



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

TAPESTRYTOPICS

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

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SHARON CRARY

SURFACE...

The question: "Do you stretch the definition of tapestry by enriching your work with surface techniques and/or embellishment?"

When asked to be the theme editor for this issue, I reviewed past Biennial catalogs to find artists who might answer "yes" to the above question, added artists suggested by other ATA members, and welcomed a number of volunteers.

Dorothy Clew's thought provoking article focuses on "stitch" as an integral part of the structure and meaning of the work- a fastening together, showing the past, uses, and changes in the textile. Susan Martin Maffei finds inspiration in embellished textiles found in ancient cultures of the Andes, Asia, and Africa, and from her own grandmother. She thinks of tapestry as being "a tactile feeling we sense with our eyes" and incorporates different materials in her tapestries to extend the narrative of that work.

In the following articles, you will find that embellishments of yarn or thread applied to the tapestry surface are numerous and varied - couching, running stitch, lazy daisy, knots, soumak, Hopi embroidery, cicim, Bönnmönstre, laid in stem stitch, brocade, twining, weft chaining, underside couching, crochet, rya, and more. Some artists go beyond applying yarn or threads and add fabric, lace, buttons, beads, feathers, pipe cleaners, prize ribbons, pearls, ceramic capacitors, campaign buttons, or a dirty bra strap to their pieces.

The expertise of our participants in adding surface interest while weaving tapestry is evident in the images that use contrasting materials such as wool, silk, linen, natural fibers, lurex, cotton, boucle, twine, synthetics, camel, pineapple, hand dyed yarns, paper, shrink wrap, and/or plastic. As you read the articles, you will note tapestry applique, Navajo weaving techniques, "doodling," diminishing twill weave, floats, two layer weavings, and eccentric weaving to manipulate tension to create dimensional ripples. Inspiration comes from mothers and grandmothers, historical tapestries, architecture, lectures, landscapes, and even a Native Peoples of the Pacific Northwest blanket.

So, why do these artists stretch the traditional definition of tapestry? Exploration. Maybe the "why not" question. To enhance the narrative. Fun. With such varied techniques, materials, and embellishments no succinct summary comment comes to my mind. To paraphrase Audrey Moore, the embellishment or surface manipulation defines and emphasizes the structure and spatial elements that integrate the overall effect.

Read on, but beware. You may also be pulled into the third dimension.

Sharon Crary has been weaving since 1974. She wove weft faced rugs until eight years ago when the long lost tapestry bug bit. She has benefited from books by, and workshops from, experts in the field of color, design, and weaving techniques. Her tapestries have been in the Small Tapestry International Exhibits 1 and 2. Sharon is a continuing education student in the "What If" school of tapestry.

In This Issue

- 1 Surface Theme Introduction *by Sharon Crary*
- 3 Co-Directors' Letter *from Mary Zicafoose and Michael Rohde*

Theme Articles

- 4 My Path to Embellishment *by Audrey Moore*
- 6 Tapestry Collage *by Joanne Sandburg*
- 8 Straw into Gold *by Dorothy Clews*
- 11 Texture and Embellishments *by Myla Collier*
- 14 Surface Tension *by Alex Friedman*
- 16 Surface/Embellishments - What is it that Attracts *by Susan Martin Maffei*
- 21 "Doodling" with Surface Effects for Tapestry *by Tommye McClure Scanlin*
- 23 Surfaces *by Susan Iverson*
- 25 On the Surface *by Linda Rees*
- 28 Embellishments *by Mary Lane*
- 30 Surface: Origins of Texture in My Tapestry *by Pamela Topham*
- 32 Surface and the Third Dimension *by Kathe Todd-Hooker*
- 34 Did You Know About Christine Laffer? *by Tricia Goldberg*

Exhibit Review

- 36 Star (Scottish Tapestry Artists Regrouped) Exhibit *by Rudi Richardson*

Book Review

- 37 Satisfactions : NARRATIVES Susan Martin Maffei's handmade book *by Gaye Hansen*

ATA News

- 13 ATA Lapel Pin
- 15 New Chair for Helping Hands Program
- 27 Small Tapestry International 3: *Outside the Line*
- 39 Nominations for the ATA Board of Directors
- 39 Convergence 2012 Events
- 40 Teitelbaum Awards
- 41 Tapestry Topics Information

Co-Directors' Letter

Once again, we offer our appreciation to members who contributed to ATA's annual appeal. Many, many of you were most generous, and everyone should have received a thank you letter. We jointly want to express our gratitude for making it possible to initiate funding for the [ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study](#). For those of you who may have missed the chance to donate to this worthy cause, you can still do so [here](#) or by contacting a Board Member.

Plans are now well underway for our activities at Convergence in Long Beach, CA. We will have a social networking evening on Friday, July 20th, a forum and general membership meeting on Saturday, July 21, followed by what promises to be a legendary tapestry workshop. This year's Members Retreat, which filled almost instantly, will feature two great Master Weavers in tandem, Archie Brennan and Jean Pierre Larochette. New on the agenda for this Convergence is ATA's booth in the Vendors' Hall. We hope to meet and greet all of you and to share with the greater weaving community our enthusiasm for contemporary tapestry. If you come to Long Beach, please plan on stopping by the ATA booth to meet your fellow tapestry weavers and Board members.

Looking further ahead, the biennial conference of the Textile Society of America will take place in Washington DC, September 19th -21st. A Speakers Session devoted to tapestry, *Political Strings: Tapestry Seen and Unseen*, was proposed by Christine Laffer and accepted into the conference. Many of us plan to participate in this exciting conference and would love to connect with fellow tapestry weavers. At the time of writing, we are still actively canvassing the greater Washington, DC metro area in search of an exhibition venue in which to travel the ATB 9 show as one of the anchor exhibitions of this conference. Our sincere hopes are that this reading finds us with a fantastic venue exhibition contract in hand.

This issue of *Tapestry Topics* addresses an aspect of tapestry that is not always in the spotlight. Most tapestry weavers strongly identify with image or color, but as elements of a tactile medium, surface and texture are also very important considerations in the creation of a wonderful tapestry. Many thanks to Sharon Crary and the impressive cadre of talented writers she has assembled for this design-provoking issue. Please read on, learn and enjoy!

xxoo

Mary & Michael

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Left: Audrey Moore, "Ladies Series XIV," 34" x 32", 2009; Right: Detail, Photos: Dennis Purdy.

AUDREY MOORE



My Path to Embellishment



Twenty years ago, I was given a Northwest Indian button blanket. It has hung in a prominent place in my home ever since. At the time I would never have anticipated how this beautifully embellished textile would affect my weaving.

The blanket has a field of dark navy blue. A red felt border surrounds three sides, forming an arch. The startling, unique element, however, is the image of a killer whale seemingly suspended in the ocean of blue. Its contours are defined by hundreds of small shell buttons. Reflecting the light, they glisten and sparkle, and are the magnet that catches my eye whenever I glance in that direction. However, these shimmering buttons are more than surface decoration, as they define the structure, the space and the dominating imagery.

Button blankets were, and still are, worn by the Native Peoples of the Pacific Northwest. They are "danced" during important ceremonial celebrations—potlatches—which mark significant events in the life of a family. Traditionally, the dense wool yardage of the basic blanket comes from the Canadian Hudson Bay Company. All the designs on these treasured robes are formed by the embellishment of shell buttons enhanced with small areas of cloth applique. They represent important, inherited crests which are usually of an animal totem serving as an emblem for a family or clan.

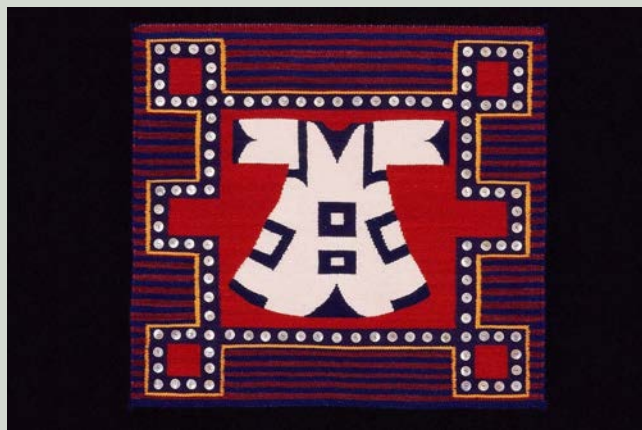
When, in the late 1960's, my family moved to Oregon, I was unaware of this rich history. However, the new environment brought new interests into my life. Weaving was one of them and a discovery and fascination with native arts and cultures was another. My interests, first focusing on textiles and basketry created by the Indian peoples of the Northwest coast, soon expanded to include the weavings of the Southwest. Techniques used by the Navajo became my primary interest

and the Navajo loom my loom of choice. Not only did the vertical loom suit the way I would create my weavings, but Navajo design elements became part of my visual vocabulary. Interestingly, when I realized that the stripes, fields of color, and geometric patterns I was using were all components employed in modern abstraction, my work became more contemporary. New forms that included literal references suggesting textile images depicted within the tapestry took shape. From this background, my *Ladies Series* evolved.

During all this time, I kept looking at that button blanket. I decided that I wanted to see how the addition of similar embellishments would affect my work. My current weavings portray images representing dresses of various styles, gestures, shapes and times. The inclusion of shell buttons in each of these series is the unifying element. Adding this adornment to the first of these tapestries, I knew that this was something I would explore. There are now seventeen "Ladies," each measuring 34" x 32".

Buttons of various sizes made of agoya shell from South Korea are now components of my designs. In some tapestries, buttons are used as frames or arches surrounding the dress; other times their positioning emphasizes patterns that become part of the designs. Placement is determined by the overall effect I wish to achieve. I have found it easiest to carry a sewing thread along the warp, attaching buttons as I go rather than securing them later. Although occasionally I have mined caches from old family button boxes, these tend to evoke nostalgia rather than what I want to portray. The pearly shimmer of color in the shell balances the bold vibrant colors of my hand-dyed yarns. Their presence serves to define and emphasize structure and spatial elements that integrate the overall effect.

The inclusion of embellishments has expanded the direction of my work. In both a physical and a visual respect, this has altered the way I experience my tapestries. I remain excited and intrigued by new possibilities and will enthusiastically continue down this path.



Left: Audrey Moore, "Ladies Series V," 34" x 32", 2005; **Right:** Audrey Moore, "Ladies Series XIII," 34"x 32", 2008, Photos: Dennis Purdy.

Not long after Hal Painter and Jim Brown formed the ATA in 1982, Audrey Moore became a member. Since then she has woven tapestries, published, exhibited and taught. She maintains a studio in her home near Mt. Hood in Oregon, and teaches tapestry with Terry Olson at the Damascus Fiber Arts School. An on-line exhibit of Audrey Moore's tapestries can be seen on the ATA website.

JOANNE SANBURG

Tapestry Collage



What do a baton, gold trim, pipe cleaners, a feather, a dirty bra strap, and a campaign button have in common? All are embellishments for my current weaving. I am weaving a portrait of a nubile young girl dressed for a parade—a political parade—and wearing a campaign button: the 70's campaign button of a politician who was later exposed as having an affair with just such an underage girl.

