



# Tapestry Topics

*A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today*

[www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org)

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*Celebrating  
25 Years  
1982-2007*

## In A Wider Circle

### In this Issue

<b>The ITNET Journal and its Evolution</b> . . . . .	<b>2</b>
by Sharon Marcus	
<b>Rebirth and Tradition</b> . . . . .	<b>4</b>
By Ibolya Hegyi	
<b>Weaving Southwest</b> . . . . .	<b>6</b>
By Rachel Brown	
<b>Weaving With Paper and Foils</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
By Carolyn Price Dyer	
<b>My Visit to the Chavez Family</b> . . . . .	<b>9</b>
Tricia Goldberg	
<b>Panel Discussion</b>	
<b>Installment #1</b>	
<b>ATA: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Contemporary Tapestry</b> . . . . .	<b>10</b>
Moderator Mary Lane	
<b>Scheuer Tapestry Studio:</b>	
<b>Tapestry as Collaborative Art</b> . . . . .	<b>14</b>
By Ruth Dundas (formerly Scheuer)	
<b>Interesting Discrepancy</b> . . . . .	<b>15</b>
By Linda Rees	
<b>Channeling your Muse:</b>	
<b>ATA Educationa Retreat</b> . . . . .	<b>19</b>
<b>Volunteers Make It Happen:</b>	
<b>David Johnson</b> . . . . .	<b>19</b>
By Mary Lane	
<b>Volunteers Make It Happen:</b>	
<b>Priscilla Lynch</b> . . . . .	<b>20</b>
By Lynn Mayne	
<b>ATA Award to:</b>	
<b>Donna Loraine Contractor</b> . . . . .	<b>21</b>

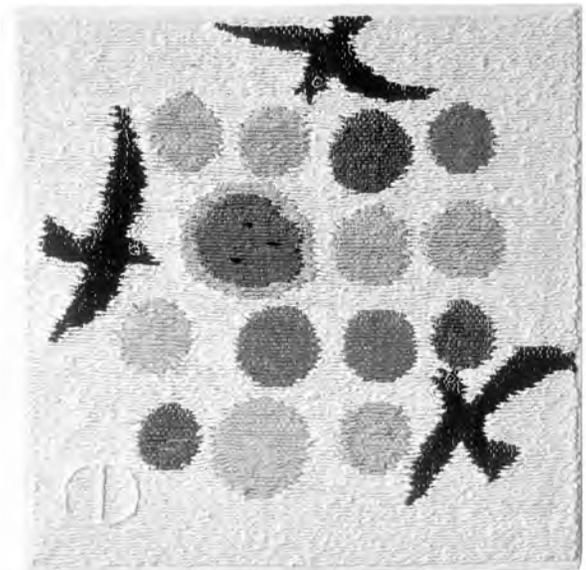
Carolyn Price Dyer, "Three Crows in the Produce Department," 18" x 18" x 1", 2004, handspun paper and cotton warp

## A Busy Time for Tapestry

Workshops, symposia and exhibitions are great incentives to leave your studio and meet with other tapestry artists and tapestry aficionados. It is also a good way to introduce a non-weaving friend to tapestry and broaden the tapestry circle. In keeping with the theme of this issue of *Tapestry Topics*, "In A Wider Circle," we want to ensure you know about the upcoming events that are rippling through the tapestry community.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City is presenting "Tapestries of the Baroque: Threads of Splendor." It runs from October 17 to January 6, 2008. This exhibition, with its accompanying catalog, is a follow-up to the earlier Metropolitan event highlighting tapestry of the Renaissance and should prove to be a pivotal event. For more information visit [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).

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Another event in NYC coinciding with the Met's exhibition is a workshop by Susan Martin Maffei, "Connecting Image to Process/Process to Image." Inspired by Andean Textiles, this ATA sponsored event will have taken place by the time you read this, but we hope to hear about the workshop later.

"TAPESTRY 2008; The Fine Art of Weaving" will be held in Canberra, Australia, May 1-4, 2008. This international conference will explore the relationships between Fine Art, Tapestry and Weaving through lectures, workshops, seminars and symposiums. ATA member, Jane Kidd is one of seven international artists whose work will be featured in the exhibition: "The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving." We all have the opportunity to participate in the symposium by entering the juried small format exhibition addressing the theme: "Land." For more information contact Valerie.Kirk@anu.edu.au. We hope to have reports from those who attend. Please contact editor Linda Rees if you are going.

Plan to attend Convergence 08 in Tampa, Florida, June 22-28, 2008 to see the tapestry exhibitions "ATB7" and "Woven Gems." ATA is sponsoring a post Convergence tapestry retreat: Channeling Your Muse, where participants will work with Mary Zicafoose (Nebraska) or Joan Baxter (U.K). For those unable to attend the retreat, the Board has invited Mary and Joan to give lectures at the ATA general meeting. The details are available elsewhere in this newsletter and will be on the website.

We know many of you enjoy combining travel and tapestry instruction, so we have noted our educators in the "Members by States" and "Members by Country" section located in the back of the current membership roster. We have also updated the educators' listing on the website. Educators can contact Jeanne Bates at: aBates@3-cities.com to be added to the website listing.

As the Holidays come into view and deadlines approach for "ATB7" and "Woven Gems," we hope you are finishing tapestries and filling out entry Forms. It is not too late to consider a year end contribution to the Silver Anniversary Fund and not too early to consider giving a gift Membership or ATB catalog to a friend.

Happy Weaving!

Becky Stevens      Linda Wallace  
Member Services    Resources

**Next Issue:** Deadline: **January 15, 2008**

**Hand Dyed Yarns,** Michael Rohde has organized a slate of interesting topics dealing with dyes. Guest editor, Lany Eila, welcomes items for her **April 1st** theme "**Representational or Abstract?**" Various traditions of tapestry making around the world have stressed pictorial motifs, abstract motifs or a regionally distinct combination of both, to reflect the inherent structure of tapestry as well as the societal functions of tapestry, for example, as a vehicle for narration or as personal identification.

This newsletter issue considers how the differing approaches of representational and abstract design have meaning in contemporary and historical tapestry. How have these differing approaches played out in your work, and why? How does one approach (or combination) better express what you want to say? To what degree does the tension between these approaches influenced your work? If pictorial imagery is used, and the structure of tapestry necessitates abstracting such images, what is lost and what is gained, in visual terms, by pushing that abstraction or not.

## **The ITNET Journal and its Evolution**

**by Sharon Marcus**

The International Tapestry Network (ITNET) was organized following the International Tapestry Symposium in 1988 in Melbourne, approximately 5 years after the founding of ATA. The two organizations had some striking differences from the outset. Helga Berry, the founder and president of ITNET, was born and raised in Germany, married an American, and moved to the US. She had a solid web of connections in the European tapestry community, a global perspective, and a positive and energetic outlook on the future of traditional tapestry. Aware of the well-established history and credibility of tapestry in Europe, she yearned to forge a connection between tapestry makers around the world. ATA at that time was primarily committed to developing a network of North American tapestry artists, so ITNET served a valuable function by providing a wider context. One of Helga's primary goals was to mount juried exhibitions of tapestries from around the world that could tour in the US, showing off the vast stylistic range of contemporary tapestry. She and her organization of volunteers were very successful in accomplishing that

goal, not only through the exhibitions themselves, but through the color catalogs which accompanied them.

Members of ITNET received a quarterly *Newsletter*, which evolved into the more substantial *ITNET Journal*. Helga's commitment to the international scope of the organization was borne out through these publications as well as in the exhibitions. She solicited World Correspondents from England, Bulgaria, Portugal, Hong Kong, Lithuania, Ukraine, Ireland, India, Romania, Hungary, Italy, the Czech Republic, Spain, Japan, Brazil, Norway, Uruguay, the Netherlands, and the USA. Through their valuable contributions to the *Journal*, readers had access to information about artists, exhibitions and events happening in the world of tapestry each quarter. For those of us in the United States who had little direct knowledge of our colleagues in these far-flung places, the effect was exhilarating. It created a sense of being part of an international community of people working in tapestry. As the *ITNET Newsletter* morphed into the *ITNET Journal*, and editorship passed from Helga to subsequent editors, it also became an increasingly structured publication, with regular features, articles by World Correspondents, and a calendar of exhibitions, competitions, conferences/symposia and educational possibilities.

In the fall of 1993 I received a late night call from Helga Berry. She was on the verge of discontinuing the *ITNET Journal* because Deanne Rubin could no longer continue as editor, and she had no time to do it herself. She wondered whether I might be interested in taking over as editor. After an hour or so of conversation I agreed to do so. At that time Tapestry Forum, a Portland based group of tapestry makers, was still in existence, and I solicited volunteers from that group, as well as other ITNET members, to form a production team. Rocky Rockwood was designer and layout person, Dawn Gaitis was long-distance typist and copy-editor, Helga and Carol Russell were consultants, production assistance was provided by Jim Gaitis, Michael Marcus and Vera Rockwood, and mailing was done by a team of ITNET board members in Alaska, Helga's home base.

In the early 1990's, obtaining copy and converting it to a format for publication was more complicated and energy intensive than it is today, where e-mail makes everything more efficient. At that time, articles came in on 3.5" discs, 5" floppy discs (Eastern Europe), by fax, and snail mail, and everything had to be re-typed in a consistent format. Without the prevalence of digi-

tal cameras, photographs also came in varying degrees of quality. Although it was a huge amount of work, it was interesting and satisfying, and I loved the contact with other artists working in tapestry around the world. However, by the end of 1994 Helga decided to discontinue the *ITNET Journal*.

Not satisfied to drop something which seemed so worthwhile, I decided to take it on as a project independent from institutional sponsorship, changing the name to the *International Tapestry Journal*. The production group remained much the same, with the addition of Christine Laffer and Micala Sidore as translators, Kristina Keller as proofreader, and members of Tapestry Forum as mailing team. The "World Correspondents" were re-named "International Representatives," many continuing to write about events in their countries as before, with contributors from additional countries added, e.g. Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, and Sweden. Seeking to provide more focused content, I developed themes for each issue, advertising them in the *Journal* ahead of time so those interested in sending in contributions on specific topics would have advance notice to do so. During the three years I edited the *Journal*, a variety of themes were addressed: Tapestry as Social Document; Commissions; Tapestry in the Year 2000; Tapestry in Context; Writings; Environment; Narrative/Text; Technology; Tapestry as Social Document II; Tapestry and the Body; Tapestry and Education; and Ornament and Pattern. By the end of my tenure as editor we had also incorporated a regular column on conservation with Portland conservator Sandra Troon, as well as other occasional segments.

