



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

# TAPESTRYTOPICS

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

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Summer 2013 Vol. 39 No. 2

**SOCIAL FABRICS**



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## Theme Coordinator's Introduction

by Dorothy Clews

In this second edition of *Social Fabrics*, tapestry continues to be found in many places, and takes various forms, both expected and unexpected. A tapestry is not merely a textile. It is a celebration, a joining of many hands and minds, a social document, a record of its own life as well as that of its owners. Fabrics are often thought of as a cover, a concealment. But, in this issue, tapestry is seen as a revelation; whether of history, personal events, dynastic wealth, the life of a community, or the public face of a city.

The Filoli tapestry's history is traced by Lynn Norris; the journey of a tapestry from the home of one of the finest collections, Knole House in the United Kingdom, to its present home in Filoli, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century country estate, thirty miles south of San Francisco, which is open to the public. <http://filoli.org> The Filoli tapestry, in the style of a woven table carpet, is a social document of the garden, a woven record of plants that would have been included in a garden fit for a prince. Its history uncovers the economic and social shifts of its various owners. An unidentified coat of arms in the weaving reveals the original owners' aspirations as well as the changing status of tapestry.

Community tapestries take many different paths, and forms. Line Dufours' Community Thread Project discovered a new life for the local weaving guilds, artistic talent, not just weaving skills, and drew in other groups such as the local historical society, local media. And, the people who donated time and talent to develop and present audiovisual media. Dufour's project emphasizes that tapestry is not just about weaving.

Canberra, Australia, has just celebrated its Centennial and one important part of the celebration is the creation of the Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry. Annie Trevillian describes her research while planning the design of the tapestry. She also explains how the design became a map that traced the path from early settlement to the present time.

Both Linda Rees and Anton Veenstra follow the thread of social politics in tapestry. Complex fabrics that reveal awkward questions that are so often covered up, and rarely discussed. Rees explores her interaction with the public, guiding them toward literally answering these difficult questions. Whereas Veenstra sheds light on these unacknowledged questions, his blog explores these ideas further, reaching out to a larger audience. <http://antonveenstratextiles.com>

Mary Zicafoose has temporarily moved out of her studio in order to extend her tapestry practice to the arena of Public Art. She has created three public art projects which include urban and rural locales, manmade and natural environments, and, most importantly, interactions with local people. Through these projects, she links the various parts of her practice: tapestry, textiles, carpets, the love of pattern and natural dyeing.



**Dorothy Clews** emigrated from the UK, and has lived in outback Queensland, for the last 34 years, where the fragile landscape and ecology has inspired most of her artwork. Her most recent community art appointment is co-director for CellArtSpace, Cairns, a local artist initiative that has been running for ten years.

**Cover image:** Thoma Ewen, "Vision Circle Tapestry," detail, 2012, cotton warp, wool weft with multi-coloured satin ribbons. Photo credit: Moonrain Centre.

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## Important Dates

June 13, 2013. [STI 3: Outside the Line](#) opens at the Handforth Gallery, Tacoma, WA

June 29, 2013. 2:00-4:00pm. [STI 3: Outside the Line](#). Opening reception. Handforth Gallery, Tacoma, WA

June 29, 2013. 2:30pm. *Reformatting Identity: Shape Shifting & Tapestry in the 21st Century*. Shelley Socolofsky lecture. Handforth Gallery, Tacoma, WA

June 30 – July 2, 2013. [Traces, Layers, Narratives & Surfaces](#), ATA's 2013 workshop with Shelley Socolofsky. Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA.

July 15, 2013. Submissions due for Tapestry Topics, *Working in a Series*. Theme Coordinator: [Debbie Herd](#).

August 3, 2013. [STI 3: Outside the Line](#) closes at the Handforth Gallery.

September 27, 2013. [STI 3: Outside the Line](#) opens at the [Troy Hayner Cultural Center](#). Opening reception from 2:00- 4:00 pm.

October 1, 2014 Submissions due for Tapestry Topics, *Type in Tapestry*. Theme Coordinator: [Lindsey Marshall](#).

October 31, 2013 Entries due for [ATB 10](#).

January 15, 2014. Submissions due for Tapestry Topics, *All Things Green*. Theme Coordinator: [Louise Halsey](#).

May 2, 2014 [ATB 10](#) opens at the [Visions Art Museum](#), San Diego, CA.

July 20, 2014 [ATB 10](#) closes at the [Visions Art Museum](#), San Diego, CA

September 25, 2014 [ATB 10](#) opens at [Kent State University Museum](#).

January 4, 2015 [ATB 10](#) closes at [Kent State University Museum](#).

## Co-Directors' Letter

We hope you all are enjoying the change of pace that accompanies summer--family get-togethers, summer food, travel, gardening, and a respite from the routines of winter. There is something about summer weaving and summer reading that seem to go hand in hand, both activities can literally transport us someplace else. What's on your loom and what's on your Kindle this month?

Welcome to the Summer 2013 issue of Tapestry Topics, another ATA volunteer, member-driven effort. This edition expands on the compelling Social Fabric theme started in the Spring Issue. We thank you all for making the time to step away from the loom and the busyness of your lives to collect your thoughts and share your experiences in print.

Kudos to the membership for your thoughtfulness and generosity in responding to the call for financial support in our annual Valentines Day Appeal. Over 150 members contributed this year. We have raised almost \$6000.00 and are grateful to all of you for helping out. These dollars are vital in allowing ATA to strive to be even more relevant in meeting our member's needs.

This past quarter saw the birth of the new ATA-Talk. The email list is a member driven initiative that grew out of an ATA Online Study Group's desire to provide an email forum for greater connection between members and the sharing of ideas. We would like to emphasize that ATA-Talk is not board driven and the opinions shared do not reflect ATA policy. The list provides a free forum for member-to-member dialogue within the field of tapestry and the greater textile/fine art world. If you enjoy this, keep contributing. If it's not for you, unsubscribe.

Spring also means that it is exhibition opening time again. Small Tapestry International 3 (STI 3) will open June 13 at the Handforth Public Library in Tacoma, WA, running until August 3, with an opening reception June 29, 2-4 pm. There were thirty-eight entries accepted and are beautifully presented in this year's outstanding exhibition catalog. Catalogs will be available on the ATA website soon.

We hope you enjoy the 2013 Summer Issue of Tapestry Topics. Have you visited the TEx@ATA exhibition, Slow Cloth, curated by Anne Jackson on the ATA website? [http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex\\_ata/](http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex_ata/). A new TEx@ATA show will open soon, as Micala Sidore curates a show on Julia Mitchell's prolific work. Soak in the inspiration of the words, images and incredible creative process of contemporary weavers around the globe, and then spread the word, sharing tapestry with everyone in your corner of the world.

Mary & Michael



## The *Vision Weave Project*: A Community Weaving Project

by Thoma Ewen

The *Vision Weave Project* evolved in response to questions I was asking about the world we live in. The media constantly depicts terrorism, disaster, and violence of all kinds. I was asking myself – is this what people want for our world? It seemed inconceivable and impossible that this is actually what anyone could possibly want, so then I asked myself, well, what exactly do people want?

This is a simple straightforward question, perhaps childlike in its simplicity. I realize that answers are terrifyingly intertwined within global multinational economic and political realities, but I had to ask. I had to document some answers, some firsthand proof of what people really do want for the Earth, which is our home, and what people want for our communities and for all humans living on the Earth.

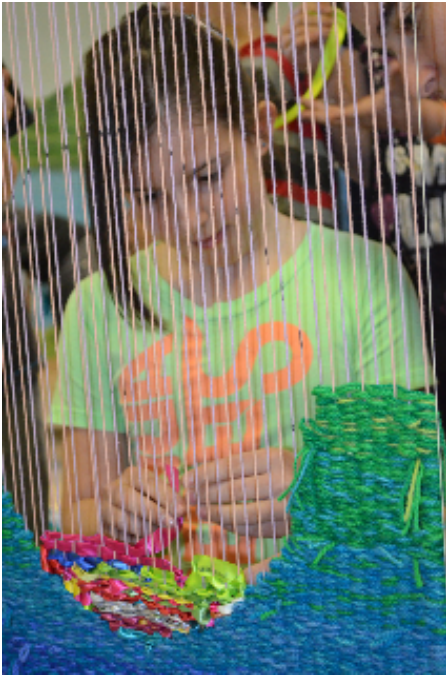
I was also cross-examining myself as an artist, asking about the place of Art and Craft and the handmade in today's global economy. And asking, can today's artist-craftsperson play a determining role for positive change in our communities and in the world?

I have seen many changes over the 38 years that I have been a practicing professional artist-weaver. I began to weave tapestries in the early 70s in Toronto during a time of economic growth and cultural expansion, when the arts and crafts were “in” and tapestry was affordable art. There have been times since those early years when continuing to weave tapestry seemed definitely out of sync. However, each of those times, my questions have been resolved through a deeper connection to my work, inspired by what I call, “indigenous weaving wisdom”. The Navajos believe that weaving transmits the energy of Peace. To me, the very structure of weave is a symbol for interconnections. It is a tangible metaphor for community and for all the natural inter-relationships of our ecosystem. For me, weaving is a necessary tool for understanding reality.



“Vision Weave” installed in an Ottawa recreation centre.  
2010. Each panel 28” x 5”. Cotton warp, 100% wool weft with multicoloured satin ribbons.  
Photo credit: City of Ottawa.

The world seems to have let go of the handmade and the heartfelt, replacing respected and cherished craft techniques and traditions with corporate ideals and technology. Continuing to weave is a silent protest, my personal activist art form. But for me to sit and weave silently in my studio wasn't enough. I needed to do more. And I needed to create a method, an open working forum to ask and then to document what people want for our Earth.



Student weaves in her vision ribbon.  
Photo credit: Moonrain Centre.

So I created the *Vision Weave Project* (VWP) as an interactive community-weaving project, a co-creative vehicle for individuals to express what they personally want for the Earth and for their communities and for our global collective future.

In the *Vision Weave Project*, while weaving a community textile artwork, participants write a message, a wish, or a personal vision for the future onto a strip of ribbon. Then they weave their ribbon-message into the collective community weaving. Participants also record their messages into a text document, which the community keeps and uses to inspire future planning. The completed textile artwork is then permanently installed as public art in the community. It is public art made for and by the public. Community members of all ages and cultural backgrounds participate in the making of their own permanently installed public art.

What has amazed me is the profound sense of pride the community realizes while creating collectively. This is enhanced by the knowledge that their own public art is embedded with their written messages, hopes and visions for their collective future. This makes the public art project a very profound community builder, creating solidarity, fusing bonds, and strengthening relationships.

I have witnessed this solidarity emerge through the project. I have watched community building in action. When we as community members realize that we all have similar thoughts, hopes, goals, visions and wishes for our families, for our communities, and for the Earth, it is very strengthening, reassuring, and calming. To me it gives hope that positive change for the good of all will take place.

