



# Tapestry Topics

*A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today*

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## Letter from the Directors

**By Alex Friedman and Christine Laffer**

In the last issue we mentioned the Board Retreat that we held in Seattle over a long April weekend. It was the first time we had tried this and all the board members and most of the Committee chairs were able to attend. Not only was it a great opportunity to talk face to face rather than by emails, it was great to get to know each other better. We had a lot of fun and will try to have a meeting on an annual basis as we all felt it was a very productive time. Many of the projects we are currently working on were fine tuned at this meeting.

As a way to meet part of our mission and to encourage younger weavers, ATA will now offer a student membership at \$25 per year. As a further incentive we have planned a **Student Tapestry Award** to be offered each spring to students at colleges with fiber programs. See page 16 for the details. We think it will be a very exciting addition to our offerings.

The mentoring program has been renamed **Distance Learning** to more accurately describe the program. So far, seven artists have taken advantage of this opportunity to continue learning about tapestry. This program can address any aspect including designing skills as well as specific technical issues. At \$30 for a year's session it must be one of the best bargains around. Contact Priscilla Lynch at [jplynch99@comcast.net](mailto:jplynch99@comcast.net)

We imagine you are in the final stretch to get your entries finished for the **ATB 6** Exhibition **November 29** deadline. It is fast approaching.



Marie Kovacs, "Reflection," 12" x 18", see page 12.

continued...

This year three entries per person may be submitted with no size limitations, so pluck up your courage and enter the competition. Please help us to encourage lots of entries to this Biennial. We want it to be the best ever.

The plans for the ATA educational retreat at Convergence in Grand Rapids, Michigan are well underway. Titled "The Way In: Exploring new Strategies for Tapestry Design," it provides a choice of three teachers to lead the course. Another offering is planned for ATA's Special Interest Session called "Exhibition: from A to Z." Be sure to save the first weekend in July '06 for all the events.

You may see ATA "in the news" more. Becky Cook, our new Promotion Chair, is always looking for ways to get the word out about ATA's many activities. If you have suggestions for periodicals or newsletters please contact her at [atabeckyvt@yahoo.com](mailto:atabeckyvt@yahoo.com).

Finally, the second year of the Biennial will fall into 2007 which is ATA's 25th year. We are planning some exciting events to coincide with this silver anniversary. There is always room for more people to be involved. In fact, we have created a new position. Joan Griffin is the Volunteer Coordinator. If you have a skill, an interest or even a lot of energy and enthusiasm ATA could use your help. Please contact her at [joan@joangriffintapestry.com](mailto:joan@joangriffintapestry.com).

Happy weaving,  
Alex and Christine

## Topics

By Linda Rees

Thanks go to Micala Sidore for a stellar issue as guest editor of *Tapestry Topics*. She delivered the goods and no doubt people will be referring back to various revelations in it for a long time to come.

Contemporary tapestry weaving in the United States has frequently been considered a "grass roots" endeavor. This "do-it yourself" sensibility now seems to have engendered a new layer, the estab-

lishment of weaving studio galleries. We have reviews of recent exhibits in two such studio-based galleries. Also, two other interesting exhibits are featured, that of Lithuanian weaver, Feliksas Jakubauskas and the other a collection of Navajo weavings curated by D.Y. Begay and Jennifer McLerren, Ph.D.



Ulrika Leander, center, Opening night at CTW Studio & Gallery on June 11, 2005. See article page 13.

### About the authors

First time writers for the newsletter include **D.Y. Begay** a fourth generation weaver with a B.A. in fine arts and arts education from Arizona State University. She exhibits extensively and serves as consultant to museums and private collections. **Dr. Jennifer McLerran** is a museum curator and teacher at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, specializing in 20th Century Native America Art. ATA member, **Dorothy Clews**, an experienced tapestry artist living in the outback of Queensland, Australia, is a graduate of the extensive Warnambool TAFE correspondence course, and co-organized the first ATA online exhibit with Linda Wallace. **Dr. Ruta Pileckaite**, an art critic, historian, and lecturer is currently chief curator of the Contemporary Art Information Center of the National Lithuanian Art Museum. She has acted as a curator for several exhibitions of contemporary applied art internationally. **Alana VanDerwerker** is a poet/painter and former professional weaver and art teacher. She copy edits for a national antiques trade magazine and lives in Waldoboro, Maine.

## Next Issue: Pushing Techniques.

We will feature mixed-media, eccentric warp techniques, non traditional materials, surface manipulations - whatever uncharacteristic means artists are employing in conjunction with tapestry techniques. We want to hear from the adventurous or multi-faceted artist in our midst. See the following paragraph for deadline information.

The submission deadline for newsletter articles is changing to the 1st of October, January, April and July. We discovered a surprising fact that there is a postal holiday just at the time each issue is printed and mailed. Hopefully moving the deadline up two weeks will simplify distribution, especially for Ellen Ramsey who capably is in charge of the printing and mailing, in addition to her many other functions for ATA.

## Opinions voiced.

A few readers expressed concern that in her article about Michelle Lester, featured in the Spring, 2005 issue, Alex Friedman misrepresented Lester's teaching credentials. For the record, they would like it known that Michelle was an excellent teacher who revealed a good understanding of the tapestry technique throughout her career. As Nell Znameiowski stated: "She was a gifted teacher who gave generously of her time and knowledge and in turn the students gave her devotion and admiration." (p. 6, TT. Spring 2005)

It is still quite possible that she did not perceive a need to instruct weavers she employed to work on her tapestries, perhaps assuming that any prior weaving experience would supply them with the skills to do tapestry. From my position as editor, having learned to weave at a university in 1965, Alex's comment seemed an appropriate assumption. Unless Michelle had specialized in tapestry techniques, she would most likely have developed her skill both in weaving and teaching tapestry through experience after she began using it as her medium. Both observations seem compatible with the times, that she learned the dynamics of tapestry by doing it, not in a formal setting, and that she became an excellent instructor in workshops and classes.

## Narrative Options

By Archie Brennan

One tapestry of major influence? I have a list: All have influenced me powerfully at various times in my career. Although at times one becomes the most provocative to my thinking, all maintain a continuously rewarding presence. When I first visited Bayeux almost 50 years ago, the narrow, 200-meter-long pictorial story set my mind reeling. Could this embroidered narrative have been stitched as the news of the events came back from the sources, thus becoming a visual diary of the unfolding events, with no knowledge of how this narrative might develop as history came to pass? If so, what if the Normans had lost at the climax, the 1066 battle of Hastings? Would the 200 meters of recorded history have been discreetly bundled up and allowed to disappear? Maybe the English were also embroidering their version of events, a work that was quietly destroyed after the lethal arrow killed King Harold. This brought a question to my mind-could one create a work, a tapestry, as an open-ended journey without knowing the final destination?

This was a provocative thought for a young tapestry designer/weaver, not the least because just the previous day I had made my first visit to study the "Acts of the Apocalypse". Inevitably the linear developing characteristics of these two huge tapestry series linked up in my head, leaving a profoundly intriguing possibility for a creative, open approach to making tapestry. As analysts subsequently assemble what facts exist about their making, we know that they were the team efforts of creative people, somewhat akin to the then evolving tapestry workshops where artists, weavers, spinners, dyers, and stitchers worked creatively together. In the case of the Apocalypse grouping there is little doubt that the existence of illuminated manuscripts about this enormous theme certainly acted as an initial design source. Such narrative manuscripts with their format of sequential 'frames' were surely the basis for a number of tapestry sets during the early centuries. These 'story board' art works were the forerunners of today's comic strips. Further, we can argue that the weavers of such teams clearly had inventive and creative input within the woven details of each frame. How much they influenced

the broader composing and organization of the whole frame or sequence of frames, I suspect, was not black and white policy, but varied. These questions have been of fundamental significance to my involvement in the making and teaching of tapestry.

Around 1950, I studied a number of 16th century Swiss/German tapestries. Besides the excitement of discovering techniques and skills that were not part of my more classic training, I saw that working along a relatively narrow warp that would hang as a long horizontal piece, produced a surprisingly open, creative journey along the warp. It seemed that this long narrow proportion encouraged subject matter such as the seasons, the 12 months or a linear narrative where the completed tapestry was read left to right. This meant you didn't have to make a balanced, all encompassing composition that is characteristic for a 5 x 8 proportion. Besides, I observed that even if the weaver (a nun in a convent?) was not also the designer, she had huge input into the evolving imagery.

Each time I visit the Cluny Museum in Paris, I respectfully nod at "The Lady and the Unicorn," then rush to a set of tapestries that have thrilled, absorbed, amazed, intrigued and provoked me with undiminished enthusiasm – "La Legende de Saint Etienne." The series consists of twelve tapestries, all 5 1/2 feet high with a combined width of about 140 feet. The relatively short height encourages a closer inspection of the detail and intimacy of the incidents. The evolving story, the entire journey along the walls, the endless imaginative handling of each major or minor passage offer a non-stop feast of creative return.

Near my home in New York City, the Cloisters house the 16th century set, "The Hunt of the Unicorn." Susan (Martin Maffei) and I visit regularly. In the 30 years since I first saw them *live*, there are still endless new passages, new details to discover and savor. This group of individual tapestries offers a rewarding yet different way to impart a narrative. Like the preceding tapestries described, the "Hunt" series have a clear left to right "read" in their content. It is subtle yet quietly present. At the right hand edge, they have a "looking back" reversal that alternately offers each tapestry as a unique self-contained piece. Each of these sophisticated and

complex tapestries is filled with incident, complete in itself, that presents one chapter of the story. The pictorial content is wonderfully organized with never a weak passage, but the great reward for me now are the seemingly endless minor details, each of small significance to the bigger picture, but giving so much. We recently had the opportunity to examine such intimate passages on one of the two incomplete sections closely from front and back. I found the eloquence and handling of these *minor* details simply overwhelming.