By 1997 my increasing teaching/administrative and studio responsibilities necessitated that the *Journal* find a new home. Fortunately I was able to recruit a new team of tapestry people in Australia to take it on, with Sally Brokensha in Adelaide taking the helm as editor, and Valerie Kirk, Head of the Textiles Workshop at the Canberra School of Art managing the subscription end of the operation. In June of 1998 the *International Tapestry Journal - New Series* commenced, with a new, more glossy format, though still in black and white. The Australian team continued with thematic issues through volume 4 of the *New Series*: Cross Cultural Issues; Recycling; Nationalism; Gender; Is Personal is Political/Memory; the Meaning of the Medium; Indigenous Issues; Tapestry and the Garden; Lost, Stolen, Fake, Copied; Sacred and Religious Tapestry;

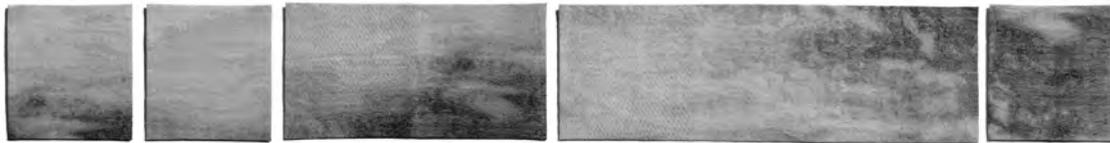
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and Representation/Translation. After their first year they published three rather than four issues per year. By May of 2002, volume 5, no. 1, the editorship passed from Sally Brokensha to Kate Derum and Sophie Knezic in Melbourne, with the partial support of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop and Monash University. Vol. 6, no. 2, 2003 was the last issue of the *International Tapestry Journal*. In their announcement of the cessation of publication, Kate Derum and Sophie Knezic announced that the development of the Internet meant that much of the original function of the Journal for information sharing and networking was now more readily available online. A "new initiative," *The Tapestry Year Book* was announced as new project. In 2004 the first (and as it turns out, the only) *Tapestry Year Book* was published.

Helga Berry, in her founding of ITNET, played an invaluable role in the tapestry world. Her passion for the medium and her desire to communicate world-wide happenings in the field spurred her on to mount exhibitions and launch publications. Though ITNET is no more, the Journal continued to evolve through a variety of sponsorships, until shrinking subscriptions and the immediacy of the Internet made it no longer feasible as an ongoing project.

## Rebirth and Tradition

By **Ibolya Hegyi**



Ibolya Hegyi, "Weather Forecast," 400x 50 cm (158" x 20") 2004, silk, wool, cotton, flax and metallic yarns

I graduated in 1978 from the Budapest Academy of Applied Arts, now the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design. During my time there, I studied in the Department of Tapestry under Noémi Ferenczy, the greatest figure in Hungarian tapestry art in the 20th century. The principle underlying the training there was that undergraduates studied drawing, painting and theoretical subjects alongside traditional weaving.

Efforts for renewal, represented by the experimental textile movement, exercised a profound influence on the artists who studied at the Department, including me. These endeavors peaked during my time at the Academy. The experimental works displayed at venues like the Lausanne Biennales (a series of shows brought into being by Jean Lurçat for the very purpose of revitalizing tapestry art) and the Szombathely Biennales in Hungary, gradually moved away from traditional tapestry. In a study she wrote for the catalogue of the KÁRPIT international tapestry exhibition staged in Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts in 2001, Rebecca Stevens [Consulting Curator of Contemporary Textiles at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. and no relation to ATA co-director] stated the following in connection with this process:

The current tapestry movement owes much to the disappearance of the tapestry specificity from the later Biennales in Lausanne. The absence of true tapestry from the series encouraged tapestry artists to re-examine their *métier*, sorting out what is relevant to them as an individual artist without the intervention of outside arbitrators operating under fixed definitions. Does the appropriation of tapestry technique by the larger art world now mean that tapestry as an independent art form has lost its significance and disappeared? Absolutely not. Traditional tapestry is alive and well in many different forms.

The presence of the traditional and the exploratory approaches in Hungary prompted some artists who had studied under Noémi Ferenczy and thus received training in the fine arts as well as in weaving, to re-think the genre radically. One of the main goals of this process was that, in the interests of linking it to the relevant discourse, the language of tapestry should be reformed and transformed through experimentation with new types of surface within the traditional technique. Of those colleagues committed to this regeneration, I would especially like to mention Gizella Solti and the late Ildikó Dobrányi. The latter's activity as artist and as organiser has been highly important to awareness of

Hungarian tapestry art internationally. I consider Gizella Solti to be my mentor, since it was on the basis of her example and instruction that I set out on a path with the intent to broaden the parameters of tapestry art.

As a result of independent experiments of my own, at the Szombathely Biennale entitled "Gobelin + and -" in 1980 I exhibited tapestries that were analogies of photographs, taking them from my series entitled "Enlargement" and "Development." The photographic-type depiction in these works was achieved not only by dyeing and mixing threads of different hues from white all the way to black, but also by weaving a "grainy" surface of the kind found on some photographs. In the interests of implementing this programme and exploiting the opportunities offered by elements adopted from machine weaving, I conducted experiments with systems of diffuse, perpendicular and cross-striped surfaces and also with different tonal values. These experiments led to a new type of weaving and a new type of picture, one that resembled the individuality and complexity of the freehand sketch. I use this technique all the time in my works recalling the backdrops and landscapes found on classic tapestries. I did so in "Weather Report" which attempts to capture the metamorphosis of water. While moving further and further away from the demand for concrete depiction, I am deeply interested in the possible move of tapestry into the surrounding space.

Happily coinciding with the period of the political and economic changeover in Hungary, the next stage of my career offered new opportunities. On the basis of open competition, I was able to take part in exhibitions staged by the Festival International de la Tapisserie in France, the American Tapestry Biennials (where I encountered the rich world of American tapestry art, which is nourished by European traditions but which appears wonderfully free to the European eye) and the Textile Museum in Washington D.C. exhibit, "By Hand in the Electronic Age," a selection of works displayed at the KÁRPIT ("TAPESTRY") international exhibition in 2001. At this last event, I again exhibited with Marcel Marois and Jon Eric Riis, whose oeuvres are perhaps the most convincing evidence for the vitality of the genre today.

Meetings at these events with persons active in the field reinforced my belief that in a number of countries, including the United States of America, more and more artists are working, and more and more consciously, to restore traditional tapestry to its one-

time pre-eminence. In 2003, prompted by my experiences at the 4th American Tapestry Biennial held in Vancouver, I enrolled as a PhD student at Budapest's Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design. Like my American colleagues, I am very interested in the theoretical side of the genre.

Despite a few pessimistic predictions, but in line with my feelings and intimations, my theoretical studies have convinced me of the vitality and, especially, the timeliness of "slow" traditional-type tapestry at variance with the rush associated with modernity. This view has received confirmation from the art historian and critic Edit Andras, co-curator of the KÁRPIT and KÁRPIT 2 exhibitions held in 2001 and 2005 respectively. She wrote:

In the course of speedy globalisation the world has shrunk and become more homogeneous, with the help of the World Wide Web communication has accelerated, and in parallel with the claims of virtual reality our relationship with the physical world, too, has changed. Across the earth it can be felt that as a counterbalance to these processes a tendency towards slowing down is asserting itself more and more clearly. Moments suitable for interpretation, meditation and recollection have been upgraded.

These thoughts seem especially relevant to tapestry art. Nevertheless, the "slowness" of the genre, which is embodied in the limited output of works created during a career, still strikes many as an anachronism.

However, I believe that it is precisely this anachronism, namely its "braking effect" and its striving for profundity and the enduring, that makes tapestry suitable for visual depiction in the modern world. The same anachronism makes possible the rebirth of this medium that demands in-depth study, long periods of preparation and major investments of work and time. In return for these "drawbacks," it provides the opportunity to create unique works and also a type of contemplative, meditative experience for the tapestry artist, a 'Zen experience' to use the words of Rebecca Stevens. Innovative tapestry art satisfies the fine arts criteria of uniqueness and work performed by the artist's own hand while at the same time preserving the link with the classic tradition and utilising elements and achievements of painting, photography, sculpture, and for that matter, science. Similarly to other media, it can speak on contemporary issues using the characteristic means of the genre.

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The philosopher Arthur C. Danto sees the future of art, which according to his prediction will, in the spirit of pluralism, disintegrate into individual acts, as the realisation of a kind of liberty; as play; and as the satisfaction of needs for decoration, self-expression and fun. In the light of this idea tapestry may hopefully again emerge as a functional art as well. With reference to Danto's idea, the question is also of its use as 'decorative art,' as a result of which the genre will, primarily on account of the traditional values of quality, longevity and uniqueness, now discover its place and function not just in museums but once more in living spaces, having already learned the lessons from the discourse that is rethinking the city-space-art problem. Reflecting on this discourse, I placed a model of my latest work, "Timeshape," a tapestry installation shaped like a Möbius strip, in the apse of the 13th-century church in the western Hungarian village of Rum as a space-time-experiment.



