



Detail from "The Hunt of the Unicorn"
see essay by Caron Penney, page 5.

In this issue:

Aesthetic Influences	3
by Jean Pierre Larochette, Silvia Heyden, Judy Poxson Fawkes, Caron Penney, Susan Iverson, Mieko Konaka, Ibolya Hegyi, Barbara Heller, Peter Horn, Pat Taylor, Lialia Kuchma, Peter Harris, Susan Martin Maffei, Thomas Cronenberg, Wlodek Cygan, David Johnson, Terri K. Stewart, Cheryl Silverblatt, James Koehler, Ildikó Dobrányi, Anna Byrd Mays, Linda Rees	
Weltbilder/Bildwelten – Tapestries by Peter Horn	18
book review by Thomas Cronenberg	
Nezhnie: Weaver and Innovative Artist by Linda Rees	19
book review by Barbara Heller	
European Tapestry Forum Artapestry 2005	21
The American Tapestry Project: Recent Work by Jerome Regnier	21
by Janet Austin	
Members News	22

Letter from the Directors

By Alex Friedman and Christine Laffer

This issue represents the first time we have invited a guest editor to manage the newsletter. Micala Sidore, who has many years' experience weaving, writing, and collecting tapestry, and is in communication with many tapestry artists, has gallantly offered to provide us with food for creative thought while Linda Rees, our regular editor, moves from Missouri to Oregon.

Micala focuses this issue on the concept of "Aesthetic Influences." Your contributions will provide an insight on how we find ideas, consciously or not, for our own creations. We hope it gives you inspiration and confirmation of the paths you take to find that creative spark. Thanks to all of you who have made contributions.

We hope you have looked at our first online exhibit, curated by Linda Wallace of Canada and Dorothy Clews in Australia. In an effort to provide more ways to exhibit, ATA is going virtual with FindingHome@tapestry.ca/au. Frustrated by the high cost of shipping tapestries, Linda and Dorothy have organized this tapestry postcard show to create an exchange between artists in both countries and to send an important message to the viewers. ATA welcomes proposals for other on line exhibits. Please see the guidelines on our website.

The Rochester Art Center, the final venue for the Biennial 5, closed the doors on the 8th of May and now the tapestries are heading back to the lending artists or to buyers. We thank them for contributing their tapestries for the exhibition. To sum up the total effort, there were over 12 tapestry lectures, close to 10,000 viewers, and numerous school tours.

continued...

It all adds to the growing public appreciation of tapestry.

Many ATA volunteers made this Biennial happen and each will have devoted many precious hours away from their looms to make it a success. Their contributions are most appreciated. In addition, we would like to thank again our jurors, Tomas Osinski, Wlodek Cygan and Dr. Alice Zrebiec; the gallery directors, Kathy Andrews at the CVA in Denver, Patryc Wiggins at the Dorr Mill in New Hampshire, and B.J. Shigaki at the RAC in Rochester, Minnesota. Also: Lisa Abendroth, who laid out the exhibition catalog. Monique Lehman, of course, was the Exhibition Chair and we thank her enormously for all her labours and vision.

Plans for the next Biennial 6 are in the capable hands of Peggy Strang. The deadline is the 27th of November; we hope you are planning to enter. This year we are allowing up to three submissions. We have two very professional jurors, Shelly Goldsmith and Lotus Stack, who will make the selections. We have also secured two venues: the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Convergence 2006 will be held, and the Bellevue Arts Museum, a newly reopened craft museum in Seattle, Washington. We are also inquiring into several other exciting galleries who are deciding to if they can host us for 2006-7.

We ask you to please encourage every one to enter. Make your weaving groups aware and remember that collaborations are welcome too. We would like the ATB6 to be the best Biennial yet. Please contact Peggy if you have questions or would like to help. peggy@frenchcreekfiber.com

We need someone who is familiar with graphic design to work on the layout of the exhibition catalog. We have lots of experience to pass on, so please contact us if you are interested and willing.

We have even lined up a fall venue for ATB7! If you know of appropriate spaces in your area, and, even better, if there is a tapestry group in the region to support it, please contact me (Alex). The good venues are planning 3-4 years in advance so it is never too soon to ask.

Our volunteers continue to support our ambitious projects. We welcome Becky Cook from Vermont who is our new Promotion Chair with the dual responsibility of helping us bring the American

Tapestry Alliance to the attention of the general public as well as letting tapestry weavers know about ATA. If you like to write articles for general publication and want to get involved promoting ATA please be in touch with her. atabeckyvt@yahoo.com

Joyce Hayes in Seattle is another valued volunteer who has taken up the Catalog and Library Chair as Kathe Todd Hooker has decided to move on to her weaving, writing and teaching interests. We thank Kathe profoundly for her diligence in reorganising this area and wish her well with her new endeavors. We welcome Joyce to our formidable team and look forward to working with her.

As always, ATA exists because of all the volunteers who offer their time and experience. We thank everyone who has played a part in where we are today. If we are to continue to provide the biennials and the symposia, we need your contributions as well. Please consider offering your thoughts, time and energy.

The board and the committee chairs of ATA met in late April to discuss the future of the organization. In the next issue we will talk about our retreat and the brainstorming session. American Tapestry Alliance continues to benefit from all your thoughts. Please continue to send your suggestions and ideas.

Happy weaving,
Alex and Christine

Note from guest editor:

You are a generous group. Many of you wrote in and/or responded to my challenge to write something about the tapestries that have inspired you. The essays in this issue range from the highly personal to the highly theoretical; you speak in your very individual and personal voices. The group whose essays you will read range from tapestry weavers traditional (Jean Pierre Larochette), to the unconventional (Silvia Heyden, Judy Fawkes), at work in studios (Caron Penney), teaching at university (Susan Iverson), non-Americans (Mieko Konako, Barbara Heller, Ibolya Hegyi, Peter Horn – and others), and so on. The group represents several countries as well as various ages. Good.

I promised I would include what has inspired me. Two things come to mind, one contemporary and one historical. Early on as I learned about tapestry, I saw Archie Brennan's goofy and sophisticated small pieces. They made me laugh out loud. They also reassured me that there was room for puns and slap-stick humor in tapestry, and that one could challenge the viewer to remember (this is woven) and forget (isn't this silly?) at the same time.

Recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York had a fantastic exhibition of textiles, including tapestries, from Colonial Peru. Repeat images, which were not always exactly the same, peppered the faces of ponchos. The colors were lively and warm. But also, looking at them, I had the impression that I was reading, perhaps hieroglyphs, but certainly a narrative. Very exciting.

A note or two:

Your usual editor, Linda Rees, asked me to sit in as guest editor because she wanted her book on Muriel Nehznie to be reviewed, and knew she could not be the editor when that happened. Her clarity about the ethics of her situation impressed me, and it is the main reason I said yes. She devoted her help, constant and with infinite good humor and patience, entirely for the technical aspects – whom do I contact for what, how do I deal with visuals, etcetera. She did not know that Barbara Heller would review her book, and neither knew that the other was writing in response to my challenge.

My profound thanks to the volunteers for the newsletter – Anne Clark, Elinor Steele – as well as other volunteers who contributed to the newsletter – Alex Friedman, Christine Laffer, Ellen Ramsey – as well as all the rest of you who made this issue possible.

Micala Sidore, Northampton, MA

To name a particular tapestry that has affected my work? That I may see as a source of inspiration?

**Jean Pierre
LAROCLETTE**

Berkeley, California

For most of the time in my weaving experience, I will say that inspiration is more like a flickering image and it does not belong to any tapestry in particular. It is a vision that was formed by a special enjoyment of Medieval art, true since my school years. It has a glimmering quality; it is quite ethereal, but for me it is the very substance of what a tapestry should consist of. Trying to be more precise, since I truly consider it a mental and emotional model, this precious object is not too big – I like to think it is the work of a single weaver. It can certainly include some gold in a busy composition, and it is likely the work of someone from XVth century Flanders. These restrictions probably bring to mind many outstanding tapestries we can still enjoy today, but that is not the point! My inspiration only exists in the blinking of an eye, and it is possibly so because to stare at its radiance could be hazardous to one's health...

On the other hand, not so much as an archetype but a favorite nevertheless, I would talk about the very earthly pieces of the series know as *The Bestiary of*

Anglars de Salers. Believed to be the work of XVth century weavers living in the general area of Aubusson, France, these ten fascinating tapestries represent for me the best of the *naïve* found in the traditional *verdures* of the region. But I am not talking about charming pastoral sceneries, but rather wild compositions: fantastic creatures inhabit the foreground while the setting looks like the very real and picturesque nearby village of Salers.

To see them you drive for about two hours south of Aubusson to the chateau Tremolière. If I remember correctly, the tapestries have been there since they were completed. What you will see is the work of *peasant weavers*: the weave is rustic, coarse, the colors basic. Most important is that you can still hear the country looms in the direct freshness of the weave.

As an afterthought, in regard to the mental picture of an influential tapestry, maybe it doesn't quite exist yet because it still has to be woven...and it is there where I see my chance. In the words of Pierre Baudouin "*Tapestry, as all art, will be always unfolding*". In the same way that I am most intrigued by the tapestry I am weaving at the moment, my second favorite does not belong to the past but is **the next one**.

