my works



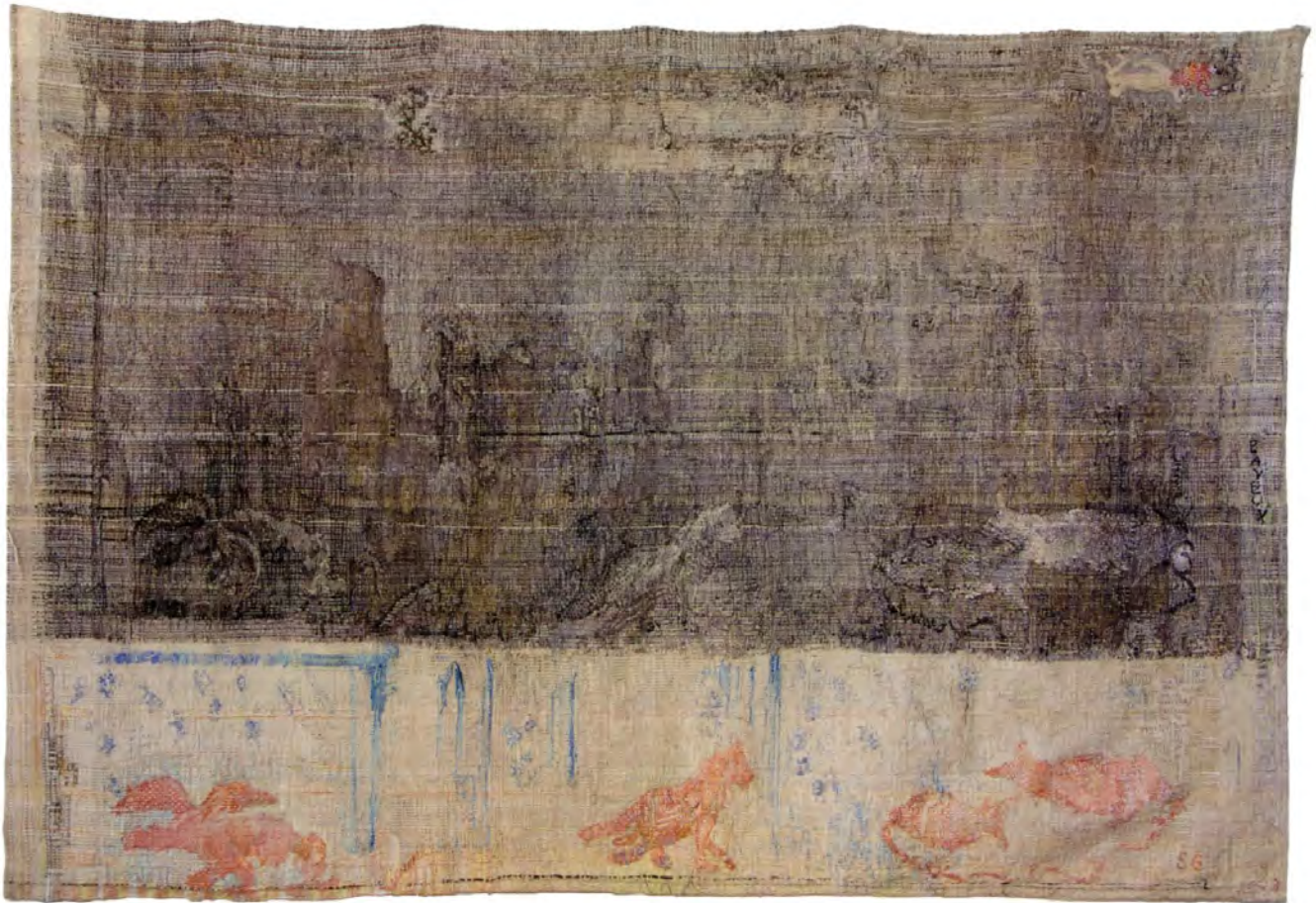
Włodzimierz Cygan

Włodzimierz Cygan graduated from the State Art School, in Łódź, in 1980 with a degree from the Department of Industrial Design and the Tapestry and Carpet Studio. He is now a full professor at the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź and head of Studio III of the Department of Textile Print.

Ibolya Hegyi

I studied tapestry art at the Tapestry Department of the University of Applied Arts in Budapest (today the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design, or MOME) but I learned the most from my colleague Gizella Solti, the student of Naomi Ferenczy. (Naomi was an artist who founded the Tapestry Department of the University of Applied Arts Budapest). Solti's experimental approach and high-level knowledge of weaving were very important for me. She taught me a lot of practical know-how and showed me the technique that she developed and used.

My design and weaving are always in constant interaction. The experiences of my previous works always go into the next piece. I try to express the conceptual background to my weaving and I wish I could have learned a precise weaving. I had to learn by doing a professional construction—to create the perfect surface, the perfect size, etc. and it took many years.



Gizella Solti: *Creatures/Bayeaux*, 49" x 71", 2007

Anne Jackson

My tutors in Constructed Textiles at Middlesex Polytechnic in London were particularly important. Art college was one of the most exciting experiences of my life. It opened me up to whole new worlds. We were given technical teaching and then strongly encouraged to imbibe all that we could of what was going on in London and the wider culture at the time.