I have never been enthusiastic about the over-extensive use of hatching as a technique to describe and express pictorial form. There are glorious examples where its use is truly appropriate but over the centuries it became the automatic technique to deal with undulating form, employed at almost every opportunity. Other options are most clearly expressed in the "Devonshire Hunting Tapestries" at the Victorian & Albert Museum in London. The wish to depict the highly decorative fashions of the courtly and humble people of the 15th century brought about a range of other inventive means for handling form, style and pattern. This is the great contribution revealed by these four huge tapestries. The illusion of textiles already woven moved me in the 1960's to adapt this for imagery of clothing and fabric in my time. It is a graphic pursuit that is still undiminished, with new associations and questions that regularly surface in my head and my work. The ambiguity of the overall tapestry cloth that also carries illusions of varying surface materials, weaves and patterns is what sets up the curious and delightful contradictions between image, form, and flatness.

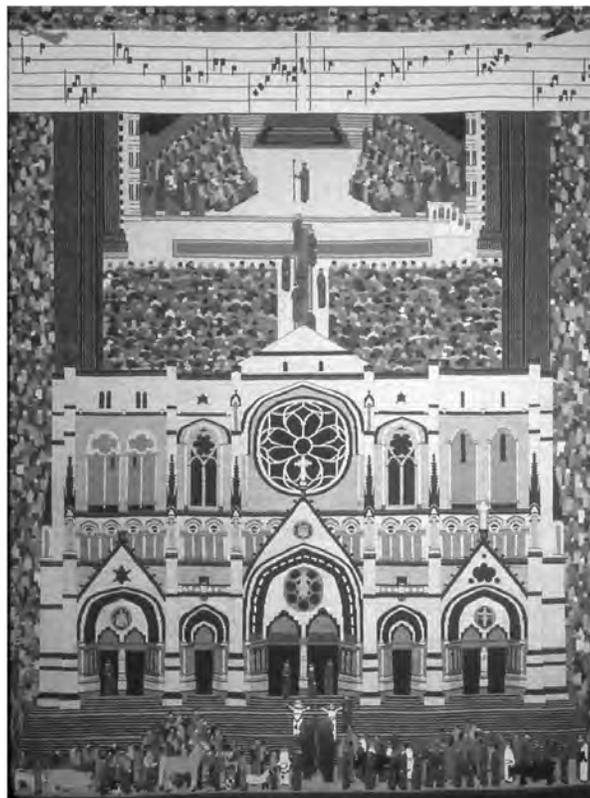
More recently, tapestries from Harrania by Egyptian "children" have had a huge influence around the tapestry world, and on me. Firstly the artist/designer/weaver and the maker are one and the same person. Today, this role is almost the norm after centuries of teamwork production. Most of the Harrania tapestries are woven from the front, and from bottom to top. I have adopted this approach in about nine out of ten tapestries I weave, reveling in the sequence of meeting incidents of imagery, particularly on a preferred format that is a vertical shape, more narrow in width than height. This is arguably the more awkward way, where the process exposes *steps* and *slits*, and it raises more questions

in the making. But the open journey up the warp, with no pre-planned design, makes this approach a living, risky, unknown adventure that is so rewarding. Think Bayeux; think Swiss/German and think of Tom Phillips and Reg Smythe.

Tom Phillips, a London painter, collaborated with us at Edinburgh's Dovecot Studios. After a successful tapestry together we set out with a 2 feet width of warp; an indefinite warp length, and a title "Complete Colour Catalogue." Throw a pair of dice to let chance decide choice and amount of each color and that was our *design*. It made a tapestry that was as revealing to me as any I have made since its completion in 1973.

Where do Reg Smythe and his *Andy Capp* character fit in? Smythe had no connection with tapestry and Andy Capp knows beers better than arts. But as a 20th century development of the medieval manuscripts and Bayeux or Angers format, Smythe's unique ability to organize his story telling sequence along the frames was a very special skill. He would set up a linear *reading*, pulling the viewer along the frames with an almost musical rhythm that is so important to any creative weaver, whatever the format.

All this is leading to Susan Martin Maffei's "Blessing of the Animals." Although originally trained to prepare a fully resolved color cartoon before any weaving took place, for more than a decade Susan has moved towards a free, open and unplanned woven journey on the loom that I find truly remarkable. This 1999 tapestry reaches a peak in her reconsideration of that earlier approach. First, without question, it is meant to hang, not only physically but visually. The pictorial content of this



Susan Martin Maffei, "Blessing of the Animals"  
79" x 59", 1997, photo by Susan Martin Maffei

cloth accepts, echoes and exploits this characteristic, all quite in contrast to the even tension inherent in mural and flat canvas painting.

It uses the final top passages of weaving, which depict a host of angels above a horizontal musical score, to both *fix* the hanging edge and close off the narrative. Now look at how the varying height of each band of incidents, from the base where the weaving began on upwards, plays a role in acting visually as a *weight* to counter the fixed top edge. All set the scene for the vertical upwards journey so that one *reads* the tapestry firstly upwards, then subsequently up and down in order to examine

the content, the subject matter in detail. See how the story grows as the people and animals gather to move up the steps. There is interplay between each incident, each passage, and interplay in size, color, and diverse handling of detail. The illusions of spatial depth countered by the flatness of the Cathedral facade consistently accepts and establishes the picture plane -- in fact uses it, never denying its physical reality, a flat surface. Here flatness works as an ever-present reality that, consciously or not, has an even greater presence than it has in painting because of the very *clothness* of a tapestry.

Finally, Susan wove the tapestry without any design preparation, no paper cartoon, so that each decision about content and narrative she made was stimulated and triggered by the completed weaving below. From the very beginning, everything was generated on the loom by the nature and intense creative commitment to an unknown journey that was provoked, above all, by an event that had great significance for the maker. It is undeniably, an important tapestry.

# Harmony of Opposites in the Textiles of Feliksas Jakubauskas

By Ruta Pileckaite, Ph.D

Translated by Agne Narusyte

Revised version of text that was originally published in the local Lithuanian cultural magazine "Kulturos barai", 2005, No 2

In January, "Spaces," a retrospective exhibition of the famous contemporary Lithuanian textile artist, Feliksas Jakubauskas, took place in the Vilnius Picture Gallery (Lithuanian Art Museum). Twenty-one tapestries were exhibited from almost a hundred large-scale works he produced.

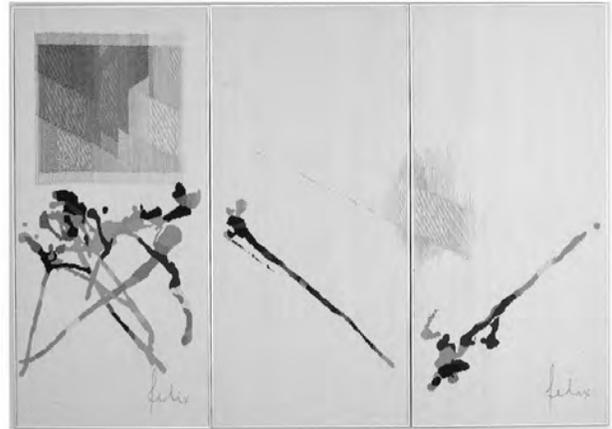
The retrospective at the national Art Museum was the first time these works from almost three decades were presented. It ranged from the artist's course work, a copy of a detail from an 18th century tapestry, which he made while still studying in Budapest, to the most recent diptych, "Two Worlds According to Matthew," finished only a few weeks ago. Three of his early tapestries "The Glass Bead Game" (1985), "A Black Cloud above My Valley" and "An Old Fabric" (both 1987) were also exhibited. Acquired by the Lithuanian Art and National Museums, they belong to the history of 20th century Lithuanian textile.

F. Jakubauskas started his art studies in Kaunas, at the Stepas Zukas Technical School of Applied Arts, where he received his diploma in stained glass. He intended to study the same subject at the State Art Institute, Vilnius. However, students were accepted to the stained glass department only every second year; so Jakubauskas started studying textiles. He did not drop it later because, as he says, he "did not want to wander". After two years, he won a competition and continued his studies in textile at the Budapest Applied Arts Academy (1976-1980, specialising in tapestry).

Throughout the twenty-five years of his creative activity, the artist has had more than ten solo exhibitions including at the Horda Museum, Bergen, Norway (1991); the Mykolas Zilinskas Art Gallery, Kaunas, Lithuania, (1998); and Gallery 526 in Lodz, Poland, (2001). He participated in more than 170 various textile and applied arts exhibitions, competitions and symposia in 25 countries. F. Jakubauskas is, undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable personalities in contemporary Lithuanian textiles, a Lithuanian artist who has represented the achievements in this area in international exhibitions.

F. Jakubauskas started his career in the beginning of the 1980s, when applied art had reached its zenith here. Many interesting artists were active in the Lithuanian art scene with a variety of styles. They were winning prizes in Baltic and all Union exhibitions. The young artists of that time found an environment of very high standards. They were encouraged to strive for high artistic quality, not to withdraw in the local artistic environment, but to be interested in changes occurring in the international art scene. Then Lithuania became independent. To tell the truth, the situation of applied arts changed dramatically in the country at that time. Changes brought only disaster and misery to some. To others they opened new vistas, possibilities to join the art scene of the world.