When I saw *L'Offrande du Coeur*, a 15th century tapestry in Paris at the Cluny Museum, I discovered the relation of tapestry to music. [Editor's note: This tapestry is now at the Louvre.]

**Silvia
HEYDEN**

San Nazarro,
Switzerland and
Durham, NC

I had always admired the Gothic tapestries where design and weaving were still beautifully balanced. Ancient tapestry elements, such as the triangle or the semicircle, were used as patterns of the background or combined in figures and scenes. From my violin playing, I was aware of the importance of the motif, a term derived from the Latin *motus*, which means movement. In music, the motif can consist of only three notes or it can be integrated into a whole melody.



"L'Offrande du Coeur," 15th century

In my favorite tapestry, *L'Offrande du Coeur*, the woven motifs sing and swing around the melody of the two figures in love. The lady almost disappears in the undulating drapery of her robe. Her hat and her curly hair contain smaller weaving elements like shorter notes, to reflect her anxious state of mind.

The gentleman approaches her with a more explicit gesture, a heart in his hand.

Around them, motifs of leaves and trees accompany the melody in beautiful passages of rhythmic repetitions and variations. Between them, a brook winds through the grass and next to the lady a rabbit puts up its ears and listens.

With that tapestry in my mind and in my ear, I try

to express in my own work what it and modern tapestry have in common: motifs disappearing and reappearing; motifs intensifying toward a crescendo; sequences of consonant and dissonant harmonies, creating tension and release; and last, but not least, rhythm as the life-giving ingredient.

*** *L'Offrande du Coeur* can be seen in the following books: Joseph Jobé. *Great Tapestries-The Web of History from the 12th to the 20th Century*. (Lausanne, Switzerland: Edita S.A.), 1965, p.54
Michel Thomas, Christine Mainguy and Sophie Pommier. *Textile Art*. (New York: Rizzoli), 1985, p.127.

**Judy
Poxson
FAWKES**

Portland, Oregon

Anni Albers, 1899-1994, wrote the following in 1946:

*Retrospection, though suspected of being the pre-occupation of conservators, can also serve as an active agent. As an antidote for an elated sense of progress that seizes us from time to time, it shows our achievements in proper proportion and makes it possible to observe where we have advanced, where not, and where, perhaps we have even retrogressed. It thus can suggest new areas for experimentation.**

Ten years ago, I began composing a book called *Weaving a Chronicle*. The book's format presents a tapestry on one page with text on the facing page describing why I created it. The book has been an exercise in retrospection. Writing it made clear my influences. Most often they were the works of painters and architects, especially of the Italian Renaissance, because their craft-like, systematized methods of construction are similar to my own and their works honor beliefs embodied in textile constructions from the Bauhaus.

During the last 10 months, I left my usual technique of inlay and returned to double weave – my preoccupation in the late 70's & early 80's, inspired by wall hangings in the same technique by Anni Albers. My goal was to thicken both warp and weft, and, secondly, to incorporate inlay with double weave. I wove 11 sample warps and 3 new small tapestries. This search, as usual for me, was accompanied by roller coaster feelings of exaltation and dashed hopes. It was not one single tapestry by Albers that effected the return to sampling, but

Albers' beliefs, formed in the Bauhaus, and evident in her many woven samples collected by the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Albers believed in the economy of execution, of the equality of the warp and weft, of allowing imagery to emerge from the grid of warp and weft, and for there to be an "immediate relation of the working material and the work process"* . Her samples are a record of curiosity persevering in the effort to find new woven effects and new forms of expression.

In addition to Albers, two other textile artists whose works have affected some of my goals during crucial stages of studio work are Lenore Tawney and the renaissance painter Bramantino. Tawney's elegantly minimal sculptural weavings, woven in a studio building shared with painters in New York City, revealed a path toward fiber sculpture, a requirement of my Cranbrook MFA thesis exhibition of 1965. As students we saw slides of the revolutionary 1963 "Woven Forms" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. Tawney's shaped, minimal, slender forms intriguingly defied straight selvages and employed a minimum of color.

The painter Bramantino (designer) & weavers of the *Dodeci Mesi*, exhibited in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, Italy, achieved the illusion of deep space via architecture and landscape. This lively, early Renaissance set of 12 large, magnificent tapestries affected my systematically constructed axonometric landscapes of the late 80's & early 90's. One point perspective is used in the *Dodeci Mesi*, while I used axonometric perspective whose provenance is still unknown to me. The story of the creation of the *Dodici Mesi* also presented me with a model for commissions consisting of patron, designer and weaver, a model I've employed throughout my career.

Judy Fawkes owns a pack of post cards showing the entire suite of the Bramantino tapestries, one of each tapestry, which she purchased in the Castello itself during a trip to Italy. She knows of no book that shows the entire set. The librarian at the Textile Museum in Washington, DC, however, located a pamphlet with small black and white reproductions of all 12 Dodeci Mesi. The reference is "Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club", Vol. 27, Nos. 1 & 2, 1943, titled Documents Relating to the Trivulzio Tapestries by William E. Suida.

1. Anni Albers, *On Designing*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press) 1961
2. Anni Albers, *On Weaving*, (Wesleyan University Press) 1974
3. Pandora Tabatabai Asbaghi and Nicholas Fox Weber, *Anni Albers*, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation) 1999.
4. Judith Poxson Fawkes. *Aspiring to Architectural Organization: Bravo Bramantino!*, "International Tapestry Journal," spring, 1995, 34-5
5. Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, *beyond craft: the art fabric*, (New York: Van Nostrand Holt) 1973 (examples of Lenore Tawney's work).

* Anni Albers, "Constructing Textiles," *On Designing*, (Middletown, CT: Connecticut Wesleyan Press), 1974

**Caron
PENNEY**

West Dean Studios
Chichester, England

In the twelve years since graduating from university, I have worked on commissions for West Dean Tapestry Studio. The Studio

works to commission making tapestries by either established artists or by our own in-house designers. Three years ago the Studio started a project to recreate the *Hunt of the Unicorn* series. This commission came about after the Studio made a proposal for the work along side five other major studios. The prospect of recreating a set of tapestries rather than from the work of a painter was a unique challenge.

The original set of seven tapestries is housed at the Cloisters in New York City. They were woven in Brussels in the 1500's and there are several opinions as to their original ownership. In 1922 Comte Aimery de la Rochefoucauld allowed a Parisian art dealer (Édouard Larcade) to exhibit six tapestries at the Anderson Galleries in New York. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., bought them there and they were on display at his home from 1923-1937. In 1937 they were transferred to the Cloisters, a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The seventh tapestry, surviving in two fragments came to the Cloisters in 1938.

During my education, I cannot say that I studied these tapestries intensively. But Medieval work has always intrigued me because during this period, the weavers could be more creative with their interpretations. Not having an in-depth knowledge of the *Hunt of the Unicorn* tapestries, I came to them free of pre-conceptions and visiting the Cloisters for the first

time was a unique experience. We started work on colour matching two in the set, the *Start of the Hunt* and the *Unicorn in Captivity*. On viewing the tapestries for the first time, I saw simple things: their condition, the strength of colour, their flatness (no woolly surface), the yarns used, the techniques and, of course, the entire image.

Then you are thrust into attempting to take them in, deconstruct them and have a sense of their making. Scanning them, I needed to be sure of the essence of the set, assess the primary areas, the faces, clothing, the reds, blues, greens and yellows. The viewer identifies with the areas/colors first, the value of the colours and the ways these colors co-exist with their neighbours.

You find areas that excite you more than others. For me, it was the use of *hachures* in the legs and dogs in the *Start of the Hunt* tapestry. The Studio's re-creations of these tapestries were to be woven from the front; the originals were woven in the traditional *Gobelins* technique from the back. Formal *hachure* is woven only from the back of the tapestry. So we challenged this by attempting many versions of the *hachure*, one of the most exciting aspects of the interpretation.

As of April, 2005, the Studio has completed two tapestries from the set and they now hang at Stirling Castle in the Chapel Royal. In addition, visitors to the castle can view the *Unicorn is killed and taken to the Castle* tapestry being re-woven on site. In West Dean's Studio, on Wednesdays at 1.30 by appointment, visitors can view the *Unicorn is found* tapestry being re-woven.

The project is expected to run for 10 years, and to date 12 weavers have worked on four tapestries either completed or currently on the looms.

These new tapestries will exist in their own uniqueness and have a life and story of their own.



*** The Hunt of the Unicorn series, exhibited at the Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Also in the book by Margaret Freeman., *The Unicorn Tapestries*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City: 1976. See also Lialia Kuchma essay in this issue of the ATA newsletter.

**Susan
IVERSON**
Richmond, Virginia

We seldom know when something that we see will truly affect our lives. Most of us see so much each and every day that we frequently feel overwhelmed by our visual experiences. Things tend to run together and the impact of individual experiences is diluted by the sheer mass of visual information. When I first saw *Yellow Braid* by Herman Scholten, I was fairly young and had seen almost no contemporary art that was woven. This was the early 70's and there were very few books, catalogs or periodicals that dealt with work in fiber. *Yellow Braid* was in the Dreyfus Fund Collection in New York City, and I saw it when Adela Akers took us (her graduate students from Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Philadelphia) to the city to look at art and to visit Lenore Tawney. This was an amazing trip that would prove to be very influential to my development as an artist.