Ibolya Hegyi, Model for "Timeshape,"  
200 x 50 cm (72" x 20") 2007,  
silk, wool, cotton and metallic yarns

## Weaving Southwest

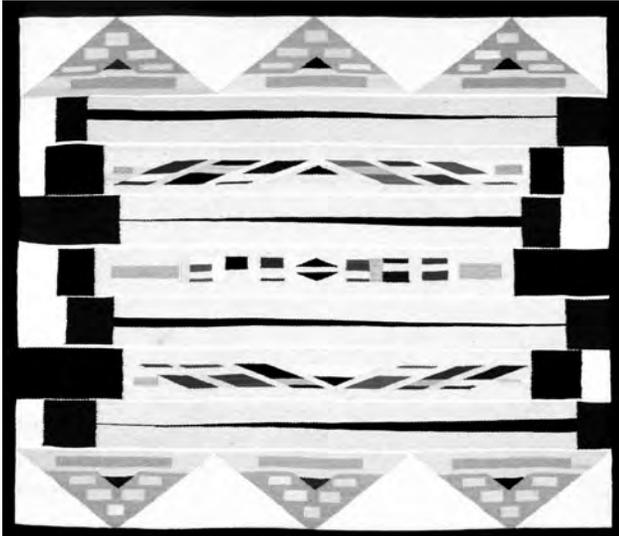
by Rachel Brown

I came to New Mexico from the East coast in 1951. I had majored in art at college and continued further studies at the Art Students League and Cooper Union in painting, drawing and architecture. I was not introduced to weaving until my husband and I moved to Taos with our 3 young kids. My sister-in-law, Kristina Wilson, and a new friend, Joan, who had studied with Anni Albers at Black Mountain College, were responsible along with my Hispanic neighbors who were weavers and spinners.

In spite of the fact that my mentors had real training in weaving, we were all busy building houses and raising families here in Taos. (This story is beautifully told in *Three Weavers*, a book by Joan Potter Loveless published by the University of NM Press.) I learned the hard way, by trial and error. I wound my first warp on the drawer knobs of my bureau. Of course, I had to unscrew the knobs to get the warp off and the threads were not in any order when I went to thread the loom. What a mess! In addition to that, I was poor, so I would collect hunks of fleece that caught on the fences, then I used a spike to spin the wool on my thigh and dyed it with Rit dyes. Thus emerged my first weavings.

My introduction to tapestry weaving was haphazard also. Joan was making unusual tapestries from her handspun and hand-dyed yarn using eccentric weft techniques, and I was studying Amsden's book on Navajo weaving. I combined the two styles and came up with my own technique. I had never heard of cartoons, and I approached tapestry as I would approach an abstract painting. The big difference, of course, is that you cannot jump around on the canvas; and what you weave you have to keep; you cannot paint over. I never unweave a section. Since I designed as I wove, I needed to remember what I had woven but was already rolled up on the cloth beam, so I sketched what I had completed. It allowed me to come up with a balanced composition. Later I discovered that by using a Polaroid camera I was able to record the entire tapestry as I completed each foot or so. Now that camera is as indispensable as any piece of equipment. I like to weave in this way because you come up with forms and designs that are more organic and better related to the medium. And it definitely makes the process more exciting; you cannot wait to get to your loom to see what will happen next.

One distinguishing attribute New Mexico weavers have, almost universally, is that they use hand-dyed yarn. In fact, our gallery shows only tapestries that are woven with hand-dyed yarn. Which brings me to the subject of the gallery, Weaving Southwest. I had a weaving supply shop since 1985 to market an unusual spinning wheel named the Rio Grande wheel, which my husband and I designed before we knew anything about the traditional flyer wheel, and long before hand-spinning became such a popular craft. I also



Rachel Brown, "Seven Samurai,"  
Natural white wool and hand dyed wools

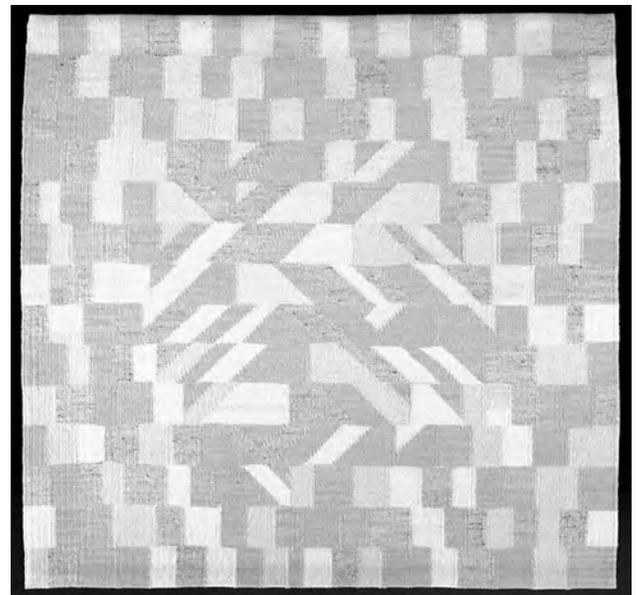
In 1987, a beautiful retail space became available next to my supply shop. Over the years I always had a retail outlet of my own where I could display my tapestries. I hated it when weavings were used to cover up a doorway or on a table to display a pot. I wanted a gallery for just tapestries, where they could be displayed as art with good lighting. By this time I had come to know many tapestry weavers in New Mexico of all three cultures. I had been hired to teach design principles to weavers on the Navajo reservation because Ramah Navajo Weavers' Association wanted to encourage the weavers to make original designs instead of repeating the traditional ones. Also, I was hired to work with, and occasionally teach, a group of Hispanic women called "Tierra Wools" who have their own tradition of tapestry. I knew some of the well-known Hispanic tapestry artists wanted to show the influences of these 3 cultures on tapestry weaving in New Mexico.

Great idea, I thought. Well, it started off with a very successful grand opening, but after about 3 years, the "three cultures" idea did not work. The Navajo weavers were used to selling their work outright to trading posts, and I could only offer a consignment arrangement. Most of the Anglo weavers were doing contemporary designs. One day it became disappointingly clear that buyers came to Weaving Southwest for contemporary designs to match the decor of their homes. We had 3 absolutely stunning pieces by the top weavers from Tierra Wools displayed in the best spots for several days. The weavers called and asked if they could have the pieces back for a show they were having. We sent them back and they all sold within 48 hours. This proved to us all that the venue is an important factor in selling. Many of the Hispanic weavers have their own retail outlets. This selling phenomenon was also true of traditional European style tapestries. We handled the work of a couple of very talented artists, but customers always opted for the abstract or nonobjective works.

I was asked to speak at an ATA conference at Pima College in Tucson, Arizona, a few years ago and in preparation for that lecture on tapestry weaving in New Mexico, I sent out a questionnaire to the artists in our gallery and one of the questions was "Do your weavings have subject matter?" I thought I would be pin pointing the difference

designed the loom of my dreams that combined all the features I wanted in a loom. It was made specially to weave rugs and tapestries but was also good for 4-harness weaves such as the traditional, simple twills and double weaves of the area. Looms in New Mexico were "walking" looms where you stand to weave. Jean Pierre Larochette, whom I was fortunate to become friends with later, told me that foot treadles with the weaver standing was the design of Aubusson tapestry looms in France.

I want to mention Connie Taylor who raises Churro sheep, the breed that was brought to America by Columbus on his 2nd voyage and that the Navajos and Hispanics loved because it was so hardy and the fleeces so perfect for hand spinning. Connie now has her Churro fleece and wool she purchases from the Navajos custom spun at a mill back East, then she hand dyes it and provides it to a group of Navajo weavers at Teec Nos Pos, Arizona who create huge traditional tapestries.



Rachel Brown, "Mirage" Three natural Churro  
white wools and other natural wools

between European style tapestries and the more abstract or nonobjective work that most of the weavers here in New Mexico do. My jaw dropped when I read James Koehler's answer, "Yes." Now, those of you who know his work, know that he probably creates the most non-objective images of any tapestry weaver. I thought it just goes to show that there are other subjects than images of people and things. There are spiritual, mathematical, emotional subjects. Donna Contractor recently completed a stunning body of work for a one-person show at our gallery that was based on the Pythagorean theory that the sum of the squares of the 2 vertical sides of an isosceles triangle equals the square of the hypotenuse (remember high school geometry?). That show has traveled to other states. Pat Dozier, who now owns Weaving Southwest, weaves bold rectangles and concentrated details of her favorite Indian pots that result in gorgeous abstractions. Personally, I do not want a "subject" influencing my spontaneous work. I wait until I have finished a piece and then name it some appropriate title. I only name it so I can refer to it later and numbers do not work for me.

One of the best things about our gallery, I think, is the synergy that it provides for the weavers. They all visit the gallery and get inspiration from each other. If I had my wish, I would like to see more tapestry galleries in this country that display the work of their region.

## Weaving With Paper and Foils

By Carolyn Price Dyer

Weaving tapestry with a variety of papers and foils is where I work "in a wider circle." I do employ interlocked and discontinuous weft weaving techniques and produce a weft-faced article. Warps are as unobtrusive as possible and generally of cotton.

I have chosen to weave my artwork for some fifty years. In 1954, while at Mills College, in Oakland, CA, the Jean Lurçat tapestry exhibit in San Francisco suggested a way to focus my aptitudes and interests. Although a graduate student in Art History, I squeezed in Loom Room time with Ilse Schultz Heller who was trained in Bauhaus aesthetics and attitudes. She encouraged me personally to weave. I also learned bookbinding at California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) at that time.



Carolyn Price Dyer, "Crow on the Moon" in progress

Principally working wool over wool for many years, after trips to Asia in the 1970's and 1980's, I found that common papers excited me. Asian newspapers and art papers were archival, colorful, and intriguingly filled with history and texture. It was while traveling in Western China in 1984 that I began to experiment with paper as weft. To begin I made a collage of paper and fiber then cut the glue sandwiched materials into flat strips for the loom. I added crayon and ink to the recipe. Twisting the paper strips gave them wonderful strength and an enhanced texture. I have now turned sheets of newspaper, wrapping paper, grocery bags and art papers into cordage to weave as weft. Colored cotton warps vary with each art piece.

I can ignore any drawbacks of paper for it has many advantages. Paper's "commonness" makes it user friendly and full of surprises, especially the newspapers from Asia. My work has become larger and is more quickly finished.

My Tapestries have strong ties to nature. Abstraction of landscape and the heavens, birds, gardens and trees are found throughout my five-decade career. I have drawn deeply from my modernist roots, and have at the same time been swept along in the excitement of late 20th century alternative materials and means of presentation. Shall I wear it, walk on it, fence a field with it, build books of woven paper, or share passions?