Anne Jackson

The creation and use of the cartoon were lessons that were most significant. I would want others to understand that the technique is only the alphabet of the language of the ideas I try to express. There aren't lessons that I wish that I had learned much sooner. Everything seems to be coming to maturity in its right time. I do wish I had learned to trust my own judgment and myself sooner, and to have confidence in myself when I was young.

Anne Jackson was born in New York, and lives and works in the English West Country. Her work is exhibited in the UK, USA, Australia and Europe. She also writes about contemporary tapestry and her own practice, lectures and curates exhibitions.

Brigitte Amarger

Robert Wogensky was a teacher of mural art in the high school of applied art, ENSAAMA, in Paris where I was a student. At that time I was very interested in architecture, space and decoration. Wogensky taught me the basics of composition. I learned later that he was also a tapestry artist and got interested in the tapestry cartoon. He wasn't weaving himself but was what we call a "peintre cartonnier," a painter/cartoon designer, that is, someone who makes designs for tapestries, and he got real pleasure in working out abstract compositions.

My first tapestry project was a cartoon of a big piece, but I had no means of making it. So I persisted in making abstract painting projects. A few years later, when I was a student-teacher, I had to do a *stage* (internship) at a professional studio. I didn't know anyone and a teacher of mine told me he had found someone. When I asked him who, he told me not to get angry and to keep cool. He said, "It is a tapestry *stage* with Jacques Brachet, a tapestry artist." I said, "You are joking!? You know me; I'll never go there! Me and tapestry, it's unthinkable!" He said, "Just go and meet him and have a look."

I spent one month doing everything I could to avoid going to the *Lycée de Sevres* where Brachet was teaching. I had no interest at all in textile and fashion design. As my mum hated sewing, I had a horror of fashion making or making something with a needle or pins. Finally, though, I went to meet Brachet, and what I saw changed my mind. The school, the atmosphere, students as well as adult learners were working in this studio. Brachet asked me what I would like to work on. I said I was fond of nature, and that I enjoyed making sculptures about trees and taking close-up photographs of bark. He asked me to find a project as the ideas I described seemed interesting and that it would be certainly possible to do something with them.

Then he told me to go downtown and get wood, screws and everything else needed to make a big wooden frame to set up a *chaine* (warp). As my father was a handy man, and I liked that much more than sewing, I felt better. I discovered that tapestry was not at all what we call in a disparaging way, *ouvrage de dame* (women's work). I had a real revelation and called my first

tapestry *Revelation*. I felt like a painter with threads, and like a sculptor when making it. The first piece was quite tall: 1.60 m x 0.90 m.

At the same time I set up another frame at home and began a second piece. Jacques gave me the opportunity to exhibit this second one and that was my first exhibition. I have not stopped weaving, though I have discovered, and developed, other techniques. If I currently spend less time weaving, it is because it is a long job and takes time. From time to time, I go to my frame and continue weaving on the last one I began, nearly 3 years ago.

After a few years, Jacques Brachet retired and asked me to take his place, as I was both a teacher and weaver. So I have had the great opportunity, for more than 20 years now, to teach what I practice and make a perpetual *va et vient* (back and forth) between the two.

Both Robert Wogensky and Jacques Brachet were well known. They were included in books and catalogs, but didn't write any, to my knowledge. The main difference between the two was that one was only a painter designing tapestries and the other did everything from the beginning to the end. I got to watch as Jacques showed me how to weave, his fingers playing with the threads, and it was fabulous. I think of it always when I do the same during my teaching. It is a kind of magic - how to mix the threads, their texture, the colors, playing with the *points* (seeds of color, one weft crossing one warp) and the light. Students are happy and proud to see that their teacher actually knows the subject he is teaching and can show them, directly, how to do the work.

It is of great importance to do everything from the first idea to the realization of that idea. You can't feel it the same way; you can't see the things the same way, when you give over your idea to be made by somebody else. For instance, for my third tapestry, I only drew the main lines of my project on kraft paper at true scale and then I was carried away by double weave, like a sculptor. I changed quite a bit from my initial design and made two tapestries instead of one. Practicing different textile techniques and weaving with special materials made me go to high relief tapestries and 3D.

Other artists' works were decisive for me: Sheila Hicks and her wrapping; Jagoda Buic for big pieces, installations, and purity; Josef Grau Garriga for conceptualization; and Olga De Amaral for texture and materials.

I try to show my students all the possibilities in weaving, that tapestry is not dead and can be woven to link with the present. I use some new materials that are luminescent, as well as reflective threads. I show them what is actually made in the world of tapestry.

Jennie Jeffries

Tapestry became my main interest in 1988 when I bought an upright loom. I wanted to see wedge woven rugs as they developed. Horizontal warp lost interest. I read all the how-to tapestry books - which contradicted each other. Time went by. In 1997 I saw that two people named Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei would be teaching at Fiber Forum on Whidbey Island. I figured I could use a class. With great luck it turned out they were, well, who they are, and they were presenting Technical Tapestry and Creative Tapestry. I arrived thinking I knew the basics, and departed a changed weaver.

