



Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

www.americantapestryalliance.org

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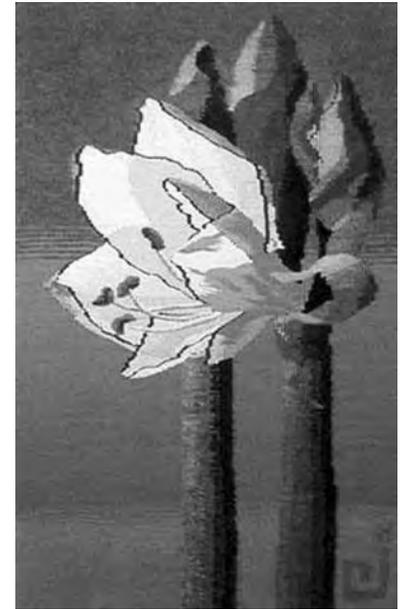
Spring and New Events to Come

Greetings.

We hope you are seeing signs of spring as this issue reaches your mailbox.

Board members and our key volunteers are in a full speed ahead mode, balancing new events with judicious management of our resources. 2008 will be an exciting year in the world of tapestry and will lead to a new ATA sponsored event beginning in 2009.

ATA has launched a second juried biennial exhibition! "Connections: Small Tapestry International" will open in the spring of 2009 and will highlight the very best in small format tapestry from around the world. Jane Sauer of Jane Sauer Gallery, Sante Fe, New Mexico, has agreed to jury for us, and we intend to publish a catalogue for this exhibition. The deadline for submission will be at the end of November, 2008. The prospectus and entry form are available on the ATA's web site. Artists are encouraged to explore new connections with concepts, techniques, and other artists and to stretch creative exploration within the format of a small tapestry. We are thrilled and excited to present a new tapestry biennial exhibition to run in opposite years of the ATB, so get your creative processes going and design something innovative and spectacular.



Jane Hoffman, "Amaryllis" 22" x 14", 2003

continued...

As you contemplate the colors soon to be bursting out in nature and on new tapestries, read the articles Michael Rohde has collected for this issue on hand dyed yarns and discover why many tapestry artists believe that creating their own palette is exciting. We congratulate James Kohler and Irvin Trujillo, both accomplished dyers, on their prestigious awards. We love to see our members recognized for their accomplishments.

American Tapestry Biennial 7 will open at Convergence 2008, at the Scarfone/Hartley Gallery in Tampa, Florida. With juror Susan Warner Keene's selection of work from the many international entries, this could be the best ATB yet. We hope to see many of you at the opening on June 27th during the Friday night Gallery Crawl and also at Woven Gems, our non-juried exhibition. We also hope you will attend the No Host Dinner the previous night and especially the general membership meeting and forum Saturday morning, June 28. See the following list of ATA sponsored events and tapestry exhibits in the Tampa Bay area. Becky, Linda, a number of board members and key volunteers will be in Tampa during the Convergence events, so please keep an eye out for us - we would love to meet you in person.

We extend many thanks to our members and non-member donors who contributed to the Silver Anniversary Celebration Fundraiser, also listed in this issue. Your contributions will help support many ATA projects.

Happy Weaving!

Becky & Linda

Tapestry & Convergence Events

Registration for Convergence is not required for any of these events, although a day pass must be purchased to attend Reinventing Landscape: Two Perspectives.

Waterfront Gathering

No Host Dinner

Jackson's Bistro, 601 S. Harbour Island Blvd #100,
Tampa, Florida

Thursday, June 26, 2008, 6:00 - 9:00 pm

You are invited to share an evening of food and conversation with fellow tapestry artists during Convergence 2008. For a reservation form please visit the ATA website, www.americantapestryalliance.org, or contact Jennie Jeffries, jenniejeffries@msn.com (425) 557-9358.

American Tapestry Biennial 7

University of Tampa Scarfone/Hartley Gallery,
Tampa, Florida

June 16 - July 11, 2008

Convergence Gallery Crawl Friday, June 27, 2008

ATB7 is supported in part by a grant from Friends of Fiber Art International.

"Woven Gems"

Teco Plaza Gallery, 704 Franklin St., Tampa, Florida

June 1 - July 31, 2008

Convergence Gallery Crawl Friday, June 27, 2008

ATA Forum: "Reinventing Landscape: Two Perspectives"

Tampa Convention Center

Saturday June 28, 2008, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Slide talks by tapestry artists Mary Zicafoose and Joan Baxter will offer insights into their work. A presentation of contemporary tapestry (Digi Slam) will conclude the forum.

To participate in the Digi Slam, please submit the following by May 15, 2008:

1) Up to five digital images of your tapestries. Label each digital image file with your last name followed by the title of the tapestry, e.g. Smith Morning Mist.Jpg. Digital image specifications: jpegs saved at 300 dpi and exactly 1000 pixels on the longest side. Save the image with maximum image quality.