## My Visit to the Chavez Family

Tricia Goldberg

A family vacation in Mexico in June of this year provided an opportunity for a memorable visit with the Chavez family in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca.

I first met three members of this rug weaving family—Federico, his son Eric, and his daughter, Janet—in April, when they came to San José, California, with an exhibition of their work at the San José Museum of Quilts and Textiles. When my friend Deborah Corsini, the museum's curator, talked enthusiastically about a family of traditional Zapotec weavers who would be bringing their rugs to the museum, I had no idea I would be visiting them in their home and studio that summer.

About two months later, my husband, two daughters, and I found ourselves in Teotitlán del Valle, a two-bus, twenty mile trip from Oaxaca, the capital of the state of Oaxaca. I had mentioned our vacation plans for a visit to Oaxaca to Deborah and discovered that the Chavez family lived nearby. With her encouragement, we made plans for a visit. As Eric had told me by e-mail, a sign directed us two or three blocks from the sleepy town's main street down a cobbled lane to their home.

The state of Oaxaca is southeast of Mexico City, and the valley surrounding the capital is known for its traditional arts and crafts as well as the impressive ancient ruins at Monte Alban and Mitla. Also its cuisine is justly famed, particularly the delicious and varied moles of chicken or turkey in a rich and complex sauce of many ingredients. Various crafts, sold in local markets and elsewhere, are the specialties of individual towns: the black pottery of Santa Maria Coyotepec, the *alebrijes* (painted, hand-carved wooden animals) of Arrazola and San Martín Tilcajete, the whimsical clay figurines of Ocotlán, and the weavings of Teotitlán del Valle.

Eric, Janet, and Federico Chavez greeted us in their home's open courtyard, which holds a sturdy loom, winding equipment, and vast quantities of yarn in a wide range of subtle colors. The yarn is natural wool, from sheep raised in Teotitlán del Valle and nearby villages. It is locally spun on drop spindles, which produces a texture quite different from that of commercial or wheel-spun products.

Eric Chavez has dedicated himself to reviving and maintaining centuries-old traditions of natural dyeing.

As Federico wove and Janet wound bobbins, Eric explained how indigo produces many shades of blue and cochineal yields various reds, pinks, purples, and oranges. Cochineal comes from the crushed bodies of beetles that are raised on cactus plants and harvested after they die. Finding the right mordants to make these dyes color fast is a special challenge.

Another visitor, Norma Hawthorne of North Carolina, who promotes the work of the Chavez family and other Oaxacan artists, observed that while many shops in Teotitlán advertise "natural dyes," the number of local weavers using them is still small.

Federico's rugs are often rooted in the indigenous Zapotec traditions of geometric, loom-controlled patterns, but increasingly they contain his own, more personal, experimental designs based on images from nature as well as motifs from Zapotec mythology. He stands at his loom, operating its two pedals with one foot. He uses plain, straight wooden bobbins and packs the weft with a simple plastic comb.



Tapestry rug with cochineal dyes

At least four generations of the Chavez family have been weavers: Federico, who taught his own children to weave, learned from his father, José, who in turn was taught by his father, Victoriano. Federico wove and sold his first rug when he was ten years old.

In an adjoining gallery room, Janet, Eric, and Federico showed us their collection of finished rugs, spreading and unrolling many of them on the floor so we could appreciate the dazzling variety of colors and patterns. Their inventory is large, perhaps larger currently than they would like. Typical of most people in the area, they are still feeling the effects of a drop in

continued...



Janet winding yarns

tourism brought about by last year's civil unrest in Oaxaca.

The gallery space is also the family's dining room, where we were invited to join them for a traditional lunch of chicken mole prepared by Federico's wife, Dolores. We were joined by Omar, Federico's youngest son, a thirteen-year-old who is a skilled weaver himself.

Eric and Janet are sophisticated young Oaxacans who gracefully blend modern life with tradition. Eric holds a college degree in business and tourism and works to study and preserve ancient artistic traditions. Janet is a student of comparative languages at a nearby university and, in addition to her work for the family's rug weaving business, maintains strong ties to local religious customs. She told us she hoped to be invited to participate in a celebration a week later, in which she and other women would parade through the town in traditional costumes, carrying ornate *canastas* (baskets) on their heads holding saint's images. Although the basket is heavy, she explained, if you can carry it, this means that your sins for the previous year were not so great. With her parents' help, she modeled the costume for us—a long, wrap-around wool skirt (dyed and woven by Federico) and an elaborately embroidered floral blouse—and before our eyes she changed from a modern young woman in jeans to a traditional Zapotecan maiden.

We decided to return to Teotitlán the following week, assuming (correctly) that Janet would be in the

parade. The procession through the town's narrow streets and the accompanying festivities were well worth a second trip. We had also decided to purchase a small rug that we had admired on Federico's loom the week before. To our surprise, it was finished, but was still on the loom because another rug was still being woven on the same warp threads. He was happy to cut off the rug we wanted and assured us that tying the unfinished one back onto the loom would not be a problem. We value our rug for its beauty and as a link to the Chavez family and the art of Oaxaca.

We, and the Chavez family, want to encourage more travelers to visit Oaxaca and experience firsthand this beautiful area and its friendly and creative people. Information on travel and cultural opportunities is readily available. You can write to Eric Chavez Santiago, Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico, or send e-mail to [erichsantiago@yahoo.com](mailto:erichsantiago@yahoo.com). Norma Hawthorne's helpful and informative web site, [www.oaxacaculture.com](http://www.oaxacaculture.com), offers in-depth information on weaving and dyeing and includes biographies of the four generations of the Chavez weaving family.

## Panel Discussion Installment #1 ATA: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Contemporary Tapestry

This panel discussion took place on April 28th, 2007, during ATA's Silver Anniversary Celebration, hosted by the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles in San Jose, California. Mary Lane was Moderator with Jim Brown, Marti Fleischer, Joan Griffin, Barbara Heller, Christine Laffer and Judy Shuster as panelists.

**Mary Lane:** Good morning. In preparation for this panel I developed a set of questions that I sent to the panelists. The questions covered the range of activities in which ATA has been involved for the last 25 years and offered the panelists an opportunity to reflect back, and also to look forward to our next 25 years. We will start by talking about the founding and development of ATA. Jim Brown, what were some of the original goals that you and Hal Painter identified for the newly founded ATA?

**Jim Brown:** The question at that time was the question I am still hearing. It is, "How does one make a living weaving tapestry?" I became an apprentice to Hal Painter about eleven years before we made our

bicentennial year weaving tour of the United States. Instead of selling our wares, we were selling workshops—a wonderful way to meet like-minded people. That experience changed my life. I had been searching for forty years, trying to find where I was going and I guess more importantly, why. When I discovered artisans and craftsmen, I found what my life was to be.

After the first thirty years it occurred to me that Hal was working into the wee hours of the morning, weaving, and maybe not even with a guaranteed purchase or a commission, but simply because he wanted to. It was his life's work. He was addicted to something that is better than a lot of other things we find in this modern world. My concern was how we could teach people tapestry if we didn't know that they were going to find something through this medium, even if not a living. Founding ATA answered part of this concern.

I am so privileged to be here to say this to you. I consider all of you, even those I don't know, to be my family. Surprisingly, my life has been directed more towards making people come together than making tapestry. Of course this is another way of tying threads together to make a wonderful community, and I encourage all of you to participate. I don't want to take up too much of your time but I do appreciate that I am still here. Many of you may not know but I have been in very bad health for a decade.

I want to praise the designer of our program. First of all, I was struck by the blues and white, which took me back to something you may have read in the front page of the program. A couple of years ago I was given another sash. It was multi colored but it was on white, or maybe pink, and I was going to bring it to show you that I have progressed from 'American Tapestry Alliance Ask Me About It' to 'American Cancer Survivor,' but my recent move was more strenuous than I thought and I can't find it, like I can't find the cord for my razor. Somebody reminded me that I could be very chic now because young men don't necessarily shave every day. You will see me grow a beard this weekend. I may catch up with my compatriot over there. [Jean Pierre Larochette]

I do want to thank particularly this morning's speakers because of their inclusion of people who have spent their lives trying to forward the arts and humanities. I was so touched to hear those names. I am also glad that someone presented this anniversary as a young topic with an old background, learning to weave its way into a happier future along with younger people who still have

their original hair color. Hopefully we will be passing the organization to the younger generation.

**Mary Lane:** We are all so thrilled that you were able to come, Jim. We are very honored.

Marti, since your presidency the American Tapestry Alliance has experienced many changes, both organizational and in terms of our programming. What are the most exciting developments you have seen and what kinds of changes or additions to our programming would you like to see in the next five to ten years?

**Marti Fleischer:** That's one question? Certainly the American Tapestry Biennial was one of our most significant accomplishments. The Biennial is something that just really kind of happened. It's amazing because it's such a big production now and it is so prestigious and rightfully so. But the way it started is almost ridiculous. Ideas can really start from nothing and grow. You have probably seen that in the designs for your tapestries. Maybe you have a dream or you see a car go by; all sorts of little things will get something started. But we, we being essentially Tommye Scanlin, Courtney Shaw, whose name was mentioned last night, and I were the people who were trying to rejuvenate ATA. ATA had had some very good exhibits but they had not occurred on a regular basis. I felt that they were good enough to be continued; that there needed to be some continuity. Why did we decide on a biennial? Because it seemed to fit very well with Convergence. Not only tapestry weavers, but also other fiber people are able to enjoy the exhibition.

What do I see as a future for ATA? What would I like to see? Obviously, there is no question that ATA will continue. The main thing I would want to see may be pie in the sky. I see the life of ATA as a graph. You start out as Hal and Jim did. You build something and very, very slowly a rising line on the graph marks your growth. As you get things pretty much settled, the line levels out, and then you have a problem and your development dips. At this point, for ATA, Jim contacted us and with our involvement, the organization started building again, and we went through the same cycle of building and leveling. Then ATB1 took place and ATA's growth took another spurt, and we started moving along like this (laughter). [Marti was gesturing and reaching high up, to the amusement of the panel and then the crowd.] The development of the Red Book was a rugged time and our growth slipped again. But now the line on the graph is much, much higher than it has ever been before.

