



# Tapestry Topics

*A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today*

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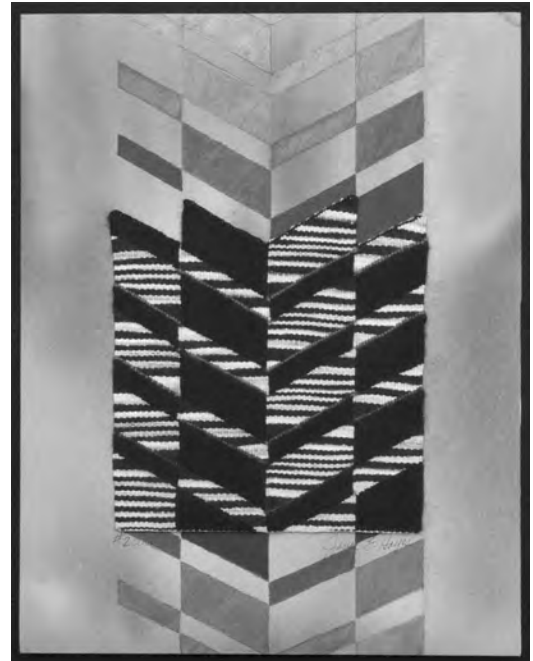
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## Letter from the Directors

**By Alex Friedman and Christine Laffer**

We hope you will find this issue a thought provoking one. The traditions of tapestry, like any other art form, are subject to re-examination and experimentation in this age of questioning. Some of our members have spent



Joyce Hayes, "Geometric Ikat V," 4.75" x 11.5"  
(See page 17)

time investigating the traditional aspects of tapestry making and are now challenging conventionally accepted notions. We hope you will find inspiration, intrigue and possibly indignation. In any case, this issue should provide food for thought.

By now you have sent in your application for the next Biennial. The suspense begins. Peggy Strang and Christina Rasmussen will be organizing the slides for the two jurors, Shelly Goldsmith and Dr. Lotus Stack, who will make their decisions in late January. We are expecting it to be a strong exhibition that will attract national attention as it travels across the country next year. There is an entry form and instructions on the website or you can contact Peggy Strang.(peggy@frenchcreekfiber.com)

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Gallantly Lynne Mayne now has a team working on the ATB6 catalog. It includes Katzy Luhring, Laurie Robbins, Nancy Crampton and Joanna Timpson. Thank you for willingness and enthusiasm. We have just learned that we are to receive a grant of \$500 for the catalog from the Friends of Fiber Art, a good start for our funding. And heartfelt thanks for this seed money from an important sister organization.

Plans for our Retreat after Convergence at Grand Rapids, Michigan in June, 2006 are well in hand. Mary Lane has planned exciting programs with Jane Kidd, Susan Iverson and Sharon Marcus as instructors. See the member section in this issue or check the website for more details. This year we will provide ATA labels at Convergence so members can identify each other more easily and we have built in a longer session for ATA members to meet each other.

One of the issues that the board is concerned about is how to make our organization more of a community so that each of us can find support and inspiration. Last year at this time, ATA initiated three study groups in which participants discussed selected topics, "Conceptual Strategies of Contemporary Artists" and "Feminism and the Visual Arts," which met on a regular basis. This has been a productive effort but the size of each group is limited. This year we would like to propose one, or possibly two, more study groups with different facilitators and topics but we need volunteers who would be willing to lead the discussions. If you have an area of interest in tapestry that you would like to study in depth and discuss with other group participants online, please contact Christine Laffer for more information. (CLaffer@christinelaffer.com)

We also offer an online forum for discussion of ideas both technical and cultural. We hope you have taken the opportunity to check it out. You can click the link on the home page. You do need to register but then you can be part of those discussions too. If you are interested in a new thread of discussion or have a big issue to discuss this is your opportunity. We continue to look for other ways to create a tapestry community for our membership. Is there a role for the regional groups? Can we put together a speaker's list? We would welcome your ideas and suggestions.

We are pleased to let you know that two of the tapestries in the ATB5 show sold recently. Both Priscilla Lynch and Aija Baumane now have collec-

tors in New England. ATA is a non profit organization and cannot sell work but through our exhibitions we can help provide exposure.

Did you know we have a catalog sale on? You can buy two catalogs for \$20 or three for \$30. Think about giving one to your students, friends, collectors, and studio visitors or just plain indulge yourself. They are a good way to inform the curious bystander about tapestry and we all know how much we need to educate the general public. The wonderful benefit of collecting the entire series is that they reveal a twenty-year span in the work of several tapestry artists. It is a treat to discover early work by someone you might have met recently. Contact Joyce Hayes (joyce.hayes@comcast.net) for details or check the website.

Finally, American Tapestry Alliance's membership keeps growing as more members are joining at the Circle and Curator membership levels. This is a strong vote of confidence and it also increases our funds to continue to bring you better services. Thank you for your support.

On a personal note, Alex Friedman has relocated to the Bay Area from England. Please make note of her new e-address. (Alexfriedmantapestry@yahoo.com)

Happy Weaving,  
AF CL

## In Motion

By Linda Rees

Alex joins Jan Austin and me in the chaotic process of moving and settling into a new house, environment, and time zone. Please check your **current** newsletter for the correct address to send submissions or material to any of us and then, change the information in your address book. Even the e-mail address changed for Alex and for me.

The tone of this issue reflects motion too: within process, toward better expression of an idea, and toward involvement in world concerns. All of the contributors are ATA members except Sally Buell who has been in the past. She has recently been focusing on painting but has tapestries in at least two of the small format exhibits and may rejoin. Jennifer Sargent has recently rejoined. So goes the flow.

## Melding Material Structure and Imagery

By Jennifer Sargent

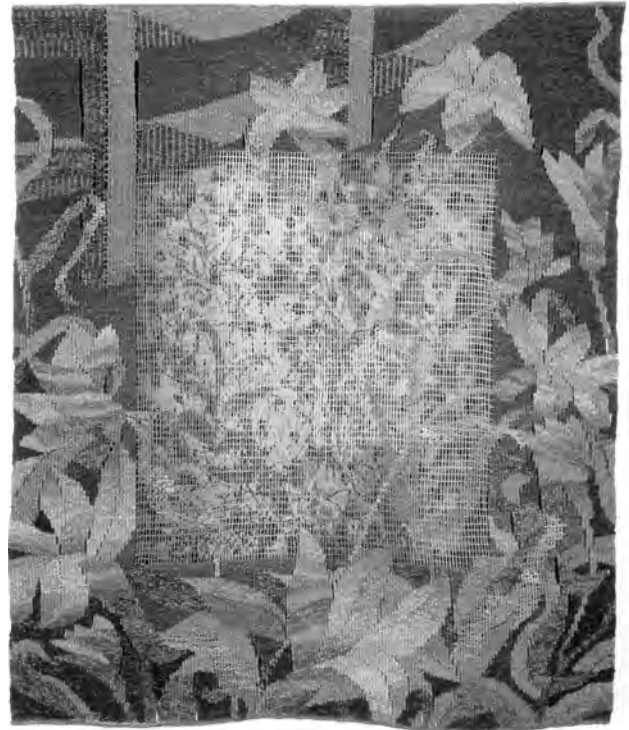
There are as many ways of working as there are individuals. As an artist I must find what fits my needs for expression and process. I have a solid grounding in Gobelins, or high warp tapestry technique, after two years working at the Scheuer Tapestry Studio, New York, study at West Dean College, England and workshops with Archie Brennan, Kay Lawrence, Jean Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie.

I added surface design to my artistic vocabulary whilst studying in the MFA program at Arizona State University with Clare Verstegen. Throughout my graduate studies I kept the two areas separate, exploring different aspects of my creative vision; using more immediate processes in surface design and continuing to work fairly traditionally in tapestry, like "The Commitment," (see color image online) incorporating eccentric and outline wefts, keeping a consistent flatness and weight to the tapestries even as I extended my ideas.

Over the years since leaving graduate school, teaching others and practicing art, I have become aware that I am a Fiber artist through the necessities of my process. It has been argued that we owe our brain's development to that of our hands (viz., *The Hand*, Frank Wilson) and the process of making, the haptic connection to the work, is as important to me as the final piece. It is through these repetitive (some might say obsessive) processes that I have time to integrate thought with action and material. Fabric, in its impermanent approximation of and proximity to skin, is for me a means of exploring questions of mortality (the physical and social complexity, fragility and resilience of life); it provides a metaphor both in its intrinsic, ephemeral material qualities and as a link to fleeting memories and lost or disappearing cultures.

Currently I think of the garden as a symbol for mortality; a place of layered states of being where outcomes are tempered by circumstances often beyond our control. I am fascinated with the artist's role of posing questions and exploring answers. My own questions and intuitive, fragmentary responses are reflected in my working methods. I proceed by

making separate components, using different materials and techniques, and responding to the implications of these choices. I am seeking visual equivalents for ideas, seeking to enmesh material structure and imagery. I always have a constructed element, although it is not always tapestry. I begin each new work by making samples; sometimes it takes many trials before it seems "right", a visceral response to the visual and material results. As I work slowly on each piece, I am developing knowledge of that piece



Jennifer Sargent, "Gardening Life II," 27 x 23 x 2, 2000. 2 layers - top layer: warp: ikat dyed linen, weft, tapestry and open weave combination: hand dyed linen, cotton, rayon; bottom layer: dyed, screen printed silk/linen fabric

and thinking about others for the future. I do not know the final outcome of a project or even if it will succeed, until I can layer, piece, manipulate or reconfigure the parts into a different whole. It seems, no matter what the processes may be, my work is complex, obsessive, and time consuming.