F. Jakubauskas was one of those who managed to use opportunities. The list of his exhibitions is impressive today; it was filled in many cases without waiting for encouragement, but due to the artist's enthusiasm. Soon his talent combined with persistence helped to gain international acclaim and prestigious awards. In 1997, F. Jakubauskas was awarded First Prize at the biennial exhibition "Fiberart International" in Pittsburgh; in 1998, the



Feliksas Jakubauskas, "Up-Forward-Down-Back"  
triptych, 130cm x 180cm, 2004,  
wool, silk, mixed technique.

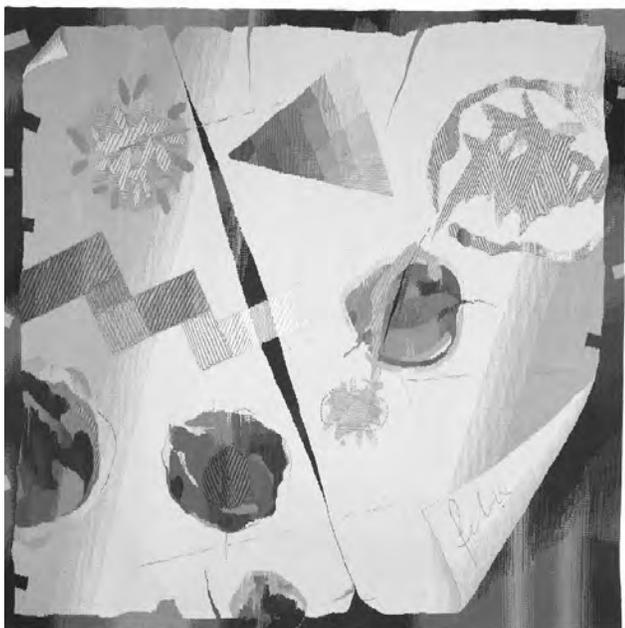
Silver medal at the 9th International Triennial of Tapestry, Łódź; and in 2003, the Golden Dragon award at the 2nd Cheongju [South Korea] International Craft Biennale. In 1998, he and the ceramic artist Aldona Salteniene were among the first representatives of applied arts to receive the National Prize for Culture and Arts in Lithuania.

Next to the stunning career, what else is fascinating in the work of F. Jakubauskas? First of all, it is his sensitivity for colours and ability to find harmony in contrasts. The artist, seemingly, likes strange kitsch pink and blue. However, he is able to combine them subtly with other colours. Alternatively, he finds such shades that are like sounds in their lightest tune. The artist is convinced that "there are no bad colours". Once we were discussing who he would be, if he were not a textile artist. We both agreed that it would most probably be a painter. "Observation of nature helped me to develop the sense of colour and harmony," he says.

Contrasts are also characteristic of the surface textures of F. Jakubauskas's works. The areas of coarse, diagonal weaving are combined with thinner textures and gem-like surfaces as if gently polished by a jeweller's hand. This is why the artist mentions that impressionist painting originally influenced the formation of his style. Later a visit to Egypt and acquaintance with its cultural heritage inspired him. At the same time, his worldview was strongly affected by Oriental philosophy based on the interaction of *yin* and *yang*, also *The Glass Bead Game* by Hermann Hesse.

The harmony of opposites could be the creative credo of F. Jakubauskas. Rational form is filled with feelings and emotions; meticulous craftsmanship is matched by free improvisation and poetic titles like a light breeze of wind. Even the fact that F. Jakubauskas's works are highly esteemed among professionals and at the same time loved by people who know nothing about the subtleties of this craft exemplifies his balance of dualities. F. Jakubauskas's work and personality are multifaceted.

In terms of style, the artist's work should definitely belong to the expressionist tendency that has had, perhaps, the most remarkable tradition in the 20th century Lithuanian art. To be precise, it is its abstract version. Feliksas's works contain numerous personal experiences and meditations over the duality of existence. At the same time, they are filled with the wisdom of reconciliation, which is revealed through the lightness of colours and lines, the avoidance of oppressive forms. It is obvious when looking at his works that he not only attempts to express his



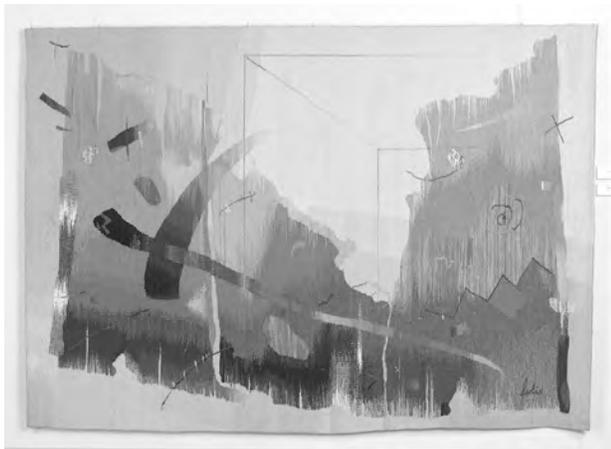
Feliksas Jakubauskas, "Day from Night"  
176cm x 176cm, 2004,  
wool, silk, mixed techniques.

thoughts, but also seeks a decorative impression. He combines several cultural traditions, classical and mixed techniques and different forms. Like in the work of many other Lithuanian artists, modern and post-modern characteristics have been fused here.

Besides that, Jakubauskas's art is exceptional because local textile traditions are entwined with global developments in contemporary textiles here. He was always interested in novelties; he had an opportunity to perceive the spirit of innovation while still studying in Budapest. However, they have never become a purpose in themselves. It is rather the opposite. His studies abroad consolidated his wish to preserve the national uniqueness of his work. The constantly repeating motifs of ethnographic sashes in tapestries by F. Jakubauskas, the monochrome range of colours of gray linen or a multitude of colors reminiscent of rural bed covers, as well as the use of wool and silk, widespread in folk fabrics, show links to the old Lithuanian textile.

continued...

At the same time, the artist's attention to the developments in contemporary textiles is obvious not from the use of installations or non-traditional materials, but from the signs of the present time added to classical tapestry. In the works of the early period, there are Oriental elements representing Eastern tendencies in European applied art of that time. Later emerge baroque reminiscences and signs of the "ethnographic" tendency. In the works of recent years, some metal elements appear, influenced by the techno style and bright futurist colours characteristic of the fashion at the turn of the millennium. However, F. Jakubauskas, in the same manner as the great reformer of textile, the French artist Jean Lurçat, preserves the flatness of textile throughout all his developments; while looking both contemporary and distinctive in style. It is impossible not to recognise his works or confuse them with others. Perhaps, this is why the notion of "modern classic" is used to characterise his art.



Feliksas Jakubauskas, "Games," 127cm x 175cm, 1995, wool, silk, Gobelin technique.

It is a shame that F. Jakubauskas who is following the tradition of modern textiles has no remarkable followers even in Lithuania yet. This is not only due to the fact that the artist has never taught at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts (although there were some short-term attempts), but also because it is difficult to imagine a young artist today weaving one tapestry for several months. The time and the speed of life are already different. In the whirlpools of its rapid flow, only the chosen may allow themselves a luxury to turn the weeks of exhausting toil at the loom into moments of pleasure in creation and meditation.

## "Weaving is Life"

By D.Y. Begay and Jennifer McLerran, Ph.D

*Iina'* is an extraordinary Navajo word that describes how you live, how life is carried out, and how life is respected in the Navajo world.

Weaving is *Iina'*.

Weaving is a way of life, it is beautiful, it is our thinking, it secures our well being, it consoles our feelings, and it perpetuates our traditions and womanhood.

"This is what you call *Iina'*."

D. Y. Begay

In 1987, Edwin Kennedy's collection of Navajo weavings was shown in "Song of the Loom: New Traditions in Navajo Weaving". A lavishly illustrated catalogue bearing the same title accompanied the exhibition, which originated at the Montclair Museum in Montclair, New Jersey, and traveled to The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. Because Kennedy was not credited with ownership in the exhibition or the catalogue, most viewers never knew who had amassed the collection. It was not until the weavings, along with his equally impressive Southwest Native American silverwork collection, were bequeathed to Ohio University in 1991 that their ownership became public.

Since then, the Kennedy Museum has undertaken the task of researching, documenting and conserving this extraordinary collection, making it available to others for study. In March of 2005 the Kennedy Museum devoted permanent gallery space to the collection. Textiles and silverwork that Edwin Kennedy acquired over a period of nearly 40 years will rotate through these galleries with a new exhibition every two years.

For the first exhibition in this new space, "Weaving is Life," we invited renowned Navajo weaver D. Y. Begay to serve as co-curator. Begay's extraordinary knowledge of textiles and her long affiliation with a wide network of Navajo weavers proved invaluable in organizing the show. As D.Y. explains in her reflections below, our aim as co-curators was to allow the weavers to speak for

themselves. The incorporation of videotaped interviews of multiple generations led to important insights and to a heightened appreciation of the role that weaving plays in Navajo women's lives.