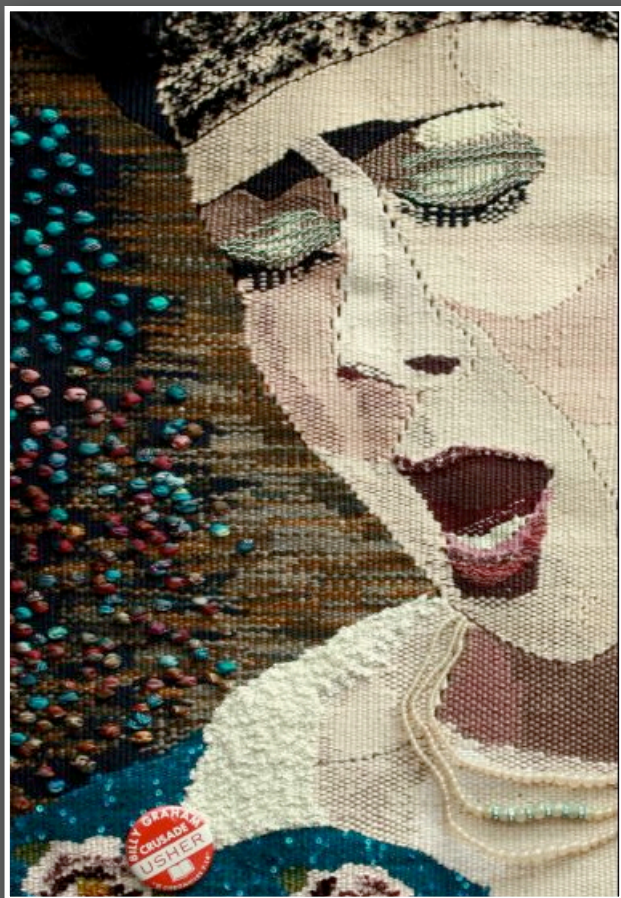
I am not really political; I weave portraits and embellish them with treasures. I have found that by weaving portraits of women, I am able to embellish with all the things which hold nostalgic memories for me: old watches, 50's jewelry, metal curlers, hairnets.

But, I must confess those were my gateway embellishments. I have gone on to bigger things: a mink pelt, a 13 inch antique crucifix, and Christmas lights (on two weavings.) I weave on a Shannock student loom; therefore, my weavings are roughly 24" x 36." This loom size limits my embellishing to some extent. I handle the weight of my creations by permanently attaching them to a rod (usually bamboo from my garden.)

Embellishments can be tricky. Take the gallery opening where the woman dragged her husband over to see the "weaving that won second place." I had embellished with a 1934 Oregon State Fair red ribbon. Next time...blue.

Above: Joanne Sanburg, "Stella," 2009, 34" x 23"; Right: Detail, Photos: Terry Sanburg





Above: Joanne Sanburg, "Francis," (detail), 33" x 23", 2008;
Right: "Aunt Lucy's Layer," 16" x 11", 2011, Photos: Terry Sanburg

Beyond the antique shop I find rich material for weaving in boutique yarn shops. I've used twine, camel, pine, pineapple, and every synthetic you can imagine. Sometimes it's hard to weave with this variety, but I find that a tight tension on my cotton warp helps. Check out Habu yarns in a good yarn shop or on line.

I use natural fiber (often purchased from Habu) for hair on my women. A few strands of fiber are tied in a Swedish rug knot for each plug of hair. When I look at the Unicorn Tapestries, these things stand out: rich garments, hair, ornaments and facial expressions. My embellishments allow me to concentrate on facial expressions. Or, who needs to weave multifleurs when you can glue 'em on.

I happen to love it when a viewer recognizes a Red Cross beginner swim pin on a weaving. I get reactions to the art and the artifacts. My daughter would not have memories of "the pin": She got a certificate. So what I'm saying is that my art contains information that is readable by someone my age with a similar background. That is really not so different from those hidden messages in the Unicorn Tapestries.



Joanne Sanburg has been working on portraits for eight years. Her subject is women and she embellishes each weaving with "nostalgic finds" that can be anything from Christmas lights to old menus. Her goal is to communicate a specific personality type with her art and artifacts. Her subjects are the personalities that she worked with for many years. Joanne is a member of Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound (TAPS.)

DOROTHY CLEWS

Straw into Gold

An argument for a deeper level of engagement with stitch. Not something superficial. Not just decorative, but an essential part.



I started thinking about this article by looking up the definitions of stitch and patch. Stitch means to fasten or join with stitches; to mend or repair with stitches; to decorate or ornament with stitches; to fasten together with staples or thread. Patches have also become part of my practice in the last year: a small piece of material affixed to another larger piece to conceal, reinforce, or repair a worn area, hole, or tear; a small piece of cloth used for patchwork; a small cloth badge affixed to a garment as a decoration. . . . Both are words mostly connected with repair and the idea of conserving the fabric or changing the fabric in some way. Stitch - not as the end, but the means.

The first time I saw tapestry where stitch played an important part was 20 years ago at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow. The corner of a large tapestry had been damaged or deliberately cut out at some time in the history of the tapestry. A patch of another tapestry had been stitched and inserted, not particularly visible from ground level, but odd looking and unmatched when viewed from the top gallery. Around the same time, I visited the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and saw delicate Coptic tapestry remnants invisibly held together by stitch. The warps and wefts were carefully arranged and ordered, mounted on backing material, exposing the movement of the eccentric weft and the stresses that the warps had undergone. Many of the Coptic tapestry fragments were cut out of old tunics and sewn onto others extending the life of the small tapestry panels and medallions. These two ideas of patching together and the ordering/securing of warp and weft with stitch have guided my practice over the last few years.



Above left: Dorothy Clews, "Site/Insight" (detail 1), work in progress; Above right: "Site/Insight" (detail 2), work in progress, Photos: Artist

The third thing that has influenced my recent work is the book The Coptic Textile Albums: And the Archaeologist of Antinoe, Albert Gayet by Nancy Arthur Hoskins. In the book, Hoskins describes the arrangement of various textiles including tapestry into albums, disregarding the conventions of modern day conservation. The tapestries were cut up to keep to a kind of Victorian aesthetic ideal of arrangement on a page, rather than conserving and preserving the tapestries. The Albums suggested a question but no answer as to why these tapestries were removed, cut-up, and arranged to the context of an album. Whatever the reasons for cutting up those particular tapestries, the fragments I am using in my current practice are the remains of much larger tapestries: damaged, timeworn, perhaps even vandalized.

Today, in the contemporary practice of “Do It Yourself” craft, women continue the tradition of taking parts of tapestries too damaged to restore and making them into small panels, pillows, and cushions. Sometimes these fragments appear on specialist online shops. The small fragments often show signs of being repaired, sometimes with poorly matched yarn – more darning than re-weaving. Some have old backing material attached where the tapestry had been mounted. Each stitch records the change of use, the wear of time, the differing tensions of original textile and additional repairs. Past and present are sometimes in conflict, but sometimes blend seamlessly.

Modern day conservators are not only interested in conserving but are involved in gathering information and conveying understanding about what is seen to the viewer. The close contact with the textile can reveal intricate details, new relationships, and interpretation. Authenticity is often regarded as very important, with previous repairs and other past modifications being removed. However, some conservators think that past history, alterations, the wear of time and use contribute to the history of the textile and its authenticity. The textile is a document of the past and of the people that made, repaired, and used it. Emphasis is on preserving its history, not recovering its original appearance.

The history of the object is important, as well as its story of production, use, ownership, and narrative of its survival. For me, the artworks that I create are not about pure versus hybrid work. Rather, they are a varied combination of closely related techniques of stitch, patch, and tapestry. The combination of techniques opens the door to experimentation with relationships and the specific connections and metaphors that these very domestic activities have with repair, preservation, conservation, and change. In my work, I seek to express the relationship that the past has on the future, and how the past and the present join together to create something new.



Above: Dorothy Clews, antique fragment,
antique tapestry awaiting transformation,
Photo: Artist



Above: Dorothy Clews, "Antipodean Landscapes," 9" x 6.75", 2011, Photo: Artist

Textile conservation grew out of the domestic task of household mending, providing a support for the cloth, and mitigating further stress, as well as repair of the obvious damage. I see it as similar to the way I have developed my garden over the past few years – shade trees for structure, support of vines, and protection of smaller, fragile plants. Ground-cover roots stitch the soil together, protecting it from rain and sun. Past cultural objects, like plants, move out of their original place and blend with a contemporary culture creating something different.

I am interested in the idea that once I start stitching/conserving/preserving a fragment of antique tapestry or one of my own composted tapestries, I change it forever, much the same way that humans intervene in a landscape, whether "improving" it or conserving its original state. A cultural artifact from one era and particular geographical place shifts from one context to another when suddenly it finds itself with cultural baggage that is unrelated to the present time and place. The new narrative is not just in the past image, but in its material structure, its use, and history.

While I carefully stitch down those small, brittle fragments of warp, or carefully ease a patch of woven raffia into the edges of an antique fragment, something is lost and gained. The past history may be entirely lost or covered in stitch, remaining within the layers of textile but not visible. Sometimes I work on just a small area,

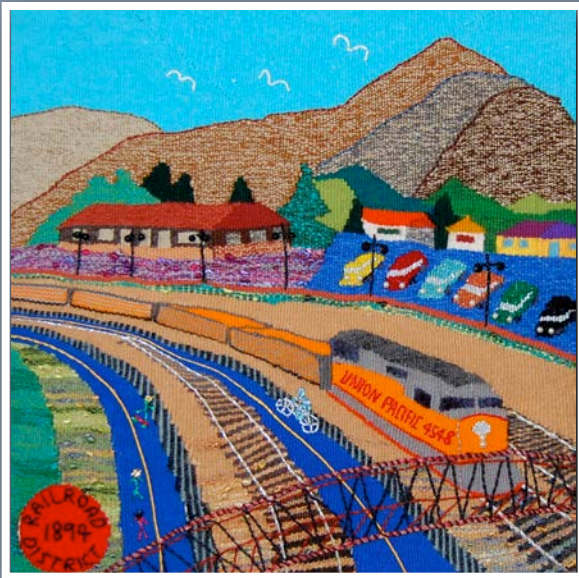
meticulously stitching down, trying to "fix" every thread, to bring order to the chaos. At other times a thread will wander from one side of the piece to the other. The line of stitches carefully follows its path ignoring the other loose threads, bringing some temporary sense of continuity and order to one line meandering its way across the textile. There is a tension between stitch-lines of order and structure and obsessive stitching trying to fix thousands of threads into place.

Each work along with its varied types of fiber dictates how the yarns behave, the form the final work will take, and the narrative it relates. Tapestry for me is a process rather than a means to an end. In trying temporarily to halt the movement towards decay, I find I am changing things forever, adding to the record of wear, time, weather, use, environment, the change in context and culture: the shifting tensions as I stitch, re-arrange, cut up, and contemplate.

Stitch is not just about surface, although surface is influenced. Stitch is not bling or simple decoration but an integral part of the structure and meaning of the work; a way of ordering the whole and structuring the detail; an element of transformation; a metaphor for repair and also of change; a way of interpretation and re-interpretation.

Dorothy Clews emigrated from the UK, and has lived in outback Queensland, Australia for the last 30 years. Graduating from Southwest Institute of Technology, Warrnambool in 1997, she has continued to push the boundaries of tapestry, exploring structure, its textile nature, and characteristics that endow her tapestries with qualities of fragility, reflecting the land she inhabits.