### Observations on Teaching

As Associate Professor in Fibers at Memphis College of Art, I teach both weaving and surface design within a Fine Art curriculum. In general, students begin taking Fibers out of curiosity and have little idea of the possibilities. Due to the present curriculum structure, even as majors, they are unable to

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Jennifer Sargent, "Bourree," detail, 76 "x 12" x 2", 2002.  
2 layers - top layer: warp ikat dyed linen, tapestry and open weave combination; bottom layer: resist dyed, hand embroidered silk/linen fabric

take more than five classes in their area of specialization. My major classroom constraint is teaching three levels in a single six-hour teaching day; it is difficult to instruct beginners, intermediate, and advanced students together. My present solution is to divide the class into two groups: beginners in the morning, the others in the afternoon. I rotate course content so that students beyond the beginning level receive new information each semester. After four semesters the students make their own proposals for the fifth and final semester's emphasis. On the weaving side, each semester begins with sample warps exploring structure and design, balancing complex weaves with processes such as ikat, warp painting, brocading, etc. In the second part of the semester, students have projects that require them to specifically consider the links between technique and concept. I have found that as a student's experiential knowledge is enriched, their conceptual abilities develop as well. Course content is not usually centered on themes, although I assign different readings and research topics. The exception to this is one semester in which tapestry is taught as part of an emphasis on narrative. It is important to me that students understand a breadth of technical and aesthetic possibilities and acquire some familiarity with both contemporary work and historical precedent.

## Hidden Energy, Warp Voices

By Patricia Dunn

Sitting here in my home in Zacatecas, Mexico, I have often wished to learn about what other artists are doing outside of the realm of pure tapestry technique. So it seems that perhaps I too should put my hand in to share what I do.

Categories of adventure are certainly diverse, like "mixed-media, eccentric warp techniques, non traditional materials, surface manipulations . . . in conjunction with tapestry techniques." Let's see, I may be using "eccentric warp" in my tapestries. I am weaving with copper wire warp, certainly a non-traditional material, with silk weft. Since "in conjunction" is defined as "in combination or concurrence with", I will add that a favorite sideline of mine is collecting and painting tabuchín seedpods.

I smiled as I read "eccentric warp" in the description. It has been so long since I participated in a weaving class that if I ever knew what eccentric warp meant, I have forgotten. I put "eccentric warp" into the google search engine. There were 191,000 hits of diverse meanings for eccentric and/or warp. Fascinating! Incidentally, eccentric weft received a lot more attention than warp. Not being sure that I use an "eccentric warp", I will describe how I have approached the warp in my weaving.

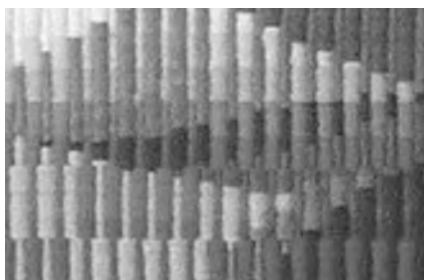
In weaving, warp exists in a spectrum of voices from the active to the passive. In traditional tapestry with the warp hidden within the weft, the voice of the warp is passive in terms of design. What voice has warp had in my work? I weave from side to side in each shed on a 60" Glimakra horizontal loom. I use a four harness threading of 4-1-4-2 blocks and 3-1-3-2 blocks learned in a Peter Collingwood rug weaving class sponsored by the Handweavers' Guild of Boulder. This arrangement gives me blocks of fat and skinny lines when I alternate the pair of sheds that have adjacent warps, 4-1 and 3-2. For example, by using one color across two blocks, the yarn goes over two warps in the one block and only one in the next one. The hue shifts from the dominant to the subdominant. Then a different color in the next pick (half pass) will shift in the opposite way. I fell in love with the idea of dominant and subdominant lines, giving me very interesting ways

to use the color paths. I might shift the value of the color slightly between picks or a lot to achieve the effect that I desire.

When designing the warp I think about how active I want it to be. How much energy is conveyed will be reflected in how the warp threading integrates with the hues I choose. I design each shed separately working from two gridded drawings of the color fields. The shed drawings are viewed side by side on an easel while weaving, like two exposures, each with its own color changes, discontinuous wefts and tonality. When I want the warp voices to be really dynamic with lots of energy, I may design lots of block changes of varying widths. It can be pretty "exciting" when I have many color changes in each shed. A more tranquil tapestry will have few block changes.

Once the weaving begins the warp design which creates the vertical lines becomes secondary to the building of the tapestry, one "horizontal" line at a time. At a casual glance it has the appearance of being rep weave or warp faced but in fact, the warp is hidden. Whether the tapestry is woven as designed or rotated on its side depends on the image. The warp blocks create a textural surface and control the width of a color line thus affecting the overall tonality too. The tapestries are two sided and the surface that I work on will be the back. The effects I describe can be seen in "Seeing with the Left Hand" and "An Evening with Schumann, Lecuona and Others in 4/4 Time."

In 1995 I allowed the beautiful, silvery linen warp to become an integral part of "Migration," a 5-panel sculpture commissioned by the State of Utah. After weaving the first panel the beauty of the warp sang to me. So I decided to put 9 feet of warp at each end of every panel, leaving the final decision regarding their length to be made at the time of installation. The active voice of this unwoven warp was essential to what I wanted the sculpture to be. The weaving technique was as described above.



Patricia Dunn, "Seeing with the Left Hand," detail as woven, showing horizontal path of yarn over two or one warp.

Recently, I sometime use a finer 2 ply wool and silk rather than the heavier 3 ply wool. I enjoy achieving finer detail in my tapestries and like the way the wool and silk dye differently. The reflectivity of the silk adds variety in the relationship of light with the yarns.

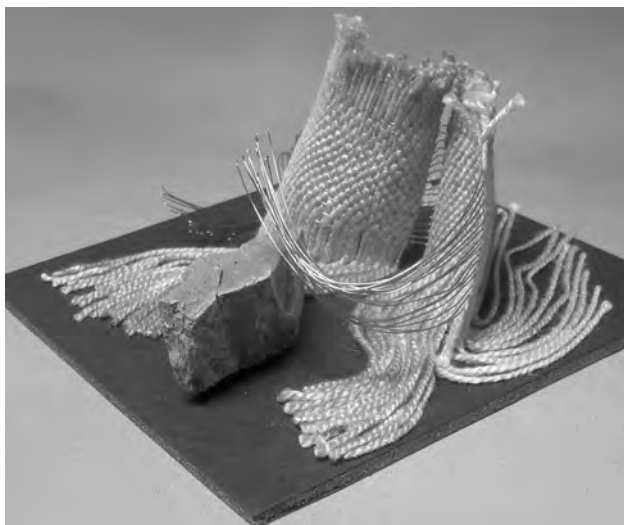
The addition of silk to my palette has lead me down another interesting path. The context results from having joined the Agrupación Mexicana de Artistas Textiles (AMAT) some years back. My first submission to a juried fiber exhibition was a 57" by 75" tapestry. The opening exhibition was in a beautiful colonial convent renovated as a museum in Queretaro, México. From there the show went to a gallery in México City, where it received a warm response, but alas, no sale. After that show, AMAT sponsored an international miniature textile show here in my home city of Zacatecas. Miniature was out of my experience. I knew it was important to participate, but didn't know how to scale down to that small, 10" x 10" x 10". I had never done that before. I pondered the problem, mulled over options



Patricia Dunn, "Seeing with the Left Hand," 36" x 48". 2000. Hand dyed wool on linen warp. (photo by Mark Dunn)

and just could not figure out what to do. What jarred me loose was a Rumi verse: "A tiny gnat's outward form flies about in pain and wanting, while the gnat's inward nature includes the entire galactic whirling of the universe."

I cannot define why that verse made me think of copper wire, but it did. It was an adventure searching for it in the many small stores of Zacatecas. I finally found an electric store that had many gauges of copper wire. With some experimentation, wrapping the wire on cardboard rectangles for the warp, and weaving the hand dyed silk with a needle, I created two sculptures for that show. I found the soft



Patricia Dunn, "El Cerro - El Universo #1," 8" x 8" x 4", 2003 (photo by Mark Dunn)

lustrous silk combined with the stiff lustrous copper wire and the possibility of moving out of the two-dimensional plane intriguing. I still do. In many ways, the material remains the teacher. I can have an idea, but the only way to discover the possibilities is to weave in order to hear what the copper has to say. I have a small warp on the loom right now. Using some of the techniques described above, I am adding copper to the weft, as an experiment, a wonderful playing, to see what happens in the tensioned warp on the loom.

It is so much fun going down this weaving path, never leaving behind the power of the traditional, exploring materials, hearing the voices that may murmur - or shout.

## Time Prods Technique

By Susan Hart Hennegar

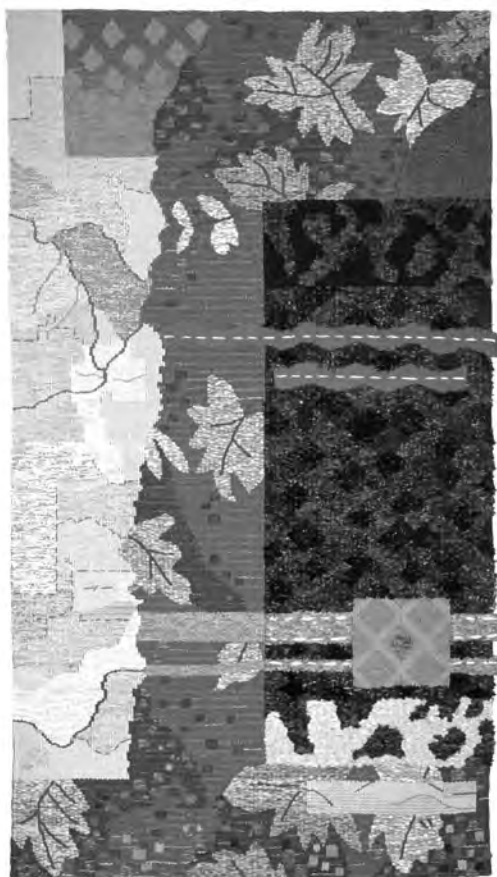
We all weave for different reasons. The tactile nature of yarn, the colors, and the opportunity for personal expression are seductive. Along with sewing, my mother taught me the basics of weaving when I was seven. I have always loved manipulating any fiber in nearly every technique.