Jennifer McLerran, Ph.D.  
Curator, Kennedy Museum of Art

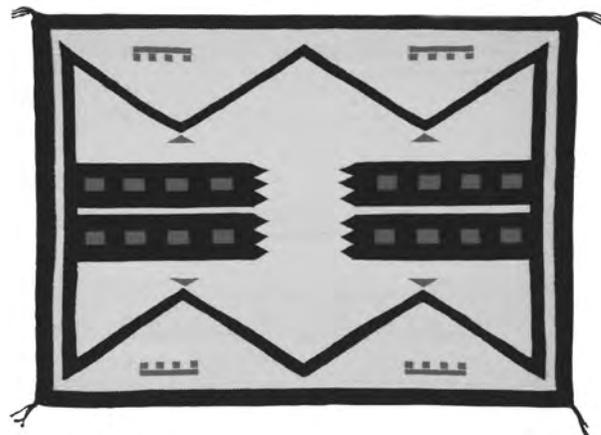
### "Weaving is Life": Development of an Idea

In November 2003, I was invited to examine the unique and comprehensive Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American weaving collection housed in the Kennedy Museum of Art at Ohio University. Since I have a passion for textiles, it would have been impossible for me to pass up the invitation, and I immediately accepted. I knew this would be an extraordinary opportunity to learn about a collection in which the majority of the weavings are seldom seen by the public, no less by Navajo weavers. I also realized this was a perfect chance to get my foot in the door to explore this exceptional assortment of work and to have a voice in how it might be best displayed.

I was enthralled with the textiles in this major collection, which includes some of the most rare and distinctive sandpainting designs incorporated into Navajo rugs. There are nearly 100 sandpainting weavings in the KMA collection depicting sacred design elements and images from various healing ceremonies. "It is, by all accounts, the largest single collection of sandpainting textiles in existence."

The grand prize of the collection is a sandpainting weaving by the late Hastiin Klah, (KMA#91.023.172). This weaving, which was the last weaving done by Klah, took my breath away. I have examined many sandpainting rugs in many museums across the country, but Klah's rug is aesthetically and technically superb. His work illustrates an enormous beauty in form and in spirit.

I also had a personal mission to survey the rugs for inspiration and in hope of discovering something rare or unusual. Uncharacteristic weaving techniques, designs or even symbolism are sometimes unveiled only by another weaver's eyes. After examining the collection, the museum curator asked me for suggestions on the best way to exhibit these textiles. After viewing a vast number of beautiful weavings, I was captivated by three names: Mary Henderson Begay,



D. Y. Begay, "Cheyenne Style," 25-1/2" x 35", 2002, natural (undyed) handspun and vegetal-dyed handspun wool. Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American Collection, Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University. KMA #2005.05.01

Irene Clark, and Lillian Taylor. Each of these women have handsome pieces in the collection and are still actively weaving Navajo rugs today. In addition, each of them have mothers and daughters who are also weavers.

I began to formulate ideas of bringing together the three generations of weavers from these three families. These women are all prominent weavers who have distinctive and superb weaving skills. They are the bearers of the Navajo weaving tradition, and I believe that the woman themselves can best present their stories in their own voices. By bringing these weavers together to present their own stories in their own voices, the KMA creates an opportunity for them to approach the museum world to explore its possibilities and to share their talent with others.

"Weaving is Life" originated with these notions. This presentation of the textiles and the stories of three families of weavers offers a history of Navajo rugs, along with a technical analysis of the origin of the colors, designs, techniques and other facets of Navajo weaving culture.

### ***K'e*: Navajo Relational Identity**

In Navajo culture *k'e* is your identity. *Ke'* gives you a sense of who you are and how you relate to your family, friends, and community. To a Navajo, *Ke'* is extremely important. [Marks, or glottal stops, in different places are determined by the speaker's enunciation.]

continued...

Each one of the weavers represented in "Weaving is Life" is related to me in one way or another, either as a grandmother, mother, sister or daughter. The three families included in the exhibition come from some of the major clans: The Ta'baahi Dine', Haastlhi, Kinyaa'aanii, Totsoni, and Ma'iideeshgiizhnii people. I myself am born to the Totsoni people. By using our clans, we identify our relationships with others. For example, during the interview process Glenabah Hardy announced that, "I am a Totsoni, so you are my daughter."

Based on our clanship relation, I have developed a unique connection with each of the weavers and acknowledge each one of them as a member of my family. This means I will never be alone, I will always be able to talk with someone somewhere. On any day I am always welcome to visit any of these women and have coffee or talk about the progress of a weaving project.

### Gathering the Weavers' Stories

The video interview process was conducted in the Navajo language so the weavers could best tell their stories. The decision to use our language, Navajo/Dine' bizaadi, for the interviews was very gratifying. Not only is our language beautiful and descriptive, but only Navajo words can convey an accurate and true picture of why we weave. Personally, when I speak in Navajo I am most comfortable and feel I am best able to manipulate the words to describe my experience with the loom, the yarn, and designs.

Speaking Navajo allowed a comfortable territory to express our ideas, our emotions, and our stories. Sometimes making a statement or expressing a specific concept is best achieved in Navajo, and in some interviews Navajo was the only language spoken. I



Irene Clark, "Crystal Wall Hanging," 48" x 72", 2005, vegetal-dyed commercial wool. Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American Collection, Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University. KMA #2005.05.01

believe that, to achieve a first rate and accurate representation of these artists, it is crucial to allow Native voices to tell their own stories. I honor the importance of allowing the weavers behind the looms to communicate what is most important to them, to their families and their beliefs.

The organization of the questions asked in the interviews unfolded in a natural and comfortable order. For example, in the Navajo way, a person will first explain who they are, what their clans and relationships are, and then address the questions. I believe this approach to the interview process allowed for a true and valuable Navajo aesthetics.

The museum film crew visited each weaver in her own natural environment. These locations ranged from a small traditional hogan located in the high desert of northern Arizona to a

more modern adobe situated near a mesa. The conversations with each family covered many facets of how each weaver learned to weave, how they observe weaving traditions, how they fit into their communities and the importance of preserving the weaving customs and passing this knowledge on to the next generation.

I have learned a lot of things from interviewing the weavers, especially from the grandmothers just by the presentations of their stories, what they believe and how important it is to them, how important it is to pass on the knowledge. There is a great lesson to be learned by listening to each of the weavers talk about how important it is to know how to weave, to think about the process, to question who is going to carry on the tradition of weaving. I have learned that it is very important for each weaver, for each person in the family, to really hold onto those traditions. I have heard this over and over again from the grandmothers I worked with.

One of the most important things you can do in any project is stress that the people, the culture—whether it is Navajo, Hopi, Pima—is still alive today. These people are still alive today. They live in homes just like you. They travel just like anybody else in this world. That is very important. You have to try and bridge that gap.

The culture is still very strong. The language is still very strong. I am bilingual. Navajo is my first language, and I switch back and forth. I have conversations with my dad in Navajo, and then I get a phone call from a museum and I talk in English. You have to bridge that gap. Talk to members from the communities, talk to people that are the weavers, that are the silversmiths, that are the basketmakers, that are members from the community, because they have something to share.

"Weaving is Life" adheres to the goal of Edwin Kennedy to use his extensive collection of Navajo textiles as an educational tool to perpetuate Navajo weaving traditions. The Kennedy Museum of Art enthusiastically embraced the idea of using Native people in the planning and decision making to ensure the exhibition accurately tells the stories of the weavers, using their words, their voices. This productive collaboration between non-native museum art specialists and Navajo weavers is a natural bridge for research, teaching, and passing on the knowledge and significance of these historical weavings. The exhibition will provide a valuable resource for the study of Navajo traditions by students, scholars, visitors, and other weavers. In a more aesthetic sense, the textiles on display should simply be enjoyed, admired, and studied for their beauty, for their various uses, and for their cultural significance.

Examples of the special knowledge and information these weavers possess have been gathered in

conversations and interviews. I am grateful that we have been able to bring together for future reference some of the weavers' intrinsic ideas and guiding forces that have never been recorded formally or written down. I know first hand that many Navajo weavers are very excited about the rugs in this collection. They are interested in learning the history of how these weavings came into the museum's possession and the role Mr. Kennedy played in establishing this permanent loan. The weavers want to examine the individual pieces closely to determine weaving structure, content, and design. This close contact

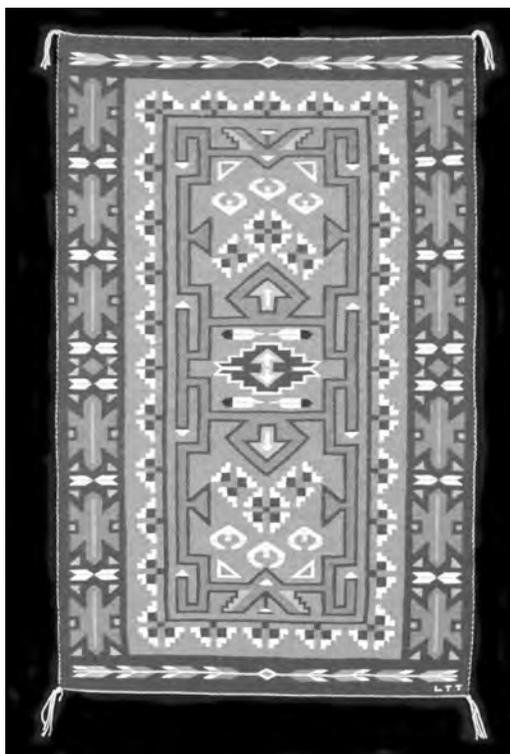
will allow for Navajo aesthetics and will provide additional valuable knowledge and stories about the rugs.

"Weaving is Life" will implement a valuable resource for the recognition of Navajo traditions for students, scholars and admirers. Our weaving traditions have lives, they have special qualities that invoke mindful tasks to create the unthinkable lines, shapes, and colors.