I didn't just see *Yellow Braid* – I experienced it. It made me really come to terms with the physicality of tapestry. It was over six feet tall and almost nine feet wide. It hung in a space really too small for it, and viewers would have to almost walk into it. The textures that softened from distance were extreme from close up. The curved, over-lapping panels; the intense color (yellow); the wonderful mix of yarns that each contributed a different texture and luster – all worked together in a beautiful, compelling way. I

was intrigued technically and satisfied aesthetically. This tapestry was both a two-dimensional surface and a three-dimensional object. This contradiction really attracted me. Having started my art career in painting, where the image was on the surface, I was intrigued with the idea that the image/visual information could be part of the structure of the work. I was viscerally aware of the energy of this tapestry as well as its subtlety of color which was offset by the large scale: it was both passive and aggressive.

Over the years the actual experience of seeing this tapestry has been lost in the retelling of the story. I show slides of *Yellow Braid* at least once a year and frequently I show it several times. I no longer remember what I really felt the first time I saw it. I do know that over the last 30 years I have not gotten tired of seeing the image of it, nor have I gotten tired of explaining my enthusiasm for it to my students.

Each day we see hundreds and hundreds of images. Most of them slide by and have little effect on our lives. Every once in a while we are fortunate enough to see something that will stick with us for a lifetime, something that will help us ask questions about our own work, a visual standard that we can use to help us evaluate future work. *Yellow Braid* is my standard.

*** Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, *Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973, p. 254-5.

Mieko KONAKA
Oita-Ken, Japan

During 1991-2, Pam Patrie [of Portland, OR] and her studio wove a series of tapestries

based on artist Astrid Preston's original oil paintings. One of these, *Daylight*, I worked on with Pam during the production.

Pam Patrie's interpreting technique of the original painting to tapestry made it possible to create this magnificent series so successfully. The shading of topiaries and bushes in Astrid's pointillist painting was created with countless small circular patches in gradations of yellow and green, which Pam used to convey daylight.

Such weaving, which I hadn't done before, required careful selection of colors, mixing them

from one bobbin to another. I enjoyed myself in the process of selecting colors by keeping a track of the color samples.

After the project, I became comfortable with weaving my tapestries in small patches. I use this technique a lot. If I am short of one color in the middle of weaving a tapestry, I can combine different colors to make a hue similar to the original hue; it helps to solve the problem. I usually dye weft yarns for my tapestries, and I dye small batches of yarns in many colors.

I have also found that weaving in patches has added some character to my work. I have found this technique useful for both economical and artistic reasons.

Daylight had a great impact on me, not only in the technical but also in the aesthetic elements of production. Pam's small patch technique certainly changed my weaving.

*** *Daylight*, by Pam Patrie, "Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot" (summer, 1993) cover

Ibolya HEGYI
Budapest, Hungary

Tapestry is such a very old art form. Due to the Arts and Crafts movement and especially to the ideas of William Morris, tapestry separated from painting and became an autonomous genre, where the artist must carry out the complete process of creation – not only making the design, but the cartoon, the mixing of colors and the weaving itself. (At the same time the manufacture-like process of tapestry creation continues, as at *La Manufacture des Gobelins*.)

Many kinds of tapestries have affected me, but I think that such a significant genre, which requires huge amounts of learning, knowledge, work and time, predestines you to honesty and awareness. After studying and understanding tapestry a little more deeply, I had to turn back to my early studies from which I could start my journey to answer the question: What does tapestry mean to me?

As a student I had extensive courses in art history and ancient tapestries. I would say that this taught me that tapestry is a serious matter, in which experimentation, playfulness and the usage of citations* are as important as the color and the quality of the mate-

rial, the character, the meditative and improvisational nature of weaving (between the bounds of technique). I can list not only one but many, mainly Flemish works made by unnamed artists [Editor's note: See list, which also refers to specific tapestry details, at the end of the essay.]. The details in these tapestries, woven characteristically and passionately, especially backgrounds, have given me the starting point of my later work. Among these, for instance, were clouds in the background of old Flemish tapestries. I see in my new tapestry how I make a new interpretation of sky and clouds.

* This idea of citations comes from the work of the American art historian George Kubler [Editor's note: author of *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, Yale University Press, 1962] who discusses the history of art as the history of objects, especially the history of the forms of objects. The series of forms evolved from each other creates a "sequence". Pieces of contemporary tapestry art are also parts of a sequence. The previous parts of the sequence are the historical material that has influenced the contemporary art. I think of this kind of *citation*.

*** Tapestries:

1. *Birth of Jesus*, Brussels, around 1520 A.D. (draperies, faces) Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest (Emoke Laszlo: *Flemish and French tapestries in Hungary*, Budapest, Corvina 1980.)

2. *Theseus and Ariadne*, Brussels, around 1700 A.D. (background, water) Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest (ibid)

3. *The Flood*, Brussels, ca. 1550 (water) Wawel, Krakow (*Tapestry in the Renaissance*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y., 2002, pp. 442-446)

4. *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (clouds)* National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (ibid, p. 309)

In the mid to late 1970's, a collection of Polish tapestries toured

Barbara HELLER

Vancouver, BC, Canada

North America under the sponsorship of Rothman's [Editor's note: a tobacco company]. I was studying in the art education department at the University of British Columbia at the time. My favorite studio class was taught by Penny Goldstone – she used textiles to teach design. Tapestry was not a big part of this, but we learned spinning and dyeing and weaving and surface design. I knew I wanted to make images. I knew I wanted to be an artist. I had developed chemical pneumonia from the chemicals in the graphics hut and knew I would have to give up printmaking as my means of expression. What now?

I spent hours walking around that exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The huge tapestries were woven of simple materials such as sisal and horsehair in a muted palette because that was all the artists could find to weave with in post-war communist Poland. But the tapestries made profound statements on deep spiritual and political themes and I had an epiphany: Tapestry could do anything that painting or printmaking could do – or rather, an artist could use tapestry as a means of expression as well as any of the more traditional fine arts.

I became a tapestry artist at that moment.

*** Web sites of Polish tapestry/textile artists:

Magdalena Abakanowicz -

<http://www.tapestryart.org/TapestryFriends/>

Barbara Falkowska -

<http://www.tapestryart.org/TapestryFriends/>

Ursula Plewka-Schmidt -

<http://www.tapestryart.org/TapestryFriends/>

Wlodzimierz Cygan - www.cygan.art.pl

Peter HORN
Kiel, Germany

"The school of tapestry weaving in Scherrebek (1896-1903)"

The renewal of tapestry weaving in North Germany began in 1896 in Skærbek, now Danish but, at that time, a city which belonged to Germany (Scherrebek). While a school for tapestry weaving existed in Skærbek for only about six years, its influence extended to many parts of Germany and Europe. I myself researched this subject because I discovered that most of the art historians who wrote about tapestry were not aware of the significance of the Skærbek school. (See photo - back cover)

And it influences my work as well – not that I took images from Skærbek, but in a wider sense. I learned that a tapestry has its own right to exist as a work of art, created from an artist's world of fantasy and artistic sensibility, and is not merely a decoration for the wall in a room.

Skærbek also taught me that weaving a tapestry is a very useful way to become aware of *time*, both what it is, and how it flows: you need patience and inward calm and the will to develop a special time-feeling in order to tolerate the discrepancy between describing an event that only took 15 seconds and weaving it during almost a whole year (as I did in my four-piece tapestry *Ranger 7* in 2001).

[Editor's note: Peter Horn also quotes from the catalogue of his work about the importance of collage in his work. See review of Peter Horn's catalogue in this issue of the ATA newsletter by Thomas Cronenberg. At the end of his essay, Cronenberg explains how to order copies of the catalogue.]

*** Peter Horn wrote an article (in German) on the Skærbek School in *Textilforum*, 2/1993.

*** Very fine examples of Skærbek weavings can be seen in several museums in North Germany, for instance, at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesmuseum Schloß Gottorf in Schleswig, Städtisches Museum in Flensburg. (This last museum has the largest collection.)

**Pat
TAYLOR**

West Dean,
Chichester, England

Medieval tapestries honor the medium, arrest the eye and above all display the idealized vision of the age.

The Apocalypse Tapestries and *The Lady and the Unicorn* tapestries have all these qualities and have transfixed my gaze since the early days of my understanding of tapestry weaving. Thirty years on, the *Hunt of the Unicorn* which is slowly being deconstructed by the learning process in the Professional Studio at West Dean [Editor's note: See essay by Caron Penney in this issue of newsletter], evokes a similar response in me and others: they are achingly beautiful.

In contrast, many other historical tapestries have been ignored or at best superficially glanced at, on the grounds that they were perhaps naive, overtly decorative, fixed on imitating paint, their content too bourgeois or they were just too beige.

As is often the case when starting a new phase of work towards a tapestry, all aspects of one's existence come into play. A blurring of old and new shapes the thinking. Patterns emerge, the memory is scoured, the web poured over, pages turned. Diary scribbles, words and images tumble around. And on this occasion, those just too beige, unreadable tapestries surface like gum on the High Street, irritatingly there and many in number. Shades of brown, beige and red, all jam-packed; everybody squeezed together in a medley of detail supported by texts that are equally dense.