As a young woman, I was drawn back to weaving when I discovered tapestry. It became the vehicle to visually express images relating to my grandmother's poetry about the land of the American Southwest. The rhythmic slow pace gave me the structure I needed in my life then. I have woven at every size and density from 2 epi to 12 epi, from 8" x 5" to 10.5' x 5.5'. They are single pieces, triptychs, and the Travel series, which some of you may know became 16 pieces woven during the 1990s.

Twenty-eight years later, my work and personal needs have evolved. No longer hyperthyroid, which made me "buzz" with activity and energy, I do not seek the solitude and pace of finer tapestry to calm myself. My energy is more centered, another decade has passed, and tapestry is physically demanding. Many of us have strayed from traditional tapestry after 25 years as it simply does not move at the speed of our ideas.

In the last seven years, I have explored quilting with vintage and new fabrics, 3-D fiber art, works on paper and book arts, as well as purchasing and remodeling houses. The increasing demands for customer service in my high-end interior designer sewing business and the exquisite fabrics we are shipped also influenced my work. I enjoy the problem solving that each area presents and find that my creative urges are fully indulged.

This combination of variables led me to develop a new type of tapestry expression in 2003. I was working long distance with a former San Diego designer. His clients had a ski house in Colorado with a large recessed art niche in a two-story stone wall in their den. I had many of their interior fabrics for the pillows and bedding I was already contracted to do and knew the piece needed to be custom made to fit the 7'9" x 4'9" niche. We spoke on Labor Day weekend about potential ideas. I could only propose the commission if I could have the finished piece in



Susan Hart Hennegar, "Vail Lifts," 7'9" x 4' 9", 2003

Colorado for installation on the 15th of December - the same year! As bad luck would have it, I sewed thru my finger that Sunday and could not work. Somehow, the pain focused me and I "sketched" three ideas for the piece. I worked at 1" to 1' scale in paper collage using images of vintage textiles, tapestry details, gluing and sewing through the paper. With a quick trip to Kinko's, I had the images scanned onto a CD and drove home to e-mail them to the designer. He then e-mailed them to the client abroad and they chose my favorite (the most red) from the three sketches. I never saw the house nor met the clients. The contract was faxed and we were "off and running". I actually had no idea how I was going to get the piece done, while working full time, but knew if I could, it would be part of the down payment for my Loft in Santa Fe. I had dreamed of that for 25 years and it now seemed within reach.

After a trip through the garment district of Los Angeles, I added ribbon, hem tapes, knitting yarn and raffia to my usual stash of Swedish wool yarns.

For speed, texture and a design element, I decided to work in a 4-harness weave on my Aubusson loom. The loom is threaded twice, thru 2 groups of traditional "portee" based headle bars. One group is threaded 1/3-2/4, the second 1/2-3/4. The tie up is changed based on weave prominence with small areas handpicked. I enlarged the sketch and painted a rough full size cartoon. I use canvas for large pieces; paper is too delicate.

I learned more about the clients and was happy to discover elements of their story fit right into my concept. They were an American family, named Diamond, currently in England, with this house in Vail. I had lived in North Wales in my 20's and the red fabric in my sketch was a 1930's scrap from the UK! Many of their interior fabrics were diamond weaves and I had incorporated that pattern into my sketch. This was enhanced in the cartoon. The left side of the collage included a map of Colorado and noted Vail prominently. The designer preferred abstract shapes, so I added subtle diamond shaped color changes in the dark "animal print" vertical area.



Susan Hart Hennegar, "Vail Lifts," detail

Because the piece was large and going on a stone wall, the weave is 2 and 4 epi. My loom is 8' wide but I decided to weave from the bottom up. I like stability at the hems so that area is mostly 4 epi. In the red area, the ground is 4 epi in 1" bands of bun-

continued...

dled yarns with a 1/8" shot of fine metallic copper between for design and added stability. The yellowish "floral" shapes are 2 epi and include wools in various weights, boucle's and eyelash yarns that are brushed up. The "veins" of the flowers are chain stitch, embroidered by hand afterwards in red cotton chenille. The roads on the map are woven in sumac stitch in the same chenille, which swells and steams very well, making integral marks. The additional "map marks" - airports, county lines, etc., were long running stitches in horsehair. Vail was red chenille, other towns along the roads, 1/4" linen squares. To achieve the paper quality of the map, it was woven in several color blends of a rayon raffia product from Japan. It is thinner than the 4 epi wool or the 2 epi as well, so there were several tension issues. My solution was to pad the thinner areas as they went around my 24" diameter roller, rather than to weight the warp.

The piece was finished and shipped on time and the clients arrived for their 2 week holiday visit, loving the entire house. I now have my own get-away set up in Santa Fe and am thrilled that weaving tapestry made it possible. "Hart's Crossing," a second commission completed at the end of 2003, is 30 percent larger than "Vail Lifts."

My sketching now encompasses all of my interests and the materials I weave with come from every facet of my fiber art career. My titles have always been plays on words and this piece was the beginning of a new style for me. Is "The Vail Lifts" simply a reference to Colorado skiing or the "veil lifts" in my approach to working? And, as they say, does it get any better than this?

## The Hello Tapestry

By Marti Fleischer

My tapestry called "Hello" is of interest because of the unique method incorporated into creating the finished wall hanging. The 3' x 5' tapestry was begun in November, 2001 and completed in August of 2002. It was intended as an accent in my home.

In December of 2004, I was asked to weave a tapestry for the registration area of a resort hotel that was under construction. The date for the Grand Opening was scheduled for the following May, only five months from then, which was insufficient time

to weave the desired 4'6" x 8' tapestry. The building contractor had liked the "Hello" tapestry when I had shown her my portfolio and thought it would be appropriate for a welcome area. Its design abstractly spells out H-E-L-L-O. Since it was not large



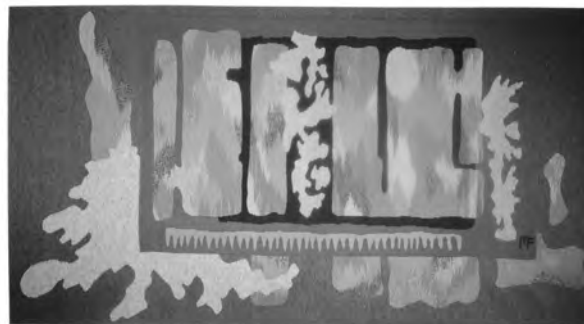
Marti Fleischer, "Hello", 36" x 60", 2002



Marti Fleischer, Background tapestry for "Hello" 54" x 96", 2005

enough for the space, it was agreed that I would design and weave a second tapestry that would provide the needed larger background.

I went to work designing a background that could blend with the already completed piece. The area in the center was left unwoven simply to save time, but straps were woven at 6" intervals in order



Marti Fleischer, Layered "Hello" tapsetry, 54" x 96", 2005



to keep the bottom section from sagging. Yarns were matched as well as possible because some of the original ones had been discontinued.

When the tapestry came from the loom, I attached the smaller piece to the larger. Considering that the one had been hanging for three years and therefore relaxed or settled, I needed to merge them in a way that would allow for uneven stretch between the two. I attached the smaller piece to the background with velcro strips at the top and very lightly sewed the side seams so uneven stretch could take place. The bottom edge was tacked in a few places to hold it snugly against the larger piece. I finished the commission in five months.

## Assemblages

by Monique Lehman

I created my collages, or rather mixed media assemblages, for an exhibit next year in Palazzo Datini, near Florence, Italy. I plan to create about 10 of these pieces for the show. My main concern is the shipping cost, so I selected very light materials. I use painted foam-core in many or support tapestry sections with it.

My concept is to show that fiber art belongs to



Monique Lehman, "Ocean," 18"x18"

the mainstream of art and that is why I combine well-recognized art pieces with fiber. I create the collages by first surrounding myself with things to which I am attracted and connect them with my sense of beauty, composition, and technical possibilities. I constantly play with things I am attracted to by dyeing, burning, embossing, pinching, or painting over them. I never consider any of the assemblage elements finished until I spend hours making them my own.

My designs are unique because sometimes I draw on art from the past and other times I just unconsciously manipulate materials with my hands and add surprising elements to the artwork. I am interested in the process, materials, and the mission of establishing fiber art as part of the mainstream.



Monique Lehman, "Indian Summer," 20"x17"

I do not take the viewers by the hand and lead them through my art. By adding all the elements that are intriguing to me I draw the audience to my work, I open the door to my mind and ask them to participate. I do not present them with the perfect, finished object. I show them the process and invite

continued...

them to engage with it. I am not a clear symbolist. Symbolism is an interesting intellectual game but once the puzzle is solved there is nothing else to find in the artwork. I want to stay mysterious and unpredictable even to myself.

I am just learning about the possibilities of tapestry. Weaving is just the beginning. In "Indian Summer," the felted part has no meaning by itself; I spent a lot of time finding other elements that will make it visually pleasing. Parts that were woven with acrylic fiber did not felt and still show the grid of the tapestry. Painted screws, vitamin E, amber, knitted velour, and beads were used. The wooden box was painted with gesso and acrylic paint. In places, it is covered with gold and silver leaf that has been treated with chemicals to change their shades.