Knowing that we all have the same collective goals and aspirations gives me a huge sense of relief. Something is RIGHT! It says to me that we can take strength and encouragement from this knowledge, and we can begin to dialogue, to share ideas, express ourselves openly, to take positive steps to improve our world.

When I first began to develop the *Vision Weave Project*, I was concerned that people would not want to participate or reveal their inner thoughts, hopes and visions. I couldn't have been more wrong. To my amazement, people everywhere want to participate in the weaving, and they want to openly express their hopes, wishes, and visions for the future of the Earth and for people everywhere. People want to co-create art and community.

What is important to me is the understanding that we all want basically the same things - peace in the world, happiness and health in our families, clean air to breathe, and clean water to drink, all in a green, healthy, and living Earth. I had to have this documented proof, and the *Vision Weave Project* has given me that



Student weaves the Vision Circle tapestry  
Photo credit: Moonrain Centre.

proof and a great deal more. The VWP openly expresses a shared collective vision for the future.

I first did the VWP in Lyon, France in 2008 at the Lyon Library as a community tapestry project. I was amazed that people of all ages and cultures wanted to participate and were willing and happy to both write a message and to weave on the tapestry.

I continue to be amazed and moved by the individuals and the communities with whom I work. I have since completed the project in schools in which the whole school participates, including teachers, students, and principals. Parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles participate in the project, the enthusiasm is so infectious. The collective pride and ownership created by the project generates community bonds and strengthens the values that schools, families, and the community are teaching the next generation.

In 2010 I directed the VWP as a public art project for the City of Ottawa, through its "1% for public art" policy. Moon Rain Centre was commissioned to create woven Vision Weave banners for the new Albion-Heatherington Recreation Centre. This was the very first time that the City of Ottawa had commissioned an interactive community arts project through the "1% for public art" programme.

The resulting artwork for the Albion-Heatherington Recreation Centre has become a lasting community icon. It is truly strengthening and supportive of that community's unique, radiant spirit. The community's own text messages are permanently displayed on an etched aluminum display panel, where they can be easily seen, allowing residents to re-connect with their own ideas and ideals, and re-charge their inspirations.

The *Vision Weave Project* is now broadened by its own interactive blog, set up and managed by Richmond Hill artist and Moon Rain Centre member, Ken Ewen (<http://visionweaveproject.blogspot.com/>). Interested people everywhere are invited and encouraged to participate in the *Vision Weave Project* by expressing their own vision, wish or message for the Earth and for their community on the blog. Check it out and participate.

For me, it is profoundly moving to know that people everywhere care deeply and that we all want basically the same things. That people in Europe and Canada share the same visions and wishes for their families and for the Earth. We all want Peace, we all want the Earth to be cared for and our precious natural environment protected. I am grateful to read the messages that people have written.

It has been a privilege to conceive and direct the *Vision Weave Project*, and to share creatively with individuals and communities. The Project shows that the arts can and do play a positive role in community building. Craft is a creative process, and the world definitely needs more creation and creative actions to help re-set the balance between creative and destructive processes continually taking place. The *Vision Weave Project* celebrates community, the beauty of the Earth, and the human spirit.



**Thoma Ewen** is a Canadian tapestry artist living and working in the Gatineau Hills north of Ottawa, Canada. She is Artistic Director of Moon Rain Centre, a not-for-profit cultural organization dedicated to interweaving textile arts and community. Thoma has been designing and weaving tapestries for almost forty years and has exhibited, taught, directed community tapestry projects, and been a presenter at conferences, nationally and internationally. Moon Rain Centre has developed an international reputation for its profoundly moving and highly engaging community projects, like the Vision Weave Project, that literally weave the community together. Moon Rain Centre is presently organizing *La Triennale Internationale des Arts Textiles en Outaouais 2013*, which takes place from August 16 to October 6, 2013, and includes outdoor textile arts installations, exhibitions, and workshops. [www.moonrain.ca](http://www.moonrain.ca), [info@moonrain.ca](mailto:info@moonrain.ca)

## Social Fabrics

by Mary Zicafoose

I have been involved in three public art projects in my career as a tapestry weaver. My participation in each of the projects was prefaced with a juror's comment that read something like, "Because you are a tapestry weaver we know you will approach the parameters of this project quite differently than other artists." How does one embrace a call to create public art in a "weaverly" way? This article is my attempt to highlight my response to three public art projects in the midwestern part of the United States that summoned greater crowds and more public interest and exposure to my work as a tapestry weaver than any gallery show I had participated in prior to that time.



"J. Doe & the Magic Carpet,"  
8' x 6', painted fiberglass with pine stand, 2001  
Collection of Paul & Annette Smith, Lake Okoboji, IA.  
Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose.

### The J. Doe Project, Omaha, NE, 2001

This public art project, similar to other fiberglass sculpture projects in American cities, was an effort to raise public awareness of the arts by placing sculptural human-like forms on the streets of Omaha, NE. The "Does" took the town by storm, surpassing anyone's wildest expectation. A local art critic wrote: "Like many Omahans and visitors, I've been chasing Does all over town and enjoying the conversations they invite."

My response to the incredible hulk of fiberglass that took over our family room from February-May 2001, was to transform it into an agent for carrying coded designs derivative of textile patterns, bolting the figure astride a magic "woven" carpet shaped from heavy gauge aluminum sheeting. I spent several weeks sanding the rough form. Then I drew on it, much like the renderings for a tapestry cartoon. In this case my medium wasn't dyed wool, it was acrylic paint (over 50 large tubes) and rolls of masking tape. The fiberglass drank the paint and I "wove and unwove" the patterns many times, changing this, adding that...a slow process, even for one wedded to slow process. I drilled 1/4" spaced holes at either end of the painted aluminum flying carpet and half-hitched lengths of color coated telephone wire through the holes to replicate carpet fringe. Carpet and Doe were then bolted together on a custom mount.

The artist statement that accompanied "J. Doe & the Magic Carpet" read:

"Textiles are a beautiful reflection of the daily breath of a civilization. Man and his relationship to cloth go back a very long way. "J. Doe & the Magic Carpet" is a culturally blended, universal soul. The Doe and the flying carpet mirror each other, a reflection of centuries of symbols and patterns found in woven handwork from around the globe."

My Doe was installed in the outside entrance of a popular neighborhood public library. It, along with a selection of the sculptures, went up for public auction at a gala event at the project's end. It was purchased by a local art collector and resides as a navigational landmark overlooking the water at his family's summer home on Lake Okoboji, IA.

### The O! Public Art Project, Omaha, NE, 2007

The **O! Public Art Project** involved another fiberglass sculpture, the mandate being to re-interpret the logo of the city of Omaha, **O!**, a three-dimensional, six-foot letter O with an accompanying exclamation point.



"wO!ven," artist at work  
Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose

I knew that this encounter with fiberglass was not going to take place in my family room. What would a unique weaverly response to the logo of the city of Omaha look like? As often happens, the name of the piece came first, leading the charge towards the concept. The name was "wO!ven". And for this project, I needed to literally weave. But what? And how? The light went on. I would weld a warp-like encasement of steel rebar around the "O" and the "!" shapes and then weave in assorted large-scale materials, revealing sculptural forms within the armature.

I had a plan. Now I needed the right man. A friend who owns a construction and crane company came to my aid. Liking my idea, he agreed to partner with me on the technical aspects of turning concept into public art.

We set up my studio in his company's construction yard.

The blank **O!** was hauled in and flanked by scaffolding and ladders. The form was spray painted a deep yellow, a signature color I often use in my tapestries. Measurements were taken and the warping process began. This entailed heating and bending long lengths of steel rebar to exactly mirror the shapes, and welding the warps together. This took two men, a master welder and several weeks. Meanwhile I scavenged and purchased materials for the weft: thick lengths of colorful industrial ropes, strips of industrial materials from salvage yards, two cast off heavy steel abutments from a nuclear power plant for the base, and willow saplings from the Missouri River.

Once the rebar warp was completed, I was on my own. But the project was too compelling to keep under my hat. An artist friend from Iowa heard about it and came to weave as my assistant. Then other friends, construction workers, interested citizens, and folks I had never met joined in. A group of regulars began stopping by the site each day to weave a bit, offer advice, and enjoy being involved in a public art project.

"wO!ven" was to be installed in a city park off the busiest street in Omaha, NE. The installation day was set for the first Saturday in May, requiring a variety of city permits. Power lines had to be taken down, the street closed, and the police force contracted to assist in transporting the massive structure on a flatbed truck to its new home. It took a crane and a crew of seven men to hoist and plant "wO!ven" on the lawn of Memorial Park.

I lost count of how many people were involved in the making of "my" project, certainly hundreds. The welder and rebar crew signed their names on the warp, the moving crew drew their initials in the wet concrete on the base, the



"wO!ven", installation day  
Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose

guys at the rope shop and salvage yards came to watch the installation, and the park crew got in on the champagne. It had become everyone's project. Technical terms like "warp" and "weft" were being tossed around like folks were members of the local weavers guild.

Word of "wO!ven" spread as one involved person told another. TV stations picked up the story and, amazingly, the Omaha community was talking about weaving in the same sentence as sculpture and public art.



"wO!ven," 12' x12,' painted fiberglass, steel rebar, acrylic and hemp roping, scrap metals, willow saplings, on a steel base, weight: 10,000 lbs, 2007, Memorial Park, Omaha, NE. Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose

### **"Elements," Environmental Sculpture Invitational, Fontenelle Forest, Bellevue, NE, 2007**

In 2007 I was invited to respond sculpturally to the theme **Elements** within a city forest preserve. The guidelines encouraged exploration of environmental art issues through the creation of site-specific, temporary installations. Once again, I needed a "weaverly" idea.

On a late spring walk through the forest with the Park Director, an idea broke through as he was taking note of tree fatalities, listing who had made it through the harsh winter and who had not. We discovered several favorite trees standing stark and leafless at prime locations off the trail and eulogized their long lives.

I heard myself saying, "Imagine if we could give them just one more incarnation?" And voila, the plan unfolded. It involved bed sheets, natural dyes and dead trees. Specifically, wrapping selected stands of dead timber throughout the forest in brilliant cloth. The idea was to completely wrap each tree with strips of naturally dyed cotton, from the base to the top most branches. As one walked through the forest they would suddenly come upon stands of trees, magnificently robed in colored cloth.

The concept was environmentally harmless and visually very compelling. The forest staff loved it so much they offered to send volunteers to my studio to assist in the dying of 250 pounds of fabric. Suddenly I had a dream, and a team. The early stage of “my” public art project was doing what public art does best: involve the public. That summer a random group of forest volunteers got a crash course in natural dying, hand ripping 300 recycled hotel sheets into strips, dyeing them with brews of osage orange, cochineal and indigo.



"Dyed & Wrapped," artist and daughter, Kale, tree wrapping.  
Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose

The dyed fabric strips multiplied, signaling that I needed to get some first-hand tree wrapping experience. Selecting a newly departed tree on our property I tracked the number of hours, number of dyed strips and number of staple guns and ladders it took for an amateur to wrap one rather modestly sized dead pine tree. The numbers were staggering, but the result was spot on.