Delve a little further however and the stories we know so well are revealed. Paris is sent by King Pram to escort his aunt Hesione home. He returns with the beautiful Helen while the Greeks plunder the temple of Venus on the Island of Cythera. King

Priam graciously receives Helen. Figures like Helen appear garlanded by heads. Each key event configures what seem like minor differences within the whole. The tapestry is a jigsaw, full, bristling with detail, dazzling the eyes: a seeing prevention?

Perhaps a different way of looking at the work is required; as if on a pebbled beach scanning, eyes down, searching for that one gem to add to the collection.

This new work shadows the fading brown, beige and red of those overlooked tapestries. The color is emptied out, the rendition of faces, fussy and clumsy. It traces those whose images were appropriated at the turn of the colonial century. Eyes looking directly at the viewer fade in and out of focus in drapes of 'clothness'. Each event configures what seem like minor differences within the whole and like a jigsaw everything fits. But it is hard to see.

*** Medieval tapestry: *The Trojan War: the Abduction of Helen*, Probably Tourni, 1470, 480 x 960 cm, Zamora, Spain, Museo de la Catedral

Visit West Dean College and/or the House of Parliament in London.



Pat Taylor's interpretation

Lialia KUCHMA

Chicago, Illinois

Weaving and trying to put that square block into a pyramid form.

My recollection is not of a particular tapestry which motivated or inspired or lit the flame, though I do remember the unicorn tapestry from the Cloisters. It was also because of the surroundings, the expression on

that face, the anguish, the luxurious pain and beauty as defined by the detail, by the richness of flora, by the seduction of color. I left so full of the experience that I associate the Cloisters with the tapestry.

But then whenever I stand before some extremely strong or beautiful art, I feel equally moved and not necessarily inspired to try the medium. So when I saw the unicorn, I had no wish or curiosity to weave but I was astounded by the work.

Perhaps in reflecting about the works of the most memorable art, I would have to say that tapestries did figure in my sense of amazement, but not so much as to motivate a desire to weave. This might be due to my full involvement in other mediums of expression during those earlier years. Then, tapestry was art, and as such, joined the repository of ideas, influences and stimuli stored within for some future mixture. But I always gravitated more to the large-scale works. Curiously, printmaking, which is what I was involved with prior to yielding to tapestry, has similarities with weaving. Loving the line, whether incised, etched, written; whether in calligraphic forms, or nuanced through shading: all this is found in tapestry – the buildup of an image through the line.

I was fortunate to be able to slide gracefully into weaving, leaving some regrets at the stone and plate, but none in weaving, none in tapestry.

*** The Hunt of the Unicorn series, exhibited at the Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Also in the book by Margaret Freeman. *The Unicorn Tapestries*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City: 1976. See also Caron Penney essay in this issue of the ATA newsletter.

Peter HARRIS

Ayton, Ontario, Canada

It's not easy for me to address my aesthetic rea-

sons for admiring certain work rather than aspects of technique, because technical challenges (usually of representation) are a large part of what motivates my own weaving projects. Also, as a philosophy major at university, I took a course in aesthetics. It was not clear then what were proper aesthetic considerations, and in the decades since, the question has only gotten more vexed. Perhaps as an early indication of my direction, I drifted from the philosophy department to English, looking for personal philosophical answers in artistic representations, rather than analytical chess games. My search continues today as I explore possibilities of direct experience and intuitive understanding, qualities often associated with the "aesthetic response", in common with religious experiences, meditation states, and "appreciative consciousness" described in the last issue of *Tapestry Topics*.

Many factors seem to contribute to the aesthetic response to something. It can simply be where you

find it, like the shiver that starts down your spine on hearing a certain musical phrase. As truth and goodness are to science and ethics, beauty is the aesthetic ideal. We can usually judge whether something has beauty, certainly more quickly than the other two. I also believe that there is more or less of an expectation that textile artworks address their essential textile nature, including the technical aspects. The artist or viewer may have a "personal aesthetic", a developed or cumulative individual style. Trend-spotters of the time try to market popular styles: fashion is the enemy of taste.

I was first drawn to the Kashmir shawl after seeing weavers in Srinagar doing intricate tapestry on low-warp looms and realizing I had unanswered technical questions. The unanswered questions led me into historical and CAD studies, with the practical aim of documenting the entire design and weave process. It was a good career move – I receive way more opportunities and generous curiosity from the community as an independent scholar than as an artist. That's a relief, because rather than pursuing cult status as artist, I can more wholeheartedly promote my research as a documentary/educational project.

The subject for me is steeped in personal recollections of visiting Kashmir almost 20 years ago.

Studying shawl-weaving is teaching me a lot about textile qualities I had previously neglected in my wall pieces, such as color combinations of warp and weft, and the attractions of repeats. Though not a stranger to the principle of making every stitch count, I have found it bracing to see digitally precise designs scaled down to the limit of the resolution of the weave structure: passes most often of 1 or 2 stitches, and at 80 e.p.i. In some ways, shawls seem to have been designed by their patrons, with weavers expected to do it the hard way to get the desired result. Experimenting with repeat designs in my own work has been perhaps the clearest thing to nudge my stubbornly pictorial imagination. But not by much – my favorite shawl designs are the earliest surviving, often just treasured fragments, showing naturalistic plants and flowers, or the very first, stylized steps in their 200-year evolution into the abstracted "paisley" motif.

I'm not sure which of these elements would ordinarily be considered aesthetic qualities, or whether an aesthetic response says more about the viewer's mode of thinking than the object in view. Textile qualities, and their technical nature, are a natural part of the mix and the experience for textile people.

*** Sources for imagery: Frank Ames, *The Kashmir Shawl and its Indo-French Influence*, Antique Collectors' Club, 1997. It has a lot of plates illustrating the chronological progression of "paisley" styles. Google the item and you would probably arrive at mid-19th century pieces for sale, because they were turned out in vast numbers.

Repeated notes of music release chemicals in the brain that make us happy. Do visual pattern repeats do the same? Did the Pre-Columbian Huari culture know instinctively the soothing effect of these repeats? Look how they integrated narrative abstracted symbols of hegemony and religion into a rhythm of geometric shapes. Look how they used color as a separate overlay to counter the rigidity of repeated pattern. Even the positive and negative, yin and yang, or mirror imagery used symbolically to express their deep underlying beliefs are arranged in rows and then often compressed, both in their relationship to each other and to the whole as

**Susan
Martin
MAFFEI**
New York City

another counter, another overlay, to the overall appearance of mesmerizing pattern. Look closer! Can you find the eyes and mouths of birds or cats, human heads, or amorphous beings? Can you discover the wings of those angels of Pre-Columbian lore? A narrative unfolds.

Woven mysteries to us in the 21st century, these pieces include symbolic messages speaking on many levels to those of the past.

I have been influenced by almost every historical tapestry that I have ever examined and in many different ways. I have examined many works from various cultures around the world, but I think this particular Pre-Columbian tapestry can best illustrate the aesthetic change that the study of Huari culture has had on my work. It epitomizes what most attracts me to this medium and what has caused me to rethink many previously drawn conclusions that were based on my traditional French training. I no longer think of myself as just a picture maker. I try to make a marriage between an idea, a narrative and the structure of the cloth. I use the Huari example of this marriage to try to make a tapestry work on multiple levels: stylization of image and mark making sympathetic to the textile grid, repeat pattern, color and movement, emotion, surprise and discovery that will enhance, build and reveal a narrative. Working without the aide of a maquette or drawing and allowing the pattern of the shapes, adhering to the structure of the weave, dictate the evolution of the narrative idea. Most of my works are personal in their iconography but strive for a deeper universal visual appeal that can work both on an overall esthetic impact and on the intimate journey of tapestry discovery. I believe these to be the gifts given by the study of Pre-Colombian Huari textile art, and why this piece represents the height of that culture.

Please read more about this extraordinary tapestry culture and savor other Huari examples.

*** Huari culture, Peru, c. 500-1000 A.D.

The *Lima Tapestry* tunic from the collection of the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, Lima. After Lumbreras 1977: 96.

The Junius B. Bird Conference On Andean Textiles, 1984, pages 132 & 133

Related fragment: Huari – *Culturas Pre-Colombinas Arte y Tesoros del Peru*, Jose Antonio de Lavelle, Banco de Credito del Peru en la Cultura, page 40

Related fragment: *Textile Art of Peru*, L.L. Editores, 1989, Chapter X, James Reid, page 203

Thomas CRONENBERG

Hamburg, Germany

Thinking about the question of influential tapestries, I came up with at least 5 tapestry artists whose work spoke and speak to me at different times of my development: Peter Horn; James Koehler; the artisans who made the Devonshire Hunting tapestries at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London; Archie Brennan and Shelly Goldsmith.

But it is Tass Mavrogordato's tapestry *Kill me on TV* which comes to mind in terms of *one tapestry* which affected my work. I must have first encountered it in the "International Tapestry Journal" or in a slide talk on contemporary weavers given by Pat Taylor (course tutor and head of tapestry) at West Dean College in Chichester, UK.