ATA is not at all like it was, certainly when Jim started it, or when I first became involved. It is so professional. To answer your question: what I see fueling growth on the next part of the graph is that the American Tapestry Alliance becomes the World Tapestry Alliance.

**Mary Lane:** Marti mentioned the Red Book. That is something I want Joan to talk about. Board members all sleep with the Red Book under their pillow, but most ATA members don't even know what it is. The Red Book has been a major factor in the professional growth of the organization. Having an organizational framework that we can continually refer to has been very useful in planning. Joan was involved from the very beginning with the writing of the Red Book.

**Joan Griffin:** Marti was speaking of ATA's plateaus. We reached a plateau about five years ago when we tried to find a president and everyone we asked said, "No." One of the questions we heard over and over was, "What does the President do?" At that point ATA had a Board of Directors with a President. They did everything, but the jobs were not really defined. We were at a growing point but also at a plateau, as Marti has said. We knew Judy Schuster didn't want to be President for life, and so we needed to do something about the lack of formal definition in the roles. We decided to write up job descriptions. As a result we now have two co-directors, Becky and Linda, because we divided the various activities of ATA into two broad groupings, Member Services and Resources. We kept writing job definitions and sought a lot of advice. Ann Hedlund was very generous in giving us advice, as well as Archie Brennan. Lots of other people offered ideas on how to restructure ATA so that no one had to give up weaving in order to volunteer. We talked about all these very fancy job titles, and wondered what we were going to call the document that was taking shape. Is it a strategic plan? Is it a business plan? We took our work to the printers and the printer asked what we wanted on the front cover. Well, it would have cost more to have a title printed on the cover so we left it blank. Then the printer asked what color cover we wanted. We said red. So it became the Red Book. The Red Book has had one revision and it will continue to be revised as we implement various programs. For instance, Judy just mentioned to me that it would be nice if we could redo the directory that we published in 1996 entitled "Directory of Tapestries in Public Places." We could do that if someone volunteered to take it on. What we have tried to do is break

up the jobs so that they are manageable. So that when somebody sees me approaching them they don't cry, "Oh, no!" The Red Book developed a division of ATA into two operational areas with program descriptions that answer the question, "What does that person do?" This has increased the professionalism and efficiency of the organization.

**Mary Lane:** Thank you, Joan. Judy, could you tell us about the "Directory of Tapestries in Public Places."

**Judy Schuster:** In the early 1990's Jim and Hal initiated a project to create a "Directory of Tapestries in Public Places." At that time they had surveyed some corporations and public institutions and still had a huge list of other public places to survey. They asked me if I would be willing to take over the project, and I said, "Sure." I compiled all of the data, put it into a database and resurveyed organizations to confirm that the information from the early contacts was still correct. Then we surveyed additional groups and asked ATA members if they had tapestries in public places. I produced a simple printed pamphlet by city and state, alphabetically listing organizations in each jurisdiction that had responded to us saying that they had tapestries that could be viewed by the public. At the time the Board determined that they didn't want to spend a lot of money producing this publication so it's pretty plain Jane and we didn't print very many. We sold them inexpensively. Now, with the advent of digital technology, I would love to see ATA do this survey again. It would, of course, require re-surveying the organizations to make sure the information is current, but we could, I think, even include photographs by each of the entries at no extra cost if it was just printed in black and white. I think it would be a really interesting project. So that's my idea for the future.

**Mary Lane:** We will definitely be getting back to volunteer opportunities so, if updating the "Directory of Tapestries in Public Places" is something you would be interested in, or would like to work on with someone else, we can help you with that. Judy has the database.

**Question from the audience:** Was this directory American or international?

**Judy Schuster:** It was North American. The world comes next. That's along with the world organization.

Note: The second installment of the Panel Discussion will be printed in the next *Tapestry Topics*.

**"TAPESTRY 2008: The Fine Art of Weaving,"** an international conference, will take place from May 1-4, 2008 at the Australian National University School of Art, Canberra, ACT. Please note that specific details about speakers and topics were not available at the time the newsletter was printed. We will post whatever information we receive in the eNews.

### **The Conference - Friday - Saturday, May 2-3:**

Themes addressed In the papers presented include but are not restricted to:

Shared experiences and the relationship of the artist/weaver to tapestry

Investigations of the techniques of weaving and tapestry cross-culturally

Community engagement with tapestry to create a sustainable and relevant future

Enhancement of tapestry's profile - collectors, the patron and tapestry for public places

Cultural diversity - tapestry from specific cultural traditions

New technologies and applications - contemporary developments/perspectives

Expansion of income for artists through design, collaboration, industry involvement

Marketing, web profile and raising public awareness

Production of opportunities for international exposure and commissions

**April 30 - May 7** there will be workshops with leading professional artists to investigate approaches to technique, design, and image-making including 3-hour seminars on developing professional skills and running a community tapestry project.

### **Exhibitions - April 2- May 4**

**LAND** is the Award Exhibition of The Tapestry Foundation of Victoria and will be held at the Australian National University School of Art gallery from April 9 - May 3, 2008. Works are restricted to 10cm in height, no restrictions on width. There will be a major award of \$1000 and an award of \$500 for an emerging artist (student, or working in tapestry for less than 5 years). Entries due by March 21, 2008.

**For entry form: contact Valerie Kirk: (02) 6125.5833 or email Valerie.Kirk@anu.edu.au or postal: Valerie Kirk, ANU, School of Art, Building 105, Canberra ACT 0200.**

**Lao PDR Tapestry: "Weaving Dreams and Aspirations,"** ANU, School of Art Foyer. Fine silk tapestries from the rich artistic tradition of Laos where the weaver works directly at the loom creating a composition of patterns, symbols and motifs. She invests her life in the fabric and it tells of her hopes, dreams, ambitions, sense of self and position in the world.

**"The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving"** School of Art Gallery. **Aino Kajaniemi**, Finland, **Susan Mowatt**, Scotland, **Yasuko Fujino**, Japan, **Sue Lawty**, GB, **Sara Lindsay**, Australia, **Jane Kidd**, Canada and **Fiona Rutherford**, GB.

**"En Pleine Air Tapestries - A Month at Bundanon: Tapestries and Drawings by Cresside Collette,"** curated by Alison French, at the Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra.

There will be **focused talks** at public venues displaying tapestries in Canberra.

The conference will take place 20 years on from the International Tapestry Symposium, held in Melbourne in 1988. This previous event was the first truly global event of its kind in the world, and the impact was far-reaching. What place has tapestry now? Finding the answers to this question is crucial for the dynamic future of this art form. The program for TAPESTRY 2008 has been carefully considered and designed to address the emerging issues and to seek solutions.

## Scheuer Tapestry Studio: Tapestry as Collaborative Art

By Ruth Dundas (formerly Scheuer)

A 16th century tapestry studio working collaboratively from contemporary photographs of New York City in the 1980's might seem to be a slew of contradictions, but it happened.

For seven years in New York City's Greenwich Village and Soho neighborhoods, twenty-five young artist-weavers worked long hours over minutely detailed woven images to create large tapestries for private and corporate collectors. Their tapestries were included in exhibitions around the world—the USA, Poland, Great Britain, France, Japan, Australia among others. And many of these twenty-five weavers have gone on to become well known artists and teachers on their own.

Why should artists collaborate? I had come to understand that, in addition to its obvious advantages for the practical concerns of labor-intensive tapestry, collaboration can also enforce the sublimation of ego so that something more universal can shine through.

It was my intention to start a tapestry studio for artists to learn to work collaboratively in this very slow paced medium where thorough technical training would yield much more exciting work than the separation of the weaver and designer had in France. After helping Jean Pierre Larochette to found his San Francisco Tapestry Workshop with Phoebe McAfee and Ernestine Bianchi in 1977, and after finishing the first American apprenticeship at the Gobelins Tapestry Manufactures in Paris in 1980, I opened the doors of the Scheuer Tapestry Studio in Greenwich Village in New York City in 1982. The first apprentices were Beverly Godfrey, Mary Lane and Susan Fuerth. In America, a "collaborative" system could take root, as it could not in the rigid hierarchical institutions of the Gobelins and Aubusson workshops in France.

The apprentices signed on for a work exchange situation where they would receive classes for several months, then work for the studio for the same number of months before becoming paid weavers. This provided the opportunity for training and full immersion in the complicated and demanding work of Gobelins style tapestry. It allowed artists to gain knowledge and technique without having to pay tuition and it enabled the Studio to create a source of talent with proper training before the expensive investment in paying them.



The Scheuer Tapestry Studio,  
"View from London Terrace," 1988

In addition to Beverly, Mary and Susan, many other artist-weavers completed the apprenticeship program and went on to work on tapestries for the Scheuer Tapestry Studio. Joyce Hulbert, Mindy Passow, Deborah Hildreth, Deborah Gordon, Ilona Mack Pachler, Susan Giller, Eve Alexander, Susan Martin Maffei, Jennifer Sargent, Susan Minnich, Lee Hogan, Jiwon Hahn, Tracey Sellers and Grace Liddy all worked on tapestries for various projects and were credited with weaving, and in some cases, designing tapestries for the Studio.

The first foundation of the Studio was a solid technical grounding. I was indebted to John Shannock for building state of the art looms based upon Gobelins loom blueprints that had been given to me by my professor at the Gobelins in Paris. John was a mechanical engineer and woodworker par excellence and improved upon the Gobelins designs to create beautiful and efficient tools for our craft. I was also indebted to my teachers, Jean Pierre Larochette in San Francisco, and Jacques Postel at the Gobelins. They taught me that God was in the details. Then they taught me how to master those details. Jean Dufour, the master dyer of the Gobelins, who taught me how plants could make vibrant and long lasting dyes, brought color into my life. Joyce Hulbert took a special interest in the dyeing and later taught this in the Studio during the apprenticeships. As the apprentices became more masterful, some of them took on the role of teaching others. Mary Lane was one of the first teachers and is still playing a very important role in the US, teaching tapestry today. Susan Giller taught classes for beginners when we gave classes for non-studio weavers. And Susan Martin Maffei later teamed up with the Master Weaver and artist, Archie Brennan, to become a well known and sought after teacher.