The Fontenelle Forest tree wrapping was scheduled for the first week of August, the hottest week of the summer. My rebar-bending friend once again came to my aid, surrounding trees with armatures of metal scaffolding to rival preparations for painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. On opening day a small crew of us toted giant plastic bins full of dyed and rolled cotton strips deep into the forest. We were on a mission, perhaps not from God, but one that had captured the excitement and imagination of many.

The wrapping at its best was a slow go. At it's worst, we battled nettles, mosquitoes, fear of heights, and long hot days. All in all, we fared well, logging in only one case of poison oak and one episode of heat stroke. Bites, stings, rashes and staple wounds went undocumented as part of the experience. The tree wrapping was completed in seven days.

During this six-month reincarnation, the wrapped trees were viewed by thousands of visitors. Some came specifically to see the reborn trees hidden in the forest, others just stumbled upon them on an afternoon hike. The community feedback was joyful and affirming.

This project was about inserting the unexpected in a familiar environment, doing something unusually surprising with very familiar objects. It was done on a shoestring budget involving many dozen people who didn't “do” art.

Excerpts taken from my artist statement in the forest read:

“I am a tapestry weaver. I have spent the last 25 years seated behind a loom, weaving stories with brightly dyed yarns. I have decided that I would like to spend the next 25 years crisscrossing this planet, involved in projects like wrapping trees.



"Dyed & Wrapped", indigo wrapped dead fall in ravine.  
Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose

I love the challenge of working outdoors on a huge scale with “inside” materials, specifically cloth. I love what happens to a dead tree when it has been wrapped--how it is resurrected from crumble and decay and is given new life, how it is pulled from the forest shadows and how the naturally dyed cloth collects and reflects light. I love the dressing of a tree,

the sense of crazy couture as you gather darts and pleats around a limb, smooth the fabric across a trunk, and fit and flair a knothole. This is satisfying and liberating work for tapestry weavers and forest lovers alike.



This is a time sensitive art installation. It will never look more brilliant than the moment the wrapping of the tree is completed. Instantly the hand of nature comes into play. The sun will begin fading the natural dyes from the cloth, the dew and rain will have their way, and the insects, birds and animals of the forest will beg, borrow, and steal threads and bits of fabric for their own creative endeavors."

My participation in public art involved taking on some personal risk. It asked that I step away from the loom to make art a bit differently. No longer alone in my studio, my process also became very public. The projects drew in many, many people eager to assist in the creative process and thousands more who were delighted to simply enjoy the view. It is through these projects that my work became much more widely known in my community and region, not as a sculptor or as a tree wrapper, but as the artist that I am, a tapestry weaver.

"Dyed & Wrapped", **Elements** sculpture installation Fontenelle Forest, Bellevue, NE, 2007, faded indigo wrapped upright tree before de-installation. Photo credit: Kirby Zicafoose



**Mary Zicafoose** has done a lot of weaving in 30 years. Lately she spends more time behind the computer than the loom giving what she can to ATA, GoodWeave USA, and Omaha's Union for Contemporary Art.

## Community Threads: Line Dufour and the Nottawasaga Handweavers and Spinners

by Line Dufour

*"Art that matters to people delights the senses, moves the heart, revives the soul, and offers courage for living."* (Hyde, Lewis. *The Gift*, 1979)

Inspired by Leeds, UK, where a fibre artist worked in the community for 10 years on embroidered and quilted wall hangings celebrating the city's history, the Nottawasaga Handweavers and Spinners in Alliston, Ontario, Canada, asked me to help them design 12 hand woven tapestries depicting the cultural and historical aspects of the New Tecumseh municipality. The initiative is entitled *Community Threads* and the Ontario Arts Council gave me a grant to work with the guild to this end. Once the designs were created, there were many hours of creating the cartoons, preparing the yarns for the tapestries, and preparing the looms. We put two warps of four tapestries each on a Leclerc Gobelin loom lent to the guild and we prepared several smaller looms. Once the looms were set up, the guild members solicited the general public to weave the tapestries, including the staff of the South Simcoe Arts Council and the Gibson Centre for Community Arts and Culture, where the project is taking place.



Taking a 2" section of each of their paintings, we created new designs. Photo credit: Line Dufour

I met with the guild once a week for several months to get everything prepared. We wanted the community tapestries started on the Leclerc Gobelin loom so that we could have it on display in the gallery during the official launch of the *Community Threads* project. It took place at the same time as the reception for my solo exhibition entitled *Wholeness*. It was a well-attended event at which the mayor of New Tecumseth, Mike MacEachern, was present. Varied activities go on at the Gibson Centre, so many people get to see the progress of the *Community Threads* project, where weavers from the guild assemble and weave.

To date, they have completed about five panels. When all twelve tapestries are completed they will be exhibited in the gallery at the Gibson Centre, and then will hang in various locations in the municipality. A brochure will be designed to promote a self-guided tour of the buildings where the tapestries will hang. We also plan to have accompanying plaques listing the names of the contributors to the project.

During the project, I've been blogging at <http://www.tapestryline.blogspot.ca/>. I've noted the people involved, my own observations, insights, and surprises, and posted lots of pictures of the projects denouement. I've been showcasing the talents of the guild members, many who never realized they had artistic aptitude and had little confidence. It's been very rewarding to see their creativity emerge and blossom. Some guild members, after years of fabric weaving, are discovering that maybe tapestry is more their thing! It's been a positive experience for all of us. People have donated yarn, materials, equipment, food, and above all, hours of their time. People have also donated time



Some of the main participants in the Community Threads project, starting in the far left corner, Elisabeth Bishof, Janet Fayle, David Lloyd (who was only visiting), Nathalia Sugden, Dawna Beatty, Jean Kazmierczak, myself, Sandi Nemenyi, Linda Needles, Corrie Parsons, Nellie Waterman, Valerie Splaine.

preparing audio-visual presentations. Local papers, magazines, and the Ontario Handweavers and Spinners *Fibre Focus* have written stories about the *Community Threads* initiative. I've posted my blog on my Facebook page and the Toronto Weaving School page (<https://www.facebook.com/#!/line.dufour>), where I am connected with tapestry weavers all over the world, as well as textile groups and organizations. Already, there is an international response to what is going in Alliston. I made a YouTube video of the birthing of the project (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtqjcDtrYfY>).



Woven tapestry banners on display before the finishing is completed.  
Photo credit: Linda Needles

The outcomes, apart from the physical aspect of creating tapestries, have been much greater than I thought possible. The project re-invigorated the guild and its activities and generated an influx of about two dozen new members for the guild. It aroused a lot of interest, appreciation, and respect for tapestry in the community and created local media attention. It brought other organizations to liaise with the guild, such as the local historical society and the arts council. I've discovered that I love working with weavers and guilds on a project like this, one in which each person brings talents and gifts to the table, and plays a part in creating an amazing project and work of art.

Recently I received an email from a friend, Scott Ford, who wrote: "I was truly amazed and impressed at the depth, insight and challenge of your work with the guild. You have made a difference in these people's lives. You've provided the opportunity to do that for everyone in the community. You've created a permanent link to Alliston's past, present and future." It's affirming that others observe the transformative power of tapestry. This tapestry project has really woven the community together and I encourage other tapestry weavers to undertake similar projects in their communities. This will certainly not be my last.

Weaving is an appropriate metaphor for community engagement and activity. Both weaving and community can be described as a means of producing a coherent united whole, or collaboration, through the combining and interlacement of various elements. All these individuals and threads are woven into a community fabric through this one shared activity, which will remain as a permanent reminder of their collective and shared community history, values, and environment.

Words and text can inspire and elevate our noblest and philanthropic feelings about community and what it is, but real engagement comes in the physicality of doing, in materiality, in actions, interactions, processes, and events shared by an assortment of individuals and groups.



**Line Dufour** has been teaching tapestry and fabric weaving for 20 years, 17 of them at the Toronto Weaving School. She has been a practicing tapestry and fibre artist for 25 years. [www.tapestryline.com](http://www.tapestryline.com).



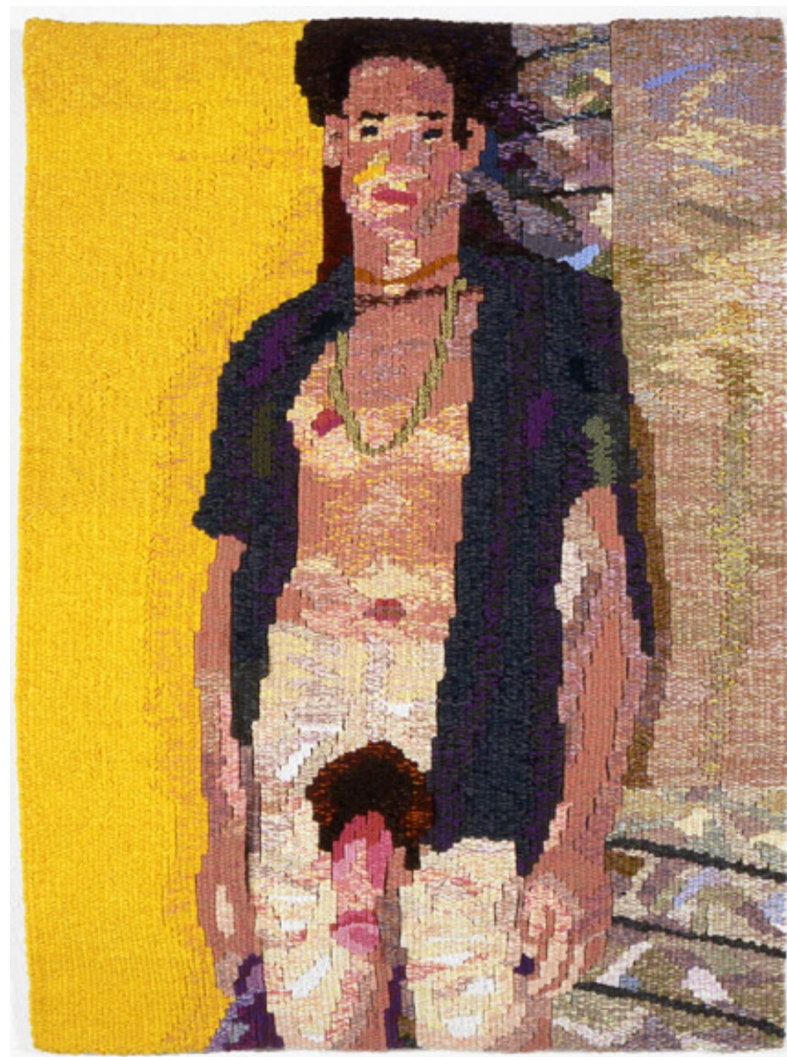
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## Tapestry and Social Protest

by Anton Veenstra

It was at university, during a first year English literature lecture that the concept of “universality” was explained. An author attempted to reach the widest audience, to do so he assumed a persona to which the reader could easily relate. What resulted was the cliché “a dead, white, middle class male.” Although male, middle class, and white, by upbringing, I was anything but that. My mother had arrived in a strange southern land as a European refugee and I had been born behind a wire fence. I grew up a “reffo kid;” classmates chanted, “Go back to where you came from” in the playground. I realised I was “ethnic” while they were ordinary. Later as I grew into my adult identity, I confronted societal homophobia, plus the effects of childhood abuse by a Catholic pedophile priest. I recount this not for brownie points, but to explain what issues I confront in my art.