Their teaching is so clear and pure, and one learns exactly how to handle warp, weft, and sheds. No grey areas. Every problem has a solution. By 2009 I had attended 8 workshops. Always they review the basics and then nuances, and then present a new theme, each time. If they come west to teach again, I'll always be there. Because it's not just the weaving instruction I go for, it's what they demonstrate about personhood. They teach unselfishly, with patience and dedication. They have given the world what they know via Internet, and designed the affordable pipe looms so that everyone who wants to weave tapestry can do so.

Archie speaks to those who weave without worldly ambition. "It's a journey up and across the warps, open to possibilities," he has said. "It is a process, a daily joy. There's no need to make it useful, show it off, or have it seen as important. It's okay to spin without a plan for the yarn." I have quotes and snapshots where I can see them as I weave and move around in my studio. And, one happy day, Susan showed me her sketchbook. I nearly hyperventilated. She said then that my way forward was to weave a lot, weave small, weave my sketches and then sketch the weavings. Being around Archie and Susan has been so important in my life, and they are in my weaving.

Jennie Jeffries loves gathering colors, textures and a rough idea and then dancing at the loom. "Building a strong foundation of tapestry technique was like learning classical ballet. Once the moves are in body memory then it is easy to get in the flow; jazz can happen."

DVD Review: Woven Tapestry Techniques (DVD) by Archie Brennan, Susan Martin Maffei & Garry Benson

Available through: www.brennan-maffei.com, \$249 (US) plus postage.

by Tommye Scanlin

In the eight DVDs of this series, Archie Brennan goes through the basics of tapestry, including setting up the tapestry warp, making leashes, and the method and importance of meet and separate in the weft. Curves and eccentric weft are discussed, as well as hatching and line making methods. He shows more advanced techniques as well. The DVD's include a segment in which Susan Maffei leads one through setting up the loom for four selvedge weaving. Susan also describes framing methods for tapestries. One DVD is a portfolio of tapestry work from both Archie and Susan, along with a discussion of their motivation for the work, as well as technical aspects. Many other technical details about tapestry making are described and demonstrated throughout the eight DVDs.

The production quality of this DVD set is quite basic; no bells and whistles here. Occasionally the sound quality fades in and out. And watching the DVD on my laptop was challenging when wanting to change from scene to scene (possibly it would be much easier if I were using a remote control but I haven't tried that). The camera focuses very well on Archie and Susan's hands as they demonstrate assorted technical aspects of tapestry making. Archie's pithy comments about the process are a running commentary throughout his portion of the video and listening closely will give one a great deal of information about tapestry, as well as quite a lot of his philosophy about the medium. Having the chance to watch Archie Brennan weave tapestry is inspirational and so very instructive.



Tommye Scanlin

I consider the DVDs an exceptionally valuable resource and am glad to have added the series to my tapestry library. I used it recently, for instance, to learn to do four-selvedge warping and have made around twenty small tapestries using the technique in the past six months.

At the end of the last DVD Archie and Susan make these comments: "And we're not finished yet!" "No, we're not!"

Book Review: Tapestry Weaving: Design and Techniques by Joanne Soroka
Crowood Press Ltd., Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wiltshire,
England, 2011, £25
ISBN 978 1 84797 280 4

This book will be available after June 12, 2012 from the US Distributor: Trafalgar Square/IPG, 814N Franklin Street, Chicago, IL 60610.
Email: orders@ipgbook.com, cost is \$49.95.

by Alexandra Friedman

Joanne Soroka has written a richly inspiring book on contemporary tapestry. Both the lively text and numerous full color illustrations strive to give the reader much to consider. The book, ambitious in scope, includes the history of tapestry, the basic tapestry techniques, as well as suggested materials to work with and ideas and techniques for designing tapestry. The last chapter highlights fifteen contemporary tapestry artists. The final pages include a glossary, a helpful list of places to see tapestry, and where to take courses and buy materials.

This book is both geared to someone who wants to have a broad overview of contemporary trends in tapestry, as well as someone who has weaving experience and seeks ideas for a project or just wants to refresh technique. Soroka broadens the traditional definition of tapestry as a weft-faced, discontinuous weft textile and includes a wider scope of possibilities. By considering what is not tapestry, she extends her definition.

With her review of the last 3500 years of known tapestry, including references to non-Western cultures that have used tapestry in some form, Soroka provides a firm context to better understand the current themes of contemporary tapestry. The main thrust of this book is the making of a tapestry. Soroka provides an excellent overview of the technical aspects. Explanations are accompanied by clearly drawn illustrations as well numerous photographs that serve as a visual companion to explain her text. She carefully details all the traditional steps of weaving a tapestry, from setting up a simple frame loom, all the way to providing ideas on how to install the finished piece. In between, she discusses many aspects of warping, tension, color blending, hatching, interlocking, slits and several finishing ideas. She even has a section on troubleshooting. I think most readers would find the explanations clear and easy to follow, but, for a beginner, there will be questions that cannot be answered in a book format, even one as clearly written as this.

In addition to the basic tapestry technique, Soroka has included sections on other techniques such as eccentric weft, soumak, twining, arras (outlining), ressault (supplementary wefts), and tufting, among others. She even has a section on creating three-dimensional tapestry with pulled warps. Soroka clearly believes that tapestry is as much about texture as it is about the image.