Once the apprentices were trained, we needed to take on commission work from private and corporate sources in order to be able to weave tapestries large enough to support our studio approach. We completed about 70 tapestries in seven years for many clients. The largest was ten by six feet, "Bluebonnets" for Touche Ross of Houston, designed and woven by Beverly Godfrey and Lee Hogan. Our themes also came from our urban environment. Typical examples are the private commissions, "View from London Terrace" showing the skyline of New York's London Terrace with a mille-fleurs background and "Queensborough Bridge."

My own work dealt with the many-layered aspects of urban isolation, often with photographic reflections such as in the "Narcissus" series where a series of young urban men portray the legend of Narcissus. I was touched by the way that people in New York lived behind glass—meeting, overlapping and touching each other's lives without leaving a trace. "The Messenger," woven by Beverly Godfrey was one of a series of people behind glass. We also completed many works from botanical subjects such as the "Daylilies," with its out of focus flowers so apt for portrayal in the tapestry technique.



The Scheuer Tapestry Studio, "The Messenger,"  
1987 woven by Beverly Godfrey

"The Urban Chase" was our most extreme example of collaboration. It was an answer to the "objectivity" of photo-realism. Four weavers took one of my photographs of taxis reflected in the triple-paned windows of Balduccis and cut it into four parts. Beverly Godfrey, Deborah Hildreth, Susan Martin Maffei and I all did separate "interpretations" of the same image, which we then wove independently. When the four-part work was reassembled, it was an affirmation of the

individuality of vision. Although the lines of the work made the image readable as one, each section was radically different in the way it was seen and portrayed by the artist. This throws out the window the idea that a photograph depicts reality.

In October 1987, there was a crash of the stock market whose ramifications were increasingly felt in the art world as the NEA was cut almost out of existence and the large commissions that had supported us slowly dried up. We wove our last commission tapestries in 1989. I decided to redesign the space as a gallery with tapestry classes taught in the studio. The Center for Tapestry Arts opened in that year. The Center evolved into the InterArt Center—a gallery forum for emerging artists working with the idea of material and process. The weavers who had worked with me had moved on to work on their own, teach and pursue other paths. In 1995, I closed the InterArt Center and am now pursuing the understanding of the "detail" as a digital photographer working on issues of man and nature.

I still believe that collaboration can be an answer for serious artists. Look at the examples of Mike and Doug Starn, Michael Clegg and Martin Guttman, Nicholas Kahn and Richard Selesnick. For an extremely labor intensive work such as tapestry, collaboration can be an answer to many practical considerations. Perhaps there will be someone else in the future who will be able to pull a group together again to make a larger statement than they could have made alone. All it takes is the right people, the right time and place—and a bit of money.

## Interesting Discrepancy

By Linda Rees

I attended a lecture called "Originality, Subversion and the Weaver as a Protestant Prometheus: Reflection on the Reflection of Raphael's Miraculous Draught of Fishes" by James Harper, a professor of Art History at the University of Oregon, presented in the department's Colloquium series. He had thoughtfully contacted the head of the fiber arts program to invite interested weavers.

The subject of Harper's talk, the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," is one of the most famous and iconic of Renaissance tapestries. Raphael designed the cartoon for this tapestry as part of the "Acts of the Apostles" series in 1516. The cartoon was used for five renditions woven over the span of forty years.

Anyone who visited "Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2002, will be familiar with the specific tapestry, now in Palazzo Ducale Mantua, Italy, that inspired Harper's discussion.

Harper briefed his audience on the use of cartoons, and how they were owned by the weaving workshop commissioned to execute the artist's design. In this case, the cartoon was owned by three consecutive workshops. The Mantua version was one of two woven by the Brussels workshop of Jan van Tieghem, ca. 1545-1557. Its border decoration is the most noticeably different aspect from the version in the Sistine Chapel, which was the original design commissioned by Pope Leo X and woven in the workshop of Pieter van Aelst between 1516-1521.

It was the custom to create borders that gave credit to the patron commissioning a piece. The lower border of the Sistine version depicts the Pope's retinue as he approaches Rome for the conclave and his election to the office. The subsequent border, designed for Willem Dermoyen's reweaving of the set for King Francois I of France, and used later in van Tieghem's version, depicts Prometheus modeling the human beings, capturing fire, and then feeding the fire to his creation. (Campbell, *Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence*, 2002 )

While viewing the piece displayed at the Metropolitan, Harper observed an anomaly in the weaving. The reflection in the water of the face of the fisherman bending down to draw in the fish is not a mirror image. The fisherman has a definite moustache and beard on a fairly rugged face whereas the reflection is more generic, youthful, and clean-shaven. The reflection happened to be at about eye level when displayed, thus in an optimal position for making a point, or for catching the eye of a knowledgeable art historian.

Once he had observed it, Harper could not dismiss the difference. One thing he knew about this tapestry was that it was not commissioned. Thus, being woven "on spec" meant that the image would not be the likeness of a patron. He was fairly sure that Raphael's cartoon did not contain the discrepancy, but he had the fact confirmed by the Victoria and Albert Museum and that all the other versions conformed to the original cartoon.

In discussing this puzzle with the audience, Harper was thorough in detailing the workshop system of the period, eliminating the possibility of one of the weavers independently making the decision to interpret the car-

toon loosely. The change would have been van Tieghem's doing, or by his dictate. It was established that he was well respected as a business man with a reputation for producing high quality tapestries. Despite a vigorous campaign of research in the Royal Archives in Brussels, the only personal information Harper found about him was that later in life he was imprisoned for heresy, because of his Protestant beliefs.

In hopes of finding a clue, Harper consulted the biblical text. He chose the Gospel of Luke because, as he explained, it gives the most detailed account of Jesus' life. In the passage related to the scene depicted, Luke 5:1-11, Jesus declares he will make the disciples "Fishers of Men." Thus, Raphael had placed the reflection of the face within the area of the net not simply as a device to elaborate the surface of the water but as a literal representation of gathering converts to the teachings of Christ.

It did not seem too much of a stretch to hypothesize that van Tieghem altered the representation of conversion to align with his burgeoning anti-papal stance, choosing a youthful face to convey innocence and a fresh perspective on Christianity. Raphael's cartoon had many references to the Church. The hill in the background is purported to be the Vatican Hill, though Harper considered it was not conclusive. Still, the predominant position of the three cranes in the foreground, thought to represent papal authority, could have served as a "red flag" to one in opposition to the papacy. However, the most convincing support for Harper's interpretation of the discrepancy is contained in the border. The Promethian defiance of Zeus, though not van Tieghem's invention, embraces a message of opposition parallel to the intent of the protesters of Catholicism in van Tieghem's day.

Harper's lecture was interesting and presented a refreshing reminder that tapestry historically played an important role as purveyor detailing the customs and sentiments of the day. The image, as posted at the Metropolitan Museum of Art web site's Special Exhibitions section, provides a stimulating opportunity to zero in on details of the imagery, and there are an assortment of reviews and articles about the tapestry for those wanting to draw their own conclusions.

Dr. Harper presented a paper at the "Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor" symposium at the Museum in October 2007 in conjunction with the exhibition, entitled "Tapestry, Strategy, and Reflections on Fate: A New Reading of the Barberini *Apollo* Series."

# Channeling your Muse: Experimentation, Research, Innovation, Design

## ATA's 2008 Educational Retreat

Tuck your muse in a beach bag and set sail for Tampa Bay to join talented tapestry artists Joan Baxter ([www.joan-baxter.com](http://www.joan-baxter.com)) and Mary Zicafoose ([www.maryzicafoose.com](http://www.maryzicafoose.com))! Dive into the American Tapestry Alliance's educational retreat and stuff your treasure chest of creativity with tools that will make your tapestries shine. Like hunting for buried gems, you will discover: strategies to identify, develop, and personalize design concepts and resources; skills and motivation to move beyond the initial design phase; formal tactics for concept expansion; image manipulation; dynamic use of color; and methods to catch and ride your wave of creativity.

Whether new, novice, or seasoned, all weavers will uncover pearls of wisdom during this tropical retreat! ATA's retreat will be held at Eckerd College's Conference Center in St. Petersburg, Florida, following Convergence 2008. The retreat starts with a dinner reception and slide talks on July 1, 2008. Full day sessions take place on July 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Accommodations are private, or shared rooms in the Conference Center lodge. Meals are available onsite.



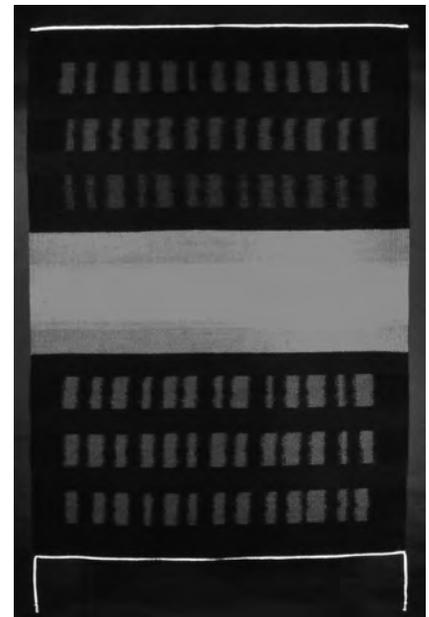
SUMMERSTONES, 52 x 112 cms  
wool, rayon and foil.

Nebraska fiber artist **Mary Zicafoose** is well recognized for her highly graphic tapestries, as well as her ability to speak articulately through the use of saturated color. Raised in Niles, Michigan and receiving a BFA in photography from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, Mary hales from a family of career artists. Her graduate studies included work in clay at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Nebraska. She is largely a self-taught weaver.

### Joan Baxter Working from Landscape

**Joan Baxter** was born in Edinburgh in 1955. After studying tapestry at Edinburgh College of Art and in Poland in the 1970s, she spent eight years in Tapestry Studios in the UK and Australia, notably working on the Henry Moore tapestries. For the past 20 years she has worked as a full time artist, designing and weaving tapestries for exhibition and commission. One of the UK's foremost tapestry artists, her work is represented in private and public collections worldwide. Baxter has also been actively committed to raising the profile of tapestry through her involvement in Scottish, British and International exhibiting and networking initiatives, and through her teaching, lecturing and mentoring activities.