Kill me on TV combines images mainly alluding to the world of communications. Behind a central figure naively hidden behind a single-reflex camera, Mavrogordato has grouped satellites, helicopters, dinosaurs, the atomic bomb, digital television, and somewhat inane texts in Japanese and English (i.e., "How to shop smart in recession").

The tapestry is large and loud and has the noisy and somewhat gaudy temperament associated with modern Tokyo. It pokes fun at the shallowness of popular culture and the pervasiveness of media and advertising imagery – and their ability to affect our thinking.*

This tapestry demonstrated to me that tapestries can deal with today's subject matter and can be as up-to-date as the artist making them. With my media background, the crossover of art and media has regularly fascinated me; I get many ideas from the media, from both print and online sources. Mavrogordato's work showed me that it is possible to make something fresh and modern using traditional *Gobelins* techniques. This important eye-opener led me to a series of scrawled, graffiti-like drawings which eventually turned into tapestries like *Stoff meines (deutschen) Lebens* and then on to the *TOMMY* series.

*This section of the essay is drawn from: BTA-Telematic Bulletin of Art, August 8th 2000, n. 214-
<http://www.bta.it/txt/a0/02/en/bta00214.html>.

Wlodek CYGAN

Lodz, Poland

During the nineteen-seventies, when I was a student at the Academy in Lodz, I felt that more interesting things were happening then than now. In looking again at the Lausanne catalogs [the International Tapestry Biennials, which took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, 1962-1996], I still remember the feeling that I had back then of yearning, some sort of longing. Today, I reach out again to those catalogs and realize that they created my taste in textiles.

I always waited to see new works of Magdalena Abakanowicz, Olga de Amaral, Herman Scholten and also Ritzi and Peter Jacobi, Naomi and Masakazu Kobaysahi and Lia Cook. I was also influenced by the art of Janina Tworek-Pierzgalska and Antoni Starczewski.

My fascination with Marcel Marois and Marika Saraz's tapestries started at the Triennale of Tapestry in Lodz [1972-present]. Is it worthwhile to mention specific titles? Probably not. I was more interested in styles represented by those artists.

I feel that the same elements, or *dust*, from those artists/stars you can also find in my own works. I use the word *dust* to describe those small traces, small remains, of pictures which one can find on ones ego after seeing something significant in the past.

I was thinking about the question about sources of esthetic influences and couldn't stop thinking also about negative sources of influence. Rather than paying tribute to well known and conspicuous artwork, my efforts were motivated by the desire to undertake discussions with the artwork that offended me. I will not quote the titles of those works, nor the names, so I will not upset their creators, I prefer that the debate take place among our artworks, rather than among us, the artists.

*** Some Polish works by artists like Abakanowicz, Tworek-Pierzgalska and Starczewski are in the Polish book *Polska Tkanina Wspolczesna*, by Irena Huml, Arkady, Warsaw 1989. Others may be seen in Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, *Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric or The Art Fabric-Mainstream*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

**David
JOHNSON**

Chicago, Illinois

I began weaving in 1975, taking classes at the Weaving Workshop in Chicago, Illinois. I took the beginning frame loom class because it seemed like a fun thing to try. I had no idea what I would do with the skill, if anything. At the time, the Weaving Workshop was something like a little community center for weavers and knitters, and I thought it was a most inviting place.

Tapestry weaver Lialia Kuchma lived upstairs and kept her Norwood loom in the shop. She would often be there, sitting at her loom weaving and talking to other weavers and to friends who dropped by. I found her tapestries fascinating. They had a freedom of expression and profusion of color that was very pleasing to me. The freedom of expression came from the appearance her work has of being spontaneously produced during the process of weaving, despite the effort I know she took to prepare her cartoons. Her use of a wide color palette and juxtaposition of what I considered at the time to be unusual hues, tints and shades added to the expressive quality of her pieces. The subjects of her tapestries at that time were mostly her friends and her/their pets, and were wonderfully complex in the composition of foreground, background, and borders. She used a variety of different yarns and mixed them together in interesting ways to achieve lovely color harmonies. The stunning results reminded me of historical pieces and yet seemed completely modern.

I went on to take a four-harness class and although I enjoyed the mathematics of loom-controlled patterns and reading drafts, always the making of images seemed to interest me the most. And all along, as I became a regular at the Weaving Workshop and then began to teach the beginning tapestry classes myself, Lialia was there, executing one after another of her striking designs at what seemed to me an incredible rate. *Schwartz* is just one of many pieces from that period that illustrate the use of color and composition that I think elevates her work to the first tier of contemporary tapestry weavers.

I spent several years trying all kinds of weaving on for size, but finally, in the early 1980s, decided that tapestry weaving was what most interested me. I let go of all my other weaving projects and ideas and focused from that time forward on tapestry weaving. As I struggled to find my voice in tapestry, I always kept Lialia in the back of my mind as an example of what and how to weave.

*** *Schwartz* by Lialia Kuchma in *Fiberarts Design Book 2*, Asheville, NC: Lark Books, 1983.

Several more of Kuchma's tapestries can be seen in *Fiberarts Design Books 1, 2, and 5*.

**Terri K.
STEWART**

Sarasota,
Florida

My grandparents came from Pennsylvania, little towns that are no longer on any maps. Go back about 50 years and you'll find them. That side of my family, my father's, is Pennsylvania Dutch (German/Dutch), and the other side is Irish and from White Plains, New York. Both sides moved to Florida in the middle 30's and early 40's respectively. I never knew that my grandmother wove anything until I was in my 30's and a former neighbor (also a weaver) informed me of this. Guess they thought we already knew.

One of my grandmother's pieces was the most influential tapestry I know of - it was the one that led me to get started in the world of weaving. In it, a delicate Bonsai tree clings to a few measly rocks. It was the sample piece for a much larger version later made of silk rags, and is the only surviving piece of her work. The neighbor who told me about the weaving later gave that very piece back to me - my mother had gifted it to her after we sold our property and moved. My neighbor decided that maybe I was ready to learn to weave tapestries, since weaving cloth didn't work for me.

I have always loved oriental works of which I have many. That little bonsai tree was my grandmother's inspiration as a tribute to her sister, a nurse and school teacher who lived in China for many years. I have many things from my great aunt and my grandmother from that time, but this tapestry is the most precious to me. It was woven entirely of silk, and is reversible. Many of the colors have faded over the years, but you can still pick them out. One day I will recreate the little "sample" and hand it down to my daughter.

I first saw one of a series of tapestries entitled *Table and Chairs* by Linda Hutchins in a magazine. Linda is from Portland, Oregon, which is where I currently live. The yellow and black palette used was actually too subtle for me; I didn't realize until much later that yellow and black were the colors of CAUTION or HAZARD tape, and that the message was quite sophisticated.

**Cheryl
SILVERBLATT**
Portland, Oregon

What I saw at the time was domesticity and simplicity.

The image of the table and chairs seemed conversational and very Zen. I thought of the Zen quality that the act of weaving takes on and immediately thought of how the image reflected the thing itself; the meditative act was echoing the meditative content.

But what really was the most remarkable aspect was the size. These tapestries are very small and thus draw the viewer forward to look carefully and attentively. How intimate and perfect, I thought. The size also reflected the flat, simplistic image of the domestic scene with its almost iconic nature of two chairs and a table seen in profile. Of course, the surface was beautiful because it was beautifully woven, but it was the combination of iconic images and size that had the greatest impact on me. Now I weave small tapestries because Linda Hutchins showed me that you can.

And I still love looking at *Table and Chairs*.

*** Four pieces from the series are in *Art Textiles of the World: USA* edited by Matthew Koumis, 2000, published by Telos. [Editor's note: Telos lists the dimensions as 9"x10", which is probably the size of the mount for the piece they show. Each individual piece is no larger than 1.75" x 4.5" – and some are shorter.]

When asked to write about a tapestry that has influenced my work, I think of a traditional Navajo textile, woven with tapestry techniques, the obvious choice. It is a blanket, circa 1870 - 1875, in the William Randall Hearst Collection.*

**James
KOEHLER**
Santa Fe,
New Mexico

Recently, I had opportunity to see the current exhibit of Navajo weaving at the Arizona State Art Museum in Tucson. When viewing the traditional weavings in this exhibit, my response was similar to

what I experienced when I first saw the blanket that continues to influence my work: I respond to the strength of an aesthetic of simplicity.

My attention is immediately drawn to the subtle and not-so-subtle movement in the red backgrounds. I hardly notice the strong design elements that contrast with the subtlety of the red. The simple, strong geometry of the design elements supports the understated strength of the background.

My experience in viewing this work is very much like the experiences I have had with minimal, abstract paintings. It is deeply moving and spiritual. I feel the creative energy. I can only hope that the effects of this energy are evident in my own work.

* Nancy J. Blomberg, *The University of Arizona Press*, 1988, page 45, documents this weaving in *Navajo Textiles-The William Randall Hearst Collection*.

**Ildikó
DOBRÁNYI**
Budapest,
Hungary

At the start of my career, in 1972-73, I went on a study tour to Aubusson and Paris.