MYLA COLLIER



Top: Myla Collier, "Johnson & San Luis Drive," 15" x 15"; Bottom: "Railroad District," 15" x 15", Photos: Bruce Collier

Texture and Embellishments

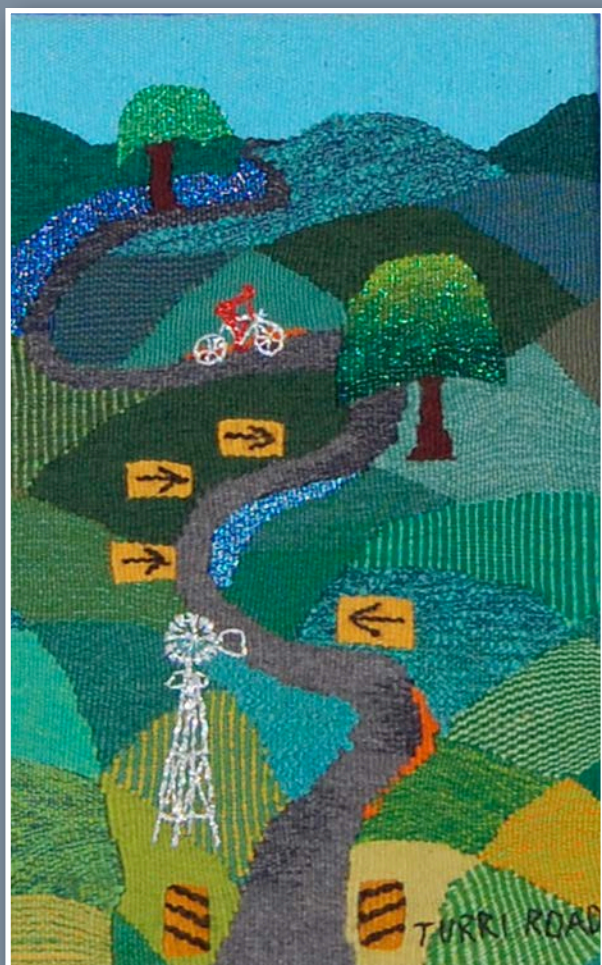
I grew up learning many types of needle arts from my mother and grandmother. Whenever I traveled from my home in Ohio to my grandparents' western Kansas wheat farm, grandma would take me to the local general store to buy flour sack fabric, embroidery floss, and embroidery transfer patterns. We would return home, cut the fabric into towel size pieces, iron the transfer patterns onto one end of each, find an embroidery hoop, and be off to work. Grandma always kept me busy. I can't count how many sets of Monday - Wash, Tuesday - Iron, Wednesday - Clean. . .etc. I made and used over the years.

When I started weaving weft faced pictorial textiles - rugs and later tapestries, I immediately became interested in creating some kind of surface interest. My first piece, a rug called "Sunrise," incorporated a soumak sun and rya trees. As time went on, I moved toward smaller tapestry pieces and always found ways to use embroidery to add depth and surface interest. This process also allows the making of intricate images on a smaller scale that could not be achieved by weaving alone.

From that point on in my weaving career, the goal became to create images that are strong from a distance yet, on closer inspection, show an added surface interest. Inspired by David Hockney's "Mulholland Drive" and Wayne Thiebaud's wildly shifting San Francisco and California Delta perspectives, I created three pieces where I played with spacial relationships. These are landscapes found in and around my hometown of San Luis Obispo, California and were woven at 12 warps /inch.

"Turri Road," a favorite for bicyclists, is an interesting hilly road outside of town. I used eccentric wefts in contrasting color blends for the hills. Then with Halcyon's Astro-Bright Lurex yarn, I embroidered a windmill and a cyclist using the couching stitch.

Couching and laid work are techniques in which yarn or other materials are laid across the surface of the ground fabric and fastened in place with small stitches of the same or a different yarn. Couching allows the use of decorative



Above: Myla Collier, "Turri Road," 10" x 17", Photo: Bruce Collier

novelty yarns or threads that would not stand up as standard embroidery thread that must be drawn through the fabric a number of times. It is also a way of creating a flowing uninterrupted line, difficult to achieve in most other embroidery stitches.

In "Railroad District," I used the same couching stitch to highlight the open feeling of an overhead pedestrian/bicycle bridge, the curve of the railroad tracks, the train lettering, and another cyclist. I added pearls for headlights of the parked cars on a whim.

"Johnson and San Luis Drive" carries through the same local themes as "Railroad District" with couching of the signs, beads for vehicle lights, and the ubiquitous bicyclist.

Most recently, weaving at 8 warps/inch, I used size 5 pearl cotton thread for a variation on the standard running stitch and the lazy daisy stitch for the vines against two tree trunks in my ATB 9 piece "Urban Forest." The running stitch or straight stitch is the basic embroidery stitch on which all other forms are based.

Also known as the detached chain stitch, the lazy daisy stitch is often used for petal designs and small floral patterns. It consists of a single loop of chain rather than the continuous pattern. This stitch need not be limited to just petals and leaves, but can be used for more complicated designs too. I have found that when choosing embroidery thread, heavy plied types, like DMC 5 Pearl, give a better dimensional look than multiple strand embroidery floss.

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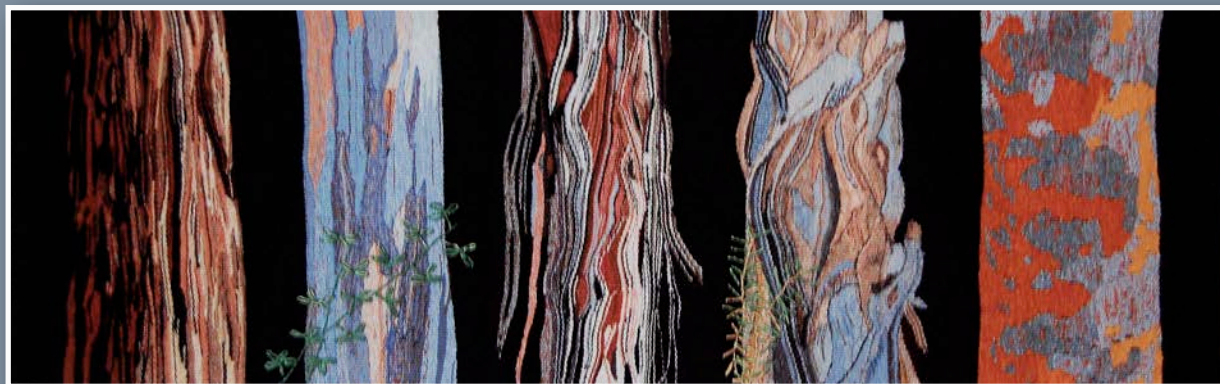
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At the moment I am working on a large commission (a 14 ft. high palm tree with a 10 ft trunk). Still working at 8 ends/inch, I am weaving the repetitive texture of the bark in small contrasting sections, accenting each with a row of soumak, (weaving from right to left). After blocking the piece, I will embroider a version of the Lazy Daisy using satin rattail for "thread" to represent ivy vines climbing up the trunk.

Adding embroidery and other embellishments after blocking my work assures that the surface design will be prominent and won't get flattened against the weaving. While not strictly surface applied material, my favorite yarn for creating textured weaving interest is Waikiki, a viscose and cotton slub yarn from Crystal Palace yarns.



Myla Collier learned to weave tapestry in New York's Craft Students League night classes, sandwiched between traveling stints as a marketing coordinator. Later after moving to California, she restored Native American textiles, earned a master's and taught Cultural Anthropology. Now when not weaving, she conducts life story writing classes.



Above: Myla Collier, "Urban Forest," 17" x 52", Photo: Bruce Collier

ATA Lapel Pin

We are excited to announce the creation of a beautiful ATA logo lapel pin – our very first ever! The blue ATA letters float on a silver, mirror-finish, cutout background about 0.75" high x 1.25" wide with a magnetic backing. The ATA pin proudly identifies you as a member of our international community of tapestry weavers, makes it easy for us to identify one another at large gatherings, and will help spread the ATA message.

Let's create a "sea of blue on silver" at Convergence!

The pin is \$8.00 (includes shipping) via PayPal at www.american Tapestry Alliance.org

Mail checks to: Marcia Ellis, Assistant Treasurer, 5565 Idlewood Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404



ALEX FRIEDMAN

Surface Tension

For the past few years I have been exploring the surface effects of my tapestries by playing with the tension as I weave the tapestry. When I remove the tapestry from the loom, the eccentric weft that I use has the effect of creating a three dimensional ripple in a traditionally two dimensional medium. For me, making a tapestry is more about respecting the whole construction of the piece rather than solely focusing on creating an image.

My studio is in an old building that is full of painters and sculptors, and I know that the painters can whip up their art in a matter of weeks as compared to my many months. While they buy their canvases to paint on, I am very aware that I actually create the “canvas” for my art. This very aspect has intrigued me. The construction process and its relation to my long term interest in both the history and the sculptural aspects of architecture are the core of what is important to me.

It took me a while to find this avenue to explore. I liked the process of building something, and weaving is a very hands on process. For many years I worked on the imagery by observing how shadows create the illusion of mass and form my woven windows, doors, and other architectural features. My tapestries were large, and many viewers found them to have a tromp l’oeil quality.

Some years later I attended a tapestry lecture and realized that what I was doing was very pictorial, and the effect could be more swiftly accomplished with photography or painting. Why was I working in such a slow medium to create these pieces? How could I take advantage of the unique possibilities of tapestry? This question began my exploration of creating a third dimension and using the many design elements that are available to a weaver.

Initially, I tested small pieces with manipulated features that flipped out from the surface. These were carefully planned before the weaving with paper samples which I cut and taped to work out the amount of length I needed to create the “flip.” These were fun to do, and I incorporated lots of different materials such as waxed threads, silks, and synthetics to see their effect. But I like to work on a larger scale, and these pieces would not work unless I was willing to use wire or some other armature to maintain the larger “flip” shape.

Eventually, in my *Flow Series*, I discovered how to manipulate the eccentric weft so that it would create a 3D shape off the loom. I am excited by the different effects it has on the face and on the rectangularity of the tapestries. The irregular surface movement makes a dynamic and unexpected twist in these recent pieces. I have more to explore in this series and look forward to see where it will go.



Above: Alex Friedman, “Big Soft Flips,” 8” x 8”,
Photo: Artist



Above: Alex Friedman, "Dynamic Flow," 19" x 33", Photo: Artist



Native Californian, Alex Friedman has been an artist weaver since 1975. She has created both independent tapestries as well as numerous commissions for corporate, liturgical and private clients. Her award winning tapestries have been exhibited internationally. Alex is a former director and board member of the American Tapestry Alliance.

New Chair for Helping Hands Program

Please welcome Traudi Bestler, the new chair of Helping Hands!



Helping Hands is ATA's Distance Learning program for new tapestry weavers. Upon request a new weaver is paired with a more experienced tapestry weaver who becomes their mentor. By e-mail, phone calls, blogging, or skyping the mentor advises, teaches, and guides the new weaver to help them achieve a better understanding of tapestry techniques, design issues, and other related questions for a six month period. More details on the ATA website under Education. <http://americantapestryalliance.org/education/helping-hands/> Contact Traudi: bestler@aol.com

The ATA board thanks Joyce Hayes for her dedication to assisting new weavers in their quest to improve their understanding and skills in the medium of tapestry! She has paired all mentors and students since the program began in 2008. Happy retirement Joyce!

SUSAN MARTIN MAFFEI

Surface/Embellishments-What is it that Attracts?

What is it that attracts one to tapestry? For me, one of the factors is that it has always had the ability to say more about the nature of what you are depicting by incorporating different materials in the weaving. Early small works were portraits of people around me and I could use a boucle yarn for a sweater, silk for a scarf, cotton for leggings, etc. and add to the essence of each of the particular parts of the image ("Laura.") I have always thought of tapestry as a tactile visual medium. And that perhaps has a lot to do with my early childhood when I spent a lot of time with my grandmother. She was such a textile person and taught me very early to work with my hands, learning sewing, cross stitch, embroidery, crochet, knitting, lace, and tatting. That appreciation has stuck with me throughout my life and I find that now more and more, I am returning to those handcrafts in an effort to extend the narratives of my work in tapestry.