### Mary Zicafoose Color, Content & Creativity: New Strategies for New Work



COUNTING CLOTH #1

Joan Baxter

## Working from Landscape

This workshop will focus on exploring various interpretive techniques involving colour and texture and different ways of approaching design and composition. Using photographs, drawings, maps, memories, history, mythology and other sources, we will create multi-layered impressions of real or imagined landscapes. Students will work on paper and with woven samples to build up a resource for future tapestries. The class will include technical demonstrations, group discussion, and one to one teaching. Students may bring examples of previous work for individual tutorial sessions if they wish.

### Registration

Registration is limited. Complete the registration form and mail, along with your payment to Mary Lane 703 Foote Street NW, Olympia, WA 98502. Early bird registration must be received by March 15, 2008. Registration closes May 1, 2008. Retreat fees for non-ATA member include a one year membership to ATA. Full refunds (less a \$50.00 administrative fee) are granted until May 1, 2008. No refunds will be granted after that date. Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$25.00 fee. For extra copies of this document, visit: [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org)

Questions? Contact Mary Lane (360) 754-1105; [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com)

### Registration Form

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher preference (number in order of preference)\*  Anyone  Baxter  Zicafoose

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

	Registration Fee	Sa pm - Tu pm room & board	Tu pm - We am room & board	TOTAL
ATA member, Early Bird, single room	\$195.00	\$282.00	\$73.00	
ATA member, Early Bird, double room	\$195.00	\$183.00	\$40.00	
Non ATA member, Early Bird, single room	\$230.00	\$282.00	\$73.00	
Non ATA member, Early Bird, double room	\$230.00	\$183.00	\$40.00	
ATA member, late registration, single room	\$230.00	\$282.00	\$73.00	
ATA member, late registration, double room	\$230.00	\$183.00	\$40.00	
Non ATA member, late registration, single room	\$265.00	\$282.00	\$73.00	
Non ATA member, late registration, double room	\$265.00	\$183.00	\$40.00	

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

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Cardholder's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Volunteers Make It Happen: David Johnson

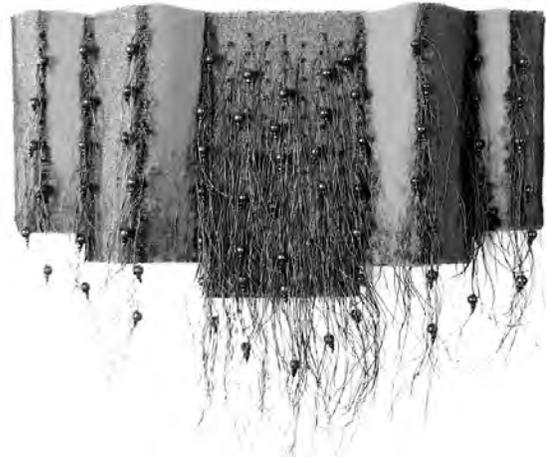
By Mary Lane

Dave Johnson's talents as a textile artist have found expression in tapestries, mixed media and jewelry. His artwork has grown through his engagement with particular themes, specific visual and conceptual ideas developed over a period of time and in a variety of ways. From early tapestries that focus on music and ethnographic textiles to his recent series entitled "Edges" and "Artifacts," each grouping reflects focused attention and thoughtful experimentation.

As both a musician and a visual artist, Dave's two creative paths often cross. For example, tapestries such as "Music Rug" and "Sea Chanty" are based on drawings that were themselves responses to specific musical compositions. "To me there is a strong correlation between music and weaving. Working at a traditional 4-harness loom with multiple treadles is very much like playing the pipe organ. There is also the performance aspect; a weaving is worked from one end to the other, much like a piece of music is performed."

Other tapestry series reflect Dave's interest in how the history of a people becomes embedded in both manmade dwellings and in the land itself. "The intent, in part, is to try to connect with and record the implied human history related to these images. The past is little more than a collection of artifacts and vague memories. Much of my work is about that inability to fully remember people, places, and events. The frequent use of waxed linen strands knotted into my work is symbolic of that inability and symbolizes the sense of mystery I feel about the past." The more philosophical content of his work is expressed through a non literal, symbolic use of color and an abstracted, graphic imagery. Tapestries such as "Prairie Roots," "Local History No.2" and "Prairie View," evoke more than they describe. They stimulate reverie and invite an introspective, even spiritual, response. Dave's interest in, and respect for the past also surfaces in his references to historical and ethnographic textiles.

He often scans his drawings into Photoshop, where they are manipulated further in order to develop a cartoon. Colors are chosen, however, directly from his supply of yarns. His dense, saturated color palette offers a rich substrate for the embellishment that enriches the surface. The color black is a signature in



David Johnson, "Edge No. 4," 15" x 12" x 3" 2006 cotton warp, wool weft, wooden beads, seed beads, waxed linen, painted bamboo, painted industrial felt

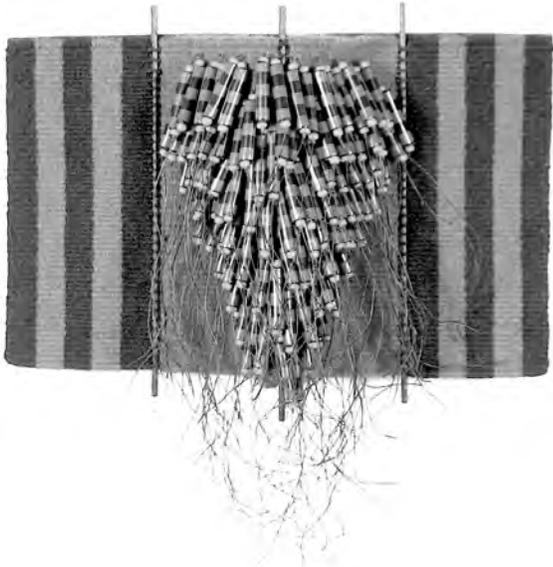
his designs. "Black, to me, is the generator of line, the container for color, and the maker of texture - as in woodcuts and etchings."

Dave's recent tapestries include off-loom manipulation and embellishment through stitching and the application of pigment, beads and thread. Some of the work is sculptural. Pieces like "Edge No.2" and "Edge No. 4" reflect his interest in moving away from drawn or painted maquettes. He is, instead, developing the visual aspect of his work through a more direct response to materials and process. The work of textile giants such as Lenore Tawney, Claire Zeisler and Magdalena Abakanowicz has provided inspiration. In speaking of this new work, he says, "I often spend as much or more time with the embellishment as I do with the actual weaving."

In the midst of his commitment to an active studio, Dave finds time to volunteer for ATA. He orchestrates the relatively new, and growing, web exhibition program. This program hosts exhibitions designed specifically for the web. Curators are invited to submit proposals, and Dave assists by designing the layout for the images and text. He also initiated a new web exhibition genre called "Work Over Time." These shows present work from a single artist's entire career.

Dave has recently retired from teaching and is happy to have time to give back to others by volunteering. He enjoys sharing his skills with ATA, especially in the area of exhibitions. He believes that presenting contemporary tapestry in a professional manner is crucial. "Tapestry should be viewed and written

continued...



David Johnson, "Edge No. 2," 10" x 6" x 3" 2006 cotton warp, wool weft, handmade inkjet printed paper beads, seed beads, waxed linen, painted bamboo, painted industrial felt

about as art, with the same rigor and connection to history as painting, sculpture and drawing."

In addition to his involvement with ATA, Dave is a member of Chicago Tapestry. He also works with the Illinois Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Along with his many ties to the art world, Dave still finds time to practice the piano daily and share his music at a local retirement home. [www.urbanwild.net](http://www.urbanwild.net) [www.chicagotapestry.com](http://www.chicagotapestry.com).

## Volunteers Make It Happen: Priscilla Lynch

By Lynn Mayne

ATA members know Priscilla Lynch from her tapestries in ATB exhibitions as well as for her leadership in producing the small format "Grand Ideas" show in 2006 and for creating the Distance Learning Program as ATA education chairman.

Priscilla bought her first loom in 1970. It was a LeClerc four harness table loom which she assembled by looking at pictures since the instructions were in French! She taught herself to weave using books from the library and then took workshops offered by local weaving guilds and her state organization, the Michigan League of Handweavers (MLH). In addition, she took college classes in art which she felt she needed in her new pursuit, since her degree was in nursing.

Priscilla credits MLH, plus having three babies in three and a half years, with developing her over-the-top organizational skills. She accepted several years of leadership roles including the presidency of MLH because she felt it would be a good way to "repay the organization that had given me so much." She learned about the importance of keeping accurate records, she says, from her years in MLH. During that time, as VP/workshop chair, she was the first to bring tapestry weavers Archie Brennen, Susan Martin-Maffei, and Sharon Marcus to Michigan for workshops.

To say that she pursues her interests with determination is an understatement. In her weaving career she wore out both her rotator cuffs by throwing the shuttle for the fabric she constructed into original apparel. In her words, "Textile design involving the intricacies of cloth structure, texture, materials, and color fascinated me." She produced numerous series of clothing designs exploring a single weave structure. Besides marketing her clothing through several boutiques, Priscilla exhibited, taught workshops, and wrote articles for *Weavers* magazine.



Priscilla Lynch, "Wise and Foolish Virgins," 30" x 32", ATB3 2000

She switched to tapestry weaving in 1998 to give her shoulders a rest. Practicing exercises in weaving books and taking workshops perfected her techniques. She was asked to become education chair for ATA with a guideline to start a mentoring program. Her research of a program offered by the Handweavers Guild of America, led to the Distance Learning Program.

The small format show, "Grand Ideas," was chaired by Priscilla in 2006 during Convergence in Grand Rapids, Michigan. For many participants, this show was the first experience exhibiting their work in public, and she spent a lot of time with daily emails answering questions and offering encouragement for weavers to work up the courage to exhibit. Priscilla made local arrangements, hung the show, directed construction of the hanging support system, developed a catalog, took down the show, and returned the work. She says she enjoyed working with the students and staff at the Kendall College of Design to create a catalog for the show. She was able to involve the students giving them some valuable client experience, and ATA was able to benefit from their fresh ideas.