2) A Word document (or pdf) containing the following information: Your name, address, phone number and email; an annotated slide list (title, dimensions, date, materials); a one paragraph bio and up to two paragraphs about your work. Label this file with your last name, e.g. Smith.doc Burn the image files and the file with the text onto a universal CD and mail to Celeste Hansel, 727 Driftwood Drive, Lynn Haven, FL 32444, chansel@knology.net (850) 271-1645.

The slide show is not juried, but is limited; first come, first served. The only commentary will come from the text you provide with your images.

ATA Educational Retreat: "Channeling Your Muse"

Eckerd College, St Petersburg, Florida

June 28 - July 1, 2008

Details: www.americantapestryalliance.org, or marylane53@mac.com

Tapestry Exhibits in the Tampa Bay area:

Tampa:

Tampa Airport Tapestries: Permanent installation of twenty-two large tapestries are in the baggage handling area. The Florida-themed tapestries were designed by the artist Ronald Renmark and woven by women of Swaziland in a Virginia studio. Tours are available with advance notice by contacting the Public Art division of Tampa Airport. "Aquamarine Living," exhibit by Doris Florig at the Florida Aquarium in Tampa Bay.

St. Petersburg:

Florida Craftsmen Gallery, *Tapestry From the Tropics* by T.A.O.S. (Tapestry Artists of Sarasota), Lynn Mayne, John

Nicholson, Rebecca Stevens, Terri Stewart.,501 Central Avenue, June 13-August 29
St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts, 255 Beach Dr. NE :
ASTRONOMY after design by Cornelius Schut I (1597-1655) Flemish, 1670, Silk and Wool tapestry, 147 x 122"
Dunedin: Fine Arts Center-Connie Lippert

Gainesville: Guild Gallery-Jan Haase

Safety Harbor: Syd Entel Gallery-Deborah Corsini

Tarpon Springs:

Leepa/Rattner Museum of Art: Contemporary abstract tapestries designed by Abraham Rattner and woven in Einhad, Israel.

Marlene Eidelheit, textile/tapestry conservator of St. John the Divine in NYC will give a lecture on conservation of vintage tapestries as part of the HGA Tour to Tarpon Springs on Wednesday, June 25. See SS&D magazine Fall issue for complete information. Walk-ins welcome for a small fee.

Sarasota:

Ringling Museum of Art: Five large paintings by Rubens which served as cartoons for the series of tapestries *Triumph of the Eucharist* are on permanent display. One or two tapestries woven from Ruben cartoons are also on display.

"Connections: Small Tapestry International 2009."

American Tapestry Alliance juried small tapestry exhibit (maximum size 100 sq.in./625 sq.cm.)
Juror: Jane Sauer; Jane Sauer Gallery, Santa Fe, NM. Artists are encouraged to push the idea of connections with concepts, techniques, other artists, the viewer or other areas of artistic investigation. Prospectus may be downloaded at <http://www.americantapestryalliance.com/> , or send a SASE to ATA Connections, 1050 Gunnison Ave., Grand Junction, CO 81501.
Digital entry deadline: November 30, 2008

Upcoming Issues:

Next Issue: April 1, 2008 deadline.

Lany Eila will guest edit the next issue. She has chosen the theme: "Representational (Pictorial) or Abstract?" Throughout various cultures and time periods, makers in many art forms have embraced either representation or abstraction. Tapestry designs have stressed pictorial motifs, abstract motifs or a regionally distinct combination of both. These traditions developed 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 identifica-

tion. This newsletter issue will consider how the differing approaches of representational and abstract design have meaning in contemporary and historical tapestry. How have these differing approaches played out, and why? How does one approach (or combination) better express what you're wanting to say? To what degree does the presence of tension between these approaches influence your work? If pictorial imagery is used, and given that the structure of tapestry often necessitates abstracting those images, what is lost and what is gained, in visual terms, by pushing that abstraction or not? Submissions should be sent to **Lany Eila at lanyeila@yahoo.com** or send non-digital material to 5940 Camino San Carlos, Santa Fe, NM 87507

Fall issue: Special theme deadline date, May 1.

Small format, small scale, miniature: Small art works are a distinct breed. Susan Stewart, in her book, *On Longing*, writes, "the miniature... speaks of infinite time, of the time of labor... and of the time of the world, collapsed within a minimum of physical space." Through their condensation of meaning and representation, small works evoke ideas and worlds much larger than their actual physical size. As they draw the viewer near, the world beyond the miniature seems extraordinarily large. Artists who work in a small scale might say that it requires more than a special set of materials or technical skills. They might argue that a true understanding of the miniature scale involves a different conceptual and visual framework, a different paradigm.