Thanks to Pierre Daquin (one of France's best known tapestry artists), I met

Jagoda Buic [born in Yugoslavia], who at the time worked and exhibited in Paris. For a few months after I got to know her, I became her assistant. Buic was good friends with Polish Magdalena Abakanowicz. Their large-scale works bore numerous resemblances to each other. Their huge woven spatial sculptures, which on several occasions – for instance, at the Lausanne Biennial in Switzerland – were shown together, surprised their audience – and awoke a feeling of amazement in me. Interestingly, however, I could at that time only instinctively identify unconditionally with one thing in the approach they represented: the love of the material. I almost wallowed in the different sorts of material – the feel of cotton, wool and silk was marvellous for me, and I adored the colors, using them abundantly in my works.

Around 1973-74, however, I decided to try to define my own expectations of my chosen art form for myself. I had to carefully consider a great many things, to undergo a process of self-clarification, and since then I have striven to continually do this.

For one, I had to try and find the technique that allowed me the greatest subtlety of expression. At the Fine Arts Secondary School and the Academy of Applied Arts in Budapest I received a thorough,

almost classical art education. Thus, I could consciously choose the French *Gobelins* tapestry-weaving technique from among the many weaving techniques I had already studied, and which, adapting to each current design, I have used as a basic technique ever since.

Since then I have used and continue to use materials and colors far more cautiously, allowing them to be dictated by my message (the subject matter).

At the start of my career, I relied 100 per cent on instinct; that has changed to 100 per cent consciousness. In the coming years, however, I should like to allow myself to be playful and from time to time spontaneous as well!

In essence I cannot say that any tapestry had a concrete influence on my inner development as an artist.

For me it is more accurate to say that the painting and portraiture of three painters – Velazquez, Watteau and Kokoschka – were important.

As regards tapestry art, in recent years I have come to admire Flemish tapestry. For example, I think the series of 12 monumental 16th-century tapestries made in Brussels, *Les Chasses de Maximilien**, at the Louvre in Paris, are magnificent due not only to their scale, but also to their technique and richness of detail in composition, combined with the cohesion and animated freshness typical of Flemish art. The refined lyricism of the backgrounds and the richness of the whole series in my opinion present truly captivating work, a pinnacle of the art of tapestry, "Grand Art" itself.

* *Les chasses de Maximilien: Les énigmes d'un chef-d'oeuvre de la tapisserie* by Sophie Schneebalg-Perelman (out of print)

**Anna
Byrd
MAYS**

Arlington,
Virginia

WEDNESDAY GROUP PROJECT 2005

The Wednesday Group consists of committed tapestry weaver/designers who meet Wednesdays at the New York City studio of Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei. Established in 1993, the group represents diverse skill levels and backgrounds. At present we are 19 including Susan and Archie. We have had 5 group exhibitions since October 2003, and are planning for 2 more shows scheduled for 2006.



From the start, Susan and Archie encouraged us to prepare personal resumés, build a slide collection representative of our work and prepare proposals for group exhibitions. The goal was for each of us to get this kind of experience. Some of us have collected a few rejections and others have achieved success in finding venues. As we finish new work, we add to the slide collection and are continually on the lookout for places to exhibit.

Sometime last summer we decided to think about a possible subject for a group project. We set a fall deadline to submit ideas and then we all met to choose one. We set our goal to start weaving April 1 and finish August 1, 2005. [I was thrilled and a bit intimidated to have my idea adopted by the group!]

CONCEPT

I originally came to this idea less as an actual historical study (ie, REWEAVING) and more as a way of understanding how one might REINTERPRET an historical piece with ones own aesthetic reaction. Maybe thinking of the Mona Lisa as an Absolut® Vodka ad might help explain this. Or think how Cezanne or Gauguin might have repainted the Mona Lisa. The image I chose to work from is a portion of a much larger fragment of an even larger original piece, a detail of *The Annunciation**, and specifically from the right side of the piece.

Our studies will incorporate the virgin from the edge of her left hand/face to the right edge of the door and not including the foliage. [Editor's note: See visual on page 15.]

This seems very cinematic to me. History started the zooming-in process by losing/destroying portions of this piece over time. The catalogue has continued the process by isolating selected areas and reducing them in size and probably altering color along the way. If we were to see the piece itself, what we would see would reflect the patina of time. It would not have its original colors or textures. Some of the cloth now consists of warp only; some areas have been repaired with thin new cloth; the darkest contours have been rewoven as have many other areas.

The catalogue has zoomed in on selected areas. We can continue the process by focusing in very tight areas and bringing to it our own sensibilities. A sort of moving forward in time, a Reconstruction from its previous Deconstruction. How do we feel about those curves in the gown? Do they become a surface of another sort? A landscape? A sinuous line? How about those diamonds? Are they terra cotta? Or maybe a brilliant mosaic? What happens if we rotate the area we are examining? Do we see it any differently?

Mounting will be decided once all the pieces are woven and we can see them together. Each final piece will be 6" x 8." Each person participating is urged to keep simple enough to weave in 35 hours.

* Part of an antependium, dossal, or choir hanging, Southern Netherlands, 1450-80, illustrated on page 210 of Adolfo Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: 1993.

**Reflections from
Archie
BRENNAN
will appear in of our
next issue
of *Tapestry Topics***

Linda REES
Eugene, Oregon

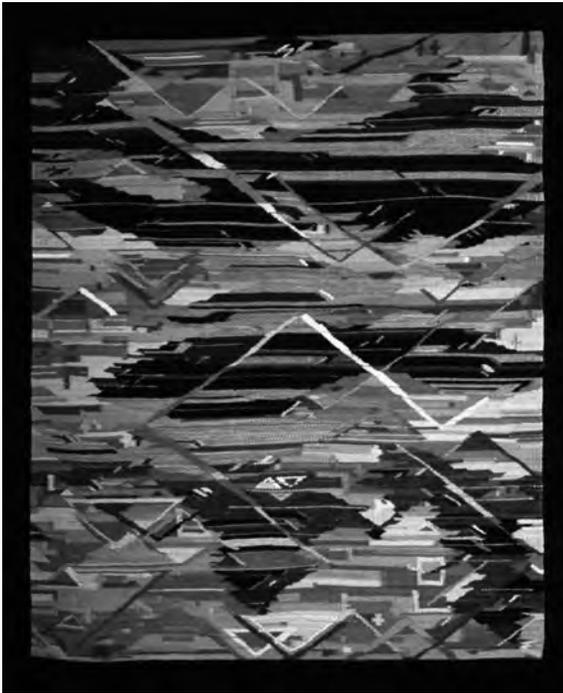
"In Search of
Spontaneity"

While attending the ATA symposium *Southwest Influences on Contemporary Tapestry* in 1999, I saw an exhibit of tapestries by Donna Martin. Her work had been featured in magazines so I was familiar with its distinctive style of complex patterning through triangles, zigzags, and strong diagonals forming fascinating color interactions and a powerful sense of movement. Its busyness was foreign to my own love of minimalism, yet seeing the large grouping was quite exciting. What became apparent was that she had captured a sense of fracturing light that was authentic for vistas in the intense desert sun. There were wonderful surprises of movement from one color to another.

As I stood looking at the tapestries and listening to her explain to folks that she did not use a cartoon or diagram and wove from selvedge to selvedge, I started pondering the consequences of her spontaneous manner of working. I had tried a sort of unplanned weaving a few years earlier but had been frustrated by the spotty results. How did she keep everything integrated? A part of me wanted to dismiss the idea as not for me. However, I kept thinking that there was a relationship between her way of weaving and how her imagery captured her environment, culturally as well as physically – and that enticed me.

I also felt I needed to change how I worked technically. Like Donna, I weave pick by pick, across the entire width of a tapestry, rather than building it up shape by shape. I had been discovering I was spending a longer time trying to follow my schematic drawing. I would create the image free hand and then transfer it to graph paper. Even shifting to a larger grid size was slowing me down because I was so used to the previous scale. The notion of not relying on a graph at all appealed to me.

A few years later, while planning my first trip to New Mexico, I wrote to Donna and arranged to visit her studio. In preparation for the meeting, I decided to weave a piece that would have some impromptu aspect to it. I had been successful in two styles of unplanned color blending. In working with two or three colors in a "meet and separate style" of inserting bobbins, I found that each junction could occur



Donna Martin, "Lagoon"

anywhere across the shed [Editor's note: traditional *hatching*]. I also found a favorite way to be spontaneous, by creating consecutive areas of two or three color patterns. I chose this second way for my trial piece. Using two colors for the background and four for the pattern, two light and two dark analogous color, I plotted the angle for a diagonal band of patterns that ran the length of a large rug-like hanging. A few other narrower diagonals came from the opposite side to connect with the main one.