As a gay man invisibility was the reverse of universality; nowhere could I find my own kind, people who had gone before, clear accounts of their feelings, their needs, their struggles. We were all underground. However, by the mid 1970s women were demanding equal rights, indigenous peoples struggled for a place, and migrants and refugees sought an identity. The mainstream male enjoyed beer and cricket, and, it seemed to me, thought about little else.



“Odalisk,” 90 cm x 65 cm, 8 epi, wool, cotton, silk, polyester, 1998.

Photo credit: Jill Crossley

As an emerging artist, I settled on a textile medium. Previously, I had written adolescent poetry for a decade, but found words a barrier to communication.

The 1970s was a decade when counterculture people were experimenting in all directions. The first tapestry I wove exuded a strong visceral impact; I was certain it could TELL A STORY. My earliest works were self-portraits and images of plants, birds, and animals; in other words, a mirror of my world, with my own reflection in a corner, examining it all. Soon I began to create homoerotic images, not to shock outsiders, although that soon seemed inevitable, but to assert the qualities of the homintern, the gay brotherhood, gay liberation. As an example, in 1999, the *Object Gallery* produced the second Gay Mardi Gras show, and included my work, *Material Boys Unzipped*. A critic remarked about the genital size of “Odalisk,” while a fellow craftsperson’s reaction to the work was that it contained exactly the right combination of joyous colour that a tapestry should have.

I began to realise that colour, texture, and luminosity were the triangulation of my art practice; however, as all tapestry weavers will admit, there is one huge drawback to the medium. If the focus of your inspiration is a detail near the top of the cartoon, in other words, possibly six months of weaving away, the drudgery can grind away at the enthusiasm with which the work began. Often, the will to complete it

quickly dissipates and the work is abandoned. One solution I arrived at was experimenting with a different textile medium that allowed the freedom painters have, to begin anywhere on the surface of the work. This idea resulted in a mosaic, which I called an "assemblage" of buttons sewn with upholsterer's thread onto stretched canvas.

I had exhibited, in an expression of solidarity, during the annual Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, now an international event. Occasionally, people bought my work from those venues, but sales slowed, and even feedback became sparse. I decided that mostly women collected textile work, and they had no desire to collect homoerotica.

In 2000, I decided on a new direction, to undertake my Master of Design Honours degree, enrolling in COFA, the College of Fine Arts in Paddington, Sydney. My thesis would be my parents' post-war migration, and my own experience growing up in a migrant household. My birth in a detention camp, I felt, equipped me to understand the experience of successive waves of refugees to Australia: the Vietnamese in the 1970s, Iraqis and Afghans in recent years. Looking at my mother's Slovenian folk culture, her country having been once part of the Ottoman Empire, led to other insights.

Visually, the Slovenian national flower, the miniature carnation with fretted petals, was also to be found depicted on the tile work of Turkish mosques and on their textiles. This was a convenient link to Edward Said's concept of "orientalism" and its recent manifestation in the wars between the west and Islamic culture. I assumed no particular stance in this area at first; I had travelled widely in the Middle East in 1979: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Turkey, as well as countries from which Islam had retreated: Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria. I greatly admired the second generation of folk tapestries from Wissa Wassef. Other travel experiences also informed my own work; for example, the Iranian carpet menders outside the El Azhar mosque in Cairo with their exquisite silk yarns, and an opium-addicted worker sitting in the Han Halili souk, sewing appliqued buntings that decorated the streets in preparation for the visit of the Israeli President Begin.

My protest came later, when I read of the honour killings and arrests of women and gay men by the "chastity police" of Iran, the foregone conclusion of sentencing by the Ayatollahs in the courts, and the casual executions in the market places of "religion cities" like Mashhad. I commemorated the execution of two youths by depicting them on a carpet, entitling it, "The Hanging Garden." I have yet to come to terms with avid onlookers compulsively filming the event on their mobile phones. However, before we point the finger of indignation, it should be said that public execution was enjoyed as entertainment in the time of Queen Elizabeth I. There, witches and sodomites were

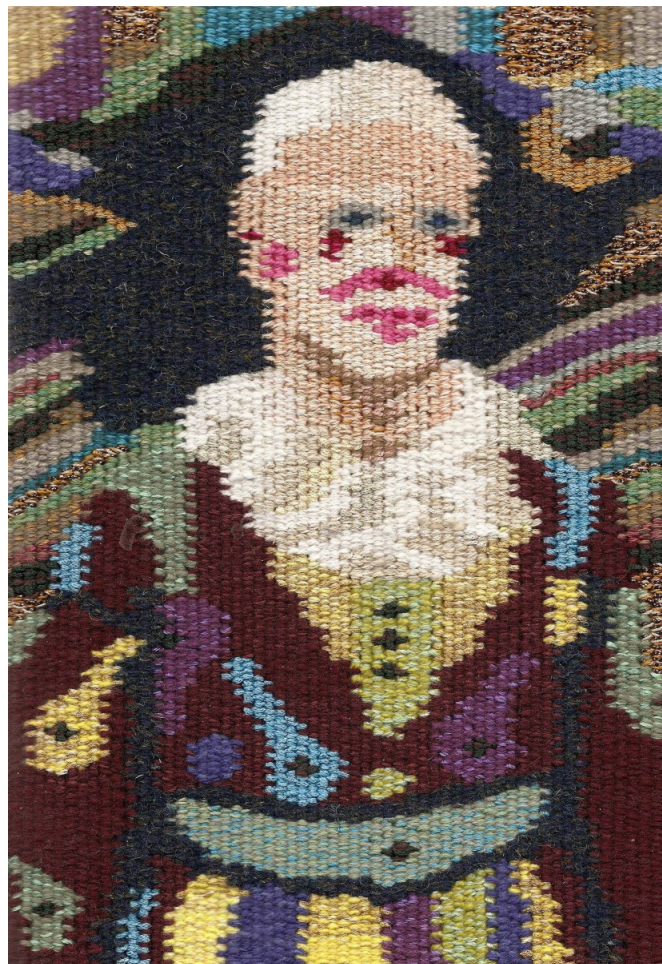


"Blond Boy with Bike," 120 cm x 80 cm, vintage buttons, upholsterer's thread, stretched canvas, 2004.  
Photo credit: Jill Crossley

hanged or burned, the original meaning of the word “faggot” being a gay man wrapped in a bundle of sticks as fuel for the witch’s pyre. I personally feel that fundamentalism whether Abrahamic, Catholic or other religions is a latter day version of the Inquisition, with suitably modern punishments like aversion therapy.



“Hanging Garden,” 150 cm x 100 cm , 8 epi, wool, cotton, silk, polyester, 2005. Photo credit: Jill Crossley



“Sad Clown,” 24 cm x 17 cm, 8 epi, 2012, wool, cotton, silk, polyester.

I remain determined to critique such barbarous treatments in my work. Tapestry was once the triumphal celebration of the conqueror; now, it is capable of conveying the personal narrative of the marginalised. One of my recent tapestries is a portrait of a clown, set in a late 19<sup>th</sup> century English circus. I was determined to express the young man’s poise, his admirable dignity while dressed in colourful absurdity; I was intent on avoiding caricature. This continues my on-again off-again series of portraits, which includes two images of Gareth Thomas, a Welsh footballer who achieved national prominence, all the while struggling to come to terms with his homosexuality. They are simply head and shoulder shots, which create a sense of harmony between massive strength and inner peace. In this I have arrived at an understanding of a younger gay audience’s rejection of overt sexual imagery; perhaps the yet unresolved catastrophe of the Aids epidemic has played its part in this. I suspect it is a way a younger gay community is building links with wider communities on neutral grounds.

My impatience as a young weaver has disappeared with the maturity that time brings; the first step towards a solution had been to allow slits along adjacent vertical colour areas; these soon became unfortunate gaps once the work was cut from the loom. One day, while giving a talk at Newcastle University, I saw the Swedish weaver Annika Ekdahl at work on a very large piece. Her technique was to use an interlocking join along adjacent vertical colour areas. Once a youthful impatience to weave quickly was overcome, it proved a satisfying method of creating shape, pattern and texture. In a Susan Maffei and Archie Brennan workshop in Sydney, the latter had admonished his class against weaving too quickly. After all, packing the weft around the row of warps involves the patient dance of the bobbin point, nothing else allows the yarn to sit flat on the surface. Textile artist Diana Wood Conroy has exhorted fellow weavers to make a virtue from what seems a chore; "Our work is a slow revolution", she says.



**Anton Veenstra** Born to Dutch and Slovenian parents, I completed my Master of Design [Hons] degree at COFA in 2003. I have contributed to socially critical art events: The Blake Prize for Religious Art ["From Refugee to Citizen, the Compassionate Society"] 2007; The New Social Commentary at Warnambool Gallery in 2006 ["The Hanging Garden"] and 2008 ["Authorised to Instruct, a Critique of Catholic Clerical Pedophilia"]. I weave tapestry and construct button assemblages or mosaics. For a more comprehensive examination of the above issues, please refer to my blog. <http://antonveenstratextiles.com>

## American Tapestry Biennial 10

ATA invites all tapestry artists to submit works to American Tapestry Biennial 10. Entry to ATB 10 is open to all tapestry artists who design and weave their own tapestries (defined as "hand-woven, weft-faced fabric with discontinuous wefts"), either individually or collaboratively (all assistants shall be named). Multimedia work will be considered as long as the primary medium is tapestry. The deadline for submissions is October 31, 2013.

Read more about the show: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/atbiennials/american-tapestry-biennial-10/>

Use our online entry form: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/atbiennials/american-tapestry-biennial-10/american-tapestry-biennial-10-online-entry-form/>

Download an entry form for mailing: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ATB-10-entry-form.pdf>

Questions? Contact Exhibition Chair, Rebecca Mezoff: [rebecca.mezoff@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.mezoff@gmail.com)

## Designing the Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry

By Annie Trevillian

I am an Independent artist based in Canberra with my own practice and exhibition profile, working across a range of mediums including textiles and digital technologies. As a community artist, freelance designer and practitioner, and educator, I have taken on projects, commissions, and exhibition/production work. I taught at the Australian National University (ANU), Textiles Workshop from 1992-2011. For nearly thirty years I have been associated with Megalo Print Studio and Gallery in Canberra as an access user, community project artist, and board member.

I have entered a new and exciting stage of my career with the broadening of my practice beyond a purely textile framework. My skills as a designer have been applied to a more diverse range of surfaces, providing a wealth of new artistic output and sustainable practice.