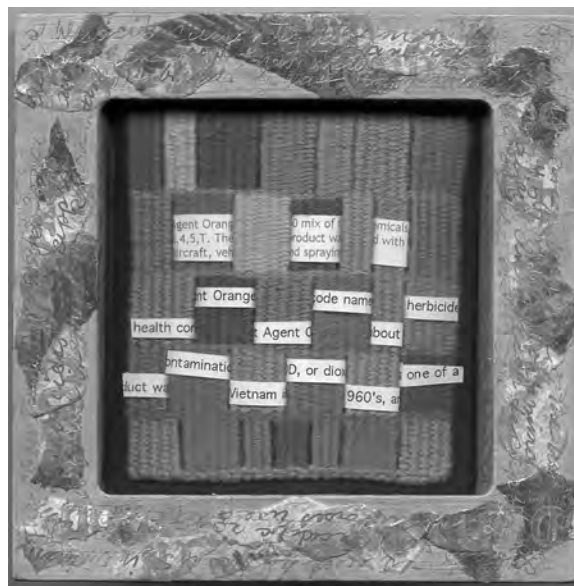
There is no difference between fiber art and other visual art. The distinction is in the artist's mind. Before I design a new project, I always study my favorite artworks. I thought, why not show the public those images that influence me so much? So I added the photo-transferred images. The presence of well-known masterwork, such as in "Red Hot," reflects on other elements by color, form, or the mood. A flashlight was placed behind the transparent transfer. (See color image online.)

"Ocean" is made mostly from elements related to the sea. There are dry kelp weeds mounted inside the frame, an embroidered and beaded transfer of a shell, a piece of unfinished tapestry and square foam core plates covered with turquoise organza. The plates are connected with pins; their heads look like beads. The safety pins were a natural way of connecting materials. I don't use glue; I connect materials in more technical and permanent ways. One plate has a drawing by Leonardo de Vinci of the unborn baby on it, and another has a glass bead. The shell has a spiral of wire embracing the varnished frame from the front and back. The tapestry is mounted on the computer circuit board. In this piece I was interested in placing unrelated objects that are visually pleasing and abstract rather than anything symbolic.

## Striving for Clarity — Pushing and Mixing Media

By **Tommye Scanlin**

The initial impetus for the ideas I am trying to express by pushing and mixing media resulted from very personal turmoil. My brother-in-law was diagnosed with non Hodgkin's lymphoma in the mid 1990s. It was felt his illness was caused by exposure to Agent Orange while serving as a U.S. Army Ranger in Vietnam. He died in 1999 and since then I have been struggling to understand why and how the defoliants came to be used so widely and to try to comprehend the extent of the destruction of lives as a result. There have been thousands of victims of the wartime use of herbicides. The legacy of its use in Southeast Asia is still being felt, there and by military veterans and their families in the United States. Much information is posted at numerous websites on the internet about Agent Orange and other chemicals used at that time. However, because anyone with the means can post to the web the validity of its content is always in question.



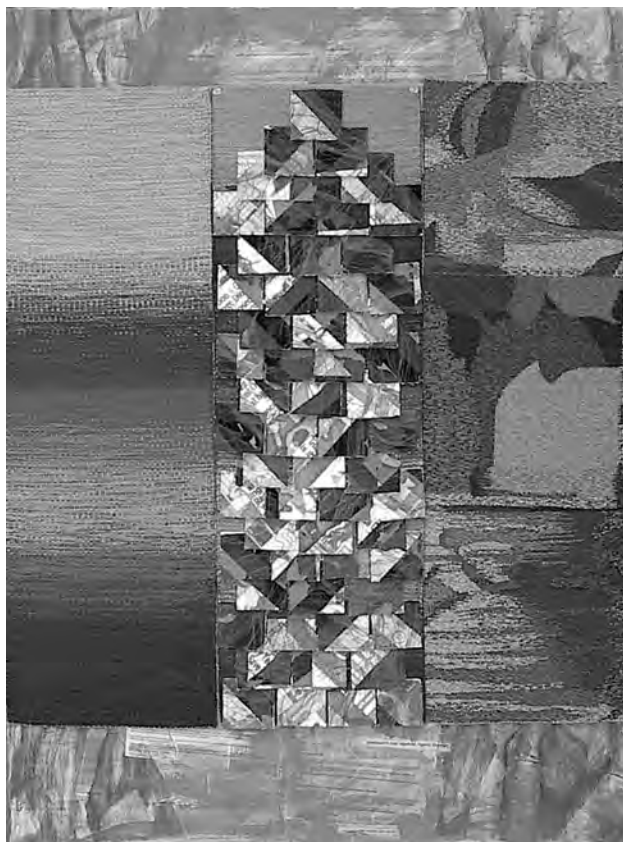
Tommye Scanlin, "Health Concerns," 6" x 6" x 1",  
mixed media

With the small pieces, "Harmful to Man" and "Health Concerns," I have tried to express my confusion about what is true and what is false from the myriad sources of information. To that end, I have used strips of text from various web sources interwoven with slit tapestry. I hoped to signify what is

hidden and what is exposed about Agent Orange in the information. The pieces were incorporated into shadow box frames that I painted and onto which I wrote and stamped lines and lines of text from the various sites, made almost illegible by the multiple lines of writing used around the edges. I have several more pieces of similar size and concept in the works.

For the multi-panel piece with the working title "Legacy of Operation Ranch Hand" my original intent was to do five tapestry woven panels in a similar vein as the one on the right side of this piece. However, trying various ways to add words without weaving them diverted my plan. In my mind it always comes back to the thousands, maybe millions, of words being spewed forth about this issue. What is true, what is not? What is exposed, what is hidden? Who knows-I am sure I don't!

Currently, this particular attempt has three panels hanging about an inch in front of a collaged and painted canvas. Using a canvas background is the latest attempt to join disparate parts and also to include more words. The collage on the canvas consists of snippets of information about AO from various websites and also color photocopies of abstracted drawings I did of vegetation, some dead and dying. The layers of collage were then painted over with thin washes of orange so that the words and images could only partly be seen.



Tommye Scanlin, ""Legacy of Operation Ranch Hand"



Tommye Scanlin, detail of center panel of "Legacy of Operation Ranch Hand"

The woven panels are all the same size, 36" x 12", but treated in different ways. The first one completed (on the right) was woven in traditional tapestry. The design is based upon an enlarged section of a small paper piece woven from photos I had taken of healthy and also dying leaves. I cut those apart, wove them, drew on them, etc. Then, as I wove the tapestry derived from that segment, I included various orange threads with each weft bundle.

The center panel was done next. Initially, I wove a weft-faced piece in which I gradually changed colors from dark greens through red orange and yellow orange to yellow greens, all colors contained a small strand of orange blended with two larger strands of the dominant color. The next development for this panel was originally designed as a totally separate work, a pieced fabric done in the traditional "string quilt" method, a simple process of stitching together fabric strips on a diagonal. The fabric I used was printed on my ink jet printer with images of Agent Orange related items, including the planes that sprayed the herbicide and symbols for toxic

waste, then layered with images from my drawings. The printed cloth was combined with commercial fabrics in orange, brown, black and camouflage print. These pieced and joined parts were then overlaid with orange netting that was wildly stitched over the whole assemblage with no concern if the netting rippled and wrinkled in the process.

continued...

As I was ironing the pieced fabric, I realized the iron was melting the netting in places. I enhanced that effect by ripping it away in some areas to expose more of the image below. The whole larger construction was then cut up again, this time into approximately 2" squares. The effect was still not enough for me, it seemed. I kept thinking, "It's the words that are important! It's the words that I need." My solution, finally, was to take bits and pieces of the information I have collected, photocopy many multiples on paper, then cut segments of the information to be stitched on the back of the small fabric squares. These information bits are paper. The top edge of each small square was then stitched onto the weft-faced panel like a flap; the fabric side of the flap faces out and the paper side is underneath. My intent is that viewers will lift the flaps to find various bits of information hidden behind.

The third panel is a simple weft-faced tapestry in which colors blend gradually from a dark, dull green at the bottom through yellow green through oranges to a gray/beige at the top. Again, a thin orange yarn is used throughout in combination with all the larger wefts. The simple horizontal movements were intended to suggest a vague, hazy, unwell landscape.

I am not sure at all about this composite piece, either the parts or the overall larger work. And I'm not even sure it will remain as it is. In fact, the middle panel, hanging over a longer narrow black warp-faced fabric, was accepted into "Spotlight 2005" the American Craft Council Southeast juried exhibit recently held at the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design near Asheville, NC.

The process of pushing and mixing media has been an effort to address the issue I have been dealing with for six years now; I have yet to find a resolution. Having encouraging remarks from Sharon Marcus and Christine Laffer at two different workshop occasions last year gave me the courage to continue the process. I have also had discussions about an earlier tapestry, my first to deal with Agent Orange done in 2000, with Steven Aimone, artist, critique guide, and author. He encouraged me to continue in this direction, as well.