The years of continual tapestry weaving have now taken their toll on her wrists and hand joints, and it is painful for her to manipulate the bobbins. She is currently searching for options to continue her explorations in the fiber field. At the time of the writing of this article, she is planning to take a workshop which combines painting with fabric collage. She says "life continues to be an ongoing journey of discovery and I am thankful for the opportunities to work with so many talented people." She has been generous in sharing her talents with so many of us in ATA, and we hope to see her return to tapestry some time soon.

## ATA Award: Donna Contractor

"Golden Mean Spiral - Universal Language Series" by Donna Loraine Contractor received an ATA Award at the Intermountain Weavers' Conference, "Fiber Celebrated," at the Durango Arts Center in Durango, CO. Donna is a tapestry artist who received her BA in Liberal Arts from St. John's College in Santa Fe and has lived in Albuquerque for the last 19 years.

Her work incorporates the landscapes and colors of New Mexico with bold contemporary architectural frames that create depth and optical illusions. Douglas Kent Hall, in *The Thread of New Mexico*, says "Contractor combines unlikely dynamic forms with a scintillating palette to achieve an evocative and compelling style of weaving. She utilized traditional...concepts as well as certain graphic constructs that fueled the work of many twentieth-

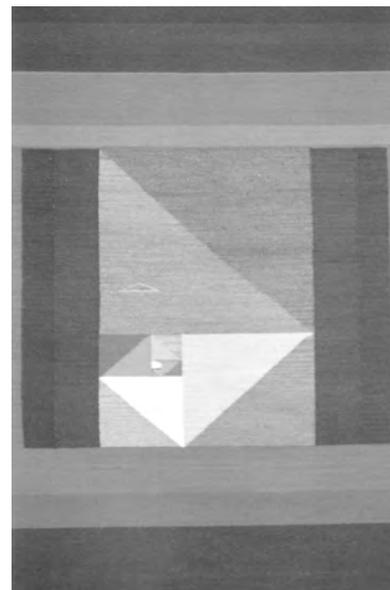
century painters and brings to contemporary tapestry a freshness that is sometimes startling."

She has won numerous art competitions and commissions such as a triptych for the City/County Building in Albuquerque and a large tapestry for the Bernalillo County Courthouse.

Accolades include the display of her tapestries at the Albuquerque Museum, MFA @ Santa Fe and an

appearance on a HGTV special. Donna's work is shown and collected throughout the United States and abroad.

Another piece from her "Universal Language Series" has been chosen, one of 98 artists out of a applicant pool of 500, for the New Mexico Women in the Arts ORIGINALS 2007 showing Sept 28- Dec 30 2007 at the Millicent Rogers Museum in Taos, NM.



Donna Contractor, "Golden Mean Spiral - Universal Language Series," 61" x 40", 2007

## ATA Student Award 2007

Melinda Heal of Canberra, Australia, is the winner of the second annual American Tapestry Alliance Student Award for 2007. The Board of ATA selected her from among a number of entrants from the US as well as abroad for the \$250 prize and a year student membership in ATA.

Melinda discovered tapestry in her second year of university studies in Textiles at the Canberra School of Art where she is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Visual Art. She says, "Constructing an image and a tangible surface...at the same time is something very particular to the medium which results in artwork unlike any other." Her submissions, a series about her family members, exhibited a strong sense of design and color theory.

At the Australian National University, Melinda is also studying for a second major in Asian Studies, with

continued...



Melinda Heal, "Grandma," "Grandma" (and "Cros". See online version) ... allowed me to explore just how much information can be lost and still retain the likeness of the subject.

a focus on the Japanese language, which she has studied since primary school, and issues of Contemporary Asian society.

Melinda grew up in a creative home. She says, "My mum was always doing some sewing, knitting, needlepoint...and teaching me

how to knit a scarf for my Barbie." Her grandmother, a talented watercolorist, gave her her first set of Derwent pencils that she still uses.

Initiated in 2006, each spring the Board of ATA offers the award to a student to encourage younger tapestry artists. For further information and guidelines see the ATA website or contact Alex Friedman. AlexFriedman@gmail.com

## Member News

### Directory Corrections

Please note the following corrections to your 2007-2008 Member Directory:

The ATA website is listed in one instance as ".net." Please note the correct web address is: [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org).

New member Anthony Harrison's surname was mistakenly listed as Harris. New member Charlotte Weinstein was mistakenly listed as Maxine Weinstein. Elaine Duncan of British Columbia, Canada, should have been listed as an educator who teaches in her studio and is willing to travel.

If you have not received your new, turquoise cover 2007-2008 Directory, please contact:

Ellen Ramsey (206) 440-8903 or [ew.ramsey@comcast.net](mailto:ew.ramsey@comcast.net).

## With Gratitude

Our sincere thanks to the following members who joined or renewed their membership at Circle level between July 1 and October 1, 2007. Circle membership dues include an additional donation in support of ATA programs.

Studio Circle: Ann Booth, Ingrid Bracey, Stanley Bulbach, Karen Flesvig Chu, Nancy Crampton, Nancy Diggs, Pamela Done, Cheryl Holbert, Beverly Hunt, Susan Iverson, Mary Ann Jackson, Jennie Jeffries, James Koehler, Mary Lane, Elisabeth Quick, Ellen Ramsey, Judy Schuster, Elaine Nixon, Alta Turner, Sarah Warren.

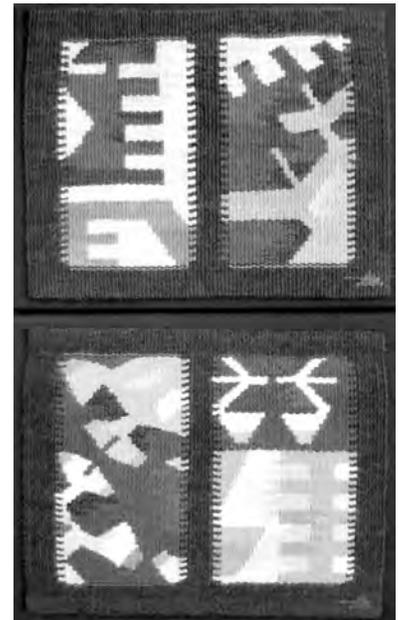
Curator's Circle: Klaus Anselm, Georgeann Blaha, Pamela Gibson, Lynn Mayne, William Saunders, Jean Smelker-Hugi.

## Kudos

Tapestry Awards at NEWS 2007: **Betsy Wing's** tapestry "Source I" won the 1st Place Award for Tapestry, at the 2007 New England Weavers' Seminar (NEWS) Gallery Show, at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

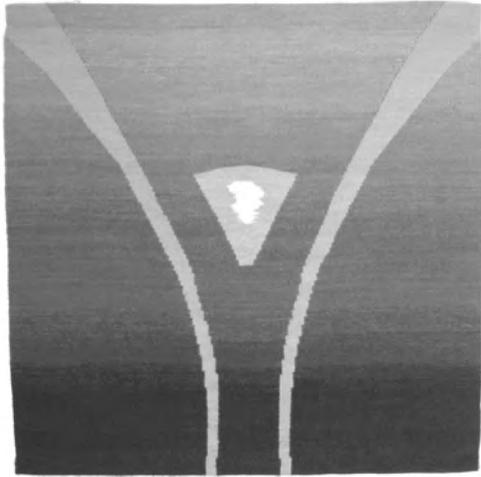
**Janet Austin's** pair of tapestries "Kilim Fragment Duet" won 2nd Place Award for Tapestry, the Helen Klekot Award for "Art Form, 2nd Place," and the "Judges Choice" Award.

"Wednesday Works," an exhibit by **The Wednesday Group**, will be at the TWO07 Art Gallery, Inwood in New York City October 14-28th. It features the work of 12 ATA members.



Janet Austin, "Kilim Fragment Duet," 8" x 10" each, 2006

Tapestry: People and Places," an invitational exhibit of works by **Joan Griffin, Lynn Mayne, Tommye Scanlin and Rebecca Stevens**, will be at the Artisans Center of Virginia in Waynesboro, VA. September 27 - November 8, 2007



Betsy Wing, "Source 1," 27" x 28", 2007

**Lialia Kuchma** and **Ann McGinn** have tapestries in the exhibit "ON/OFF: Illinois Women Artists and Contemporary Fiber Art" at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art featuring 6 artists who work on or off the loom.

The exhibit, "Doors, Gates, and Windows" at the Albuquerque Arts Alliance gallery, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 5-22, 2007 is an international group challenge project with **tapestry weavers from Vancouver Island, Canada**, in addition to new works by members of the **Las Aranas Tapestry Group**. About 13 members of each group wove a gate, door, or window of their particular region. Then, the two groups "exchanged" tapestries by drawing names, with each "partner" weaving a response tapestry to each other's pieces.

## Contact ATA

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www.americantapestryalliance.org

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### Ed. Com. Coordinator, Events & Online study groups

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### Library Chair, Archives & 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 Barbara Richards  
2160 Devil's Gulch Rd  
Estes Park, CO 80517  
(970) 577-9728

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax/Alternate phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Visa/Mastercard number

Exp. Date

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card holder's signature

American Tapestry Alliance  
PO Box 28600  
San Jose, CA 95159-8600

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## Tapestry Topics



Melinda Heal, "Coptic Mel."

"Coptic Mel" is a self-portrait woven using the techniques of Coptic tapestry: fine eccentric weft, linen warp, quirky faces and various traditional motifs.

### **Guidelines for submitting articles to *Tapestry Topics*:**

Next Deadline: January 15: **Hand Dyed Yarn**,  
April 1: **Representational or Abstract?** July 15: **Miniature  
Tapestry**, and October 1: **Conferences and Events of the Year**

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

--Or--

1507 Elkay Drive

Eugene, OR 97404

Phone: 541-338-8284

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 exhibit and explain the parts that contribute to this sense.

Newsletter committee: Proofreader: Mary Colton, Layout: Elinor Steele, Distribution: Ellen Ramsey. Online excerpts: Lyn Hart, Web posting: Tea Okropiridze.

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