Beyond the range of other how-to books, Soroka discusses designing for a tapestry. She suggests a number of sources for finding inspiration and various ways to approach making a weaveable design. She suggests using binoculars or turning the page around as ways to check the composition and balance of a design, how to prepare a cartoon and how to ink your warp. Among the technical details offered there are also caveats about what kind of designs work and will not work easily. Appropriately, she concludes the more technical part of the book with a thoughtful survey of different ways to finish, hang, and care for a tapestry as well as how to enter shows and find appropriate exhibits.

The final pages contain a selection of fifteen contemporary tapestry artists with bios and a brief commentary on their work. The full color illustrations, however, are the best way to convey the variety of themes and techniques available to tapestry weavers. It is a very thought provoking chapter.

I would highly recommend this book for any tapestry weaver's library. The multiple illustrations alone make it a wonderful source book for ideas and inspiration. With the addition of the friendly, explanatory text it would be a good companion for learning to weave but I feel the real strength of the book is the broad overview of the different kinds of tapestry being woven today.

Joanne Soroka has herself been a tapestry weaver for over 40 years. She was born in Montreal and studied art in Nova Scotia, Canada. Once she was exposed to tapestry, she was inspired to travel abroad to learn more. She earned a postgraduate diploma with distinction from the Edinburgh College of Art and served as the artistic director at the Edinburgh Tapestry Company (also known as the Dovecot Studios). She then taught at Edinburgh College of Art for 17 years. She has received many awards including an individual development grant from the Scottish Arts Council, and the Wingate Foundation. Her own work has been exhibited widely and there is an excellent online ATA article about her available online: americantapestryalliance.org/education/educational-articles/inspiration-creativity/unmarked-lives-the-weaving-of-meaning-by-joanne-soroka/

Exhibition Reviews

“Tapestry: Four Voices “
Stirling, Scotland

by Louise Martin

The “Tapestry: Four Voices” exhibition is situated in the heart of the Royal Burgh of Peebles, a busy former market and woolen mill town in the Scottish Borders. The grand, white walled space has an impressive high arched roof with natural light coming from above, filtering down, lighting the exhibits beautifully.

As soon as you enter, Elizabeth Radcliffe's three woven life size figures bring immediate warmth, inviting you into the gallery. *Lucy Mackenzie* has a casual pose. Despite looking three-dimensional, everything but the ends of her scarf is in fact two-dimensional. Woven bottom to top, the different mixes are cleverly woven together to give the feeling of cloth, a topic of real interest to Elizabeth. Texture and pattern are seen in many of her exhibits, from her dozen tapestries of cat's eyes to a fabulously woven herringbone jacket called *Caron in Herringbone*. Elizabeth is not only weaving cloth to look like cloth, her fascination includes what clothes people choose to wear as well as how they look when covering their physique. When I attended a talk Elizabeth gave, she spoke about how we can identify a person from just a section of their body. *Belstaff* and *Segura Leathers* showcase this with only a section of their neck and torso woven.

Amanda Gizzi also likes people in her imagery. Her charming, literal tapestries are like sketches in weft, often telling stories of her Italian background and family life. Titles such as *Pimentos Hot!*, *Making Tortellini*, and *Chips at the Pier* get the taste buds going and trigger memories.



Elizabeth Radcliffe, *Lucy Mackenzie*, life sized,
Photo Credit: Louise Martin

Amanda exhibits her tapestries cleanly, allowing them space to breathe, giving weight to the narrative. Often intimate, the tapestries are mainly sewn onto mount board in white frames of various thicknesses behind glass. It is not only the imagery that evokes feeling in her work, it's also the way she weaves, largely eccentrically. Visible cut backs add character especially in *Chips at the Pier* where the background seems to have chunky chip shapes repeating the message. I particularly liked the vitality of *Maillol's Maize*, where the statues felt as if they had come alive, composed with playful angles and eccentric outlining. A tortoise is seen in the bottom left corner and the orange in his face is reflected in the windows at the top.

Windows were also featured in *Sundress in the Shade*, where the shutters are imaginatively woven using pick 'n' pick, a technique Elizabeth had also used in *Segura Leathers* for the zip and in some of John Brennan's flowers and trees. The playful, flowing movements in Amanda's pieces are echoed in John's. His work is a joyful celebration of tapestry and his love for the medium is clear. Like the other exhibitors he has woven for many years and has built up a large body of work, often based on nature. John likes to bring the landscape seen in medieval tapestries into the limelight, ignoring the human drama in the foreground. In *Far Away Landscape*, *Rolling Hills*, *Tree of Life* and *It's Only a Step from the Garden of Eden*, flora takes center stage. Although woven on their side as the originals would have been, unlike their counterparts where wool and silk was woven in solid colours, John employs heady mixes of natural and synthetic yarns. The trees in the foreground are woven with rich colors and are outlined with a deeper, almost black yarn. The trees behind these are again outlined but this time with a softer color to aid perspective. A double mount covers the tapestries' edges; firstly in cream and then a black mount set in a glassless frame. Not all John's work is framed; *Miss Floribunda Poppy* and *Tenacious of Life* are his larger works, both woven with borders, the only ones seen in the show.