---D.Y. Begay, Co-Curator

After DY voice-recorded English translations of the Navajo/Dine' bizaadi, a complete written transcript was compiled and archived for use by researchers and weavers. In addition to two overview videos in the galleries, there are interactive touch-screens for each of the three families containing video extracts from the interviews with each of the weavers. Viewers can hear family members talk on subjects from a menu. The portions that are in

Navajo have subtitles. Family notebooks also display family photographs along with interview segments and photos. These notebooks can be accessed on the museum web site, [www.ohiou.edu/museum](http://www.ohiou.edu/museum). The exhibit will be on display at the Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University, through March, 2007



Lillie Taylor, "In the Path of the Four Seasons," 31" x 48", 2004, natural (undyed) handspun wool, vegetal-dyed handspun wool, and aniline-dyed handspun wool. . Edwin L. and Ruth E. Kennedy Southwest Native American Collection, Kennedy Museum of Art, Ohio University. KMA #2004.08.01

## Tapestry in Maine

by Alana VanDerwerker

"Tapestry in Maine" is a small but intriguing exhibition in the rural town of Waldoboro, Maine. The jurying was done by Lissa Hunter, a well-respected, nationally known artist from Portland, Maine, who creates thoughtful low-relief collages using coiled basketry techniques. The show opened at the Old Point Comfort Gallery on June 16th and runs until the end of July, 2005. The gallery is part of the studio and home of Sara Hotchkiss, a master rug weaver. Hotchkiss uses the west end of her gabled, cape cod house as a gallery. This well-lit, long room with its relatively small white wall spaces creates a naturally intimate presentation but necessitates choosing small pieces for display.

The most satisfying combination of masterful technique and striking design in this show is a 12" x 18" silk, ramie, cotton, and red cedar piece, "Reflection." Maria Kovacs of Livermore, Maine, has used half a slice of convoluted red cedar trunk as her inspiration for a beautifully woven reflection of its image. The thread colors match the rings of the heartwood and outer layers of the half-butterfly or flower-like shape of wood. They are hung as she specified, close but not touching and slightly off a horizontal center. The wood is hung above on a flat hook and the tapestry below on Velcro so they freely float and interplay as shapes without a border. The play on form and fiber rewards close inspection and repeated long looks. It would be an easy piece to keep company with. The backside of her woven shape is expertly finished with rewoven ends so that the curved edge is clean and flat. Two other pieces by Kovacs in this show also are woven very well, with wavy locking interplays of greens in wool on cotton in an 11" x 20" format to interpret her impressions of aerial views of summer fields, "Ein Augenblick 2" and "Ein Augenblick 3." They are presented simply by folding the tapestry over Foamcore.

Priscilla May Alden of East Boothbay, Maine, is represented with three pictorial tapestries of wool and silk, inspired by the ocean in waves of color and injections of sparkling yarn. "Dancing Starfish" is 16" x 20" and "Magic Carpet IX" is 22" x 13". "Rocky Coast" is the most pictorial with triangular shapes in the top and bottom borders and is 23" x

20". Her work is nicely framed and presented on black background and neatly woven.

Two small delightful surprises in the form of woven purses are presented on a pedestal with sea-smoothed stones and shells. The wool and silk pictures of a loon and of ducks are charming and finished with nice touches: metal beads on the edges of one and a metal button that is the clasp on the other; and long labor-intensive straps. They are priced far below expectation for the amount of fine work Dolores Broberg of South Portland, Maine, has done. "Winter Water" and "Home at the End of the Day" are small but powerful and show a traditional and useful side of tapestry combined with her artistry.



Delores Broberg, "Winter Water"

Bonnie Eadie of Standish, Maine, takes her inspiration from important events in her life and spends the necessary time to commit her appreciation to her pictorial vision. A trip to Guatemala, for instance, inspired her use of colors and border treatment of a rendition of St. Francis and his great friend Brother John. Her straight-forward design, 26" square, takes on an old and friendly feeling in the juxtaposition of the priests with birds in the trees. Likewise, her images in "Chess Players," a charming smaller scene of boys playing chess by the shore on Monhegan Island on a board suspended between them, has a timeless quality. "Chess Players" is nicely woven in wool with fine use of subtle gradations. Eadie's impression of "Stanley," a personable cat, oozes charm and is presented in delicately modulated threads with likewise rendered flowers in Stanley's garden. Eadie comes close to painterly technique in yarns and threads.



Bonnie Eadie. "St. Francis & Brother John," 26" x 26"

Norma Godwin of Portland, Maine, has the least amount of time to weave and her single work, "RedLine" is a 12" x 18" presentation of abstracted flowers. She has a nice color sense. The finishing of her piece was not as professional as others in this show. Susan Perrine of Woolwich, Maine, is represented with two shawls that utilize some tapestry techniques. The shawls are lovely, subtle additions to the show, one being in cotton and the other in wool,



Susan Perrine, Shawl

soy fiber, and mohair. They are in natural color and are full of understated grace.

Four of the weavers were present at a "Weave-In" on June 25—Broberg, Eadie, Kovacs, and Perrine. The weave-in, a deliberate reminiscence of and reference to the happenings of the 1960s and 70s, was the way Sara Hotchkiss invited participation of tapestry weavers with all levels of expertise to learn from one another. For a single day, under ancient oaks and a white, freestanding awning swagged in colorful cloth; nearly 50 people converged to share their enthusiasm for tapestry. Jan Austin came from Rhode Island, for instance, braving the unlikely heat for Maine's midcoast and traffic on a Saturday to join others from Massachusetts and from points afar in Maine. Stripped of bark, Sara painted a dead white pine tree a nice red then added warp strings as an invitation to weave webs communally. Most weavers brought their own tapestry looms and worked in the shade. Mimi Dunn, president of Maine Crafts Association, is not a weaver, but she brought an old tapestry loom and learned to warp it, after preserving the partially done, faded linen tapestry which had been left on it many years before. Framed, the fragment will look reminiscent of ancient work. Dunn appreciated the willingness of expert weavers to teach her techniques and give pointers. Many others had similarly good experiences at the successful beginning to an event Hotchkiss hopes to make annual.

## Elements: Mixed Media Show

By Courtney Ann Shaw, Ph.D

I was introduced to the work of Ulrika Leander while compiling my dissertation, *The Rise of the Artist/Weaver: Tapestry weaving in the United States from 1930-1990* published by the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1992. At the time of my research, she was weaving commissions, using a 14' custom tapestry loom. The thesis documents that Leander wove her first tapestry when she was 13 and lists her extensive course work in her native country, Sweden. Trained to be a textile consultant, she became the head of the textile department at Lund University until she moved to the United States in 1980, when her husband, a physicist, accepted a job in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Her largest tapestry at that time was 12' x15', woven for the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine. Another

was exhibited at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee. For several years she taught weaving at a museum in Oak Ridge to enhance local traditions. The Cumberland Mountains served as inspiration for her weaving.

Now she lives on Maryland's "Eastern Shore" near the town of Easton, in Bellevue, a very quaint area, with beautiful old churches, right next to the Tred Avon River and the ferry crossing to Oxford. When

her husband retired from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, she wanted to be closer to the East Coast and all that it offers in art. They started their quest in South Carolina and worked their way up the coast looking for the perfect spot—one that they could afford. The Eastern Shore reminded Ulrika of the flat, fertile area where she had lived in Southern Sweden. The house they found was built in 1896. It had been partially refurbished to include an antique and craft store which subsequently become Contemporary Tapestry Weaving/Studio & Gallery.

The studio and gallery are a wonderful open space (2000 sq.ft.), with a huge vertical loom, built by an engineer from Oak Ridge in 1986. There are wooden cubicles for her Scandinavian wools. Since 2001, she and her husband have created a yearly show not only of tapestry but sculpture and mixed media as well. Exhibiting artists might be local, national, or international. "Elements" is Ulrika's fourth show. One of her other shows displayed her collection of Norwegian and Swedish textiles from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

I met Ulrika for the first time at the opening of her "Elements: Mixed Media Show" on June 11th. She was dressed elegantly in a white silk blouse, and long black skirt, perfect for the sweltering weather outside. The show is an ambitious one of five artists - one weaver, one quilter, two sculptors, and herself.

Ulrika's tapestries vary from realistic to abstract depending on whether the work is for commission or speculative and personal. While flexible in style, her work continues to be quite large. She had three tapestries in "Elements." Quite a story lies behind "Ingrid and Gey." Ulrika was an adopted child. She went in search of her parents after her adoptive mother's death just four years ago as a result of finding correspondence with doctors who had helped with the adoption. She discovered that her biological mother had lived in Hollywood, California as Ingrid Clairmont and that her father, found by a detective, had died in Guatemala City. She was able to contact her half-siblings through the detectives. The result of this poignant story is a very colorful, very large and well designed abstract tapestry of three hearts, theirs and hers, two dancing people, double helices, x and y chromosomes, with profiles of how they had all changed over time.

"High Meadow" (see photo pg. 24) depicts flowers across the bottom with a spacious background. She has created several similar ones, which sell well. "Aniara" is created in a much finer weave. It is based on the famous Swedish poem of the same name written by Harry Martinsson in the 1940s about the "unbelievable" idea of men going into outer space. With a mythical bird in the foreground, a nude woman representing a vulnerable human being facing toward a new world. Warp threads have been divided to weave the female in a finer sett than the background.

Rounding out the exhibit, art of the found object includes both thought provoking sculptures by Helaine White and fanciful angels sculpted of wood and tin cans by Dottie Heimert. Arts and Crafts textiles of Kelly Marshall are expertly woven, their linearity reminiscent of Mondrian or the Bauhaus.