So what is the importance of surface? We all work to have a good surface, which means controlling the tension of weft in both sheds in an equal balance. But that is a technical matter that surely affects both color reflection and irregularities in warp and weft placement not to mention edges. Surface in creative terms is more about a tactile feeling we sense with our eyes and the use of silk against wool against metallic used in early European tapestries is one good example of the enhanced quality and sumptuous food for the eyes that can take an image beyond the limitations of wool. If we look at Coptic tapestry we can see that the use of what is called "flying shuttle", (where a supplemental wool weft is interlaced with the linen warp at intervals during the weaving and lies on the surface), allows a freedom on small works that extend creatively what can be expressed and adds another layer to the work that can be quite complicated and textured. Originally it was thought to be embroidery and I wonder looking at Polish contemporary tapestries that use a lot of texture in flying shuttle style that perhaps they were responsible for the clues that led to the understanding that it was in fact woven in during the weaving process and was a weaving technique?

Another surface variation is eccentric weaving (where the weft does not lie at right angles to the warp but diagonally), also used in many cultures and often suggests a flow of visual movement. Soumak, weaving with different thickness of yarn, changing warp sett, or weaving over more than a single warp at a time can all change surface qualities and bring certain elements into a different dimension.



Above: Susan Martin Maffei, "Laura," 10" x 7", 1994, Photo: Artist

These aforementioned possibilities all take place during the weaving and are still in quite general use. However, although we think today of tapestry as a discontinuous weft faced plain weave fabric, what about all the warp faced weavings that used ikat or discontinuous warps as a form of tapestry? What about twining used as the earliest form of image making in the Americas? And not to forget that there was a time when twill tapestry was the original paisley shawl (not the European copy) and was found as well in some of the clothing of the mummies of Urumchi, which date from 1st millennium B.C. These are all forms of historical tapestry that have a different surface texture and can be combined to enhance the tactility of the different surfaces of an image.

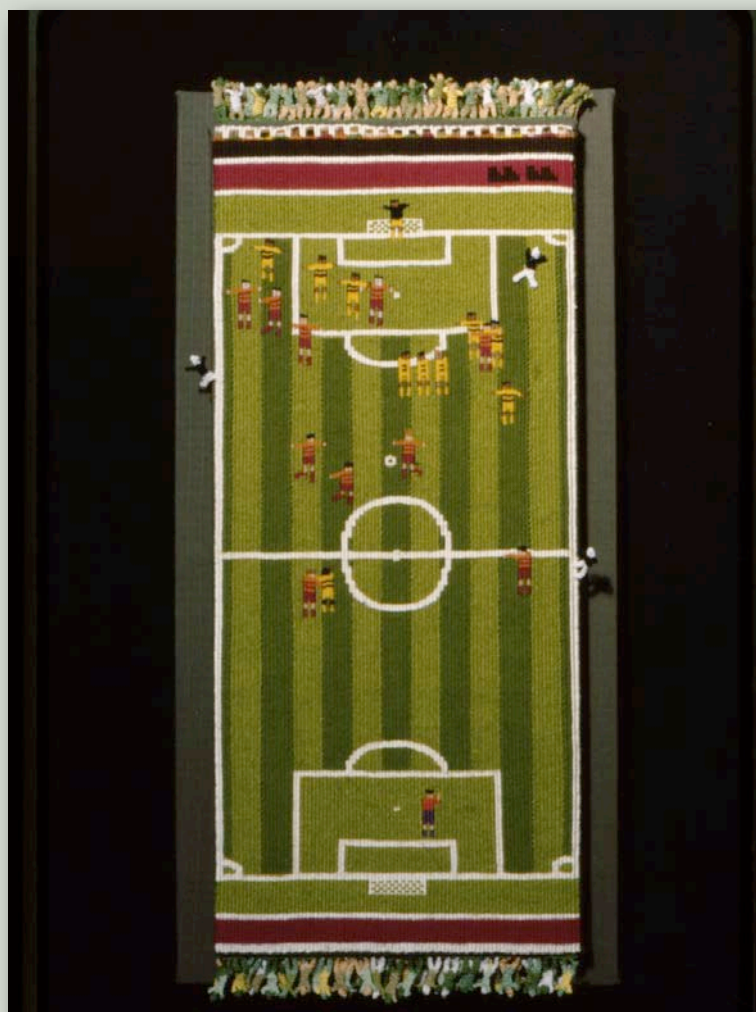
What do embellishments and/or trims add in and/or on a tapestry and how were these used historically? Can tapestry be an embellishment unto itself? The use of trims appears in many early cultures. Certainly, for me, Andean comes immediately to mind. Their use of cross knit stitch that created those lovely, tiny figures that adorned the edges of mantles and tunics and depicted in three dimension birds, flowers, deities, animals and people in all their color and detail. Perhaps the most elaborate example is the Paracas mantle at the Brooklyn Museum that is believed to be a form of a calendar and shows an array of extremely detailed deities that represent the cosmos, seasons and planting times and is famous for its most complicated three-dimensional figures. This technique of cross knit stitch has mostly been replaced in today's world with a cousin or related technique of crochet. Adding three-dimensional trims in crochet for a couple of years now extends the narrative of my works. Adding little men in canoes on the short edges of a tapestry landscape about the beauty of the calm morning river reflecting autumn color helps the viewer to imagine they are floating along within these boundaries ("Morning River.") Use of silk for the reflective quality of water and using wool and linen for land and trees is an example of



Above: Susan Martin Maffei, "Morning Walk & River Tides," 12" x 19', (detail,) 2010, Photo: Artist

surface change suggesting actual qualities of the real landscape. It engages in an enhanced way. Or take a crowd of crochet people trim along the edges of a tapestry of a sports game, cheering on their favorite team ("Sport Series-Soccer.") The viewer becomes part of the enthusiasm of the group. Perhaps it is the dimensional aspect of these that pulls the viewer to become a more active participant in the narrative.

Intrigued and influenced by the mystery of pre-Columbian cultures' integral relationship to textiles, in particular their use of the quipu (or khipu), (knots on yarn used as a method of recording information), has compelled me to do several as both visual embellishment and a means of recording information extending the imagery. One such quipu records the family tree and is attached to the front of a tapestry of a self-portrait that looks remarkably like my mother. Another records the times of the high and low tides of the Hudson River for a full year and is used as a decorative trim under the border graph of tide heights on a 19' scroll of my typical morning walk thru the seasons at Inwood Park along that river. At present I am working on another very long tapestry landscape, again about the river and now looking at the rising and setting of the moon, its azimuth and times recorded by the quipu which is partially woven into the body of the narrative scroll but still dangles partially below as an informative trim.



Above: Susan Martin Maffei, "Sport Series-Soccer," 18" x 8" plus trim, 2010, Photo: Artist



Above: Susan Martin Maffei, "Morning River," 4" x 65" plus trim, 2008, Photo: Artist

You find embellishments of a great variety in early cultures. African tunics often use bones, shells, nuts, pods, etc. as well as metal as adornment to say something more about the person within and their position in society. Some rattle and make noise to engage. Some Kuba raffia skirts use elaborate woven ruffle edges as trim that add a particular identification. Certainly Coptic tapestry was most often an adornment on their plain weave tunics and also engaged to project a position or protect the wearer.

Feathers were an important part of Andean identity and attached to tunics and other important items. There is a method of attaching the feathers on a knotted cord and then the cord is attached to the textile and can completely cover and/or form images in mosaic like constructions. I enjoy collecting feathers on my hikes as well as making small tapestries that use the image of feather pattern against the feathers themselves ("Feather Works VIII-Duck.")

Looking at some early Swiss German tapestries and Asian works we often find embroidery (and sometimes paint) used for tiny features that were difficult to portray in tapestry or perhaps added the surface quality that embroidery imparts.



Above: Susan Martin Maffei, "Feather Works VIII-Duck," 9.75" x 12.75", 2010, Photo: Artist

Finishing for a weaving can also be a form of embellishment. What to do with all those warp ends? Peter Collingwood's The Techniques of Rug Weaving, a book that includes many rug finishes has been used by many tapestry weavers to illicit a pleasing means of securing those warps.

Even in the world of Andean 4 selvedge weavings, decorative fringe, or looping or special heading cords or locking together the looped ends of warp add much to the aesthetic pleasure of a work. Extension of weft loops beyond the selvedge edges are also used to elaborate or extend a particular image.

Of late, interest in different forms other than rectangular tapestry for placement on the wall has engaged my study. Looking at Ancient Asian textiles, we see the scroll as a narrative form, not meant to be placed on the wall, but to be viewed in sections as you unroll the work. It is recognized as an early form of the book. My interest in the narrative fits well into this form and for some years now I have used it in many of my sport series and landscapes, adorned, of course, with trim. Woven tapestry covers were traditionally used quite early on to cover the precious scrolls that were most often painted on silk. Desk covers, which hide the front and sides of small desks or tables were a common textile form, sometimes tapestry, sometimes embroidery. Most have a series of flaps at the top that carry some significance beyond the landscapes or legends in the main body and so become a form of embellishment within themselves ("Desk Frontal, What Lies Beneath?")

Tapestry after all is an object, something that has to be constructed in a way much different than other media. And that construction is so much a part of, not only the technical aspects, but also the creative possibilities. Looking at historical tapestry forms and how they were used can enhance an understanding that so many early cultures embodied in their textile works.



Above: Susan Martin Maffei, "Desk Frontal, What Lies Beneath?," front 28" x 24", sides 28" x 12", flaps 9" high, 2012, Photo: Artist



Susan Martin Maffei is an internationally known tapestry artist whose background includes art studies at The Art Students League in NYC, tapestry training at Les Gobelins in Paris, apprenticeship and studio work at the Scheuer Tapestry Studio, NYC and conservation of antique textiles at Artweave Gallery, NYC. She has been weaving her work professionally since 1985. She has taught, lectured, and exhibited in the U.S. and abroad and has work in both public and private collections.

TOMMYE MCCLURE SCANLIN

"Doodling" with Surface Effects for Tapestry



During 2011, I decided to learn more about a few techniques that I had only briefly explored before in my work. I began the study in January of 2011 with soumak. I scoured my resources for information and diagrams about the technique and I was happy to find I had quite a few references to soumak and other methods, as well, in several of my books: *Techniques of Rug Weaving* (Collingwood); *Line in Tapestry* (Todd-Hooker); *Woven Structures* (Mallett); and a small booklet that I'd forgotten I had, *The Soumak Workbook* by Jean Wilson.

After trying several of the soumak possibilities, I moved on to other methods like weft chaining and twining (including twining with more than one color and vertical twining). As I used the various methods for surface texture in an exploratory way, I began to understand the potential for the techniques in my work. I decided to dedicate an intermediate level class that I was scheduled to teach at John C. Campbell Folk School to an assortment of the techniques I was learning.

The class was called *Tapestry—Expand Your Horizons* and was held in January of 2012. Information about the techniques was introduced in a way that I hoped would encourage experimentation. My intention was that students shouldn't feel pressure to create a design but would rather have freedom to explore the technique to see where it might lead. I described that we would be "doodling" with the methods.

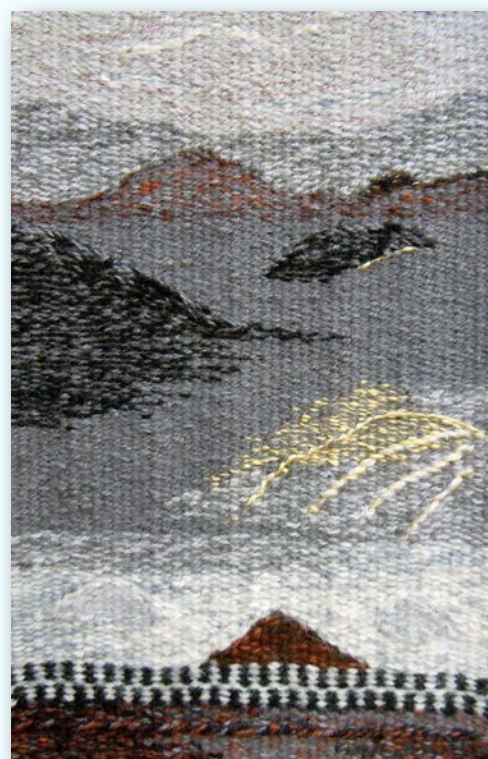


Above: Tommye McClure Scanlin, "Lone Feather," 8" x 3", 2012; Right: "Crow and More," 12" x 8", 2012, Photos: Artist

The participants enthusiastically tried out several methods and were happy to add those to their "tool box" of tapestry techniques. I also continue to explore where the methods may lead me. For instance, I've recently completed two small tapestries in which I've interpreted drawings from my sketchbook through the linear effects available by using soumak.