"Tapestry: Four Voices" exhibition,
Photo Credit: Louise Martin

Joan Baxter's tapestries hang opposite each other in the centre of the room. Inspired by living in the Highlands, several of her pieces focus on the winter landscape. *White Boat of Winter* showcases Joan's known talent for color mixing with wool, with blues and greens hatched together. To effectively create the illusion of snow, cut strips of white material were also woven, occasionally over a double warp, giving a luminous, textured surface. This tapestry makes me think of scenes from folklore tales. I feel serene when I look at it, as if I'm almost floating alone in the water.

Winter River is a continuation of the artistic experimentation Joan has been embracing during the last decade. Here we see a reduced color palette including cotton warp successfully used as warp and weft, white rags and twigs inserted and woven. The twigs extend beyond the tapestry, which is mounted on a frame, bringing depth and casting shadows onto the gallery's wall.

Rooted in the traditional Gobelin technique, all four professional weavers and former graduates of the Tapestry Department at the Edinburgh College of Art have pushed and individualized their interpretation of tapestry. Their combined experience and dedication to the medium have ultimately culminated in an interesting, expertly hung exhibition in a town that continues to support its textile legacy.

Louise Martin has been Senior Weaver at Stirling Castle, Scotland since the project commenced ten years ago. She is the Membership Secretary for the British Tapestry Group, teaches regularly, gives talks and exhibits. www.louisemartintapestry.com



Louise Martin

"Intimate Earth: The Art of Louise Wheatley"
Evergreen Museum and Library, Johns Hopkins University

by Courtney Shaw

My first impression of "Intimate Earth" was one of awe and wonder. The title of the show reflects Louis Wheatley's connection with the world around her and the close examination of that world through the time consuming and meditative art of tapestry weaving. She looks microscopically at insects, birds, eggs, and fossils.

The exhibition was held at the Evergreen House, in North Baltimore. Evergreen House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a magnificent Italianate home on 26 wooded and landscaped acres. Owned by Baltimore's Garrett family from 1878 to 1942, the mansion, carriage house and gardens underwent two generations of adaptations and renovations. In 1942, the estate was bequeathed to The Johns Hopkins University with the stipulation that the mansion remains open to "lovers of music, art and beautiful things."

Entering the show, the first feeling I had was of a Coptic revival. The tapestries were similar in technique, style and images, similar in feel and fineness. The curator, James Abbott, was able to space and beautifully frame a retrospective of her work over a period of 35 years. Mr. Abbott said that it was an honor and a privilege to have worked with Louise Wheatley on the show. And she returned the compliments with her praise of his ability to space the objects so appropriately and with a great color sense.

Abbott included Louise's very precise drawings (reminding me of Beatrix Potter) and her lithographs. The drawings for the egg collection and the seed manta gave one the sense of the process from idea to woven tapestries.

I met Louise when she gave a lecture at the Textile Museum and asked her why her wefts were not even on the selvages. Now I know about eccentric wefts! I went to visit her at her home to take notes for the review and to see her in her environment. She and her husband live in a farmhouse with ruins filled with various dye plants and other interesting flowers. Louise has a separate weaving studio atop the barn/garage.

In the exhibition, none of the works had a nameplate with dimensions and media next to it. It forced the viewer to look at the work itself to decide what it means. Many could be interpreted in several different layers. I would like to highlight five of them.



Louise Wheatley, *Voice from the Whirl-Wind*,
 Photo Credit: Courtney Shaw



Louise Wheatley, *Crow Blanket*,
 Photo Credit: Will Kirk

An early work, *Hérons*, came about in a rather typically Louise-esque way. She was driving North on Rte. 1 passing over the Gunpowder State Park bridge when, out of the corner of her eye, she saw a glint of blue and green. She stopped and turned around to discover a totally perfect and very frozen Great Blue Heron on the side of the road. She, of course, pried it up and took it to school, only to find that it is illegal to possess such animals. She took it home, made many photographs and drawings, and then buried it in her yard.

Louise had an early interest in crows and took in several. The first was crippled, and she cared for it. Her son, Owen, found another and others came to be part of their family as these birds would stay and perch, each having its own distinctive personality. *Crow Blanket* is in honor of them.

The *Mummy Bundles* was inspired by the mummy covers that Louise conserved while working at the Textile Museum. The fineness of *Ancestral Family* (with warps sometimes reaching 60 per inch) allows for minute detail, especially since she spins her own yarns, sometime directly at the loom, making slight changes in color and fiber.

Louise's latest work, *Ida*, is based on an archeological find thought to be a link between primates and man. After seeing a picture of *Ida* in a library, Louise went home and scoured through books and periodicals to find appropriate associations with fruits. In Louise's tapestry, *Ida* is holding a pear in her hand.

There is an element of humor in Louise's work and what she has to say about it. It is amazing to me that someone as humble and kind as she is can produce in totality her perceptions of the universe.



Louise Wheatley, *Mummy Bundles*, detail,
Photo Credit: Will Kirk

“Woven Stories: Contemporary Tapestries”
Ann Street Gallery, Newburgh, NY

by Alta Turner

Opening December 10, 2011, the Ann Street Gallery in Newburgh, NY hosted Woven Stories: Contemporary Tapestries,” a collection of 51 mixed media textile works representing 21 artists. The exhibit was solicited by invitation and organized by gallery director, Virginia Walsh. Review comments below provide an overview of the diverse works represented, focusing on: object form; weave structure and surface treatment; imagery and content; and closing with a description of notable display details.