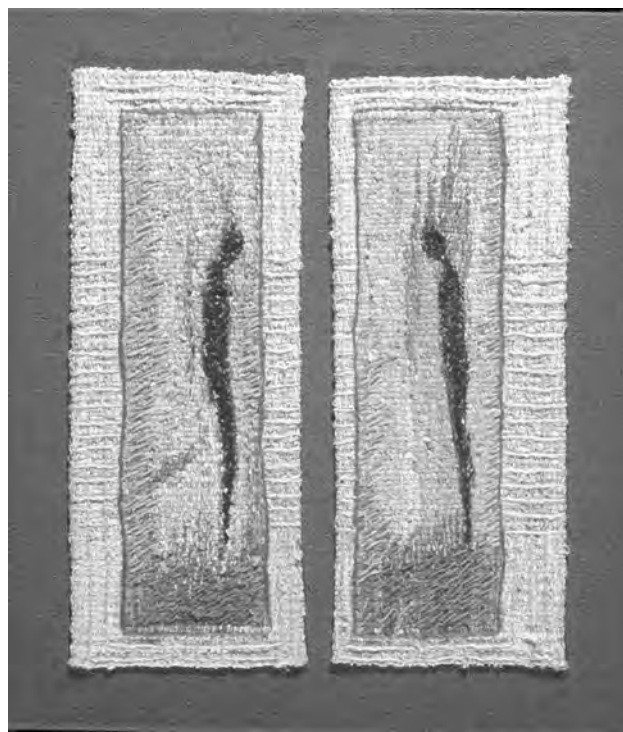
I have many other thoughts and images that these attempts are bringing up and I hope I will live long enough to try to make sense of them.

Sometimes I question, that with so much going on in the world today, why am I continuing to look back three decades to dig up heartbreak? Yet through this need to ponder the old results of herbicide use in warfare I am becoming aware of current herbicide use in supposedly beneficial ways-- in farming, for instance. I'm working now on a tapestry in a corollary series that I currently think of as "Healthy Harvest" -- about organic gardening, among other things.

## Search for New Directions in Tapestry

By Ann Schumacher

Call it a mid-career crisis or an artistic block, several years ago I sensed an inner resistance to the style and type of tapestry I had been weaving for the previous ten years. I felt a break was needed so that I could find an empty space of time and energy to explore new directions with different materials. In the meantime, I wanted to work for the cause of peace out in the world rather than sitting alone in my studio making art. Thus I completed a MA degree in Conflict Resolution at Wayne State



Ann Schumacher, "Reconciliation," 16" x 14", 2005

University, began mediating in my community, and campaigning for the establishment of a Department of Peace. The result of this two-year artistic turmoil is now a new surface texture created by weaving with paper and linen rather than with wool, embellishing the surface with a variety of embroidery threads and beads, embroidering human figures within the tapestry landscape, and focusing on narrative themes such as Reconciliation and Healing. Tapestry making has always been a significant part of my spiritual growth but when it no longer brought joy, I knew that either it was time to set it aside after thirty years or to persevere on a different path. I do not know whether this new path has a long duration, but I do know that, once again, I look forward to going to my studio while still working for the cause of peace in our divided world.

## **Exhibition Review: Robin Reider's "One World"**

**By Lanny Eila**

"One World", a recent exhibit at Weaving Southwest in Taos, New Mexico, reflects a personal philosophy that Robin Reider expresses through her life as well as through her art. "I am very connected to one world," Reider has said, expressing a belief that the universal motifs used in tapestries can reach beyond language to touch universal emotions.

Accomplished weaver and teacher, Reider is a world traveler who prefers to live in, rather than just visit, a place because it requires one to "form oneself to the other culture." Her approach to the traveling life is consistent with her spontaneous approach to art. While she plans out the basic outline of each tapestry, she chooses colors instinctively, figuring it out as she goes. "I have no [formal] art education. When you can't see what the final product will be, you have to have faith that your intuition will get you through, and it's the same when you're out of the box in another culture."

Reider learned to weave in 1978, in the Rio Grande style. While she has evolved into a style of her own, her work has maintained Rio Grande practices such as the use of a thicker, single thread rather than multiple strands in each bobbin; doubled warp threads at each selvage; weaving from the bot-

tom up; and a medium sett of about 8 epi and 11-12 ppi. Such is Reider's technical skill and use of color that, from a distance, the works appear to be woven with a finer sett. Reider selects from hundreds of colors of wool weft, hand dyed with natural or synthetic dyes. Her palette has grown brighter over the years, evolving from earth tones to bold, saturated colors.



Robin Reider, "One World Revisited"

The "One World" exhibit continues two long-standing themes in Reider's work: landscapes and bold abstractions. So consistent are these themes that she frequently alternates between the two, or has one of each on her two looms. Of her landscapes, Reider has written, "I am inspired by and constantly drawn to the outdoors by natural forms, shapes and colors. The abstracted landscapes that I weave hopefully can provide viewers with a sense of the spiritual and emotional values that I feel when surrounded by natural beauty. I strive for harmony and balance with the boundaries provided by the framework of the loom, the wool, and the process of weaving."

Reider's abstractions are bold, asymmetric, geometric, and enlivened with painterly shading. They have frequently included zigzags, reflecting a Rio Grande influence, and/or black outlines around more organic elements, reflecting an African influence.

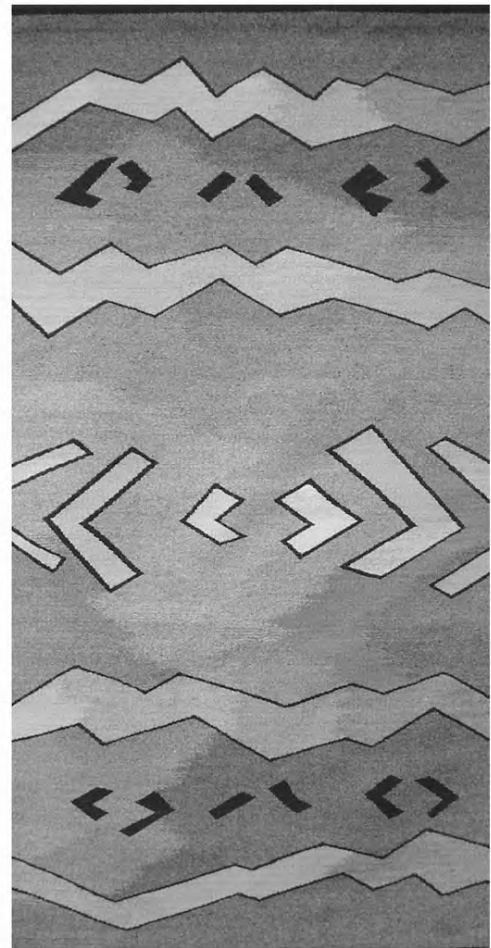
The works in the show were woven since Reider's return to New Mexico after two years in Africa with the Peace Corps; at the time of the show, she had returned to Africa, volunteering for a different aid organization. However, the African

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themes present in her geometric work preceded her visits to that continent, and were first inspired by photos of African work.

The show included nine tapestries: 3 landscapes ("Fire Over the Bosque", "One World Revisited", "Amber Evening"), 3 abstractions ("Autumn Harvest", "Angles and Squares", "Out of the Box") and 3 that hovered somewhere in between ("Seascape", "Ultra Z Runners" 1 and 2). All used color gradations, contrast and asymmetric balance to create a musical quality. Other than the "Ultra Z Runners", they had narrow dark borders on the upper and lower edges, as if to contain the energy, and open borders on the sides. The landscapes, which all sold, featured vast skies in lush tones that drew the viewer in to a complex, dramatic world. The abstracts were cooler, two of them with black outlines in the manner of African Kuba cloths, and the third ("Angles and Squares") a quieter arrangement of turquoise squares against a lavender background, each square with its own black details. The final 3 brought to mind landscapes (specifically a churning ocean and the nearby Rio Grande Gorge) while remaining sharp edged and abstract at heart.

When we saw the show, it had been rearranged from its original hanging to allow rotation of unsold tapestries into the window. The rearrangement served to intensify the occasionally discordant differences in color and style in the various works. It was hard to find a common thread. Yet it is perhaps appropriate that a show reflecting on this one world would consist of many parts, each with a unique strength and beauty, which do not always hang comfortably with one another within the same sphere.



Robin Reider, "Autumn Harvest"

## Review: 9/11 Memorial Tapestry Exhibit

By **Kathe Todd Hooker**

The Corvallis Handweavers & Spinners Guild recently sponsored the "9/11 Memorial Tapestry Exhibit" at ArtCentric, the home of the Corvallis Arts Center. Although the exhibit arrived several days late and the opening had to be postponed for a week, the wait was worth it for those who could change their plans and return to view the tapestries.

The 9/11 Memorial Tapestry is composed of 100 tapestries from 19 different countries. The majority of artists are from North America but Australia, New Zealand, and England are also well represented. The second largest non-American group is from Eastern Europe. Most of the tapestries can be viewed at <http://www.tapestryart.org/MemorialTapestry/artwork.htm>. However, not all the tapestries in Corvallis are on the site. For instance, a particular favorite of mine, a 3-D shaped tapestry that is made from wool and wire is not.

After the tragedy of the World Trade Center bombings, Monique Lehman had the idea that tapestry weavers could help lighten their own and the world's grief by weaving a memorial. The idea was advertised on the tapestry list, internet web pages, and by word-of-mouth. The exhibition has been traveling in several European venues and a few places in California since it was completed.

The criterion for participation was that the individual tapestries had to be 10 inches by a number divisible by 10. The largest pieces in the exhibit are 20" x 20". They are currently mounted on four black cloth panels

about 8' tall, with perhaps two inches of black border around each piece.

Hester Coucke, ArtCentric's gallery director, created an interactive atmosphere that left one with a sense of awe. It focused the attention of the audience both on the whole collection and as a way of seeing the individual weavers as more than a part of the whole. The converted church gallery is a very large space with groined ceilings. Every panel had its own large white wall, giving a very austere, thoughtful, and dramatic feeling to each unit. On a sidewall, poems about 9/11 printed on plain white paper had been affixed to the walls. To one side of this, there was a freestanding center where viewers were asked to draw their own feelings about 9/11 and mount them. The notebook of statements by the artist and printed location maps of the individual tapestries were on a table.