In 2012 I was project artist for "What Still Remains" for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Heritage Unit in Canberra. The project was based on rigorous historical research with an awareness of and sensitivity to the heritage context. The outcome was a fine art project with significant community engagement.

In 1912 an international competition was held to design the new capital of Australia in what was basically a sheep paddock. It was won by the American architects and landscape architects Walter Burley Griffin and his wife, Marion Mahony. On March 13, 2013 it will be 100 years since Lady Denman, wife of then Governor-General Lord Denman, proclaimed that Canberra was the official name of Australia's capital in the newly created Federal Capital Territory.



"Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry" design, Annie Trevillian, 140cm x 270cm, digital print on paper

As part of the year-long Centenary of Canberra celebration, a project centered around a community tapestry was formulated by Valerie Kirk, Head of the Textiles Workshop, Australian National University. It was funded by the Canberra Centenary Community Initiative Scheme with support from the Legislative Assembly for the ACT and the Textiles Workshop at Australian National University (ANU) School of Art.

Valerie's concept for the Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry had two components. First, a major community tapestry designed, produced, and permanently displayed in The ACT Legislative Assembly in Canberra will be a significant marker of Canberra, its community, and its 100-year history. Also, small tapestries woven by individuals or groups in other parts of the country the world would be sent to Canberra to be exhibited with the centenary tapestry in 2013 in the ACT Legislative Assembly Gallery. These tapestries will be returned to their makers and will commemorate the Centenary in personal collections across the country and the world.

The management structure of the project includes Valerie Kirk as Project Leader, Annie Trevillian as the Tapestry Designer, Dan Edwards as the Tapestry Coordinator and instructor, and Al Munro as the Audience Development and Marketing Coordinator. All personnel involved have extensive experience in their particular roles and have delivered successful projects of a similar nature. The project team has a depth of knowledge and skills relating to tapestry weaving, public art textile design, community art project management, and audience participation and engagement.

The project is under the auspices of the Australian National University, known for providing education and research facilities and for working with the public through its outreach programs, the Centre for Continuing Education and Visual Arts Access. The ANU School of Art has strong community ties through its exhibition program, public workshops, and lectures. Projects successfully administered by the ANU School of Art include: conferences, public art programs, and visiting artists programs.



Design process for the "Canberra Centenary Tapestry"

As the tapestry designer of the Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry, I used my creative design skills to respectfully and sincerely to honour the Canberra I am proud to call home. My grandparents first came to live in Canberra in 1923. The tapestry is multi-layered and has many stories to tell. Each person viewing it would add their own story and that is what community involvement is about.

I used the motif of the bluebell, the Canberra floral emblem, in a five spot repeat to make the design elements cohesive. I encouraged individuality in the weaving, to mirror the individuality of each bluebell in nature.

While weaving, when a portion of the warp is accidentally left uncovered, there is a term for the resulting flecks of white warp showing through: sheep on the hills. My first attempt at tapestry certainly showed this. The idea that the weavers are actually weaving the “sheep on the hills” appealed to my sense of fun, linking a tapestry term with the landscape.



Tapestry samples: Nina De Caritat, De Peruzzis, and Valerie Kirk, wool on cotton warp, variable dimensions.  
Photo credit: Daniel Edwards.

My way of working is to gather information from ACT libraries and institutions, especially the ACT Heritage Library, National Capital Authority, Australian National Archives, the National Trust, Australian National Library, ANU Library, Canberra Museum and Gallery, and the internet, and my personal collections of Canberra memorabilia. I immerse myself in the subject before I start to create the imagery.

I was particularly taken with Walter and Marion's plans for the city layout, located in the surrounding mountains. I tried to capture Marion's creativity by being true to my own artistic abilities – by paying respect to the beautiful drawings she made for the competition. In my tapestry design, I also employed her reflections of buildings in the water in the New Parliament House image as well as in one of the lost houses of the Molonglo in the lake.

In the National Capital Authority building in Canberra there is a large tapestry of one of Marion's drawings. It is a straightforward interpretation. As the designer of a new tapestry I wanted to weave something not so literal, in a style that is representative of my design aesthetic.

I studied the paintings in the Competition of 1913 and was drawn to the colours used by the third place winner, A.E Macdonald. I particularly liked the distant mountains, an image that resonates for most Canberrans. It also shows Canberra with St Johns Church (where my parents got married), Blundells Cottage, the Molonglo river, a horseman and sheep. Even with these elements, the landscape appears vast and open. . Since the painting is owned by Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG), I asked their permission to

use the top part of the painting to be interpreted by the weavers. CMAG happily gave permission after seeing a draft of the design with copyright instructions to be observed. I like the idea that the public could view the tapestry and then hop over to CMAG to see Griffin's painting.

Following Walter Burley Griffin's lead, I chose the following elements for my design: the Molonglo River, the Parliamentary Triangle, with the Houses of Parliament, the Australian-American War Memorial, which includes imagery of the American eagle, and a sphere, Civic Centre/Vernon Circuit, represented by Roman cypress trees, the Carillion, the Powerhouse, Fitters Workshop, and Telstra Tower.

I did not set out to create a map and have not placed all buildings and images in their correct locations. The lake and the Parliamentary Triangle are emphasised. Also, the cover of Lindsay Pryor's book *Trees in Canberra* gave me inspiration for my design elements, particularly the illustrations of plantings in Canberra, both introduced and indigenous. Many Canberra tourist posters also emphasize that Canberra as a place of trees.

In my designs for previous commissions, my job was to create well-researched, relevant, and aesthetically pleasing designs, which I feel I have accomplished in this tapestry design. Canberra has been layered from indigenous times to the present. For example, the Australian National Library sits on the site of the cottage of Robert Corkhill, an early Canberran settler.

The Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry encourages community involvement. There has been community consultation and an image-gathering workshop run by Valerie Kirk, Dan Edwards, Al Munro and Annie Trevillian. To date 60 participants have completed the free training sessions with more scheduled for 2013. The design and tapestry classes have prompted lots of discussion and generated ideas for the individual tapestries. Other events include "Make Your Mark in Tapestry," community Open Days, promotional visits to schools, community groups, information stands at markets and libraries, and ongoing publicity through the media. I kept a blog plotting the process for the tapestry: <http://canberra100communitytapestry.com/>



"Canberra Centenary Tapestry," tapestry in progress, wool on cotton warp

I finished the design for the tapestry in August 2012 and a full size (240cm x 140 cm) cartoon was digitally printed. The warp was set by Dan, the colour matching of wool was completed, and sampling was undertaken by Nina De Caritat De Peruzzis, Valerie Kirk, Lisa Molvig, Marie Edwards, Andrea Edwards, and Daniel Edwards.

The volunteers are already working hard alongside Dan. A healthy list of volunteers, including several interstate weavers, is willing to donate their time on this exciting project. The large tapestry is due to be completed and exhibited along with individual tapestries in November 2013.

People are enchanted to see the magical process of weaving strands of coloured weft into cotton warp to produce an image. I was delighted when weavers selected their favourite motifs to weave. They develop a relationship with the work and a deeper understanding and value of Canberra's cultural and artistic sector through being part of it, and being able to see their contributions on display in a major public artwork.

The Canberra Centenary Community Tapestry project is an activity that marks and celebrates Canberra's history, place, and people. The tapestry visually represents Canberra, in which the design and production is a process shared and owned by a broad section of the community.



**Annie Trevillian** is a Canberra based artist and designer working in textiles and digital technologies.

## A Lost Treasure Discovered at Filoli

by Lynn Norris

*This article was originally published in Filoli's Highlights Magazine. It is reprinted here with permission of the author.*

Objects as well as people can have eventful lives. Such is the case with Filoli's Reception Room tapestry. New research by British textile historian, Hilary Turner, has identified Filoli's tapestry as one that was last seen in 1913, then disappeared from view when J. P. Morgan's art collection was broken up in an episode known as the "Morgan Claw Back."



A rare table tapestry from the J.P. Morgan Collection in Filoli's Reception Room. Photo credit: Courtesy of Filoli

The latest adventure for Filoli's tapestry began several years ago, when now-retired Curator Tom Rogers sent the tapestry to be conserved by textile conservator, Stan Derelian. His examination of the tapestry led him to believe that its origins dated to an earlier period than was thought. He suggested having a textile historian authenticate the tapestry and through his contacts at the Victoria and Albert Museum, British textile historian, Hilary Turner began work on the tapestry's provenance. In November 2011, her paper, "Transplanted: a floral tapestry-woven table carpet once at Knole, Kent," was published in *Kent Archaeology* and traces the tapestry's long and eventful life as part of two of the finest tapestry

collections ever assembled, the Knole House Collection in England, which still contains the world's finest collection of 17<sup>th</sup>-century tapestries, and that of J. Pierpont Morgan.

Although there are many tapestries that date to the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, few table tapestries such as the one at Filoli survive. Made to serve as early tablecloths, these tapestries had hard lives subject to food, insects and errant candles. How and when it came into the Knole House Collection is unknown.

Knole was built by Thomas Bouchier, the Archbishop of Canterbury between 1456-1486 on the site of an earlier house. Upon his death, he bequeathed the house to the See of Canterbury to be a home for archbishops, a duty it served until Thomas Cranmer was forced "voluntarily" to give Knole to Henry VIII in one of their endless doctrinal disputes. In 1603, Elizabeth I gave the house to her cousin, Thomas Sackville, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Dorset. Thirteen generations of Sackvilles have lived there ever since, including the Bloomsbury writer and garden expert Vita Sackville-West, whose friend Virginia Woolf set her novel *Orlando* on its grounds.

In an effort to date the tapestry and its makers, Turner examined the tapestry's design elements. Unlike figurative tapestries that were illustrations of myths and Bible stories, taking their names from their subject such as *Diana, Goddess of the Hunt*, the Filoli tapestry is called a verdure tapestry because of its botanical theme. Fifty-six flowers are strewn across the carpet in a *millefleurs* pattern, portrayed in the same manner as botanical art prints of the time. While some plants are depicted more than once, it is never in the same way. The main body of flowers is bounded by a border of trefoils, quatrefoils and leaves that serves the purpose of a fence.

If these flowers were planted in a garden, they would provide a floral display all year long. The plant list closely resembles one Francis Bacon deemed would be suitable for a princely garden. The tapestry's intricate design indicates that it was a custom-made piece of considerable value with materials used available only to the rich in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

By dating the design elements between 1530-1600, Turner notes that the tapestry incorporates elements from different major styles of the period and this makes it difficult to identify the specific weaving center that produced it, although she has narrowed it to the regions of north Holland and northern Germany. *Millefleurs* tapestries were common during this period, but not later. The exception to the design date is a later addition of a coat of arms in the central roundel that was poorly done. Efforts to identify a family that went with it have so far stumped the College of Arms, London.

The range of dates may indicate that it also came into the Knole Collection somewhere between Thomas Sackville and the Sackville family's great collector, Charles Sackville, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dorset (1638-1706). It remained in the family until 1911, when Victoria, Lady Sackville (1862-1936) was in need of a cash infusion. She found it from J.P. Morgan, the American financial colossus.