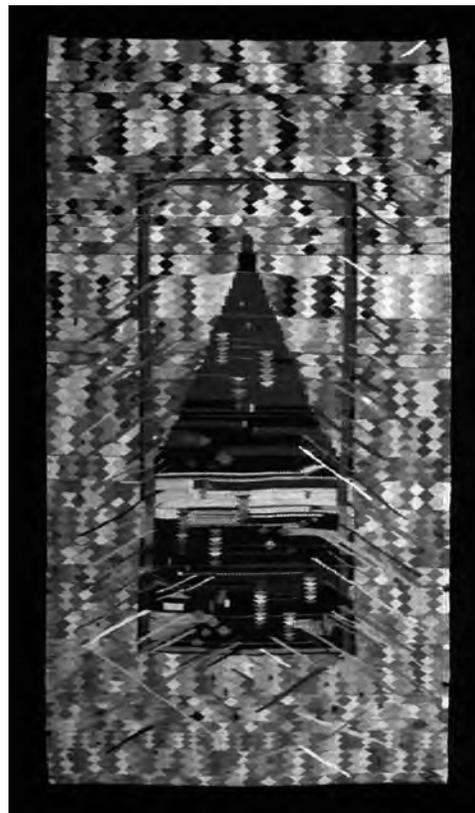
To my surprise, as the diagonals came together, the color patterns matched as if by design. It was not that patterns were alike, but that they intersected logically. I felt as though I had a visual memory of what had preceded what. I am sure the design was aided by the fact that I was working on all the sections across the tapestry at one time. Involved in pattern transition, I could feel the movement of the bands; I saw a vitality and alertness in my weaving.

In New Mexico, I was able to discuss with Donna how she decided when to change a color and to what extent she had a design in mind. One obvious question was how she knew when a piece was finished. To that she just responded it started to feel that it was winding down, coming to a conclusion. Before the visit, I had also re-read the article about

her in *Shuttle, Spindle & Dyepot**. It mentioned that what she is reading often stimulates the character of a tapestry, setting the tone on a daily basis. She chooses groupings of yarn for potential use, placing them on a tray at her side. When ready for a transition, she reaches over and picks up what her hand goes to.

Currently, I allow myself to weave major areas spontaneously and only map out figures or tricky areas. My weaving is noticeably faster and probably more lively. I accomplish randomness by letting my hand choose where along the warps I will end one color and begin another. The hand knows what my eye wants without mental interference. Occasionally, my mind overrides my hand but I accept that too. Without experiencing the dynamic effect of Donna Martin's tapestries, I might never have pursued this system.

* "Donna Martin of New Mexico: The Power of Lightning", *Shuttle Spindle & Dyepot*, (summer, 1998) p. 26-7.



Donna Martin, "Journey into Solitude"

Weltbilder/Bildwelten – Tapestries By Peter Horn

Book Review by Thomas Cronenberg

Master weaver Peter Horn has produced a catalogue of his tapestries which charts the course of his progress as a tapestry weaver from his early work to the present day. Horn, who is among the foremost tapestry artists in Germany today and is very highly regarded internationally, is self-taught in this medium and has over the years developed both a style and a technique unique to him. Horn has also exhibited his work extensively internationally, had several one-man shows, taught at home and abroad, and has in recent years been on the juries of several major exhibitions.

Weltbilder/Bildwelten – Tapestries by Peter Horn is an especially valuable reference work as it includes both Horn's own thoughts on his tapestries as well as texts by other artists and academics, giving a well-rounded picture of where the artist started out as a tapestry weaver, where he is today and how he got there. The catalogue will appeal to a diverse readership: artists, tapestry weavers, collectors, experts, museum people and academics.

Horn (68), who taught tapestry weaving and photography, among other courses, as an associate professor in the art history department of Christian-Albrechts-University in Kiel until his retirement in 2001, tells the story of his early years as a tapestry weaver. Inspired by his mother, who was weaving at a flat loom at the time, he started experimenting with tapestry in the 1950s. The illustrations of his early works are especially interesting. To someone who knows Horn's current work, his first large-scale tapestry *Danger is at the gates of town* (1968) comes as somewhat of a surprise with its references to medieval illustrated manuscripts. His description of his struggles with an inappropriate warp, too many threads per centimeter and the back-breaking nature of trying to weave a large tapestry at a floor loom will ring a bell with anyone who has ever tried to master the art of tapestry weaving.

In the years that followed, Horn wove a series of six of his children's drawings. Inspired by the strength and originality of childrens'

drawings – something which he had come to admire as an art teacher – he was intent on translating the marks and colors as accurately as possible within the strict framework of tapestry technique. He describes these six *Children's tapestries* (1975–1982) as his "self-imposed tapestry apprenticeship".

Before embarking on what later became his signature style of woven collage in a crisp, almost photo-realist style, Horn developed his own technique involving two weft threads which allow for a very fine gradation of colors, reminiscent of pixelization. Horn implements this technique with utmost precision and uses it in a series of precise diagonals, which add a certain neatness to the finished tapestry. His technique alone conjures an image of a weaver who strives for perfection and who works with meticulous precision.

Illuminated manuscripts and ancient Greek and Roman mythology were among the high points of what Peter Horn calls his otherwise rather uninspired high school years in the northern German town of Flensburg in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There, he became acquainted with the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome and with medieval art history. *Danger is at the gates of town* relates Homer's epic poem of Troy and the Trojan horse. Horn returned to the theme of Greek mythology in the 1980s in the tapestries *Water Levels for Kerkyra* (1983), *Island of the Sirens* (1984) and *Greek coast* (1985).

In weaving *Danger is at the gates of town*, Horn had the crucial realisation "that to take on tapestry weaving as a satisfying and meaningful occupation, one has to accept, and adapt to, the slow nature of the process", a realisation that he calls "life-changing". During weaving, Horn continues, "I am subject to an altered sense and measure of time: I ... exist within a space-time continuum outside normal definitions." He has dealt with issues of time, for example, in the piece *Date line* (1990).

Some of his best-known works originated from collages. Peter Horn says that "by more or less fortunate accident", his work with collage coincided with the period when he had turned increasingly to weaving. The artist goes on to explain that he likes to surprise himself – and the viewer – "by juxtapos-

ing situations of seemingly unrelated content in order to see whether there is a reaction between them".

In this context, his tapestries *Don't be afraid, General* (1989) and *Untitled* (1994) come to mind. In the former, Horn combines a torn-out newspaper photo of a soldier, a segment of a painting of Baroness de Rothschild and a snippet of bright red paper. In *Untitled*, he combines trunks of beech trees with a newspaper photo showing the arrival of Jewish prisoners from Poland at the Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. These pieces have left ample space for reflection and contemplation on the part of both the weaver and the viewer.

It is clear that for Peter Horn, tapestry weaving is not a process of mere reproduction. The thoughts and associations the weaver has while developing a work, weaving day after day, become an integral part of the work. In a quiet way, Peter Horn's works transport content, are food for thought and what Peter Horn has to say cannot be said in any other way but through his tapestry.

From 1990 onwards, he has been interested in images beamed back from space, and has woven a number of tapestries based on NASA images: *Mercurius 1* (1996), *Uranus 2* (1996), *Ring of Jupiter 2* (2000) and *Eros 2000 Mar 6* (2000). They are based on the interaction between modern technology, which brings images back from the depths of space line by line, and the age-old medium of tapestry, in which the weaver builds the image one pass at a time using centuries-old tools and techniques. And at the same time, his thoughts are out in space. "I started an imaginary journey through the infinite open spaces of the Universe, travelling more and more widely as time went on. Recently I have been to the planets Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and to the Main Belt," he writes.

One of the strengths of the book is how very personal it is, giving us a glimpse at the intellectual processes that accompany the act of weaving. The book is in German but includes excellent English translations of the text (by Volker Rosenberg). It is rounded out by numerous high-quality colour plates, a complete list of all of Peter Horn's tapestries, his curriculum vitae/resumé, a list of exhibitions, and a bibliography.

Weltbilder – Bildwelten. Tapestries by Peter Horn with texts by Peter Horn, Manfred Korte, Gerd Mettjes and Karl Uphues. English translations by Volker Rosenberg. 95 pages, paperback. Medialab, Lodz, Poland © Peter Horn 2004.

PRICES: 18 euros plus postage:

2 euros within Germany; 6.50 euros in Europe;

Overseas postage 7.50 euros (surface)

Overseas postage 12.50 euros (airmail)

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Nezhnie: Weaver and Innovative Artist **by Linda Rees**

Book Review by Barbara Heller

Linda Rees has written a compelling and entertaining biography of the artist Muriel Nezhnie. Bringing her own experience as a tapestry artist to bear in understanding the path of a fellow weaver, Rees gives us insights that another biographer might have missed. The writing style is light and easy to follow, yet there is much depth of thought and analysis. The book basically follows the chronology of Muriel Nezhnie's life but Rees has done an admirable job of sorting the facts into cohesive chapters. She goes beyond a simple biography and catalogue of a life's work in tapestry to make us feel a part of Nezhnie, her family and her art. She takes us 'behind the scenes' to learn the whys and wherefores of the tapestry designs and weaving techniques. For the scholar, the appendices at the back of the book give a complete production chronology from 1960 to 1991, as well as grouping the tapestries by theme and style. There is also a list of honors, exhibitions and publicity.

continued...

In her preface, Linda Rees gives a concise account of the recent history of tapestry in North America and throughout the book she places Nezhnie's work within the context of what was happening in the greater art world. Initially, Nezhnie attained a reputation through commission work, only venturing into more personal themes in the 1980's. Rees maintains that "it was exposure through the initial exhibitions sponsored by ATA that her artwork gained [international] recognition...." She was a prolific and tireless artist and the onset of Alzheimer's put an untimely end to a constantly inspiring body of work. Once viewed, the images she wove in her holocaust series long remain in memory. In the epilogue Rees deals in a compassionate manner with Nezhnie's final years dealing with the onset of Alzheimer's disease. I attended one of the last workshops she taught (Tapestry Forum, Portland, Oregon, 1990). Rees eloquently describes Nezhnie's intense frustration at her memory loss during this event, as well as her satisfaction that her work was being recognized by the tapestry community.