Time and other tragedies have removed the sense of urgency and overwhelming newness of the 9/11 loss. Enough time has passed from the actual event for the pieces to be considered as individual statements rather than as a mass statement of support and caring. I think that this was the first time the memorial tapestries had been shown with the statements available. The emphasis has previously been on the whole, the quantity and universality of the weavers - not the individuality of each weaver that becomes very apparent when viewed with the written statements. The focus on the statements of the weavers and the individuality of each tapestry gives a greater meaning to the project as a whole, perhaps gives it a greater sense of loss and tragedy as the enormity of the loss has been totaled and catalogued.

Statements have replayed in my mind since viewing the exhibit. For instance, Renate Chernoff made reference to a poem by Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer that kept running through her mind. It begins with "We Remember Them/ At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter/We remember them/At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring" and ends with "As long as we live, they too will live;/For they are now a part of us, as we remember them."

Being one of the weavers who contributed a piece, "Over and Over" and seeing the tapestries together for the first time, I found the experience

very interesting. I had seen many of the pieces separately and in photographs, but not together as a whole. Hearing it called a quilt was rather shocking. I realized that people were not seeing it in the same way that I was trained to see it. So many quilts-The Aids Quilt, The Cancer Quilt, and many other precious and meaningful group efforts, have conditioned people to view the tapestry in a certain way. So, I backed up and re-looked at it. Viewed as a quilt, each panel tended to gray out and mellow into a burned out ash tinged color. Brightly colored pieces became somber and sad. Only a few pieces stood out, like embers in a fire. On the large walls, the panels looked quite small and alone. As a whole, when blended together the pieces became quite monumental — a marker in time. It was not until one got closer and saw the individual parts that one saw the color, power, and uniqueness of the designs.

It is fitting that tapestry be used as a partial remembrance for 9/11. It is both a pictorial medium used historically for telling stories and for marking great events. Several major tapestries were destroyed when the towers toppled. Most notably was one by Jan Miro. According to an insurance source it will never be known how many art works in private offices were destroyed. It was rumoured that many tapestries were among the art works that ceased to exist on that date.

In the final analysis, it is the memory of loss and of the resulting pain that we pass on to our children and their children, hoping that they may use this knowledge in creating a better and more peaceful world.

Of interest is how the statements and messages of the pieces differed. Many focused on universalities or broader themes such as patriotism, religion, justice and peace, while others focused on the individual statements of dismay, grief, wonder, disbelief, fragility of life, amazement and perplexity over what survived. Other statements focused on the destruction — the over all price of destruction to all, humanities caring, the rescue dogs, destroyed architecture and the twin towers themselves.

I thought about listing and categorizing pieces, but decided it would be better if you all went to the website and looked at the pieces yourself. Stylistically, everything was represented. There were shaped pieces, photo-realistic pieces, abstracts, min-

continued...

imalist, stylized pieces, caricatures, surrealist, 3-D pieces and things that made you want to say, "how did they do that?" It is a statement for the uniqueness and diversity of what has been and is happening in tapestry in the last few years. Technically, there are pieces that were woven wonderfully and with amazing virtuosity. Fortunately, there were also pieces woven by students and the not so skilled. The variety of skill levels helped to humanize the richness of others, making for a wonderful democracy of all.

As tapestry weavers, we are trained to think of the longevity of our textiles, but as 9/11 showed us everything can end in a flash. To paraphrase a statement Charles Talley made many years ago, we as tapestry weavers work in a subversive medium, one that can easily last 500-1000 years and yet the reality is that we live in a culture where the end of "our" world could be as close as tomorrow.

## Book Review

### ***GET SET : A New Technique in Tapestry Weaving***

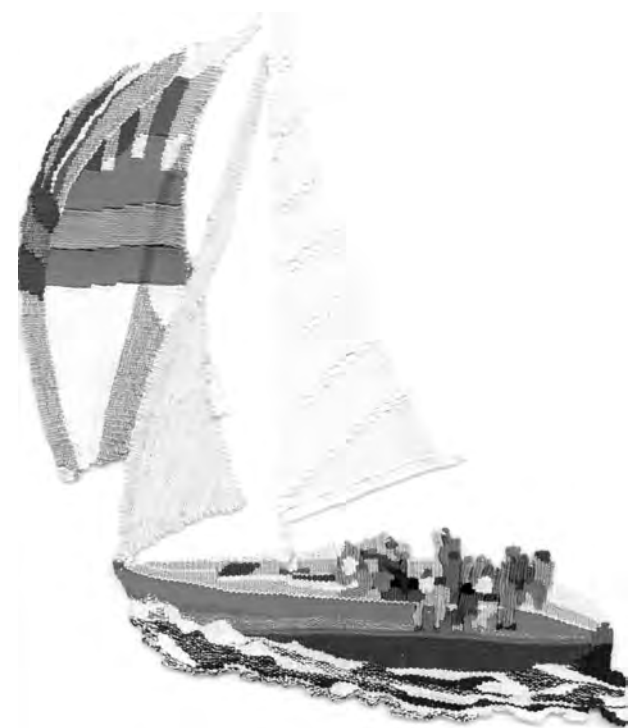
**Diane Ammar, New Zealand**

Review by Linda Rees

In the spring of 2004, Diane Ammar published a small monograph on a technique she has developed for creating shaped tapestries. Her passion is working small, "interpreting children's paintings and drawings into family treasures" and incorporating portraiture in her artwork.

Ammar's introduction to tapestry came in 1995 when she discovered "the beautiful work produced by Marilyn Rea-Menzies." (see TT31-1, 2005) From the start, she was interested in weaving small tapestries but was not satisfied with her results until introduced to the four selvedge technique taught by Archie Brennan and passed on to her at a local Christchurch weaving meeting. That was "the seed required for my simple technique to evolve."

Essentially, the process is a system for attaching warp along the edges of the desired shape to be secured to a secondary "waste" warp secured to a frame. The completed tapestry comes off the framework with almost no finishing required and is stable. The method is explained in detail in a straightforward manner. However, because people learn in many different ways, and personally, I learn more from a visual diagram than text, the book could have benefited from step by step diagrams. Still, I could create an image from the description. It simply meant that I needed to read and visualize the procedure several times.



Diane Ammar, "Yacht," woven in one piece, shaped and selvedged, but there are four groups of warp which have been set in

The colorful examples of her work attest to the flexibility of the technique along with her own artistic sense. I suspect that we will start seeing more works produced in this format because of its versatility and the stability of the structure.

Copies of 'GET SET' are available by contacting Diane Ammar at the following email address, [d.ammar@clear.net.nz](mailto:d.ammar@clear.net.nz) for US\$17.00 each including airmail postage and packing to anywhere in the world.



## Informal Review: TAPS

Sally Buell & Patricia Williams

*While vacationing in the Northwest during the summer, Pat Williams of Clarksville, Georgia, and her family visited the Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound (TAPS) exhibit at the Handforth Gallery in the downtown public library of Tacoma, Washington. So did Sally Buell, of Seattle. Both wrote informal commentary to the online tapestry list, which is sponsored by Kathie Todd Hooker and provided good information about the exhibit. Having such commentary from our ATA members about exhibits they see is a goal of mine, as editor. Here are extrapolations from their observations.*



Margo Macdonald, "Point of View," detail, 9"x9", 2005

**Pat:** We enjoyed studying the tapestries and particularly enjoyed seeing several works by each artist. So often these shows have only one work per artist.

**Sally:** In previous years a lot of the work had been figurative, but this year almost all was with geometric or large forms.

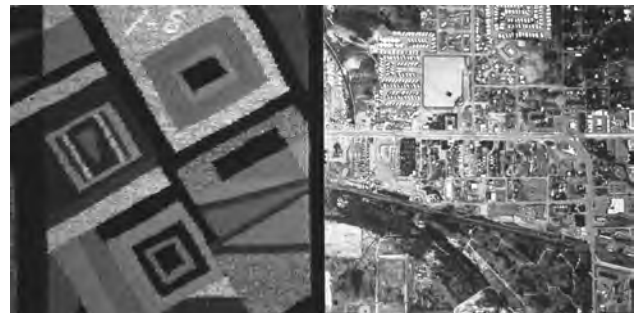
**Sally:** "Mary Lane exhibited a series, "The Life of Joseph Lane," that worked metaphorically from "Joseph's Birth," which has a feeling of Sumi painting; through "Joseph's Question," a piece with echoes of the Norwegian tapestry tradition; and then moves into "Joseph's Search," woven in a repeated pattern with variations. Melanie Berry presented a three dimensional tapestry called "Owl Mask". Carol Price Dyer wove geometric shapes in what looked like rolled paper of silver, gold, and others with tiny Chinese characters. **Pat:** Carolyn Price Dyer's pieces were not exactly weft-faced tapestry in the traditional sense, but I loved her really strong series using twisted papers. I think I saw a picture of the one titled "Red Handed" some time ago, but seeing it in person was quite another experience.

**Pat:** My husband was quite taken with Cecelia

Blomberg's rooftop piece, "June 4th". **Sally:** Pacific Rim Tapestries had woven "Labyrinth", which especially appealed to me. I had wanted to weave a tapestry with a labyrinth as the theme some years ago but decided it was technically beyond me at that time. Theirs was in brown and greens and it was very hard not to trace the path with my finger.