The third generation of a wealthy mercantile family from Hartford, Ct., who turned a business into a financial empire, J. P. Morgan was well educated, well travelled and fluent in French and German. The Morgans were pillars of the Episcopal Church and possessed a strict New England work ethic and were known for spending their money wisely and not freely. Only at Junius Morgan's death did his son J. Pierpont come into control of enough money to begin amassing one of the world's great art collections. At fifty-four, he soon made up for lost time.

Morgan had previously purchased from the Knole Collection. He bought Thomas Gainsborough's masterwork, *Miss Elizabeth Linley and Her Brother*, from Lord Sackville, much to Lady Sackville's dismay when she discovered it was gone. In her diary several months later she recalled meeting Morgan at a party in London. She wrote, "I avoided Pierpont Morgan most carefully, as we have got tapestries to sell, and I do not want him to think that I am running after him."

Morgan would hardly have minded as he was accustomed to people with artworks to sell following him around the globe and for beautiful, titled women he made a specialty of being a friend in need. He invited Lady Sackville to his London home, Prince's Gate, to discuss a possible purchase.

Lady Sackville recalled in her diary, "We sat on a long sofa, yards away from each other! It was most awkward. He asked me what and why we had to sell anything. I said, 'Lloyd George's super tax and land tax and the death duties.' He answered 'Damn Lloyd George...I want to help you. What have you got to get rid of?'

"Tapestries."

"I don't want tapestries, let me come down to Knoles and look around."

Perhaps with her lost Gainsborough in mind she replied, "No, Mr. Morgan...it is a case of take it or leave it."

"He thought for a few moments and said, 'Well, I'll take your tapestries to help you. How much do you want for them?....The whole interview did not take ten minutes....' The price was £65,000 for twenty-nine tapestries including the one that now hangs at Filoli.



The verdure tapestry's central roundel is a later addition, featuring an unidentified coat of arms. Photo credit: Courtesy of Filoli

Edward Robinson, the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1910-1931, described how when Morgan was offered an individual piece from a collection, he often then pursued the entire collection. He remembers Morgan recounting, "I heard that Mr. So-and-so had a certain object in his collection that I was very anxious to secure, and in the hope of being able to buy it, I obtained an invitation to visit the collection, which I had never seen. But when I saw what treasures the man had, I said to myself, 'What is the use of bothering about one little piece when I might get them all?' So I asked him at once if he would take so much for his entire collection; he said he would, and I bought it then and there."

He once was stopped when entering his car on the way to catch a steamer to Europe by a dealer telling him a collection Morgan coveted was for sale. "Very well," said Mr. Morgan, "if you are authorized to negotiate for it, you may buy it for me." With that, he closed the door and was driven away.

Morgan kept his European purchases in London. The Progressive Era import tariff of 1897 imposed a 20% tax on importing art and antiquities over one-hundred years old. When he ran out of room at Prince's Gate, he sent the overflow as gifts and loans to the South Kensington Museum, now the Victoria & Albert.

His American purchases had long since outstripped the space in his relatively modest brownstone in New York and graced a myriad of museums including the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the J. P. Morgan Library. The tariff was repealed in 1909 and in 1912 Morgan began shipping a major portion of his London collection into the United States. Many a museum director's chest swelled as the new European arrivals from the Morgan Collection came across the transom as promised gifts.

But the honeymoon of largess ended in 1913 with J. P. Morgan's death. The papers were awash with coverage, condolences were received from kings, and stock exchanges in Chicago and New York closed as a mark of respect. His estate was valued at \$77 million and his art collection was pegged at a very conservative \$20 million. Not anything to sniff at, unless you were John D. Rockefeller, Sr., who was quoted as saying, "And to think he wasn't even a rich man."

At the request of Morgan's son Jack, the Metropolitan Museum mounted a "Loan Exhibition of the J. Pierpont Morgan Collection" in 1914 primarily of objects never seen before in the United States. It was reviewed for its splendor and range as "the greatest exhibition of art put on view in the New World" on par with the Old World de Medicis. Not bad for not a rich man.

Yet museum directors felt their first tremors of foreboding when the art collection was included with all Morgan's assets and bequeathed to his son Jack, who was faced with a difficult decision. In his last days, J. P. Morgan's manic collecting strained even a Morgan's purse and with the addition of death duties, money needed to be raised. His son decided to make a choice between the Morgan banks and the art collection and chose the banks, announcing that three-fifths of the Morgan collection on loan to museums was to be returned and sold in what has been dubbed, "The Morgan Claw Back". A collective thud was heard as museum directors' bodies hit the floor en masse.

Connoisseurs howled and compared the break up of the great art collection to be on par with the sale of the seventeenth-century collections of Charles I and Cardinal Mazarin. Historians and biographers still disagree on Jack Morgan's motives and even the necessity of the sale, but nevertheless the collection went on the block in a series of sales handled by one of Morgan's primary dealers, the Duveen Brothers, who made more from J. P. Morgan in death than they had in life. In 1915, French & Co., another well-known dealer with a specialty in tapestries bought eighteen Morgan tapestries from Duveen, including the one that would come to Filoli.

Filoli's tapestry last recorded sighting, as far as provenance records go, was on exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1913 until Hilary Turner recently identified it from a 1918 photograph of the Reception Room at Filoli. In 1915, Mr. Bourn had bought the tapestry from French & Co., and the 1930 Filoli inventory gives a history of the tapestry as being from Knole House and the J. P. Morgan collection.

It has looked down from the Reception Room wall at Filoli watching nearly a century of family life and visitation. Due to the generosity of Mrs. Lurline Roth, it continues to enjoy its well-earned traveler's rest among the treasures of Filoli.

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**Lynn Norris**, is Director of Educational Programming and Interpretation at Filoli

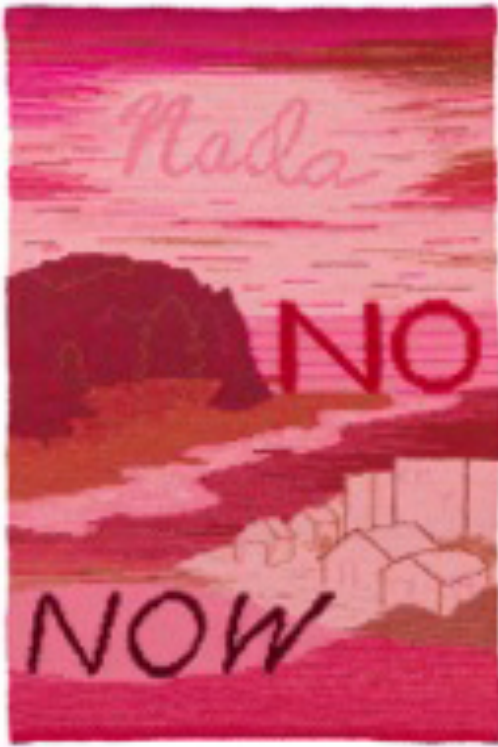
## On the Way to Clarity: Visual and Verbal Political Expression

by Linda Rees

Occasionally in the last ten years, I have tried to create effective political imagery in tapestry. It's a difficult task. In general, my designs are guided in an abstract way, letting a feel for the colors, or yarns dictate what the composition style should be. It is an idiosyncratic method that does not insist that the viewer interprets the design in the same way that I envision it. In contrast, the very nature of creating political art is to communicate a specific opinion or idea clearly to the viewing public.

My first two attempts, in 2002 and then 2007, were met with ambivalence from observers. What I concluded as I considered trying again, was that every detail is critical and that I need to look objectively at each shape, asking whether it supplies a distinct meaning that supports my intent. It has felt as if I needed to begin the process of learning how to visualize imagery all over again. I joined the "Political Lines" ATA forum in 2011 in order to work on this new goal.

What seemed to give me most direction from the discussions came in reference to political cartoons. There had been an exhibit of comic strips at a local gallery shortly before this discussion. I had looked at the work several times. Each drawing, as in political cartoon examples, was supported by the use of a few words that were often punctuated by symbols or action lines. This allowed me to cross a barrier of prejudice I had about using text in tapestries.



"Stasis," 2011, 32" x 22," 6 epi, wool, linen, 2012. Photo credit: Dennis Galloway

All this analysis had me eager to get to work on another political tapestry in 2012. The local *Fiber Challenge Group* that I belong to chose to work on "puzzles" for the year. I am an avid puzzle solver, especially word problems like cryptograms, but the only challenge I could think about was the very puzzling inability of our country to make progress on our myriad political issues. I chose to concentrate on *Puzzling Politics*. Because the two earlier political tapestries also dealt with our polarity, I have included them in the series.

I wove three tapestries in 2012 that attempt to deal with various political issues. The last piece I wove comes the closest to accomplishing my goal of combining a verbal and visual expression of my concerns, so I will briefly summarize "Puzzling Politics #3" and "Puzzling Politics #4." For "Stasis 2011," I decided to use the political cartoon tactic by including the words *NOW*, *No*, and *Nada*, thinking they would underscore how dysfunctional our system appeared. I found it interesting that all factions could identify with the sentiments of *No* and *Now* while we collectively understood that almost *Nada* was accomplished. One day I decided to look online to determine for myself what the Keystone XL pipeline dispute was all about. After reading only a few sites, I was shocked by how interconnected the energy choices are, and most of all, by how we were taking sides on decisions with only sound-bite information. It inspired my next tapestry, "Connected Conundrums." I used question marks, incorporating variations used by other cultures. Each symbol extended into the layer above it by bringing the color of the previous one up into the next portion to imply a connection. Visually, both pieces were considered interesting but I was surprised that even with

explicit titles, nobody understood their messages any more than the previous work. The dialogue about "Stasis 2011" with members on the forum was informative and I reworked areas where my color choices were ambiguous.

More analysis led me to see that in both examples, I was considering my compositions as landscapes that read from lower "foreground" progressing up and backward while viewers were focusing primarily on the words or symbols that conventionally would be read from top to bottom. It was only when I observed this phenomenon that I realized how the fact that I weave from the base of a design upward rather than the classic French procedure of weaving on the side, was influencing my layouts.

As the cliché "third time is a charm" gives hope, undaunted, I began my third endeavor of 2012, "Not So Trivial Pursuits: Energy Options" (*Puzzling Politics* #5). As in the previous two tapestries, concerns about energy resources in relation to balancing economical and environmental perspectives seemed the arena I could address most directly. My first reaction to the profusion of pipelines on the map was to wonder about how many rivers these pipes spanned. That led me to more maps and information about waterways and also coal distribution. I could really see that maps could provide a basis for a tapestry about the complexity of energy options. Also it would be desirable to make a greater connection to the puzzle theme than my previous two tapestries had. I had done so much reading online about the various parameters of energy production by then that the idea for the format of the question and answer game came to mind. Our group had been talking about interactive items for our exhibit, so I



"Not So Trivial Pursuits: Energy Options," 38" x 58," 6epi, wool, linen, 2012. Photo credit: Dennis Galloway

figured I could somehow fit twenty-four questions about the tapestry. Admittedly, these questions only skim the surface of what could have been addressed. While I did not include map inserts for Hawaii and Alaska there are questions about energy issues in those states too.