Students' weaving samples from the class *Tapestry—Expand Your Horizons*. Clockwise from top left: Nancy Burley, Sidsel Moreb, Mary Kircher, Kristin Majkrzk, and Joanne Wilson. Photos: Tommye McClure Scanlin



Tommye McClure Scanlin has been weaving since the early 1970s. Her early weavings often used methods like pick up, painting or printing on warps, and inlay techniques to create imagery. She turned to tapestry in 1988 when she was introduced to American Tapestry Alliance at the Chicago Convergence and also had the chance to see the wonderful exhibit, *World Tapestry Today*, sponsored by ATA.



SUSAN IVERSON

Surfaces

The surface of a tapestry has always been of primary importance to me. My interest in the object quality of tapestry is at least as strong as my interest in its image making ability. The yarn that makes up a tapestry informs how we see the object and how we read the information. A yarn with personality produces a surface that is more specific and less generic. Over the years I have experimented with all types of yarn - falling in and out of love with them and their personalities. Horse hair is rough and aggressive and visually heavy. Silk is lustrous and lovely and has a sheen that is very seductive. Linen also has a wonderful sheen and when used in its natural color can appear strong and serious. When linen is dyed it maintains that nice sheen but has a hardness not seen with cotton, silk, or wool. Wool can be flat and anonymous, hairy and aggressive, fuzzy and soft, fuzzy and harsh, on and on - in other words wool has many different looks that are perfect for many situations. Finding the right yarn for the right tapestry is always a wonderful challenge.

I have created a large number of tapestries that use only one type of yarn throughout the entire tapestry. The uniform surface may be necessary for the clarity of the content of the work and should support the content. I do, however, love the surface conversation that erupts when two or more yarns start to contrast with each other. I frequently work with a fairly coarse wool that has a medium personality and can be woven at 6 epi. For contrast, I insert areas with more detail woven with silk and linen. The silk and linen are physically flatter and have a contrasting sheen - these areas are more lively and energetic than the surrounding wool.

I sometimes use embroidery to outline woven shapes, define new shapes, and find it useful for text and fine linear details. For years, I thought that to embroider on a tapestry was cheating. Why I thought this - well, I just don't know. Once I got past that ridiculous notion, I was free to play more with subtle lines that could not be woven at the sett I



Above: Susan Iverson, "Dream Landscape," (detail), 34" x 30", 2007, Photo: Taylor Dabney; Below: Technical sample of applique, pulled warp silk on wool, Photo: Artist



Susan Iverson, a Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA, exhibits her work throughout the United States and is included in many collections including The Art in Embassies Program and the Renwick

Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC. She earned a MFA from Tyler School of Art, Temple University and a BFA from Colorado State University.

was using. With embroidery I can create lines that feel more spontaneous than woven lines. I have found that couching yarns onto the surface is especially helpful when I want to incorporate text. For outlining woven shapes, I use the stem stitch which can smooth or soften the steps created by angles or curves.

I have used tapestry applique a few times and want to explore it further. To start, I weave smaller tapestry pieces and attach them to the base tapestry. I finish the warp edges of the small pieces and then sew them down or push the unfinished warp ends through the base tapestry and tie them in square knots. This technique is especially helpful when I want to use yarns that require different warp sets and also want a more physically active surface. This process can be quite spontaneous as it allows me to explore yarn types, warp direction, and composition.

I believe it is our responsibility as contemporary tapestry weavers to explore the limits of our chosen technique - to keep tapestry a viable and innovative art form in the 21st century.



Above: Susan Iverson, "The Pond," (detail), 13.5" x 13.5" x 3.75" (one of four panels), 2009, Photo: Taylor Dabney



Above: Susan Iverson, "Seven Days at Millfield Pond" (detail), 23.5" x 71.5", 2009, Photo: Taylor Dabney

LINDA REES

On the Surface

My weaving style has remained essentially the same throughout my long career. I work selva to selva. I am equally satisfied to create shapes as large blocks of a single color or by blending a few colors in weft faced patterns where each color is a separate yarn so that its identity within the pattern is visible. Neither choice is particularly subtle but each fits my style. Generally I weave with wool yarns, but ever since collaborating with a jeweler friend in the 1970s, I have enjoyed investigating other materials.

I've used a few embellishments that were decidedly novel, such as attaching ceramic capacitors (used in circuitry back then) by bending their wires back like a staple into a small weaving called "Growing Capacity" in 1980. Mainly I have used strips of plastic, but any flexible material that could be cut was an option. I probably have about 15 pieces using garbage bags in which the heavy plastic successfully packed down much the same as the wool weft. Lots of experiments failed, but I still enjoy putting something unexpected into weavings as an accent.

In 1989, I laboriously cut up blue-green shrink-wrap because its shimmer was enticing and looked good with other plastics of similar color. I tried weaving it, but after one pass realized that it stretched too much as weft. I also found that it didn't work for lines of soumak, a technique I had adopted the year before for creating gestural "line drawings." Fortunately, I devised a way to anchor the shrink-wrap, which has become a mainstay in creating imagery, although rarely have I struggled with such a finicky material.

Years later, I discovered the technique is called "Underside Couching." My usual procedure is to feed a length of yarn between two warps leaving a long tail underneath and somewhat less than half that on top. I then weave three or



Above: Linda Rees, "Growing Capacity," 18" x 13", 1980:
Right: "SOS: Tracks of My Tears," 26" x 36", 1989, Photos:
Richard Nicol Photography



four passes before lifting the lower tail up between the warps, forming a loop. The top thread is slipped through the loop, which gets pulled to the backside again. It looks like sewing machine stitches when the tension is wrong. Keeping a consistent number of passes between connecting the thread makes a uniform line of stitches. This procedure can be done after the piece is off the loom by using a crochet hook instead of a finger to raise the loop to the surface. It seems to keep a better tension or uniformity when working horizontally to do it after the piece is off the loom. I occasionally revert to soumak for horizontals if compression makes the line look thinner, shifting from one to the other as needed. Reworking the line is quite easy in this couching because its path does not effect the basic weaving.

In the mid 1980s, an orange paper bag inspired me to simulate the shaggy bark of madrone trees. It was a fun exploration and I liked the effect, but my interest in paper's properties languished until recently. Having an exhibit with Carolyn Price Dyer, a master at paper weaving, inspired me to try again. Also, my favorite bakery started putting their breads in very classy red, black, and tan bags. Fortunately, the frequency of my purchases has provided me with the generous supply needed, because incorporating paper into a tapestry has been far more challenging than plastic.

Visually what I find exciting is that I can create finely layered weft areas by packing the paper down or produce sections of "free-form brocade" by randomly pulling the strips out over several warps before tucking them back into the shed, even

several passes later. Both options are quite dimensional. Packed down, the sharp folds of the paper look like a type of lava formation while the brocade works really well with a patterned paper. I hope to get back to this project, taking advantage of both characteristics once I can fine-tune the imagery.

To some extent the paper challenge goes back to my preference for relaxing into a rhythm of placing yarns of similar characteristics across the weaving. I have found myself concentrating too much on the requirements needed



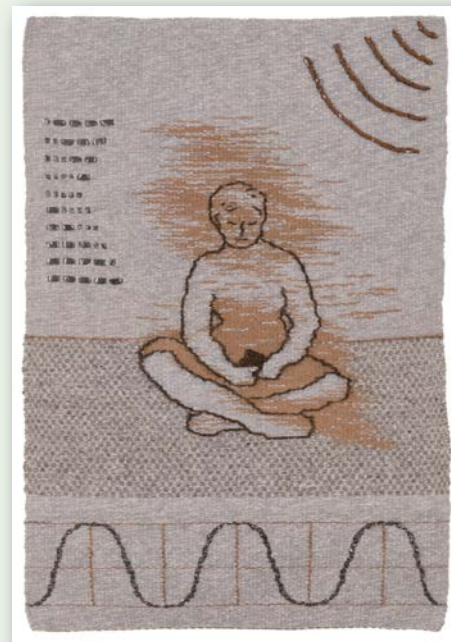
Above: Linda Rees, Bread Bag sample, 18" x 19", 2010;
Right: "Madrone," 23" x 19" (detail), circa 1985, Photos:
Artist

to get the paper areas under control, thus sacrificing the appealing flow that I require to integrate the whole image. Paper requires far more manipulation in placing it into a shed than plastic, and it deteriorates quickly with handling. Once woven, paper seems to remain stable, and the tapestry can be handled like any other weaving. One madrone tapestry sold. The other experiments are stored rolled up and even the remaining madrone piece looks about the same as when it was woven.

Because I start designs with selecting the yarns, I need a large supply, so I am always scouting for interesting colors or textures and materials. Adjusting to the various quirks of the weaving elements has kept me alert for surprises on the loom. My style is simple, but the visible evidence of how the surface is created is an honored part of my personal aesthetics.

Video of underside couching <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7NN8DoK5lk>

Linda Rees learned to weave in 1965 and has focused on tapestry since the late 1970s. Spending a few hours at the loom is a daily routine that has sustained her throughout her adult life. She has lived in many areas of the country and her scope now extends to Norway, where her daughter's family lives. Besides her artistic pursuits, Linda volunteers in community activities.



Above: Linda Rees "Transmitted," 25" x 17", 2010, Photo: Dennis Galloway

Small Tapestry International 3: Outside the Line

ATA is pleased to announce *Small Tapestry International 3: Outside the Line*, a juried, international exhibition of small-scale tapestries. Artists are encouraged to explore the conceptual, technical, and metaphorical implications of the theme, *Outside the Line*, as they develop work to submit. Innovation and experimentation within the technique of handwoven tapestry are welcomed.

Outside the Line asks you first to consider the concept of line. Is it a geometric concept of "breadthless length" or a mark made in art? Is it an indication of boundaries, border or limits, or is it a course of action or policy? Is line a series of generations descended from a common ancestor or the words an actor says in a play? How do you express being outside the line?

For more information on submission requirements please refer to the call for entry on the ATA website. Please note that the size restrictions for mounting have changed, so please read carefully. All works must be mounted.

The Entry form for STI 3 has been mailed to those members who do not have access to the internet. For those members who do have access to the internet, please use our new online entry form: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/small-tapestry-international-3-online-entry-form/> or download an entry form for mailing here: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/small-tapestry-international-3-outside-the-line/>

Exhibition Chair: Terry Olson
STI3Chair@gmail.com
<http://www.americantapestryalliance.org>



MARY LANE

Embellishments

My training as a tapestry weaver comes from traditional roots. I went through an apprenticeship that focused on classical French weaving techniques. Later, as a studio weaver for over five years, I produced larger sized, flat tapestries that prioritized the image. Both experiences refined a certain set of skills. I love the control that those techniques offer, and I love the economy of means that was developed by weavers over many generations as they refined the systems that do so much with so little.