Ulrika Leander, "Ingrid and Gey" 66" x 144"

## "Portrait of Dr. Richard Ferry"

By Linda Rees

In the fall of 2003, I tried to locate the owner of the Richard Ferry portrait described in the book, *NEZHNIIE: Weaver & Innovative Artist*. After local phone inquiries produced no results, I sent out large mailings to Ferrys garnered from genealogical sites, all to no avail. In January of 2005 I donated a book for raffle at the winter luncheon of the Missouri Mycological Society. I had met the graphic designer for the book on a mushroom foray and thought folks



Muriel Nezhnie Helfman, "Portrait of Dr. Richard Ferry"  
24" x 26", 1978

might be interested in this joint effort by two members. The man whose name was drawn discovered the image of Dr. Ferry in the book as he sat down to have it signed. He exclaimed, "Oh, that was my partner; we shared an office!" and was able to give me the contact information for Ferry's widow, who is still in the St. Louis, Missouri, area. Thus, long after the fact, I can finally describe one of Nezhnie's most skillful weavings in detail and accurate color.

I am compelled to focus on the weaving, pass by pass, not the big picture, because it is so fascinating to consider at very close range. The description will be far clearer when looking at the color images on the ATA website, but because computers vary so much in

how colors look, it is essential to use qualifiers like green gray or light blue gray in the discussion.

The portrait is made up of a series of two-color patterns. Each pattern is essentially consistent wherever that combination occurs. The predominant color in setting the tone of the image is a medium value blue, somewhat greener than pure hue. It is used to create shadows in the face, to provide highlights in the hair, and by itself as the backdrop for the face. The following colors are used in various combinations: 2 blacks - a 3-ply wool and a thin cotton carpet warp; 2 grays - a light blue gray and a mid-value, greener gray; purple; plum or red purple; teal, and cream. Two tans are used in the face - an orange one and a grayer tan, verging on taupe. A third tan is used in the border. Pale lavender is used in two small areas in combination with plum.

I will only elaborate on a few of the patterns and how they are used. The granular quality of the highlighted areas is formed by following two passes of cream with one pick of orange tan then one pick of blue gray. Thus, the cream yarn goes over and back twice before the row of tan and gray. I am fascinated by the ability of the gray to visually blend in with the cream to create a subtle vertical ribbing at the same time that it unites with the tan to form a more definitive wavy horizontal stripe. This texture alludes to the coarse, weathered skin of a mature adult. It makes me smile, thinking of Chuck Close's image "Keith" that reveals all the pores in the massive face.

The combination of purple and teal is particularly recessive, providing a deeper shadow than when the purple is used with black. What appears as brown in the hair is really teal and plum woven as pick and pick. This pattern is also used to create the brow and also in the eye socket juxtaposed with the purple and thin black cotton combined as one yarn. Some portions here are also teal and purple pick and pick, effectively separating the brow from the recessed area just below it. The number of pattern changes in this area, and in the hair, is astounding. It seems very daring to even attempt to simulate three-dimensional form with multiple patterns in such a confined area yet Nezhnie attains very convincing eyes.

Besides being used with purple as a single yarn, the thin black cotton sometimes alternates with either the thicker black wool or tan yarn used in a modified

pick and pick patterns in the border. Since the thin yarn cannot cover as much surface area as the thicker yarn, small specks of warp color show through. Nezhnie chose to use six colors for warp. (See the online color photo of the reverse side) She played with which colors would show within a specific pattern. In some areas of the border, one color warp consistently shows through and at other times which color comes through is random. When alternated with the black wool, she often used two picks of wool to one pick of thin cotton that produce alternating pinpoints of many warp colors. The manipulations are very subtle elaborations that do not have a major effect on the image. What they do accomplish is that they give the viewer the opportunity to come into the tapestry for an intimate discovery of the yarn's path.



Ferry Detail #1

By giving the face a decided textural quality, Nezhnie achieved a surprisingly life-like image. Having a patterned border probably serves to balance the unrealistic nature of the face, an ingenious choice. Dr. Ferry looks vital, alert, and maybe a bit challenging to those around him. There is a sense of quick-witted intelligence in his eyes. His widow maintains that Nezhnie captured his inner self and his "larger-than-life" personality. His medical partner saw his sense of humor showing through. I see the portrait as Muriel's need to satisfy her own complex vision even in commission work. I am in awe of her commitment to discovering new ways to manifest that vision.

## What's Happening at ATA?

### ATA ANNOUNCES "STUDENT TAPESTRY AWARD"

ATA is pleased to announce a new Student Tapestry Award. This award will be offered annually to students who are currently enrolled in a college fiber program. Entering students will submit both visual and written material in a CD format.

The award will comprise a \$250 prize, a one-year student membership to ATA and a feature in the ATA newsletter. A panel of three ATA board members will make the final decision. Students should apply by April 15th each year, with the winner announced in time for recognition at their graduation. Full details of the Student Tapestry Award are posted on the ATA website.

In September we plan to promote this new prize to all the colleges that have fiber programs so they can notify their students. If you are interested in helping us to publicize this exciting new program please contact our new Promotions Chair, Becky Cook at [atabeckyvt@yahoo.com](mailto:atabeckyvt@yahoo.com).

ATA is also looking for a sponsor to underwrite the prize. Your support for new talent will be invaluable. (We can even consider naming the prize.) If you would be interested in supporting this very worthwhile endeavor, please contact Ellen Ramsey. [ew.ramsey@comcast.net](mailto:ew.ramsey@comcast.net)

### Developing New Layers: ATA Study Groups

By Dorothy Clews

In the paper "Critical Issues in Tapestry," found on the ATA web site, Sharon Marcus discusses ways to make changes in how we approach tapestry and addresses criticisms that have been made about contemporary tapestry. The formation of ATA Study Groups was one strategy that she suggests for overcoming the marginalization of tapestry.

The call for expressions of interest went out and three study groups were offered; our group was led

by Sharon Marcus to discuss "Conceptual Strategies of Contemporary Artists." Membership of each group was restricted to ten. This small number of participants allowed more discussion, on a level that enabled trust, respect, and personal connections to develop, though it did make a problem when several members could not participate due to "life" interrupting. However, it was in these times that a dialogue developed rather than isolated comments. I have included comments from members' emails to me about the study group which express the impact this level of involvement had on us.

Although Sharon Marcus was the group leader, she encouraged us to participate in how we wanted the group to operate. After a discussions started, we needed very little guidance. "Once the initial reading and looking at images happened . . . I found it a challenge to come up with some thread to start a discussion. Sometimes a challenge I felt almost daunting. Once under way, the discussions were fantastic!"

Our research/discussions led us to many interesting artists, including a few that are known as textile artists and others who work in many different media, such as Andrew Goldsworthy or Doris Salcedo. All the chosen artists explored the world of ideas, the concept first, then the way to realize that concept in a concrete form. We looked at how these artists used their ideas and further developed their concepts with techniques, materials, and ways of presentation that underlined the initial concept. "The most important part of the ATA discussion group (for me!) was to have serious discussions with other tapestry artists that did not centre on technical skill or marketing . . . this discussion group was by artists/about artists"

We soon decided that using Internet references and email attachments were the most efficient ways of exchanging 'readings,' which were made up of critical essays, interviews and artist essays on conceptual art. Group members were responsible for researching their chosen artist and distributing the readings electronically. The artists were sometimes chosen because of the influence they had on the previous artist studied, or else artists that group members were interested in. To initiate discussion, each member would forward two questions to the group on each artist. "...the discussions often opening up

new areas of inquiry for me . . .these "side trips" have helped me to look at tapestry and what I am."

Our group was diverse in its international membership, the members' art education, and their tapestry experience. This led to wide ranging discussions and many different points of view. "I found my view of my own work developing new layers." "The things that have been most rewarding to me . . . include . . . having the opportunity to have several viewpoints expressed for comparison and consideration, and the practice in writing out my thoughts on matters of artistic intent and results. And all while sitting comfortably at the computer!"

Often our discussions started with a question that led only to more questions, with no definitive answer, but I, for one will be going back to our forum in the future to see where else our discussions could lead. I found that there is much food for future thought.

Our particular course of study is almost at an end. Along the way some of us have gotten to know each other better and, thanks to Christine Laffer who has set up these forums, we have launched another initiative, an online Critique Group, commencing in September.

## **Library and Slide Registry News**

**By Joyce Hayes**

The slide library has been reorganized. First, we are improving our archival storage; all slides will be stored in archival boxes in a bank safety deposit box. After much discussion it was decided that this was the most responsible and economical approach. Secondly, Terri Stewart will be taking on the lending part of the Slide Registry. We have slide sets to rent for all the shows sponsored by ATA. If anyone would like to have their slides available for lending send 2 sets of slides to me, Joyce Hayes, and I will forward the rental set to Terri.

We have the beginnings of a library thanks to Helga Berry. Our intent at this time is to ask for donations of catalogues and books. If you are in a show or see an exhibition with a catalogue, ATA would much appreciate receiving a copy. We would like to lend out the beginning instructional books at

a reasonable fee to encourage new tapestry weavers. The one-of-a-kind or out of print books and catalogues would have a higher fee. All rental costs except for mailing are refundable when material is returned.

**Sale - Sale- Sale!** We are selling the ATB5 catalogue and all the remaining catalogues at 2 for \$20.00, 3 for \$30.00. Think about presents for friends, donations to community and university libraries, guild libraries, and inspiration for yourself. Education is a big part of who ATA is and this is a great way to get the word out.



By Jan Austin

While enjoying Courtney Shaw's article, "The Art of Louise Wheatley" (*Tapestry Topics* vol 31, Spring 2005) Pam Hutley of Queensland, Australia wondered, what exactly is a "roundel?"