Object / Form

Many of the exhibited pieces move away from the conventional flat surface of decorative tapestry and/or the wall upon which tapestries are typically hung. George-Ann Bowers’ *Annie Creek* consists of succeeding, organically shaped, connected sections that overlap and underlie each other and, as a whole, project 7 or more inches from the wall. Mary Kester’s large multi-layered panels, *Gallery Grave* and *Loughcrew Dolman*, parallel the wall but fall in seemingly discontinuous planes, like massive veils, emphasizing the deep space and ancient time alluded to in the surface imagery. In Cameron T. Brown’s *Layers of Meaning*, panels of plain and twill weaves, hung from and weighted down by sets of 4 colored rods above and below, overlay a sheer fabric base.

Multiple pieces have been ‘formed’ to project some or all the woven surface beyond the mount. In Barbara Burns’ *Orange Torso*, the entire tapestry piece bulges aggressively from the flat dark panel. In Linda Wallace’s *Out of the Ashes*, the upper portion with its crackling, apocalyptic energy extends out beyond the flat lower half. George-Ann Bowers’ *Gesture* suggests the beginnings of more complex contouring. Susan McGehee’s *Desert Folds* and *Renaissance Triptych* capitalize on the behavior of multi-hued woven metal strands and wider strips, worked into twilled and plain woven bands which, in the former piece, fold accordion-like away from, back into, then away and back again into the wall surface. The flat surface margins in Susan Iverson’s 4-panels of *The Pond* swell into the center of each panel where ‘peep hole’ views look onto underlying vignettes of pond activities, sediment-water interface, looping of water movement and biologic structures. Radical departure from rectilinear shape is pronounced in both Lialia Kuchma’s *Urban Turtle* panels.

Distinctively off-the-wall objects are well represented and distributed throughout the exhibit space to good effect. Kate Anderson’s meticulously rendered, waxed linen tapestries translating Lichtenstein and Matisse imagery onto tea pots with stainless steel structural components of spout, handle and lid filigree are both whimsical and attentive to detail. Cameron T. Brown’s stand-alone, grouped figures carve intimate spaces among the 4 decorated with *Words About Art* and the conversational *Angels & Men / Quartet*. Tari Kerss’ gossamer hanging tube weavings of red, black and white 50|50 plain weave, collectively entitled *Natural Resource*, and the multi-colored *Kimono Dancer* are fragile sculptures of complex, translucent structure. Louise Halsey’s *Senor Blanco y Negro* is an evocative, primitive head mounted on a debarked stick stuck into a roughly hewn base. Coarse, simple woven features surrounded with tangled locks are adorned with shell-like beads in eye and lips. Barbara Burns’ enigmatic boxed torso with chastity belt and lock, *Altered Ego – Corset*, comes replete with key mounted on the outside of the box, inaccessible to the torso within.

Weave Structures / Surface Treatment

A more appropriate title for the exhibition might have been “Woven Stories: Contemporary Textiles,” in that the range of weave structure represented extends well beyond the conventional definition of tapestry. Definitions aside, conventional weft-faced tapestry weave structure is present throughout the exhibition, although a smooth surface consisting solely of weft-faced plain weave is the exception. More often a variety of weave structures have been played against one another on either

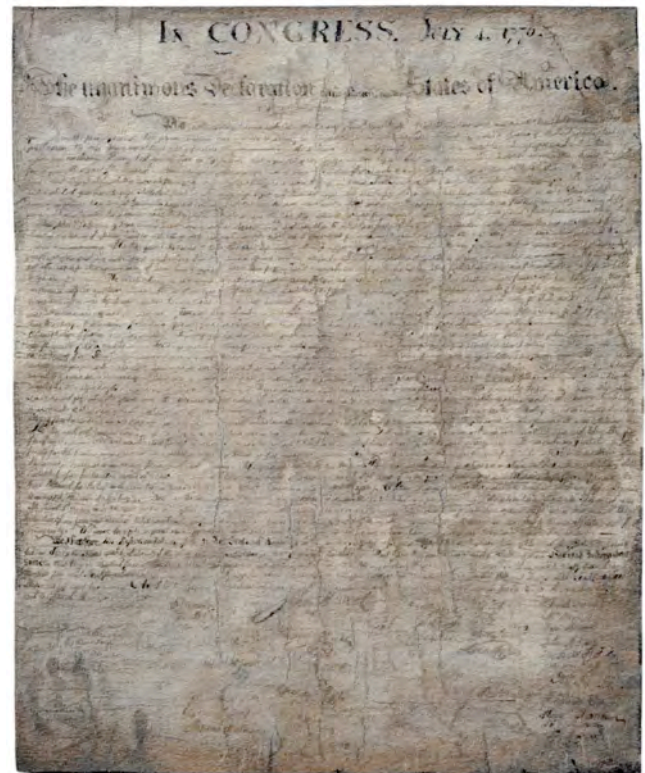
a large-scale, laying discontinuous areas of 50|50 plain weaves, interlock, slits and twills side-by-side or on a small-scale, as found in the stunningly subtle and highly active surface of Marzena Ziejka's *Declaration of Independence*. Maximum divergence from tapestry structure is found in the Jacquard examples. Betty Vera's paired panels, *Mystere* and *Sparkles*, limited to varying density of cyan and black threads, are impressionistic images of obscure forms, like probing tentacles underwater and lights moving through a dense atmosphere. The complexity of surface in Vera's *Vertical*, attributable to the complex interplay of color, reads architecturally like the rendering of an aging, eroding surface. Lialia Kuchma's *At the Gate*, with northern-light aurora borealis-like patterning of light on 10+ feet of textile puddles to the floor below the mount.