The first tapestry that I wove outside the proverbial box was part of a group project that my regional group, Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound (TAPS), undertook. My tapestry was small, in the shape of a slip. I had started weaving small format tapestries while I was in graduate school because I could manage smaller pieces along with the work that being in school entailed. I have continued to weave shaped tapestries and most of them are based on garments, or fragments of cloth. This choice relates to my admiration for the rendering of drapery in Medieval tapestry. The increasing dimensionality in the treatment of clothing during that time reflects the shifts going on in image making as the spiritual focus of the Medieval period transitioned into the humanism of the Renaissance. The physical world of the body was no longer seen as antithetical to the spiritual world. Late Medieval tapestries are a delightful combination of both ways of looking at the world. The growing volume of the body beneath the clothing is combined with a flat and highly patterned picture plane where landscape is used primarily for its symbolic value, and in which architecture's principal role is as a device to frame scenes.

Using garment shapes in my work pays homage to the fabulous skills of weavers who came before us, but it also taps into a certain feeling of melancholy, or loss, for these are clothes without a body. They are the residue, or perhaps the proof, of a life and, they are always those of a female.



Top: Mary Lane, "Untitled #132," 12" x 12", 2010, Photo: Artist, Bottom: Mary Lane, "Untitled #133," 19" x 15", 2011, Photo: Artist

A few opportunities for experimentation present themselves as a consequence of working small and weaving shaped pieces. One of those is mounting. As soon as I begin to mount tapestries on a backing, the backing itself becomes part of the work and requires consideration. My first experimentation began with using a variety of materials for the covering on the frame, including printed fabrics.

Another opportunity to explore came about as a byproduct of shaping the tapestry. My tapestries do not employ scaffolded warps, so I always have cut warps with which to contend. In shaped work, the spaces are sometimes so small that cutting and sewing the warps to the back of the tapestry becomes difficult. Thus, I usually use colored warps. In "Untitled #127," I decided to create decorative patterns by sewing the visible warps into patterns. I have always enjoyed sewing and so, once I took the first step stitching over the mounted tapestry, all sorts of ideas popped into my head. I started using French knots and a large running stitch to extend, or respond to, the tapestry itself.



Above: Mary Lane, "Untitled #127" (detail), 18" x 11", 2006, Photo: Artist

Tapestry is both deliciously, and frustratingly, dense and opaque. I found the form and content of the layers that began to emerge as a result of my surface work very appealing. In my recent work I have incorporated vintage linens, voided lace, buttons, and beads. The possibilities are rich and numerous.

I do all of my surface work after the tapestry is mounted. The cloth covered frame acts as an embroidery hoop. I employ a small curved needle and a beading needle. Both can be used along the edges where the frame is directly under the mounting cloth and I cannot sew through to the back of the cloth.

As a tapestry weaver I am a planner, not in the "painted cartoon" meaning of the word, but I am not an improvisational weaver. However, I find that the surface work I do requires no planning. The "one step leads to another" approach works beautifully for me in this phase. After the tapestry is sewn onto the cloth covered frame, I add whatever additional fabrics or bits of fabric I am using, thinking about the placement of the fabric in terms of two dimensional design concepts. The stitching, knots, and beading are applied after the fabric embellishments, and I see those conceptually as an additional layer. The surface work grows organically, each layer responding to what has come before. This approach is a welcome contrast to the methodical, row-by-row reality of tapestry weaving. I believe the various technical methodologies employed in making an object impact the experience the viewer has in looking at the work. In other words, the processes employed in making an object are part and parcel of both the form and the content, and in turn, influence the experience of the viewer.

Where next?

Mary Lane is an artist and an art historian. Her tapestries reside in private and public collections and her writing on contemporary art has been published in journals, catalogs, and magazines around the world. She currently works for the Washington State Arts Commission and the American Tapestry Alliance.

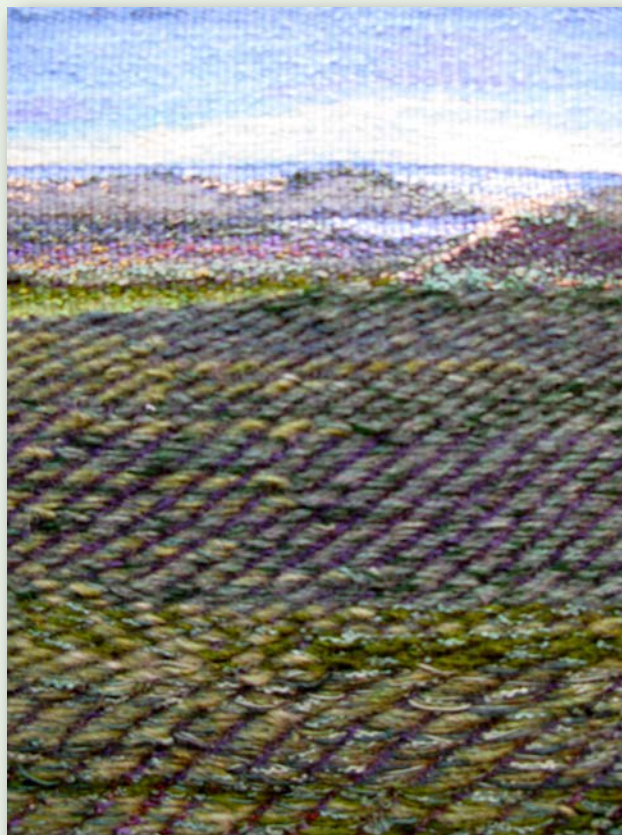
PAMELA TOPHAM

Surface: origins of texture in my tapestries

I have lived most of my life in an uncommonly beautiful place of wet lands, farmland, endless sea, and sky. I also travel to find other places of similar and contrasting aesthetic inspiration. My landscape tapestries and drawings are devoted to preserving and interpreting these visual impressions.

In most of my landscape tapestries, I use texture to define the relationships of landforms. I employ a wide variety of fibers, tapestry, and non-tapestry techniques to interpret textures and forms of the landscape, seascapes, and endless sky of Eastern Long Island, as well as landscapes encountered in my travels.

I wind a combination of fibers and textures of yarn together on a bobbin. Typically, yarns might include two hues of Victorian Tapestry Workshop fine wool, a plied silk, and a boucle. Sometimes I add an interesting yarn bought years ago from Robin and Russ. The yarns may be of analogous hues or with a little contrast.



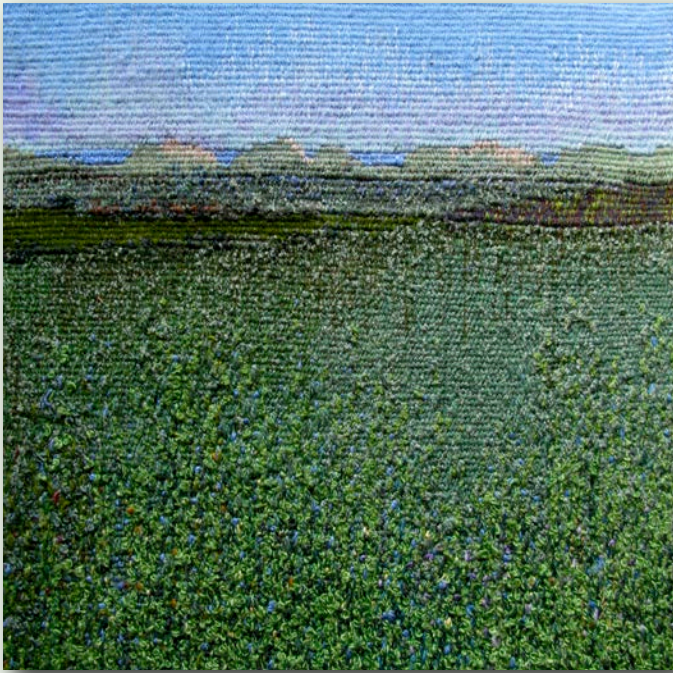
Above: Pamela Topham, "Sagaponack," 10" x 10", (detail), Photo: Reeds Photos



Above: Pamela Topham, "Watermusic," 35" x 35", (detail), Photo: Reeds Photos

In "Watermusic" I used the contrast of silk and wool in similar hues to define a horizon of water and sky with just a subtle textural difference.

In "Sagaponack" I used diminishing twill weave interspersed with tabby to portray the potato fields of Eastern Long Island, the farming community where I live. In the twill, coarse to finer textures of green tints and shades alternate with tabby in browns to purples to contrast and give depth to the greens.



Above: Pamela Topham, "Wildflower Field, Sagaponack," 10" x 10", (detail), Photo: Reeds Photos

In a less organized fashion, in "Wildflower Field, Sagaponack" I used random floats to give the texture of wildflowers and grasses and turned it 90 degrees after weaving. The textures diminish in scale to the horizon of dunes and ocean.

"Northwest Harbor" was woven in two layers on a frame loom made for me by furniture designer David Ebner. The back layer was warped on the walnut frame-loom and woven. The front layer was woven leaving open warp revealing the distant landscape of the background.

Integral to my work is the use of texture in the fiber choices as well as the weaving techniques to express my dedication to the land that surrounds me.



Pamela Topham's tapestries and drawings have been exhibited in galleries and museums across the U.S. and are included in many private and corporate collections. In 2011, she worked at the David and Julia White Artists' Colony in Costa Rica and at Milkwood Artists' Residence in Czech Republic. She has a BFA from the School of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University.



Above: Pamela Topham, "Northwest Harbor," 14" x 22" x 1", Photo: Reeds Photos

KATHE TODD-HOOKER

Surface and the 3rd Dimension

Surface is one element of several that controls my use of color when designing tapestries. In my work, surface is usually about flatness and fooling the eye into believing something has more depth or texture than I have actually woven. A little like reducing a textured Van Gogh to a print, the eyes see and understand the surface as textured, but it isn't really there - the surface is flat and relatively smooth.

Normally, I simulate texture by changing the texture in my weft bundle, mixing colors or the reflective quality of the threads. All my weft bundles are equal in size so that, as woven, the surface elements all remain equal. I am most comfortable when I can run my hand over the surface and feel the wool or sewing thread as a flat surface without raised areas. Occasionally, I do get the fleeting thought that it might be fun to add a blister to distort the warps. I am a great admirer of Silvia Heyden and the blisters sometimes used in Turkish weaving to create a raised medallion effect or the blisters used in several historic Navajo weavings.

Occasionally, I'll double the warps to create a slightly wider rib structure, changing the way the rib behaves in relationship to light and color. While many weavers iron the surface of their tapestries to flatten the rib structure and loft, I don't. I generally leave the rib structure alone because the light is caught and bounces or is absorbed by the fine hairs in the loft of the weft. I'm also fascinated with using brocading techniques such as soumak, Hopi embroidery, cicim, Bönnmönstre with eccentric wefts, or pulled slits, techniques that are mostly flat and don't add a lot of texture to the surface.

On my surfaces, I look for different ways for light to be reflected back to the viewer or held within the rib structure and the loft - shine or absorption. I might add silk or fuzzy mohair to contrast with the wool or sewing thread of my weft. A color can look lighter or darker by changing the type of fiber used.

Over the years, my use of soumak and twining has increased. Both leave a slight float, but are balanced to the point that the line is almost non-existent as added texture. Lately, especially on those pieces that have crochet lace in the design, I have been seduced into using a thicker twining thread. As a result, the vertical and horizontal soumak is heavier than the



Top: Kathe Todd-Hooker, "PAX Chene and Blankie," 5.25 " x 9.5 " , 2012. **Bottom:** Detail, Photos: Artist

weft bundles used to produce the ground fabric. This creates a slight ridge and shadow that adds some depth and appears to float on the surface of the tapestry. I have been slowly slipping towards the “dark side” of the third dimension (3D.) In my piece “Pax Chene,” I have jumped into the third dimension. “Pax Chene” has a frame made with rya knotted, thick silk ribbon.