**Sally:** Joyce Hayes has been weaving with sewing thread in geometric designs. One, "Geometric Ikat 5", (See page 1) was mounted on watercolor paper painted to continue the tapestry pattern. Her "Mountains 2" had color changes reminiscent of the kind of value and hue changes you can get in watercolor. **Pat:** It was interesting to me to see that she had mounted them on what appeared to be watercolor backgrounds that were carefully painted to complement the tapestries. Presentation is so hard to decide on. The watercolor backgrounds have a wonderful multi-media potential that I began to play with in my mind.

**Sally:** I was enchanted to see a group project, "Point of View". The inspiration was an aerial photograph of Tacoma broken into 9"x 9" squares. The weavers interpreted their portion as a 9" x 9" tapestry, exhibited next to the city blocks which provided



Frances Williamson, "Point of View," detail, 9"x9", 2005

the reference. **Pat:** The presentation was particularly effective in that each artist wove her tapestry according to an aerial photo. All of the pieces were the same size with the black and white photo mounted next to it. The individual artistic styles were fun to compare, yet the theme kept it strong and cohesive.

Group project statement: "Point of View" is the most recent in a series of collaborative projects undertaken by Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound. In this project each artist produced a woven interpretation of a nine-inch by nine-inch aerial photograph of

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South Tacoma taken in 1974. The only restriction was that the tapestry be the same size as the photograph. The modular nature of the project lends itself to a variety of configurations and the possibility of adding pieces in the future. The variety in the resulting tapestries demonstrates the individuality of the artists and the creative potential of hand woven tapestry.

**Sally:** All in all, this was an exciting exhibit, with different styles, materials and points of view.

## TWS: Focus on Critique

by Becky Stevens

Tapestry Weavers South (TWS) met at the Bend of Ivy Lodge outside of Asheville, North Carolina for the annual retreat, September 22-25, 2005. The serenity of the Lodge and the beauty of the surrounding hills and valleys provided a relaxed atmosphere where old friendships were renewed, and new ones were created. Also, knowledge of tapestry was exchanged and the art of critique was imparted. The retreat was a balance of touring, sharing work and a half day presentation on the methods of critique by Steven Aimone.

As members arrived on Thursday afternoon, their tapestries were hung clothesline style in the great room of the former tobacco barn that served as our headquarters. The work was presented in a variety of manners, "hot off the loom", in progress, complete, or shown as photographs. Sometime over the three-day retreat each person presented their work, discussed the goal for the work, and related any problems they encountered in the making. Group discussion followed, giving the weaver feedback.

On Friday the group toured nearby Biltmore Estate, spending several hours viewing and then discussing the five large "Venus and Vulcan" Flemish tapestries (1546-1553) in the Banquet Hall and the series of three "Triumph Of Virtue Over Vice" tapes-

tries in the Tapestry Gallery. One tapestry is accessible to walk up to and view through Plexiglas. The others were seen only from a distance. Biltmore Estate allows self guided tours, which gives you as much time as you want to spend in any area. This allowed small groups of weavers to stand before the tapestries discussing the narrative content, calculating the ends per inch and noting the weaving techniques employed.

On Saturday Steven Aimone, an art coach interviewed in a *FiberARTS* article, "The Creative Critique," April/May 2005, came to the Lodge to teach the basics of critiquing artwork and how to set up several kinds of critique groups. Members participated in a questionnaire to determine their "art-making orientation". Each member rated "purposes"—for example: narrative, formal, or emotive, in terms of importance in their approach to creating art. Pat Williams was preselected to present a body of work to be examined by the group, guided by Aimone and his check list of "purposes". Pat was asked questions based on her answers to the questionnaire, to see if she felt her work demonstrated the qualities she val-

ued most in creating art work. Aimone responded discussing the degree to which she was accomplishing her intentions.

As a result of this educational experience, participants will continue to discuss ways to set up small, two to three person, regional critique groups. On-line groups or by-mail groups are also a possibility, and a group critique at the next retreat is likely.

The TWS retreat provided time to get to know each other better, thus understand-

ing why we all make the work we do. Walks to the river and hiking the surrounding hills provided pleasant occasions for informal interaction. Gatherings of the "night owls" in the great room led to much giggling and merriment. Some members visited the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Highway, New Morning Gallery, and Earth Guild in Asheville before returning home. This retreat from our normal activities and the world's catastrophes allowed us to focus on something



TWS retreat participants, left to right: Terri Stewart, Tommye Scanlin, Marianne Vigander, Pat Williams, Rosemary Smith, Nancy Garretson, Marti Fleischer, Becky Stevens, Judy Bocknek, not shown: Janet Hart, Connie Lippert, Holly Wilkes.

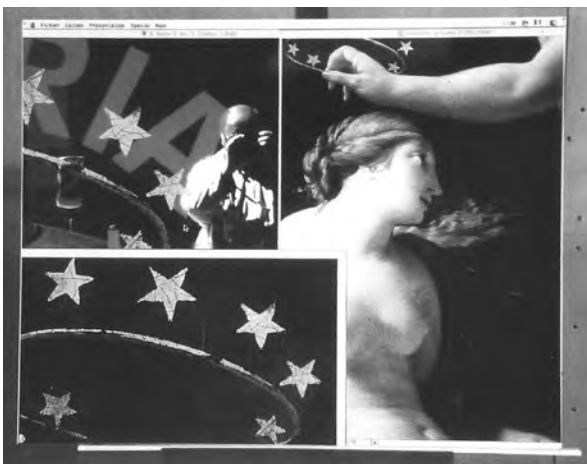
## TWW Symposium: "Tradition in Motion"

By Christine Laffer

In honor of their 20th year anniversary, Tapestry Weavers West (TWW) organized an exhibition, workshop and symposium, "Tradition in Motion: New Forms, Attitudes and Approaches in Tapestry." The events took place during the week of June 15-28, 2005. Between the receptions, special dinners and many impromptu gatherings over food and wine, the anniversary celebration appropriately lasted an entire week.

The exhibition at the Nexus Gallery featured works by 14 artists selected by juror Suzanne Baizerman, Curator of Textiles at the Oakland Museum. The tapestries, some completed over 10 years ago, shared the gallery space with a class in advanced technique tapestry. Even though this arrangement made the gallery a more complex space to maneuver in for seeing the works, it provided a particularly informative experience for viewers. Care Standley, who organized the exhibition, performed the tasks of docent during gallery hours - even while taking the workshop.

With a stroke of inspiration, Jean Pierre Larochette arranged to bring Philippe Playe, of the Mobilier National of Beauvais France, and Director of the Beauvais Tapestry Museum, to the US to teach this class. Acting as host, translator, and one of the team teachers, Larochette put every effort into assuring a successful workshop. Yael Lurie also taught, as the students were expected to design as part of their assignment. Within weeks of its first announcement,



Cartoon for tapestry series on Eustache Le Sueur at Beauvais under the direction of Philippe Playe, 2005"

the class was completely booked up. The post-workshop consensus indicates that it was an incredibly successful and intense experience.

At the end of the week, a daylong symposium took place on June 25th. Janet Moore, Co-President of TWW, organized "Tradition in Motion" and brought together a fascinating array of invited speakers. Philippe Playe agreed to talk, as did Barbara Heller from Canada, Sharon Marcus from Portland, along with Californians, Jean Pierre Larochette, Sheila O'Hara, and Deborah Valoma.

Sharon Marcus, Barbara Heller, Philippe Playe and Sheila O'Hara focused primarily on studio work although they each had different ways of engaging with process, form and idea. Marcus divided her talk between developments taking place in her work and her involvement with online discussions in two of the first ATA study groups. She described the recent changes in her work as a process of asking questions. Is she a tapestry maker or an artist who happens to work in tapestry as a medium? Questions constantly arise on the appropriateness of choosing certain materials. Wedge-weave techniques have pushed several of her pieces into sculptural forms. She questioned whether the piece is really complete when it comes off the loom. She found herself making alterations with pigment, polymer and pounding the tapestry surface with a heavy iron hammer. Questions and curiosity about textile materials and their intrinsic symbolism and meaning have also arisen in the online study groups. Comparisons between artists' works, their choice of materials, and their writings have triggered many experiments and new directions.

Heller took a tour through the last 15 years of her work and talked about her own symbolic image system as it developed over time. This in-depth look highlighted the irony of political situations and the pathos hidden therein. She has also found herself tapping into material meanings that add to her recent work such as "Still Life... With Bird," where she stitched the actual bones of birds onto the piece.

Playe spoke in French with Larochette translating. Two projects drew particular attention. One, currently being woven on the looms at the Beauvais, involves the use of photographic elements layered in window frames as seen on a computer monitor. Combining 18th-century tapestry and contemporary photography, the images play between their existence as archived documents quickly browsed through, and their new

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existence (which becomes a reiteration) in the final woven tapestry. The traditional portions are woven in true 18th century techniques and the photographic portions are woven with demi-duite (half-pass) systems for achieving pixilated effects.

The second project he discussed with the panel was presented without any visual reference. Apparently this project is under negotiation, since it involves a rather controversial reproduction of the "Lady and the Unicorn." One of the famous panels would be rewoven exactly, with one major exception. The weaving will be all in one color in order to reveal a different view through the reproduction of its slits. As described, this project will present a challenge to the master weavers of Beauvais as well as to subsequent viewers who will be asked to understand this historic tapestry in entirely unpredictable ways.

In step with this emphasis on new practices, Larochette showed slides of his foray into combining woodcarving and tapestry. A narrow woven strip depicting three curls of barbed wire was set into a wood strip carved with the same motif. The change from the flat crispness of the woven portion to the dimensional warmth of wood shifted material qualities and interpretive meanings into a new realm.