Surface embellishments beyond weave structure are evidenced by inclusion of exotic materials interspersed within the weave, as in Betty Ferguson's *Winter Evening*, as well as by post-woven surface destruction found in John Paul Morabito's *Plain & Twill* and *Warp Faced Plain Weave*, where designed patterning of burned holes are distributed across the fine, translucent surface. More extreme surface embellishment destruction is apparent in Pavlos Mayakis' *Shin* and *Santorini* where an encaustic overlay disguises and virtually buries the underlying coarse fabric base.

Imagery / Content

Imagery and content in the pieces include contemporary seens/scenes such as Suzanne Pretty's *Daylilies* (with bulldozer) and *Truck Stop*, and Margo Macdonald's *Shimenawa for Puget Sound*, an image within an image, suspended by a tasseled rope, strung across a watery source. Female identity and functionality have been examined from multiple perspectives including: Barbara Burns' icy portraits of Frida Kahlo, *Blue Frida 2* and *Frida 11*, and the bemused and bemusing *Alternative Ego*; Marzena Ziejka's *Head Was Full of Honey*; Erin M. Riley's *Kiss* and *Drunk Girl 2*; and Janet Austin's *Life Drawing Group*, a panel with 4 inlaid nude drawings, cum tapestry. Sara Salin's disturbing *Impedimentia* lays out imagery alluding to bondage and torture, coupled with repeated modules of Venus-figures whose posture and gesture read less as classical graceful modesty, more as broken self-defense.

Pieces with obvious political commentary are comparatively few, an exception being Marzena Ziejka's *Declaration of Independence*, where the detailed lettering of even the bold, iconic 'John Hancock' is faded and fading and the copy appears to have been folded, as if carried within the bearer's pocket for years. Given the current, extended period of American conflicts overseas, that subject is, surprisingly, limited to two examples: Barbara Burns' *War Cry!* madness and Erin M Riley's *Pure Hell* whose war is contra drugs. Cryptic enigmas exploring less obvious subjects include Susan Iverson's *Dream Landscape* with patterned silhouette extended by raised contours rippling the outline to the margins; Ziejka's *Dog Bite*, the residual puncture hole scar in a thumbprint? and Sherri Woodard Coffey's *Journey*, ideogramatic simple shapes and *Purple Haze*, an Albers-like exploration of geometric color contrasting.



Marzena Ziejka, *Declaration of Independence*, 50" x 43"

Curating / Display

The juxtaposition of pieces within the exhibit clearly intends to complement adjacent pieces without drawing the viewer to any particular focus within the exhibit space. As emphasized in discussion with the curator, the point was to give each piece the opportunity to speak, by itself, on its own. What more could an artist ask? Multiple works from the same artists have been distributed throughout the exhibit space, rather than grouped, allowing the viewer to play detective, comparing the multiple dimensions and personas within individual artists. That game is facilitated by the listing of all pieces, numbered sequentially in order of spatial presentation through the exhibit. This device achieves at least two objectives: most obviously, moving viewers systematically and smoothly through the space and, more importantly, eliminating the need for title/artist labels alongside the work, a convention which all-too-often fails in gallery and even museum settings. Here, the solution, the numbered listing with corresponding numbers on circular heads of small pins positioned alongside the work, is smart, simple and gives desired information effortlessly, without distraction. All in all, the Ann Street exhibit represents careful, thoughtful display of well-selected, beautifully crafted, intriguing textiles. What more could a viewer ask?



Sherri Woodard Coffey, *Journey*, 55" x 29"

ATA News

Archie Brennan says Thank You!

I am amazed and astonished by the, to date (and they are still arriving), 100 plus "get well" cards that I have received in the mail. They have come from seven or eight different countries and with comments that often make me smile, instructions, even orders, to "get better at once, you are needed." There are even 10 tapestry woven postcards - Where did they get that idea? - and many delightful personal tapestry images on paper postcards. As a result, and along with Susan's dedicated care (and bullying orders), I am truly on the mend, now back at the loom (I put up a big warp today) and making preparations for upcoming workshops.

ATB 9

ATA is pleased to announce that the following artists' tapestries have been accepted into ATB 9. From 110 artists who submitted 223 tapestries, juror Lee Talbot, Associate Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections, The Textile Museum, chose 41 tapestries.