I have a fascination for learning new techniques and have used samplers to explore techniques that create a more 3D surface. However, I do not necessarily use them in my personal designs. I prefer to focus on image, narrative, and disciplined technique to express my “stories” or narratives. I think heavy texture is sometimes just about the technique, not about the story. Some of this might be due to my training by instructors educated at the Gobelin and/or Aubusson. I attended several lectures by Marc Adams, who was a Lurçat protégé, that are still influencing the way I think and design tapestry. The quote that I heard constantly was “Tapestry is at its best when technique disappears.” Rightly or wrongly, it has strongly influenced me to think that the surface of a tapestry should be flat.

But... lately I am being pulled into using, or at least contemplating the use of, 3D techniques that create uneven, deeply textured surfaces. When Pat Spark and I wrote the second edition of Shaped Tapestry, we decided the third dimension was an important element in shaped and flat tapestry and added more 3D techniques. Another recent influence has been working with Shelley Socolofsky on a large format tapestry that includes rya, floats with tails, and materials I might not have considered several years ago.

So in the end, for me surface is beginning to break down to “Why Not” as opposed to “Not a consideration” for the third dimension and highly textured surfaces.



Above: Shelley Socolofsky, “Trade-Hybrid Bride,” work in process; Right: Kathe Todd-Hooker and Shelley Socolofsky, “Frontier Installation,” 2011, Photos: Todd-Hooker



Kathe Todd-Hooker is a tapestry weaver, instructor, dreamer, and writer. Her work consists of small format work (less than 15 inches square at 20-22 epi) and some large format tapestries. She co-owns Fine Fiber Press and Studio with Pat Spark. They publish and write books on tapestry, felting, and sell supplies for these media. She has been the administrator and owner of the online tapestry list since 1996.

Did You Know about Christine Laffer?

by Tricia Goldberg

I was given the honor and pleasure to learn new things about a colleague and friend as preparation for this story. I am happy to have known Christine since I began as a tapestry weaving student at the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop in 1981. At Christine's suggestion, a small group of us met informally in 1985 and later became Tapestry Weavers West, the first U.S. regional tapestry group. We have both kept tapestry as our primary means of creative expression, and I'm proud that I also teach tapestry along with such fine teachers as Christine. She is an artist, curator, scholar, speaker, writer, thinker, and tirelessly generous contributor to many art, textile, and women's organizations, especially ATA.

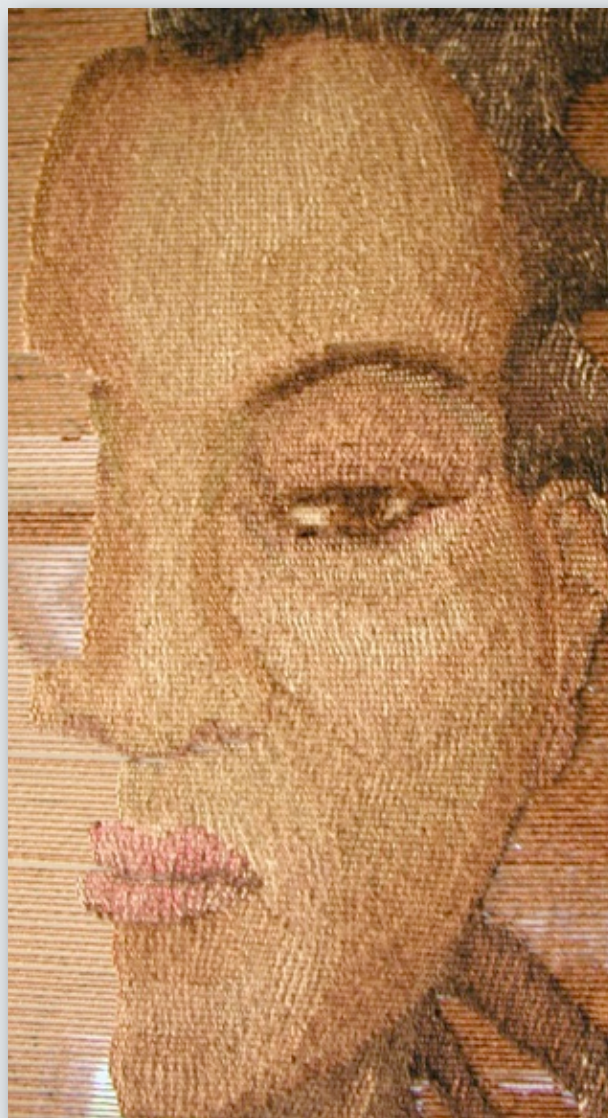
Christine deserves special recognition and appreciation for her vision and generous donation to fund a program within ATA's web exhibitions with a permanent home on the ATA website titled "Christine Laffer Curatorial Gallery." From 2002 to 2011, Christine ran ATA's website as she helped develop online forums, artist pages, and online exhibitions. Within the ATA Forum is the discussion group Political Lines in Tapestry, begun in 2009 and continuing in 2012. To read more about Christine and see additional pictures of her tapestries and art work, go to:

http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex_ata/christine-laffer-lines-of-inquiry

In "La Dona" (shown in progress) Christine exhibits her sureness, ease, and understanding of the tapestry medium. She uses gorgeous, subtle color gradations that look both classical and modern.

Christine is currently involved in setting up a session at the Textile Society of America's *Textiles & Politics* symposium in Washington D.C. in September. Speakers at *Political Strings: Tapestry Seen and Unseen* will include four artists: Linda Rees, Stanley Bulbach, Linda Wallace, and Clara Roman-Odio (Information at http://www.textilesociety.org/symposia_2012.html.) Christine has been interested in art and politics from early on and has always focused her attention on where tapestry fits into the puzzle.

In 1990 Christine organized the exhibition *Risk Factors* for Tapestry Weavers West members at the Littman Gallery, Portland (Oregon) State University. She and Archie Brennan were the jurors. When I recently read aloud to Christine from her curatorial and artist's statements, we were both amazed at the continuity of her ideas in her work from then until now. Our best art evolves from ideas, thoughts, and images we have cared deeply about for a long time. This is enhanced by the time and patience our medium demands.



Above: Christine Laffer, "La Dona" (detail, in progress), 32" x 22", 2012, Photo: Artist

Christine's tapestry "Governments Take Hostages" was planned for an exhibition for Amnesty International's new offices in San Jose in 1989. The show didn't happen, but she still wove the tapestry. It shows Christine's distinct "mark making" in the way she wove diagonals. The colors and lines are finely expressed. She says "Some of the hardest art to deal with is political art, and although it could be argued that all art is political in nature, I think that art which deals directly with political content is the most difficult. There are a few artists who have an incredible ability to work with socio-political content while maintaining an original voice and point of view. Honoré Daumier, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Francisco Goya, Diego Rivera, Rupert Garcia, and [tapestry artist] Muriel Nezhnie are some of the artists I think of who have succeeded in avoiding self-righteous melodrama and obvious propagandizing."

"To Speak with Threaded Tongue" is an excellent example of using finely woven tapestry in a sculptural way. Pushing the medium, combining different fibers, and provoking strong feelings in the viewer demonstrates artistic risk-taking.

To learn more about Christine:

Christine's blog. www.tapestryresource.com and <http://americantapestryalliance.org/?s=laffer>

Christine Laffer: Tapestry and Transformation, by [Carole Greene](#), Outskirts Press, 2007.



Above: Christine Laffer, "Governments Take Hostages," 38" x 38", 1990, Photo: Jacques Cressaty



Above: Christine Laffer, "To Speak With Threaded Tongue," 20" x 18" x 2", 1995, Photo: Jack Toolin



Tricia Goldberg has enjoyed weaving and teaching tapestry weaving for over twenty-five years. She weaves commissions and her work has been widely exhibited. Tricia's tapestries are in collections and publications including Fiberarts Design Book 3, 4, 7; and The Tapestry Handbook, by Carol Russell.

STAR (Scottish Tapestry Artists Regrouped) Exhibit

by Rudi Richardson

A tapestry exhibit that was recently shown in Edinburgh, Scotland illustrates the place Scotland holds in the world of modern tapestry. The *STAR (Scottish Tapestry Artists Regrouped) Exhibit*, held at the City Arts Centre in the heart of Edinburgh, was a retrospective of the group's work spanning more than twenty-five years. Viewers were able to track the course of many of the 16 participants' careers. The show, held on two floors and displaying both mural and small pieces, allowed space to step back and get a good perspective on the larger works, while at the same time approaching for a close viewing.

In a country with a population comparable to the San Francisco Bay Area, two exhibits (the other reviewed by Louise Martin in *Tapestry Topics*, Volume 38.1) drew crowds and allowed the public to see some wonderful examples of modern tapestry art. I viewed the STAR exhibit on several occasions—at the opening (which was very well attended), in the middle of the run, and at the conclusion.

The last time that I visited the exhibit, I went with Dakotah, one of my sons. Even though he has grown up with tapestry, he looked at the work with a fresh eye. He paid attention to the surface detail, the use of texture, and he commented upon the advantages of tapestry as compared to painting. Overall, he was very impressed. It was as if he was seeing tapestry for the first time. He was possibly even inspired to learn to weave.

The show was well laid out with the smaller pieces in a corridor and the mural pieces in the larger galleries. Thus, visitors are able to wander about and see work by the different artists juxtaposed opposite different contributors and to see the influence that members of the group have had upon each other's work.

Edinburgh, and Scotland in general, seems to be much more receptive to tapestry than most places. Currently, I am helping to weave a new version of *The Hunt of the Unicorn* series at Stirling Castle and am pleased to be able to recommend the show to visitors who ask about modern tapestry. With the Dovecot (also known as Edinburgh Tapestry Company) celebrating its centenary this year, visitors can expect to see more shows of contemporary tapestry in Scotland.

Rudi Richardson has been weaving with West Dean Tapestry Studio since 2007. He has worked on both the 'Unicorn is Killed and taken to the Castle' tapestry and the 'Unicorn at Bay'. He began weaving with the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop (SFTW) in 1978 as part of 'The Dinner Party' project by Judy Chicago, which now hangs in the Brooklyn Museum as part of their permanent collection.



Showing at *STAR Exhibit*: Sara Brennan, "Broken White Bands with Pale Blue II," 78 cm x 82 cm, 2011, Photo: Shannon Tofts

Satisfactions: NARRATIVES

Susan Martin Maffei's handmade book

by Gaye Hansen



An anticipated delivery arrived: a box, with a handmade book inside whose contents are tapestry work. As a curious Master Weaver and bookbinder, I found it all very intriguing. More significantly, it surpassed my expectations. The title page announced the core facts of the book: the author Susan Martin Maffei, the title NARRATIVES, the fact that it is a limited edition and that these handmade books have been constructed by Maffei herself. The precise execution and mastery of technique in the making of these books is no small accomplishment. The book in hand is exquisite, beautifully designed and in perfect harmony with its content. Acknowledgment has been given to designer Milena Leznicki who collaborated with Maffei on the project.