The design came quickly and the weaving flowed relatively fast. I had considerable doubts about whether the "question pockets" would work, but when the tapestry came off the loom all the dilemmas actually had been solved in the right direction. Because of the size, I could not easily create the central couched lines as I wove so I spent a month applying those lines. It took me another month to get all the questions in order and onto cards. The answers are on the reverse side of the cards. To create the pockets I hand sewed a backing cloth to the tapestry and then basted lines to the weaving to keep the cards stable. It all came together in time for an exhibit at a local gallery. It was fun to walk up to folks I saw with cards in hand at the opening and ask them if they knew all the answers. Besides the actual cards, I also had printouts of the questions, answers, and references, although few were taken. The direct interaction connected with a fair amount of patrons, those who took the questions out to read.

I could never have considered designing a project like the one described without the marvelous quantity of information at my disposal on the Internet. I think back a decade or so when I read articles in *Tapestry Topics* about how various artists did lots of research before beginning a tapestry. That was a completely foreign concept to me. I still am humbled by how challenging it is to really communicate a specific notion. On the other hand, the experience emphasizes how attempts to express our ideas allow us to continue learning more about our medium and the role of art in general. Perhaps I will still be striving for the quintessential representation of an idea a decade from now.



"Connected Conundrums," 34" x 15," 6 epi, wool, linen, 2012.  
Photo credit: Dennis Galloway



**Linda Rees.** *I learned to weave in 1965, focusing on tapestry since the late 1970s. Spending a few hours at the loom is a daily routine that has sustained me throughout my adult life. I enjoy writing about the tapestry medium. Currently, puttering outdoors, learning about native plants, and mushrooming in the Eugene, Oregon, area are also relaxing pasttimes for me.*

## Interweaving Cultures: The Meeting

by Jean Pierre Larochette

*Exhibition and conference of tapestry weavers at the Textile Museum of Oaxaca, January 19 – March 9, 2013*

The goals of this exhibition, and the accompanying conference, were to unite two groups of weavers, coming from geographically and culturally different communities, who practice similar tapestry techniques. We shared concerns relating to the creation and diffusion of techniques related to the medium, while in this interaction exposing each other to the intimate flow of ideas and individual processes.

“Interweaving Cultures: The Meeting” grew out of “The Splendor of Textiles”, an exhibition held at the Peter Gray Museum of Art, University of Guadalajara, Puerto Vallarta, January/February 2012. During that occasion, we presented the finest weavings from Teotitlan del Valle, Oaxaca, works that were 12 EPI or finer. Through this technically based selection we identified pieces that, by format and texture, transcended the utilitarian function of the typical rug weaving workshops of Teotitlan, with emphasis on the decorative art of tapestry.

Responding to the same technical criteria, this group of eleven weavers from Teotitlan del Valle, a community rooted in its native culture and ancient textile tradition, was joined by an equal number of members of a different community. The group from beyond the northern borders is by nature cosmopolitan and diverse, weavers who have found in tapestry a vehicle for creative expression of their choice.

We are grateful to the Textile Museum of Oaxaca for sponsoring this event; and, very especially, to the participant weavers, our colleagues from Teotitlan del Valle and the American Tapestry Alliance, for sharing a moment of their lives. We let their art and passion speak for themselves in these accounts and luminous images.

Participants:

Teotitlan del Valle: Jacobo Mendoza Ruiz, Román Gutiérrez Ruiz, Erasto Mendoza Ruiz, Luís Lazo Mendoza, Lizbeth Gutiérrez Sosa, Pedro Mendoza Gutiérrez, Francisco Martínez, María Luisa Vásquez de Mendoza, Fidel Cruz Lazo, Marcelina Mendoza Ruiz, Emiliano Cruz Mendoza.

ATA members: Archie Brennan, Susan Martin Maffei, Mary Zicafoose, Jackie Wollenberg, Lurie/Larochette, Mary Lane, Pam Patrie, Elaine Duncan, Jennie Henderson, Joyce Hayes, Hipolito/Young.

Coordinators: Jacobo Mendoza and Jean Pierre Larochette

## Weaving With the People from the Clouds

### Interweaving Cultures: The Meeting - Open Studios at Teotitlan del Valle

by Shirley Anne

In January of this year, I arrived in Mexico City prior to continuing on to Oaxaca, and then to Teotitlan del Valle. Mexico City is diverse in its artistic and cultural offerings, as well as its architectural and archaeological wonders. A jewel for me was the Museo Frida Kahlo, which is painted a vibrant azure blue. Frida shared this abode with Diego Rivera. The museum exhibits many of her original art works, furnishings, original costumes, her favorite clothing, and even the leather corsets Frida wore to shore up her frail body.

I headed to Oaxaca to attend the conference and exhibition opening at the Museo Textil de Oaxaca. The purpose of this event was to facilitate the meeting of two geographically distinct peoples with common technical skills and a love of tapestry in order to share their experiences and ideas to the mutual benefit of both groups. The studio workshops scheduled for Teotitlan del Valle further enriched these experiences.

Remarkably, each voice and weaving expression was distinctly different. For the visiting weavers, tapestry was largely not a family occupation. Many learned through formal education. Imagery for tapestry was formed from life experiences, spiritual and political ideologies, interests, and travels. And clearly there was a heartfelt compunction for a voice through tapestry.

In contrast, weaving is truly a way of life for the Teotitlan del Valle weavers. Most were born to this vocation and were involved with it from a very early age. While still maintaining traditional values and forms of expression, many of the weavers are now exploring a more personal vision – often contemporary in nature. Still, each expression resonates with the spirit of the individual weaver.

I was excited and felt a little bit daunted to think of weaving side by side with a weaver from the clouds. Zapotecs' ancient beliefs are that they descended from the mountaintops on earth from the clouds and possibly from the Pleiades star cluster.



Zapotec designs in stone work at Mitla. Photo credit: Shirley Anne

Teotitlan del Valle is a small village surrounded by mountains and renowned for tapestries. On our way to the village we stopped and visited Mitla. This archaeological Zapotecan site is the source of symbols prevalent in traditional tapestries. Even the cobbled streets of Teotitlan have some of these markings. Teotitlan has a central and very active market place, a church, a large school, and houses with wall-enclosed courtyards. Dirt roads with cobblestone sections link it all together. The village expands up the mountainsides and meanders down the highways to more open and rural ranch-like compounds.

We were warmly welcomed to this village one mid-afternoon to the sound of a full brass band at the home of Marcelina Mendoza. It is also the home of Abigail Mendoza who is a famed Zapotec cook. We were told, "Our food is prepared with as much care and love as are our weavings." Weavers could not hope for a better welcome. The musicians played for us all evening and we were introduced to some traditional dances in which everyone participated.

It was the luck of the draw that determined the studio assignment for each visiting weaver. I was assigned the studio of Fidel Cruz and Maria Luisa Mendoza Ruiz Cruz. I wove on a vertical loom, different from what I am used to. I selected a very fine warp and had only five days to complete the work. I enjoyed the intricacies of serrated diagonal lines using linked threads that demanded concentration but produced a lovely feather-like effect. This technique produces completely reversible tapestry woven textiles with few slits.

Teotitlan weavers mostly use natural dyed wool. At Casa Cruz Maria Luisa showed us how to use cochineal. This is an insect harvested from cactus that produces a red dye. Casa Cruz uses 65 different materials to make over 200 colours and both Fidel and Maria Luisa have won awards and are well respected for their expertise. Fidel Cruz commands a very high price for his tapestries, many made with silk and cashmere, all hand spun and dyed.

At last my weaving was finished. I completed the sacred mountain in my tapestry and with Maria's encouragement added the Zapotec symbol for energy and guidance. Teotitlan del Valle is a delightful place with very talented and fine weavers.



Fidel Cruz weaving at Casa Cruz.  
Photo credit: Shirley Anne



Shirley Anne and her finished tapestry beside the stand up loom.

*After 36 years in arts management **Shirley Anne** has returned to her passions: travel and the visual arts, including tapestry, painting, and photography. Having recently moved to a loft on Vancouver's east side in British Columbia, she is currently setting up a new studio.*

## Interweaving Cultures: The “Open Studios” Experience

by Yadin Larochette

In Teotitlan del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico, I recently found myself sharing a loom with Marcelina Ruiz Mendoza, a weaver, linguist, and professional cook at her sister Abigail's restaurant *Tlamanalli* (noted as the best restaurant in the world in *Saveur* magazine in 2003). Marcelina's talents also lie in dyeing the wool and silk yarns she uses with locally grown dyestuffs, and tending to other responsibilities at the restaurant, at home, and within the Teotitlan community. As a member of the community's governing body, she was responsible for establishing the town's museum in 1995, which educates visitors on Zapotec culture, and she is now very involved with a group developing a spelling and pronunciation guide of the Zapotec language. Her older brother Arnulfo is a renowned artist and weaver in his own right, having traveled the world and eventually resettling in the nearby city of Oaxaca, where he owns the gallery “La Mano Magica.” Another brother, Jacobo, is also an excellent weaver/designer who has a studio and gallery that he runs with his wife Maria Luisa at the entrance to Teotitlan.



Marcelina Ruiz Mendoza and Yadin Larochette. Photo credit: Yael Lurie

Teotitlan del Valle was founded by the Zapotecs in about 1465. It was later “re-founded” by the Spanish in 1527, although archaeological evidence suggests that the Olmecs were there as early as 500 BC. At 5,500 foot elevation, the town has an Aztec Nahuatl name meaning “place or land of the Gods.” The town is known for its rugs, woven on low-warp or horizontal two harness looms following the influence of the Spanish conquistadors. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Zapotecs and other indigenous peoples in the area wove on back-strap looms exclusively. Every house in this town of 9,000 inhabitants has at least one loom, and weaving is an integral part of everyday life. Children start learning to weave very early, at around four or so, while “playing” on improvised looms using upside-down chair legs as beams. Tourists come by the busload to view the local work, and it seems like every other house is a gallery, with colorful carpets covering the exterior walls.

How did I get here? My father Jean Pierre Larochette organized this event - a sharing and exchange of tapestry techniques between ATA members and weavers in the area. He, my mother, and I met the local weavers two years earlier, when he curated **El Esplendor del Textil**, an exhibit of the finer weavings of the area, at the Peter Gray Museum on the University of Guadalajara campus in Puerto Vallarta. Eight of the weavers from that exhibit now opened their hearts, homes, and heads to twelve members of ATA. Names were drawn out of two hats to match weaving hosts with weaving visitors at the most awe-inspiring reception I have ever attended. The party, sponsored and prepared by the weaving hosts, included the very talented children's band of Teotitlan, ever flowing mezcal (the region's version of tequila), Abigail's sublime dishes, and the company of the warmest peoples I've ever encountered (and I do tend to travel!). The experience was made even more moving when I looked up to see my parents dancing together - a sight I have never encountered during these 43 years of existence!