Janet Austin, USA	Erica Lynn Diazoni, Switzerland	Ulrikka Mokdad, Denmark
Cecilia Blomberg, USA	Alex Friedman, USA	Gunilla Petersson, Sweden
Ann Booth, USA	Helen Gold, USA	Suzanne Pretty, USA
Archie Brennan, USA	Tricia Goldberg, USA	Bozena Pychova, Czech Republic
Marie-Thumette Brichard, France	Joyce Hayes, USA	Michael F. Rohde, USA
Anne Brodersen, Denmark	Barbara Heller, Canada	Deann Rubin, USA
Elizabeth Buckley, USA	Susan Iverson, USA	Joanne Sanburg, USA
Barbara Burns, USA	Anne Jackson, UK	Kathy Spoering, USA
Carol Chave, USA	Nancy Jackson, USA	Becky Stevens, USA
Dorothy Clews, Australia	Ruth Jones, Canada	Linda Wallace, Canada
Myla Collier, USA	Mary Kester, USA	Pat Williams, USA
Donna Loraine Contractor, USA	Tori Kleinert, USA	Mary Zicafoose, USA
Mary Cost, USA	Lialia Kuchma, USA	Marzena Ziejka, USA
Thomas Cronenberg, Germany	Lindsey Marshall, UK	

Valentines Day Appeal

This year, ATA is dedicating the money raised in the 2012 Valentines Day Appeal to educational opportunities for our members. The annual appeal will seed a fund for the ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study. This scholarship is for any ATA member who wishes to pursue study in the field of tapestry weaving. The application may be for study in workshops, courses, study with individual tutors or institutions of higher learning.

Our goal for the annual appeal is \$15,000. To meet our goal, we need your help. This is an opportunity for you to support a medium that you feel passionately about and to share your dedication to contemporary tapestry with others. Please help us as we build a Scholarship Fund for our medium. Your generosity will make a difference. No gift is too small, or too large.

Donate online: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/scholarship-campaign-valentines-day-appeal-2012-donation-form/>, or send in the form that you received in the mail. And don't forget to share your story of how a scholarship made a difference to you: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/scholarship-campaign-valentines-day-appeal-2012-share-your-story/>

Teitelbaum Award Winners

Thanks to a generous donation from the Teitelbaum Family Trust, ATA offers awards to two ATB artists. The juror for the show bestows the awards on tapestries that (s)he considers to be of exceptional aesthetic and technical quality. The First Place Award is a \$300.00 cash prize and Second Place is a \$200.00 cash prize. The juror, Lee Talbot, selected the following winning tapestries.



FIRST PRIZE: *Sunia* by Ruth Jones



SECOND PRIZE: *DisConnect* by Linda Wallace

Convergence Events

Currents, Waves and Rising Tides

ATA's 2012 Educational Retreat The retreat is currently full. If you would like to put your name on the waiting list please email Erika Scott: erika.scott@cox.net.

Pacific Forum

ATA's 2012 Membership Meeting & Educational Forum

Join us for the ATA's Biennial Membership Meeting and Educational Forum. Saturday July 21st, 2012; 10:30am – 1:30pm; Convention Center, Long Beach, California. Room to be announced. Open to the public. Be inspired by Archie Brennan and Jean Pierre as they share insights into their tapestries and their careers. A Digi Slam of contemporary tapestry will follow Brennan and Larochette's talks. Submissions to the Digislam must be received by May 15, 2012. Check the website for more information or email:

Pacific Portals

ATA's unjuried small format exhibition; July 7 – August 30, 2012; Long Beach Library, Main Branch.

Pacific Breezes

Join this ATA sponsored gathering to meet new, and old, friends and colleagues. Learn about regional tapestry groups, enjoy a slide show of tapestries, peruse our publications, and best of all, talk tapestry! Friday, July 20, 2012; 4:30 – 6:30 pm. Long Beach Convention Center. Room to be announced. A cash bar will be available. Open to all. No reservation is necessary. For more information, contact: info@americantapestryalliance.org

A Weaverly Path: The Tapestry Life of Silvia Heyden will be screened on July 20, 2012 at 6:30 pm. Silvia will be attending and speaking at the screening. The film's producer, Kenny Dalsheimer also hopes to attend. This is one of HGA's "Special Events," listed as "Dinner & Movie at the Westin Hotel" and coincides with ATA's networking evening. It is open to non-HGA members, but Special Event registration is required. This is not the same as registering for Convergence itself. One can register for just the Event itself.

Visit HGA's registration page to learn more: http://www.weavespindye.org/pages/convergence2012/pdf/c2012_reg_form.pdf
For a description of the dinner, look at the left side bar at the top of Page 12 of the registration form. Registration is located at the top of Page 14 under Section E: Meals.

ATA Board of Directors – Open Positions

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

Tapestry Topics Information

Themes & Deadlines ~

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

The intertwining structure of the tapestry medium is reflected in the world wide web of communication between tapestry artists. The pioneering initiative of ITNET, websites like ATA's and the Tapestry Facebook group, express vividly the powerful materiality of the medium, and the commitment of the artists who work in it. This is only one of the paradoxes that enliven the practice of tapestry as an art form. We invite submissions from tapestry practitioners around the world, overviews of the tapestry scene in different countries, and general "thought-pieces" on contemporary tapestry as a worldwide phenomenon. Contact Theme Editor, Anne Jackson, annejackson.smirnoff@btinternet.com

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation

Deadline: October 1, 2012

Contact Theme Editor, Lynn Mayne, lynnmayne@comcast.net

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 newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org

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

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