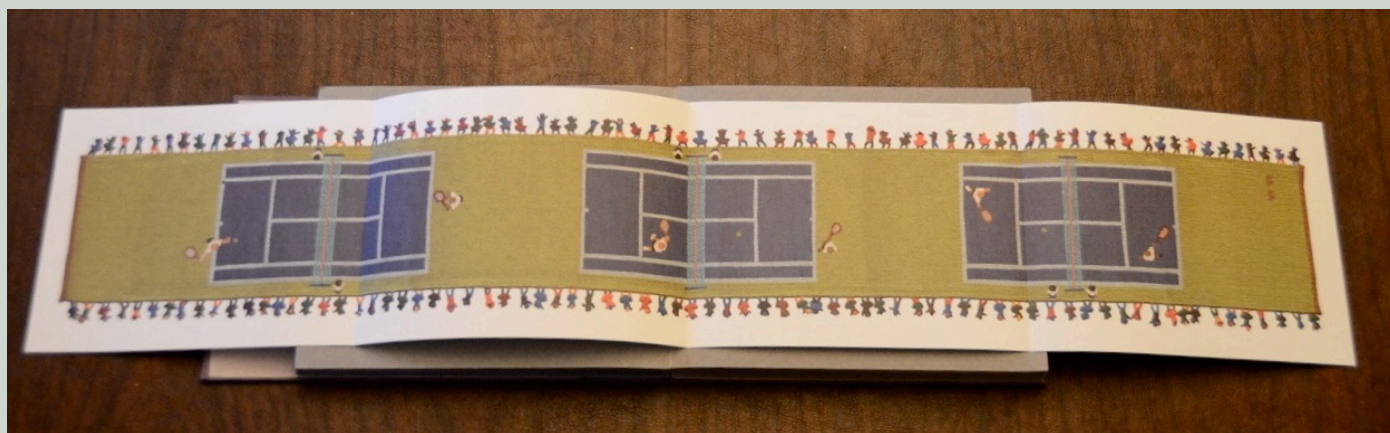
There are just two pages of text reading and here Maffei appropriately moves through a brief introduction of early forms of visual narratives and early book forms. In her words, "How appropriate within these many connected factions of narrative language that these particular textiles can now exist in both hand woven tapestry scroll and accordion book form in this hand made volume and in some same way reflect not only the artist's image of her surrounding world, but also echo a small piece of the relevant march of textile history."

With a turn of the page, the section LANDSCAPES begins, and with one more turn of a page, the first piece, "Morning River," can be viewed by unfolding the pasted-in image of the tapestry. Four other works are featured in this section: "Baynes Sound;" "Tolovana Beach;" "Meadowlands & Skyway;" and "Could These be Purple Martins?" They range in size from 3.5"h x 55"w to 8.5"h x 67"w. It becomes evident immediately that Maffei's work is technically flawless and that she has given great attention to detail and finishing. While some pieces elicit intrigue, others evoke lightness and whimsy. For example, the piece "Could These be Purple Martins?" showing thirteen martins and portions of a fourteenth about to land, all in a row, each a different pose, calls for careful scrutiny to appreciate their uniqueness and precision of technique.



Above: "Could These by Purple Martins?" from Susan Martin Maffei's book NARRATIVES. Photo: Markus T. Hansen

The second collection of images relates to SPORTS: a chess game, a marathon, horse racing, tennis, etc. The perspective Maffei has taken triggers a smile from the observer as he/she realizes the works are done from a bird's eye point of view, far above the offered view from highest of grandstands. But one's attention is also drawn to the finishing details— dozens of spectators, all individually worked, apparently in crochet, all independent from each other, stand along the sidelines watching the games unfold. In the mind's eye, it is not difficult to visualize the synchronized heads turning to watch the tennis ball travel from one side of the court to the other. The pieces disclose Maffei's personality; her sense of whimsy captures the viewer's imagination and sets her audience in the surroundings she has so sensitively created.



Above: "SPORTS SERIES- Tennis" from Susan Martin Maffei's book *NARRATIVES*. Photo: Markus T. Hansen

In the last section, TRAVEL, Maffei has included two series of train travels, each series consisting of five panels. Along the top horizontal plane, a train is traveling across a long expanse of tracks. Below the tracks are numerous wee woven vignettes that reflect the artist's observations along the journey. They are captivating and full of imagery. These simplistic small-scale images leave permanent images in the mind of the viewer.

This limited edition volume (number 69/170 in hand) is beautifully executed. Words cannot portray the visual and tactile experience that awakens the reader's senses; the book must be seen and felt. The front cover is simply but artfully impressed and clothed in a subtle, warm, hazy, purple fabric. It that calls the fingers to explore the monogrammed front cover impression and inviting textile..

On opening the landscape format book, one discovers the book is constructed in the accordion-style technique; only the back end paper adheres to the cover. With the book being 7.5" x 6" x 1.5" in dimension and the text pages not attached to the spine, the book requires respectful handling. Maffei has chosen four papers to work with. Papers A and B are French Canson papers of different colors but very close in value. These papers are warm and fabric-like, adding another level of tactile experience. Paper C is thin, Asian paper, which indicates a new section of the book is being introduced. Paper D, the strongest of the papers, is folded to fit within the text pages and bear the images of the tapestries.

Maffei has been studying and executing tapestries since 1985, including her time spent at the Art Students League in New York City, *les Gobelins* in Paris, and the Scheuer Tapestry Studio in New York City. She has taught and exhibited within the USA and abroad, and has work in both public and private venues. The personal level of her work draws the viewer in and reveals Maffei's individual interests and artistry. She described herself as *obsessive* in an interview but perhaps an equally powerful word *passionate* might be applied as well. After immersing oneself in the book, one desires to view the art works themselves in person to further appreciate the workmanship, content, tactile qualities, meticulous detailing, and magnitude of the pieces as well as to glimpse more of the personality and artistry of weaver Susan Martin Maffei.

In conclusion I must note that Susan Martin Maffei has combined tapestry and bookbinding, two diverse fields of art rarely seen together, quite harmoniously and successfully.

Further information about the book and how to order a copy can be found at www.susanmartinmaffei.com

Gaye Hansen holds her B.H. Ec. from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC; received her Master Weaver certificate from the Guild of Canadian Weavers 1991; and chaired HGA Convergence 2002.

ATA News

Nominations for the ATA Board of Directors

On behalf of the nominating committee and ATA's board, I would like to thank everyone who showed interest and applied for positions on the board for the upcoming two-year term.

This year members were invited to apply for the board positions. In addition, members could submit the names of potential nominees to the Nominations Committee. Two positions were available on the board: Exhibitions Chair and Awards Chair. Every board member is responsible for a specific area of programming, as well as regular board duties. After reviewing the qualifications of each applicant in relation to the duties of the positions, the slate of nominees was submitted to the board for approval.

I am pleased to announce the nominees: Margo Macdonald, Exhibitions Chair and Tal Landeau, Awards Chair. The membership will vote on these candidates. If you do not have email, you will receive a ballot in the mail. If you do have e-mail, you will receive an e-mail with a link to a form that can be filled out online. Members may also vote at the AGM in Long Beach, CA in July.

Margo Macdonald has been weaving tapestries for 30 years. She has exhibited tapestries and paintings in the Northwest and is represented in public and private collections throughout the United States. Her work reflects her immediate environment with an emphasis on realism. She, along with Mary Lane and Cecilia Blomberg, founded Pacific Rim Tapestries, a collaborative tapestry studio specializing in large-scale work for public, corporate, and residential spaces. She is a member of Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound, American Tapestry Alliance, and Northwest Designer Craftsmen. Margo was the Chair for ATA's Small Tapestry International 2: Passages, which travelled around the United States last year.

Tal Landeau lives in Virginia and has been a member of ATA since 2004. She enjoyed getting to know more about the organization through the Finance Think Tank in 2010. Tal's experiences in communications, event organization, research, writing, and editing will definitely aid her in this position on ATA's board. She says: "Involvement in the process of overseeing the different awards that ATA gives to promote interest and excitement in tapestry would be fascinating and educational for me. I am eager to learn and help out." Tal has been involved in her spinners and weavers guild as an officer, secretary, and membership coordinator.

Elaine Duncan,
Nominations Chair

Convergence 2012 Events Long Beach, California

Pacific Portals: Unjuried Small Format Show

July 7 – August 30, 2012; Long Beach Library, Main Branch

"Recent Works: Tapestries and Watercolors"

"Meeting Cultures: Collaborations of Yael Lurie with Luis Lazo"

July 19th, 3-7 pm: Opening reception. Larochette Textile Conservation Studio, 5239 Sepulveda Blvd., Suite #3, Culver City, CA 90230. Exhibition dates: July 19th – 26th.

ATA's Booth, Vendors' Hall, Convention Center

July 18th – 21st. ATA will have a booth in the Vendors' Hall this year! Please stop by and say hello. If you would like to leave information about your work or your classes on our table, please prepare it in the form of a postcard, or a sheet of paper no larger than 8.5" x 3.67". Table space will be tight. For more information, e-mail [Becky Stevens](mailto:Becky.Stevens).

Pacific Breezes

July 20th, 4:30 - 6:30 pm. Interested in meeting with tapestry weavers? 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! 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 Film screening

July 20th, 6:30 pm. Silvia will attend and speak at the screening. This is one of HGA's "Special Events," listed as "Dinner & Movie at the Westin Hotel." The event is open to non-HGA members, but Special Event registration is required. 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 Registration is located at the top of Page 14 under Section E: Meals.

Pacific Forum**ATA's 2012 Membership Meeting & Educational Forum**

July 21st, 10:30 am – 1:30 pm; Convention Center, Long Beach, CA. Room to be announced. Open to the public. Join us for ATA's Biennial Membership Meeting and Educational Forum. Find out what's new in ATA. Be inspired by Archie Brennan and Jean Pierre Larochette as they share insights into their tapestries and their careers.

A **Digi Slam** of contemporary tapestry will follow Brennan's and Larochette's talks. To participate in the Digi Slam, please submit the following by June 1, 2012:

- 1) Up to five digital images of your tapestries. Label each digital image file with your last name followed by the name of the tapestry, e.g., Smith Morning Mist.jpg. Digital image specifications: jpegs saved at 300 dpi and exactly 1000 pixels on the longest side. Save the image with high, or maximum image quality.
- 2) A Word document (or pdf), whose file name is your last name, e.g., Smith.doc, and containing the following information:
 - Your name, address, phone number, and email
 - An annotated list for the submitted images listing the title of the work, the dimensions, date, and materials.
 - A one-paragraph bio.
 - Up to two paragraphs about your work.

[Use our new online submission form](#), or, burn the following onto a universal CD and mail to: Michael Rohde, 986 West Carlisle Road, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

The slide show is not juried, but is limited: first come, first served. The only commentary will come from the text you provide with your images.

Currents, Waves and Rising Tides**ATA's 2012 Educational Retreat**

July 21st - Tuesday, July 24, 2012. Chapman University, Orange CA, <http://www.americantapestryalliance.org>

Teitelbaum Awards

ATA is pleased to announce the Teitelbaum Awards, monetary awards that will be presented to artists exhibiting in ATA's two juried exhibitions, American Tapestry Biennial and Small Tapestry International. The awards are made possible by the generous gift that ATA received in 2008 from the Teitelbaum Trust. The recipients of the awards for *Small Tapestry International 3* (STI 3) will be chosen by the juror for the show, Hesse McGraw.

Tapestry Topics Information

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](mailto:annejackson.smirnoff@btinternet.com), annejackson.smirnoff@btinternet.com

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation

Deadline: October 1, 2012

The tagline for ATA was the top choice by the membership of several suggestions. How does the phrase pinpoint what we are about? Are you excited by the roots of historical tapestry, or are you seeking the new, the untried in your tapestry pursuit? Send in your thoughts and photos please!

Contact Theme Editor, [Lynn Mayne](mailto:lynnmayne@comcast.net), lynnmayne@comcast.net

Social Fabrics

Deadline: January 15, 2012

This issue will explore tapestries and related creative work that incorporates or encourages community involvement, for example, community tapestries, interactive installation work, work intended to motivate social, or political action. Articles might also explore ways in which tapestry artists could move their work out of the traditional gallery/museum setting into alternative modes of interaction with the public.

Contact Theme Editor, [Dorothy Clews](mailto:warp122000@yahoo.co.uk), warp122000@yahoo.co.uk

Do you have an idea for a theme? Would you like to be a Theme Editor? Contact: info@americantapestryalliance.org Lost a link to a Tapestry Topics? We would be happy to send it to you.