Larochette went on to relate the story of the largest tapestry in the western hemisphere, woven by his brother, Jacques Larochette, in Argentina in the 1960's. Not only did Larochette talk about the glowing articles published in magazines and newspapers of the time, but he also spoke about tracking down and talking with the men who wove on the four-year project. His paper presented a fascinating man who accomplished a monumental tapestry on the scale of Lurçat's "Chant du Monde," an accomplishment that clearly deserves more historical attention. At the same time, he made clearer the changes that have taken place in the practice of tapestry production as few multi-weaver studios exist.

Sheila O'Hara's lecture brought to the forefront the resurgence of digitized weaving processes that have noticeably affected the types of fiber work seen in galleries. Even though she has spent the majority of her career weaving imagery at her loom, the recent accessibility of high-tech jacquards generated by digital images has made an impact on her methods. Where previously she played with a simplified geometry that suited the techniques of warp-faced twills, she now can explore the subtleties of thin curved lines and diverse textural effects as the computer

translates them from photograph to jacquard. She described a whole new set of logistics to take into account, from a much finer range of thread sizes, to renting time on the jacquard or even hiring someone else to weave the work.

Winding up the talks, Deborah Valoma took a look at the ways that image and pattern in textiles have evolved their own language. From the earliest possible pattern units of woven mats, to the swirls of paisley cashmere shawls, textiles have visual characteristics and meanings that get largely ignored or misrepresented by analysts and historians. Her lecture underlined the potential still inherent in textiles for a visual system apart from that of realism.

Few symposia have managed to clarify the urgency of current issues. The difficulty of pinpointing change as it occurs did not prevent these speakers from offering cogent, lucid documentations of what is taking place right now in the tapestry world. In tandem with the retrospective view of the exhibition, this particular event satisfactorily drew attention to the significant challenges that still lie ahead.

## Member News

By Ellen Ramsey

Thank you new and renewing Circle Members! Your additional contributions are providing much needed funding for the American Tapestry Biennial 6 exhibition and catalog. **Studio Circle:** Klaus Anselm, Kissiah Carlson, Nancy Crampton, Deb Erickson, Joanna Foslien, Susan Iverson, Patricia Jankowski, James Koehler, Kristin Majkrzak, Letitia Rogers, Jean Smelker-Hugi, Kathy Spoering, and Diane Wolf. **Collector's Circle:** Lynn Mayne

We strongly encourage all Circle Members to post an Artist Page on our website. Please contact Web Editor Christine Laffer if you have questions. [claffer@christinelaffer.com](mailto:claffer@christinelaffer.com)

And One More Thank You: Friends of Fiber Art International has awarded ATA a \$500 grant in support of the ATB 6 exhibition catalog. If you attend an FFAI function this year, be sure to thank their leadership for their continued support of ATA publications.

**Catalog Sale extended!** See enclosed order form for details. Sale prices good through **January 31st** with this form. Buy yourself a little holiday gift and then curl up by the fire with some tapestry inspiration.

**ATA Award of Excellence** was given to Connie Lippert at the "Fiber Celebrated 2005" exhibition in Durango Colorado, for her tapestry "Blue". Connie learned to weave in 1975 as an art major at Auburn University and since 1999, her focus has been wedge weave. She teaches, lectures and is an artist-in-residence in South Carolina public schools. Her work is in museums, corporate, academic and private collection and published in magazines and the *Fiberarts Design Book 7*.

Member Kudos: **Tommye Scanlin** and **Pat Williams** had a two person exhibit, "Common Threads" at the Center Gallery, in Sauttee-Nacoochee, GA from September 15 to November 5, 2005.

About the Membership Directory: Usually a new Member Directory is published each January. This year we are moving the annual publication time up to summer. The next newsletter will include an update of new members and changes since July 1, 2005 and then the 2006 Directory will be mailed with the summer '06 newsletter. **With this change the deadline for member advertisements in the Directory will now be March 15, 2006.** In the meantime, if you need a new copy of the current Directory I will happily send you one. - Ellen Ramsey at (206) 440-8903 or ew.ramsey@comcast.net



Candace Adelson asked: Do you have statistics on the number of American tapestry weavers at different times during the past century or so? It would be interesting to see what the trends are.

Wouldn't we all love to see statistics like that? Unfortunately, "tapestry weaver" is not a category that is used by the United States Department of Labor, or by Census collectors, the most likely sources for such statistics. In searching the Statistical Abstract of the United States the only reference to weaving was in a small table about recreational activities. I was quite surprised that their survey showed 16% of the sample population had participated in weaving in the past 12 months! Then I noticed that their definition of "Pottery Work" included ceramics,

jewelry, leather work and metalwork. They did not explain what they meant by "Weaving," but given that there was no other fiber category listed, I suspect they have lumped together under the "Weaving" category everything from knitting, crocheting and quilting to sewing on buttons!

Likewise, in the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which is published by the Department of Labor, I searched in vain for any job title even vaguely related to weaving, fiber art, art or design. The only thing I found was "Textile, apparel and furnishings workers."

So we are left with the very limited numbers that I have right here: ATA membership. Although these numbers are interesting, they are by no means definitive, given that there are many tapestry weavers who do not belong to ATA. Counting tapestry weavers is a bit like herding cats! We are very independent, and



Connie Lippert, "Blue," 24" x 24", 2004  
photo by Robert Lippert

there are many of us still working in isolation. That said, and with my apologies to any statisticians in the audience, here are some interesting numbers:

In 1995 the total number of ATA members was 169, with 163 of those being from North America, or the USA, Canada & Mexico. Now, in 2005, the total of ATA members has more than doubled to 383 with 351 North Americans. Our "overseas" membership has increased dramatically from 6 to 32.

In addition, there are regional groups like the Canadian Tapestry Network (CTN), and Tapestry

continued...



Cecilia Blomberg, "June 4h," 35" x 51"

Weavers in New England (TWiNE) and others, many of whose members do not belong to ATA. For example CTN has 148 North American members, only about 1/3 of whom belong to ATA. TWiNE is smaller, with only 50 members, and even with my constant nagging, only 50% of them belong to ATA. I take that to mean that we could probably multiply the ATA membership by at least 2 for a more accurate figure.

To date, there have been two published accounts assessing the scope of tapestry weaving in the United States. Courtney Ann Shaw's thesis, *The Rise of the Artist/Weaver: Tapestry Weaving in the United States from 1930-1990* published in 1992, can be obtained via interlibrary loan from the University of Maryland, College Park, MD. Alice Zrebiec's thesis, *American Tapestry Manufacturers - 1893-1933* was from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University in 1980.

It would be a fun project for someone to try to compile a list of every single tapestry weaver in North America (and I believe that our Membership Chair, Ellen Ramsey, is moving in that direction!), but the big question is: What is a tapestry weaver? Do we include only professionals, or only full-time weavers, and what about students? What about all those floor loom weavers who dabble in tapestry? What about all the tapestry weavers who dabble in everything else?

That leaves us with herding cats again. As far as current trends, ATA continues to grow, and many of us are noticing an increase in tapestry exhibits, workshops and the like. The President of my local Weavers Guild did a survey of members last month, asking what subjects they would like to know more about, and Tapestry was one of the most popular responses. Whether the number of tapestry weavers is actually growing or they are just coming out into the open, we may never know.

## **DISTANCE LEARNING:**

An ATA sponsored education program pairing you with a teacher to further your tapestry weaving or design skills. For more information contact Priscilla Lynch [jplynch99@comcast.net](mailto:jplynch99@comcast.net)

## **Events at the HGA Convergence 2006**

**By Mary Lane**

The American Tapestry Alliance is pleased to share the following information about its 2006 educational retreat that will be held following Convergence 2006 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

### **The Way In: Exploring New Strategies for Tapestry Design**

American Tapestry Alliance Educational Retreat  
July 1 - 3, 2006  
Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Jump-start your creative process with talented textile 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.

Details: [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org), or [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com)

ATA will be opening American Tapestry Biennial 6 during Convergence 2006, and will also sponsor the following Special Interest Session.

### **Exhibitions: From A to Z**

American Tapestry Alliance Special Interest Session  
Convergence 2006  
Saturday July 1, 2006 10:30am-1:30pm

This forum will present various aspects of exhibiting tapestry, including designing and organizing an exhibition, selecting work to enter an exhibition, the jurying process and much more. Speakers will include artists, gallery owners and curators. A slide show of contemporary tapestry artists will conclude the forum. Location to be announced.

Contact: [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com)

Registration for Convergence is not required for

any of these events, although a day pass must be purchased to attend the Special Interest Session.

If you would like to have your work included in the slide show that will be part of the American Tapestry Alliance Special Interest Session at Convergence 2006, please send the following by June 1, 2006, to Michael Rohde (986 West Carlisle Rd Westlake Village, CA 91361):

5 labeled slides (title, your name, dimensions, date, materials) and, typed on one page: an annotated slide list, a short bio (one paragraph) and a couple of paragraphs about your work

This slide talk is not juried. People will be included on a first come, first served basis. The only commentary will come from the information you provide with your slides.

You can retrieve your slides at the end of the Special Interest Session. If you are not planning on attending Convergence, please include a SASE for the return of your materials.

## GRAND IDEAS

Unjuried small format (100 square inches or less) international tapestry show to be exhibited at Kendall College during Convergence 2006 in Grand Rapids, MI. DEADLINE FOR ENTRY FORM: JANUARY 15, 2006. Download prospectus from [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org) or send SASE to Priscilla Lynch, PO Box 340, Saugatuck, MI 49453.

## Contact ATA

PO Box 28600 San Jose, CA 95159

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### "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

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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
Student*	\$25	\$45

\*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

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:

Next deadline: 2006:

January 1, No theme, 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 be accompanied by the following information: 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



Diane Ammar, "Shadows," 45cm x 16cm, 8epcm,  
using cotton warp, linen weft

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