The draw placed Susan Sandoval and Joyce Hayes with Roman Gutierrez, Pam Patrie and Cande Walsworth with Pedro Mendoza, Martha Fulton and Jackie Wollenberg with Jacobo Mendoza, Beverly Flynn and Shirley Anne with Fidel Cruz, Mary Zicafoose with Luis Lazo, Jenny Heard with Francisco Martinez, Jennie Henderson with Erasto "Tito" Mendoza Ruiz, and me with Marcelina Mendoza Ruiz. It could not have been a more perfect fit on all counts. At the breakfast meeting on the first day, there was some trepidation mixed in with excitement about the general unknown of it all and the language barrier. Most of the host weavers spoke very little English. None of us had done anything like this before, and I observed some slightly tense faces as we all boarded our motorcycle taxis to take us to our respective hosts. Designed in India, these little rickshaw-type vehicles are everywhere in Teotitlan, and Jean Pierre had hired several to get us around. Six hours later, as everyone descended after the first day's work, all I saw were radiant smiles...the language of tapestry reigned, after all!

Marcelina and I traded techniques. Zapotec traditional weavings are geometric in design and are comprised of dovetail joins exclusively, which makes for an extremely strong weave structure, but limits composition. They weave with the intention of making both faces of the textile exhibit-able (they were originally intended as rugs, after all), so tails are overlapped at joining warps and cut flush once they are secured by subsequently packed wefts. I showed her some other joining techniques and she was particularly interested in the double weft interlock, which we practiced and I made the attempt to draw. (Marcelina was kind enough to say the doodle helped, but I'm not convinced). Although I have seen hatchings used in their weavings, hachures are not so common. We were able to experiment with the different effects one can achieve with both contrasting and soft color gradations as well as the multi-step variations. All the while, we used using the Zapotec weft overlap technique to secure the weft ends so that the tails could be cut flush without the risk of weakening the weave.

Marcelina showed me how to make the little *ojos* pattern, bi and tri-color oval shapes repeated along the horizontal axis, and the interlaced *greca* pattern found on the ancient stonework in Mitla, an archaeological site 20 miles to the east. These patterns, as with all the geometric patterns found in Zapotec weaving, are woven by counting warps. Since each color is joined via dovetail on a shared warp, each group is counted with the same warp twice: once at the end of the first group, and once at the beginning of the second group. I cannot help but think that this is also representative of how they live. Family and interconnectedness are paramount: each action is connected to the one before, each individual is connected to another. Art is life and life is art in Teotitlan...there is no sacrificing one for the other, as my mother Yael Lurie pointed out during her presentation at the related symposium hosted by Oaxaca's Textile Museum the weekend before.

We all left Teotitlan inspired - ...and are looking forward to next year!

***Yadin Larochette** has been weaving since the day her little feet could reach the pedals when her father, Jean Pierre, sat her at the loom. The love of warp and weft led to textile conservation, and she works on a range of textiles for various museums and private collectors. Her private practice is based in Los Angeles, California.*

## Exhibition Review - The Tapestries of Jon Eric Riis at 108 Contemporary

by Janette Meetze

**The Tapestries of Jon Eric Riis** is the inaugural show presented by a brand new nonprofit gallery in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The *108 Contemporary* is located at 108 Brady Street in a newly renovated warehouse in Tulsa's Brady Arts District. *108 Contemporary* was formerly known as the Brady Craft Alliance, a group created to promote fine art from traditional craft materials such as ceramic, paper, fiber, metal, and wood. It is the only nonprofit organization in Oklahoma dedicated exclusively to fine craft.

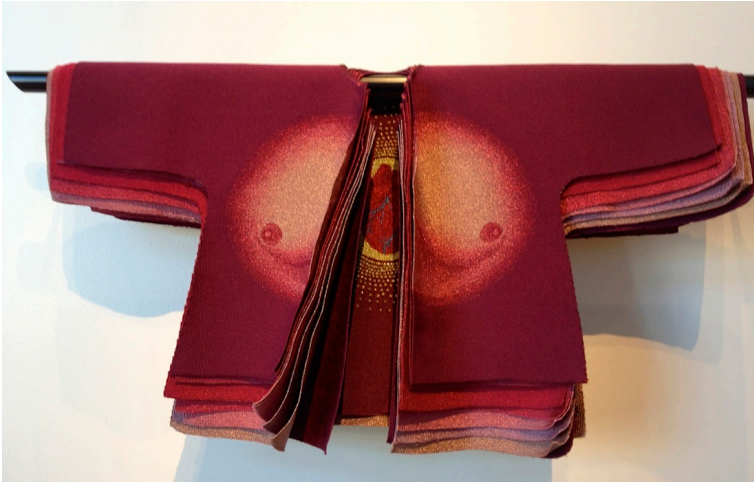
This show, opening on the first of March and running through April 21, 2013 comprises about forty examples of the work of internationally known contemporary fiber artist Jon Eric Riis. It is hard to imagine a more perfect fit for this new gallery and its mission. The work displayed ranged from large wall-sized tapestries and stylized jacket shapes to three-dimensional objects. His finely woven tapestry work is intricately embellished with opulent materials including freshwater pearls, crystals, and precious metal threads. Here you can see many of the artist's inspirations and influences in his work spanning a long and varied career. Historical influences from classical sculpture to ancient Asian and Peruvian textiles are laced with contemporary social commentary, combining both wit and a biting discomfort at times.

Upon entering the gallery the beauty of the work impresses first and draws the viewer in like flies to honey. Directly to the right "Icarus In Flight," the second of a three part series of tapestries referring to the story of Icarus, commands the wall. This 56" x 158" tapestry is primarily woven with silk and metallic threads, embellished with crystal beads. Many of the artist's interests including classical sculpture, anatomy, and feathers are shown in this impressive piece. The human form is woven in dizzying detail and the feathers of Icarus are lovingly depicted and incredibly dimensional.



"Kiss the Prince Coat," 32" x 69," 2004, tapestry woven silk and metallic thread, leather, black freshwater pearls, coral beads.  
Photo Credit: Janette Meetze

Many of the pieces in the show are based on a jacket shape influenced by ancient Chinese court textiles. These jackets are not wearable, as they are heavily embellished with pearls and beads and weigh an average of forty pounds each. They are made from separately woven pieces for the outside and inside which Riis describes as like a book, in that the cover is often quite different from the contents. Between the woven pieces a layer of leather provides strength and stability. White gloves are provided so that the outer layer can be pulled back to reveal the intricately woven interiors. "Kiss the Prince" and "Night Flight" coats are examples that deal with subjects from the natural world. The "Sacred Heart Coat" is comprised of eight separately woven layers showing the female chest on the outside. The coat opens to reveal the heart within. The most recent piece in the exhibit is the "Blue Tipped Emu Coat" which differs significantly from the others with its open interlacement of fiber and leather strips.



"Sacred Heart Coat" (8 layers), 22" x 44" x 3," 2005,  
tapestry woven silk and metallic thread. Photo credit: Janette Meetze

Another coat, "Congressional Constraint," is based on a fourteenth century Peruvian textile that Riis transformed into a straight jacket. Applied discs of woven elephants and donkeys are paired with woven boxing gloves. A fringe of more woven boxing gloves surround central figures of elephants and donkeys in straight jackets looking away from each other. The implied political statement and humor of this piece are clothed in a finely woven work with clear ethnic connections.

"Anatomy Tape," another unusual piece, is at first glance a colorful and pleasing abstract design. It was woven and the cartoon designed as a one-inch wide tape. Riis describes it as the effect that might be achieved if we took a potato peeler and starting at the top of the head peeled a one-inch strip down to the

feet. The strips are stitched together into a larger format that reveals the human body: a finger here, an eye there, muscle, skin and organs all woven in great detail.

*From Black to White* is a series of five portraits all woven in values of black and white. They show, part by part, a black face transformed into a white one. Simple and direct with no embellishment, this work stands out from the others on display.

On the back wall of the gallery are the four pieces in the *Locust Tapestry* series. Large and visually arresting, these four locusts speak eloquently of the artist's interest and fascination with the beauty of the natural world. The surfaces of these tapestries are richly woven and intricately detailed, yet they represent a creature bent on destruction. It is this combination of striking beauty, intricate detail, and uncomfortable commentary on the social concerns of the present, which seems to set the work of Jon Eric Riis apart. In this way an ancient tradition continues, is built upon, and transformed.



**Janette Meetze** lives in Bixby, Oklahoma where she weaves tapestries, writes a blog (<http://www.jmeetzestudiocommonthreads.blogspot.com>), and owns *The Fiber Studio* with tapestry supplies and classes available. Janette is a former art teacher with a degree in art history from the University of Florida.

## ATA News

### Board of Directors Election

Elections for new and renewing Board Members will take place starting May 25<sup>th</sup>. We are pleased to announce that Patricia Dunston has been nominated to replace Diane Wolf as Membership Chair. Renewing Board Members are Mary Zicafoose and Rosalee Skrenes. Watch your email for a link to vote. Those without email will be receiving a ballot in the mail.

## Tapestry Topics Themes & Deadlines

### *Working in a Series*

**Deadline: July 15th, 2013**

Submissions for this issue are closed. Theme Editor, [Debbie Herd](#)

### *Type in Tapestry*

**Deadline: October 1, 2013**

There are many historical and contemporary examples of type and lettering in tapestry, for example fifteenth century tapestries such as the 'Wild woman with unicorn' in which the figures are surrounded by a scroll of gothic lettering.

Type and lettering may be included as a logo or signature, a description or caption, or it may be part of the imagery, such as the lettering on a packet of dog biscuits. Type and lettering may be the main subject or simply one of components. It may be added after the weaving or part of the weaving.

Are you interested in type and lettering in tapestry? Do you include it in your work? If so, what form does it take? Some other questions: is it legible/readable (and is it intended to be so)? Is it technically difficult or challenging? Is it woven in or added on or both? Why do you include it? And lots more...Contact Theme Editor, [Lindsey Marshall](#).

### *All Things Green*

**Deadline: January 15, 2014**

This can encompass various meanings of the word, from seeing green, being green to thinking green. For example:

- Using the color green in your work.
- Green with envy - work that inspires or places where tapestry work is honored and appreciated.
- Green practices in terms of dyeing and the studio facility.
- Green as a reference to being new to tapestry or new to some aspect of tapestry.
- Being green – exploring environmental issues in the content of one's work.
- The greenback - a discussion of pricing and selling work as a way to earn that green paper we need in order to do our work.

Contact Theme Coordinator, [Louise Halsey](#).

Do you have an idea for a theme? Would you like to be a Theme Coordinator? Email:

[newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Tapestry Topics Committee

**Editor:** Carolyn Furnish

**Copy Editor:** Robbie LaFleur

**Layout:** Mary Lane

**Proofreader:** Katzy Luhning



"Anatomy Tape," Jon Eric Riis, 66" x 36", 2009, tapestry woven metallic thread, woven in strips and sewn together. Photo credit: Ann Schneider.

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