*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Unabridged Edition) lists many definitions, but the relevant ones are: 1. Something round or circular. 2. A small round pane or window. 3. A decorative plate, panel, tablet or the like, round in form. The word comes from the Middle English "roundele," which comes from Old French "rondel," a derivative of "rond" (round). *The Oxford English Dictionary*, records the earliest relevant use as 1546, where it referred to an ornamental circle sewn or embroidered on a garment.

In the Glossary of Barty Phillips' book, *Tapestry*, a roundel is defined as "part of a design in the form of a circle, which usually has a motif or motifs within it." In the same book you can see a small photo of a Coptic roundel on the Contents page, with the caption reading in part "tapestry roundels were often incorporated into garments such as tunics."

Roundels were also used in stained glass. "The word roundel is used in stained-glass to describe a single piece of colourless or non-pot-metal glass, either round, square, rectangular, or oval, that is painted with a self-contained design. Roundels became less popular after the late Middle Ages." (*The Dictionary of Art*) I wonder, was it only the

word that was borrowed or the entire concept?

Photos of Coptic roundels can be found in F.P. Thomson's *Tapestry: Mirror of History*, on page 47. Plate 10 shows a purple woolen roundel, described in the caption as "a decorative feature of an undyed linen cloth in plain weave." Plate 11 is "one of several ornamental devices on, for example, a tunic." Another good source of information about roundels is the new book by Nancy Hoskins, *The Coptic Tapestry Albums of the Archeologist of Antinoé*, reviewed in *Tapestry Topics*, Spring 2005, and refer to the online version of the Winter 2004 issue for excellent photos in the article "Shaped Coptic Textiles" by Mary Lane.

Using the internet search engine Google, with "coptic roundel" as my search term, I found lots of interesting websites and photos. Try it yourself or just go directly to [www.copticmuseum.gov.eg](http://www.copticmuseum.gov.eg). Click on Gallery, then Textiles.

Hoskins, Nancy, Skein Publications and the University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2004

Phillips, Barty, *Tapestry*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 1994

Thomson, F.P, *Tapestry: Mirror of History*, Crown Publishers, NY, 1980

Ask ATA Guidelines: questions should be about some aspect of tapestry, and preferably thought provoking and of interest to other readers.

Email your questions to Jan at [nitsuanaj@yahoo.com](mailto:nitsuanaj@yahoo.com), or mail to: 191 Cedar St  
East Greenwich, RI 02818, USA

## Brasil/Olympia: ATA's Distance Learning Program

By Mary Lane

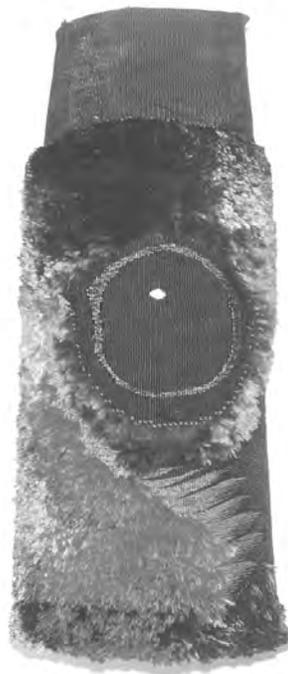
When Priscilla Lynch contacted me about volunteering for ATA's Distance Learning Program (then called the Mentoring Program), I agreed enthusiastically. The woman I worked with, Elke Hulse, lives in Brasil. She and I were the first "mentor couple." Elke's letter to me expressed a desire to learn more about designing and cartooning. She included photos of her tapestries, as well as a cartoon she had prepared from an image of a man's head and shoulders. Elke's work displayed a broad range of imagery. The influence of a class with Jean Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie was evident in her use of hachures not only for shading, but also as a patterning device.

My first response to Elke included general information, such as, possible approaches to cartooning, two-dimensional design principles and design concerns that are specific to tapestry. I spoke about intentionality, i.e. why did you choose that particular photograph to weave? How can you work with the image in order to reinforce your intentions? I also brought up a few technical issues, such as scale, warp sett and the direction in which the image is woven. Finally, I commented specifically on each of Elke's tapestries, including the cartoon of the man's head. I told her what I thought was successful about each image and also made suggestions for changes that I thought would strengthen the work. I tried to be as specific as possible in comments and suggestions.

In Elke's second package of photos, she included not only the photos of her tapestries, but also the original photos from which she had worked and photos of the cartoons. This was very helpful to me as I could see more of her process, from the simplification of the image in the cartooning phase to the interpretive decisions she made while weaving. Again, I addressed each tapestry, using my specific comments about the piece to also talk about more general design

issues, such as value relationships, or specific tapestry techniques, such as blending colors on the bobbin. During our mentoring I also sent Elke references to books that I thought might be useful to her and xeroxed a few sections from out of print books.

I enjoyed working with Elke and we both feel that our mentoring experience was a success. For a mentoring situation to thrive, the student must be self-motivated and the mentor must be able to express herself well with words. Elke is a very productive and enthusiastic weaver. She completed many tapestries during our mentorship. I had the



Elke Hulse, "Alvo 4"  
(Target), 20" x 12", 0.30  
x 0.50 cm, 2004

advantage of years of teaching experience to offer her. It is also important for the student to express in specific terms what she hopes to gain from the mentoring relationship. These expectations should be quite specific. Some possible topics for study might be wedge weave, shape building, vertical joins, shaped tapestry, finishing and mounting, color theory, design, cartooning, or sewing slits as you weave. The expectations should be realistic for both the student and the mentor and should be possible to achieve within the mentoring period. Finally, the mentor and student should make an agreement about the frequency of communication.

Although our mentoring relationship is over, Elke continues to send me photos of her tapestries, which I always enjoy receiving. Her recent work includes pieces woven with recycled plastic that are shaped three dimensionally after the weaving. Perhaps she could teach that technique to me!

## Distance Learning

By Priscilla Lynch

Have you taken a beginning tapestry class and woven a few tapestries, but now dream of taking your tapestry weaving to a higher level? Would you like to design more dramatic compositions, perfect your skill in weaving curves or create an impressive portfolio? Without a teacher these goals can prove daunting. Once you have pinpointed which area(s) of study are of highest priority, the ATA Distance Learning Program will be able to help you develop your potential by matching you with an experienced tapestry weaver. You, along with your teacher, will determine the focus and parameters of your study. The Distance Learning Program may last for up to one year and, upon completion, participants will receive a certificate.

**TO APPLY:** Please send a letter describing your tapestry weaving experience, the topic you would like to study and your specific goals. Participants must be current members of ATA. The program fee for basic members is \$30. Circle members may participate at no additional cost.

Application should be made to Priscilla Lynch, PO Box 340, Saugatuck, MI 49453 or [jjplynch99@comcast.net](mailto:jjplynch99@comcast.net)

## Member News

By Ellen Ramsey

### Thank you new and renewing Circle Members:

Grete Bodogaard, Lany Eila, Nancy Ellison, Susan Hart Henegar, Urban Jupena, Jori Walker Keyser, Judy Koelsch, Mary Meader, Julia Mitchell, Michael Rohde, and Ramona Saskiestewa. This year the additional contributions provided by Circle Membership dues will help fund the production of the ATB6 catalog. Your support makes a difference!

### Member Kudos: Congratulations to you!

Hope everyone read the article, "Fertile Associations: The Tapestries of Shelley Socolofsky" by **Mary Lane**, *Fiber Arts*, Summer 2005, pp. 50-53. \* Two of **Shelley Socolofsky's** tapestries were selected for the National Bead and Fibers Exhibition at The Delaplaine Visual Arts Center, Frederick, MD, September 3 - October 30. Her tapestry, *Well of Surrender*, won Best of Show. \* **Elizabeth Buckley's** tapestry "Portal" was accepted into the New Mexico Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts exhibit *Originals 2005* opening September 23, 2005 at the Fine Arts Museum in Santa Fe. \* **Elinor Steele** won First Place 2D non-functional Art and Best of Show for her tapestry *Reconstruction I* in the exhibition *Fiber Celebration 2005* at the Longmont Museum & Cultural Center May 7-July 17. In the same exhibition, **Ellen Ramsey** was awarded the Excellence in Weaving Special Award. Other ATA exhibitors in Longmont included **Anji Bartholf, Deborah Corsini, Connie Lippert, Barbara Richards, and Charlotte Ziebarth**. ATA member **Mary Zicafoose** was the juror for this exhibition. \* Congratulations to the artists representing our field in *Fiber Directions 2005* May 6 - June 12 at the Wichita Center for the Arts: **Deborah Corsini, Amy Kropitz, Connie Lippert, and Kathy Spoering**. \* **Maria Kovac's** tapestry *Reflection* was accepted for HGA's *Small Expressions 2005* in Georgia. \* **Lynda Brothers** won First Prize in HGA's Showcase Exhibit at the Association of Southern California Handweavers Conference in Escondido for her mixed media piece *East Meets West in the Bamboo Garden*. \* **Tommye Scanlin** was recently included in *Spotlight 2005*, an all media craft exhibit of artists in the Southeastern states organized by the American Craft Council and

juried by **David Revere McFadden**. Her work was also selected for *Golden Threads* at the Lyndon House Center in Athens, Georgia, sponsored by the Chattahoochee Handweavers Guild of Atlanta. \* "Tulipa" by **Janet Austin** won the "Art Weaving" award, in memory of MarieLitterer, from the Pioneer Valley Weavers Guild, at the New England Weavers Seminar (NEWS), July 2005.

Share *your* news and honors with your friends in ATA! Send your kudos to Linda Rees at [lerees@comcast.net](mailto:lerees@comcast.net), or Ellen Ramsey [ew.ramsey@comcast.net](mailto:ew.ramsey@comcast.net).