Muriel Nezhnie forged her own path. Trained in the fine arts and married to an artist, she decided to put her energy into tapestry so there would be no competition between spouses. Family and friends were as important to her as her art, and she managed to balance all three without compromise. Rees describes her commissions and the solving of design problems, the day-to-day decisions necessary to running a professional studio with apprentices, and how Nezhnie balanced all this with her work as a founder of the Craft Alliance and the emotional toll the weaving of the holocaust tapestries took. "Like many other women artists, in discussing her accomplishments Nezhnie tended to attribute her success to external factors and to minimize her own role.... This is a modest omission of her natural talent, hard work, and the persuasive communications skills that she possessed." (page 13)

My only real complaint is the poor quality of the color reproductions. Each tapestry is described and discussed in the text and illustrated with a black and white reproduction. The design analysis is percep-

tive and worth the reader's attention. Rees points out subtle details that add an almost subliminal impact for the viewer. However, when I turned to the color reproductions at the centre of the book, I was often disappointed that the description and the color did not match. This was especially frustrating when Rees spends several pages discussing Nezhnie's use of color in the chapter "A Melding of Media."

We, as fellow tapestry weavers, have much to learn from this account of the life of a professional tapestry artist. I found myself peppering the book with yellow stickies as I read, marveling at the many parallels between my path and hers. I enjoyed reading the quotes from an extensive interview between Muriel Nezhnie and Jan Castro that occur throughout the text and the excellent summing up of an artist's life by Rees in the final chapter. Throughout the book, Rees makes perceptive comments about Nezhnie's art, the field of tapestry in general, and its place in our society, culminating in an interesting history of contemporary tapestry from 1985 to 2000 (page 139-140). Rees has given us much to ponder in *Nezhnie: Weaver and Innovative Artist*.

Nezhnie: Weaver and Innovative Artist
by Linda Rees (2004)

Image Line Publications, 1908A Senate Street,
Saint Louis, Missouri, 63118.

The book may be purchased for \$29.95 (US)
plus \$5.00 shipping in Canada, \$3.00 in US.

Send check directly to Linda Rees,
1835 1/2 Lincoln St., Eugene, OR 97401

or through paypal.com to use a credit card. If paying
online, access Linda's paypal account with this refer-
ence: lerees@comcast.net.

European Tapestry Forum Artapestry 2005

The ETF was set up by tapestry weavers for tapestry weavers. Its main aim is to demonstrate the continued vitality of this technique and encourage the continuing development of the art form. The ETF recognizes the growing need for professional tapestry artists to cooperate in a European context in order to ensure renewal and visibility of the art form. As an organization for professional tapestry artists we aim to bring together tapestry weavers for collaboration and cooperation, exchange of ideas and exhibiting.

The ETF is opening the first European Tapestry Exhibition – **ARTAPESTRY** in 2005

Art Museum of North Jutland

4th November 2005 to 3rd January 2006

Aalborg, Denmark

Deutsches Textilmuseum

16th January to 16th April 2006

Andresmarkt 8, Krefeld, Germany,

Other venues are planned

The exhibition is being selected by an international jury of artists and curators. Shelly Goldsmith (UK), Archie Brennan (USA), Jan Groth (Norway), Marcel Marois (Canada) and director Nina Hobolth (Denmark).

A catalogue is planned.

Tapestry Masters Web Site

Tapestry Masters web site is an online tapestry gallery for members of the ETF to display their work and keep up with news from the ETF.

The organization

The organization, based in Denmark, is run by a Steering Committee consisting of professional tapestry weavers from various European countries. The ETF is working in cooperation with applied art museums, government organizations and European Union bodies, but most importantly, the ETF is interested in the active participation of Tapestry artists throughout Europe.

If you would like to find out more about ETF please look at www.tapestry-masters.com



Jerome Regnier, "Times Square, NY 1996"

The American Tapestry Project: Recent Work by Jerome Regnier By Janet Austin

Jerome Regnier's recent work was exhibited at the Nacul Gallery in Amherst, Massachusetts, from January 9–February 25, 2005. Having reviewed his earlier exhibit at the Boston Public Library (*Tapestry Topics*, Spring 2002, vol xviii, issue 1), I was naturally curious to see what he has been up to since then.

Regnier was born in France, and came to the United States 47 years ago, as a Fulbright Scholar, and Geology professor. He has been weaving tapestries since 1978, and began working on his American Tapestry Project in 1993. In this ambitious undertaking Regnier employs the narrative tapestry tradition to tell us stories about the history, geography and architecture of the United States.

In order to appreciate the significance of each subject, Regnier first gathers historical background information. Each tapestry design is based on careful research, using primary sources such as paintings, drawings and prints from the relevant period and place. For example, in Regnier's preparation for *Rivers*, he referred to Carl Bodmer's paintings of a 1835 expedition on the Missouri River.

Because he prefers to see the entire tapestry as it

progresses, Regnier invented a loom on which he can weave a section up to 22" tall, then move it off the loom to the left, adding new warp to the right side. This allows him to weave very wide tapestries without weaving sideways.

The Nacul Gallery, in an architectural office building, was spacious enough to do justice to some of Regnier's very wide tapestries. The juxtaposition of *Rivers* (20" x 180") and *California Trail* (23" x 276"), one above the other, emphasized the narrative quality of these two pieces. The latter was hung around an inward bend in the wall, which gave it an interesting 3 dimensional effect. Another large tapestry, *California Missions*, shows five different images in a tapestry that is 22" x 100," and filled the entire wall behind a stage area in the gallery.

Although most of the tapestries are horizontal, some, such as *Times Square, NY 1996* (65" x 58"), and *Marble Canyon of the Colorado River* (84" x 60"), employ a more vertical format, appropriate to the subject matter. In *Times Square*, for instance, the eye is attracted by the bright yellow taxicabs along the bottom, and then drawn upward by the vertical shapes of the buildings. The cabs and skyscrapers and electronic billboards crowd together in that special claustrophobic New York City way; you can almost hear the commotion.

Regnier sometimes uses embroidery to add or outline details such as windowpanes, masts of ships and so on. In *California Trail* there are appliquéd stagecoaches, and in *Jamestown* (23" x 40"), rya is used very effectively for a thatched roof.

The last time I wrote about the American Tapestry Project, it comprised 25 tapestries; now it has grown to 29. It's exciting to see this formidable body of work continuing to expand, and I wonder, what will come next?

Right: **ATA Award Winner** Trudie Roberts, "Evolution" from Showcase exhibit at the Southern Conference of Handweavers in Escondido, California, March, 2005

MEMBER NEWS

New Member Recruitment Drive in Full Swing

Could you use a new Hagen loom? What about bobbins, or a sampling of spun silk? Wishing you could add to your tapestry catalog library? All you need to do to receive one of these prizes is to introduce a friend (or a stranger) to ATA membership. As our thank you for helping ATA grow, *every* current member who participates in this special campaign will receive a \$5 discount on a two year renewal of their own membership and the chance to win one of fifty available goodies. In addition, every new member you recruit will receive a one time discount from Fine Fiber Press as our welcome. The campaign ends **June 24th** and the prize drawing takes place July 1st. Don't miss out! However, *late recruitments received after the prize drawing will still receive the discounts from ATA and Fine Fiber Press through August 31st. Everybody wins!*

For recruitment forms, brochures, or more information contact Ellen Ramsey (206) 440-8903, or email: membership@americantapestryalliance.org.

Mid-Year Directory Update: Call for Website listings

In the next newsletter we will enclose an update to the current member directory. We would like to begin listing member websites along with your contact information. If you have a website to list, or if you have any changes or corrections to your current



contact information, please send that information to us at membership@americantapestryalliance.org by July 15, 2005.

Thank you new and renewing Studio Circle members: Barbara Carlbom, Daria Gardynik, Kareemah Hasan-Rasheed, Ruth Jones, Mary Kester, Jane Kidd, Sonja Miremont, Tea Okropiridze, Joanne Park-Foley, and Elizabeth Quick. Your donations make a difference!

Sponsor an Artist for ATB6

ATB is an expensive exhibit to enter due to the membership requirement. Sponsoring an artist by contributing the membership portion (\$35) of their fee allows for more participation in the event and encourages student entries. If you are interested in sponsoring an artist for ATB6, please contact Ellen Ramsey ew.ramsey@comcast.net.



By Jan Austin

Announcing a new question and answer column for the ATA website and newsletter to be managed by Janet Austin.

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, or mail to: 154 PineHill Rd. Wakefield, RI 02879, USA

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ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name _____

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Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

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c/o Janet Austin
154 Pine Hill Road
Wakefield, RI 02879
(401) 789-2957

Visa/Mastercard number _____ Exp. Date _____

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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:

Next deadlines: July 15, October 15, January 15

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

**NEW
ADDRESS**

--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



Frida Hansen, "Die Milchstraße (The Milk Street)"
from Scherrebek, School for Art Weaving
See essay by Peter Horn, page 8.

visit our website
www.americantapestryalliance.org