Lynda Brothers, "East Meets West in the Bamboo Garden," 23"h x 27"w x 11"d, gournd w/watercolor, bamboo yarn, wool, cotton, bamboo, and pine. The sculpture won first prize from HGA in the Showcase exhibit at the 2005 Association of Southern California Handweavers Conference in Escondido, CA.

### Thank you for Introducing a Friend to ATA

**Mary Lane** is the Grand Prize winner in the Introduce a Friend to ATA recruiting drive. Mary will receive the Hagen Loom for recruiting the most new ATA members, something Mary selflessly pursues year -round, contest or not. We owe much of our growing Washington state contingent to Mary's recent efforts, and for that we are very grateful. Congratulations Mary, you deserve this wonderful prize.

Our thanks also go out to **Joan Griffin, Sarah Swett, Brenda Osborn, and Dorothy Szymanski** for each recruiting a new member. These lucky ladies sweep all the remaining prizes for their effort! Your help is *greatly* appreciated.

# The Way In: Exploring New Strategies for Tapestry Design

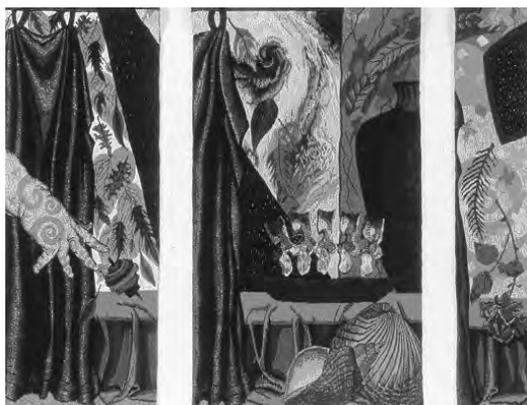
July 1 – 3, 2006 (Saturday evening to Monday late afternoon)  
Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Jump start your creative process with talented tapestry artists Susan Iverson, Jane Kidd and Sharon Marcus. Explore new strategies for finding and developing ideas. Expand your visual language. Topics to be covered include gathering and using design materials, developing ideas in multiple directions, uniting design and medium, and evaluating the success of your designs. The format for this retreat will be small groups working actively with design materials, lectures, discussions and critiques. Two days of play and work will start your creative juices flowing and send you home full of new ideas. Artists of all skill levels will benefit.

This retreat, sponsored by the **American Tapestry Alliance**, and following Convergence 2006, will offer not only intensive study, but also opportunities to socialize and network with other tapestry weavers. The retreat will begin with a dinner reception on July 1, 2006. Sessions will be held on Sunday, July 2 and Monday, July 3. The retreat will be held at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a short distance from the site of Convergence 2006.

Accommodations will be private, or shared, suite-style dorm rooms with linens and cafeteria food service available.

## The Instructors



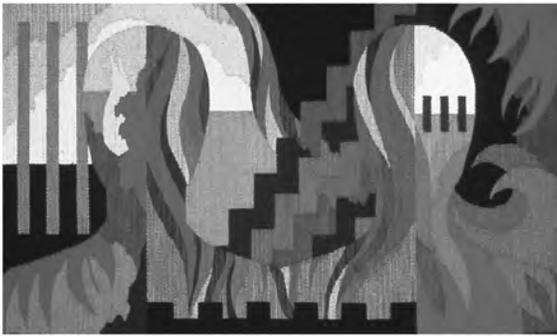
Jane Kidd *departure, voyage, arrival*, 129cm x 154 cm

Jane Kidd teaches at the Alberta College of Art and Design. She says, "Throughout history, textiles have been imbued with spiritual and social significance. They commemorate, enhance, and celebrate life cycles. In my recent tapestries I gather together a collection of symbols that allude to this journey and the substance and continuity of life. The images are layered into an illusive space of shifting views and multiple perspectives to create a symbolic narrative akin to poetry."

Sharon Marcus is professor emeritus at the Oregon College of Art and Craft. She works in weft-faced tapestry and mixed media installation combining textiles, book arts, printmaking, photography, digital imagery and found objects. Her work is a vehicle for exploring: the relationship between architecture, the ruin and place; archaeology as metaphor; structure vs. surface; the potential subversiveness of ornamentation; the impact of colonialization on indigenous cultures; and the senses, particularly the haptic.



Sharon Marcus *Site*, 16" x 32" x 1"



Susan Iverson *The River Twins* 36" x 55"

Susan Iverson is a professor in the department of Craft and Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. She says, "I am intrigued with the object quality of tapestries- the density of structure and color and the visual and physical textures of the cloth. My tapestries reference memories and dreams, they deal with the past and the future - both real and imagined. Silhouettes of anonymous figures are surrounded by their dreams, or by a landscape into which they merge."

**Registration and Payment**

Registration is limited. Registration begins October 1st, 2005. Complete the registration form and mail, along with payment, to Mary Lane, 703 Foote Street NW, Olympia, WA 98502. Registration must be received by May 1, 2006. Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$25 fee. Full refunds (less \$50 administrative fee) will be granted until May 1, 2006; no refunds thereafter. Retreat fees for non-ATA members include a one-year membership to ATA. For extra copies of this document visit [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org)

**Questions?**

Contact Mary Lane, Retreat Coordinator, [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com), (360) 754-1105

**Registration Form**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher preference (number in order of preference)\*: any one \_\_\_\_\_ Iverson \_\_\_\_\_ Kidd \_\_\_\_\_ Marcus \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate preference: \_\_\_\_\_ Comments/Special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Retreat Fees**

	Retreat Fee	Sa pm - Mo pm room & board	Mo night room, Tu breakfast	Total
ATA member, single room	\$ 175.00	\$ 126.00	\$ 34.00	
ATA member, double room	\$ 175.00	\$ 108.00	\$ 25.00	
Non ATA member, single room	\$ 210.00	\$ 126.00	\$ 34.00	
Non ATA member, double room	\$ 210.00	\$ 108.00	\$ 25.00	

**Payment:** Check enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card (MC or VISA) # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_ Cardholder's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Special Gift Membership Holiday Offer

Now through December 31st you can buy two one-year gift memberships for just \$50! Plus all gift purchasers receive a renewal savings coupon for an additional \$5 discount on a two year renewal of your own membership.

Gift membership packets arrive in a special vellum envelope with full color tapestry image showing through for that "wow" factor in the mailbox. A personalized message, an issue of Tapestry Topics, and information about all ATA programs are included in the packet. Your friends will be thrilled to receive this treat in the mail! ATA memberships are a great way to encourage others and keep all of us with a passion for tapestry connected. Questions? [membership@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:membership@americantapestryalliance.org)

## Call for Advertisements

ATA Members get 20% off on advertising in the Member Directory. Ads for the 2006 edition are due (in .pdf format) November 15, 2005 to [ew.ramsey@comcast.net](mailto:ew.ramsey@comcast.net).

Full page 7.5" h x 4.75" w \$100 (\$80 members)  
 Half page 3.75" h x 4.75" w \$50 (\$40 members)  
 Quarter page 1.75" h x 4.75" w \$25 (\$20 members)

## Contact ATA

PO Box 28600  
 San Jose, CA 95159

### Director of Member Services

Alex Friedman [AQSF@aol.com](mailto:AQSF@aol.com)

### Director of Resources

Christine Laffer [claffer@christinelaffer.com](mailto:claffer@christinelaffer.com)

### Treasurer

Amy Kropitz [Alfincher@yahoo.com](mailto:Alfincher@yahoo.com)

### Member Chair

Ellen Ramsey [ew.ramsey@comcast.net](mailto:ew.ramsey@comcast.net)

### Membership Database and Ask ATA Host

Janet Austin [nitsuanaj@yahoo.com](mailto:nitsuanaj@yahoo.com)

### Education Chair and

### "Grand Ideas" Small format exhibit Chair

Priscilla Lynch [jplynch99@comcast.net](mailto:jplynch99@comcast.net)

### ATB6 Chair

Peggy Strang [peggy@frenchcreekfiber.com](mailto:peggy@frenchcreekfiber.com)

### Library Chair & Slide Registry

Joyce Hayes [joyce.hayes@comcast.net](mailto:joyce.hayes@comcast.net)

### Promotion Chair

Becky Cook [atabeckyvt@yahoo.com](mailto:atabeckyvt@yahoo.com)

### Volunteer Coordinator

Joan Griffin [joan@joangriffintapestry.com](mailto:joan@joangriffintapestry.com)

### Webmistress

Jeanne Bates [aBates@3-cities.com](mailto:aBates@3-cities.com)

## ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

	1 year	2 years
Individual	\$35	\$65
Studio Circle	\$55	\$100
Curator's Circle	\$125	\$225
Collector's Circle	\$250	\$450

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

Send payment to: ATA Membership  
 c/o Janet Austin  
 191 Cedar St  
 East Greenwich, RI 02818  
 (401) 885-5595

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American Tapestry Alliance  
PO Box 28600  
San Jose, CA 95159

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## Tapestry Topics

### **Guidelines for submitting articles to Tapestry Topics: Note new date — the first of the month for deadlines**

Next deadline: **October 1 - Pushing Techniques**

2006: January 1, April 1, July 1, October 1

Send all items to: Linda Rees lerees@comcast.net

--Or--

1835 1/2 Lincoln St.

Eugene, OR 97401

All photographs and electronic images should include size, date completed and photo credits.

Articles should be under 2000 words. Submissions will be edited for clarity and space requirements

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

Newsletter committee: Proofreader: Anne Clark,  
Layout: Elinor Steele, Distribution: Ellen Ramsey



Ulrika Leander, "High Meadow" - 53" x 106"

visit our website  
[www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org)