The fall issue of Tapestry Topics will focus on small format work. Do you work in a small format? Does small work capture your attention? Would you like to share your experiences and thoughts about small scale work? Please send your proposals to **Mary Lane, marylane53@mac.com; (360) 754-1105 by May 1, 2008.**

We are looking for more people either to "guest edit" an issue, which entails being responsible for all the aspects of newsletter editing (with help available when needed), or to suggest a theme and solicit the articles but not be responsible for all aspects of editing. Having a more diverse pool of editors is an important way to ensure that the newsletter is touching topics that the members want addressed while decreasing the number of deadlines any one editor has.

Kudos: We also encourage people to let us know if they are having an exhibit or have received an award. That way we can be more inclusive in the Kudos section and better represent the depth of activity in our field.

Reminder: The third annual "Student Award" submissions due April 15, 2008. For guidelines: www.americantapestryalliance.org/Education/2007SA.html

Why Make More Work for Ourselves?

By Michael F. Rohde

There must be a very good reason to dye your own yarns. Tapestry weaving is such a long process, why would anyone want to add more steps? Those of us who do dye before we weave find it does not add that much time, especially considering how long we might struggle over getting the cartoon just right. An amount of time needs to be spent learning the craft of dyeing, but when I begin a new work, it takes no more than three days to dye the yarns for that project, and then weeks to months to weave it.

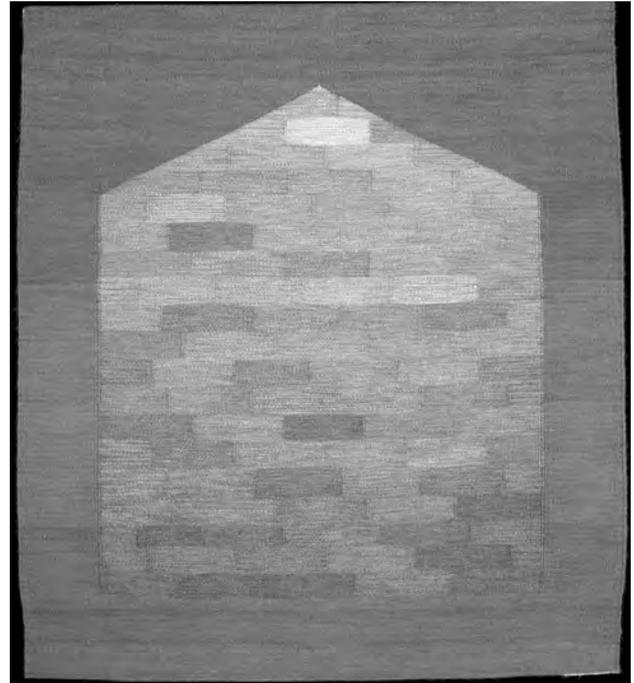
My first year of weaving, in 1974, was with commercial K-Mart Orlon yarns, but the next year I was exposed to dye processes. After that my path expanded, and I have never wavered from exploring complex colors and color interactions. Once I began to dye by mixing colors or over-dyeing yarns, I learned much about the colors themselves, and how they related to each other. Trying to match a color or make one that is in your mind gives you an understanding not only of the target color, but of those that lead up to the result you want.

So, why take the time to learn to dye? Most importantly, you dye the yarn to get colors that are not available to you in commercially dyed yarns. The analogy I think of most often is which box of Crayons would you rather have: the one with eight, sixty-four or even three hundred? Once you have learned to mix colors, even the box of three hundred will not give you everything you would want.

Understanding of colors comes, for example, when you realize that the bright red Crayon we have always been told is a primary color, really is not. You can get this bright red by mixing fuchsia or magenta with yellow, but you cannot get a clear fuchsia or magenta by adding blue to Cardinal red; the resulting color will be muddy. Likewise the strong blue Crayon comes from turquoise plus a little of the Cardinal red. These are lessons we now know from ink jet printers, but they can be learned more directly in the dyepot.

Color is a language; you can easily get an idea across with a limited number of words or vocabulary, but think how much richer your message can be if you expand your range, be it words or colors. There is a richness and complexity in colors that you create yourself, if you are willing to blend the pigmenting material, whether from plant, insect or the dye factory.

Simple colors often convey simple meanings. There are places for this goal, but if you want depth in your commentary, I feel you need depth in your color choices. Commercially dyed yarns come in colors that must appeal to a wide range of tastes and uses; if you want something that is just a little off these accepted hues, you must make your own colors.



Michael Rohde, "Intricacy" 41" x 37", 2005
spelasu wool & mohair, dyes, some weft ikat.

We are constantly assaulted with the colors of various visual media, seemingly most often used to try to sell something. Rather than taking cues from these examples, I prefer to venture away from tried and true (and often tired) colors and combinations, and to make new ones: colors that cannot be easily named, and combinations that break accepted color harmony rules. They are separated enough from today's latest fashion colors or marketing trends to be refreshing mixtures of hues that cannot be quite categorized. As creative people, we are not content to reproduce what has gone before in our tapestries, so why not add color as one of our creative tools?

How Things Happen

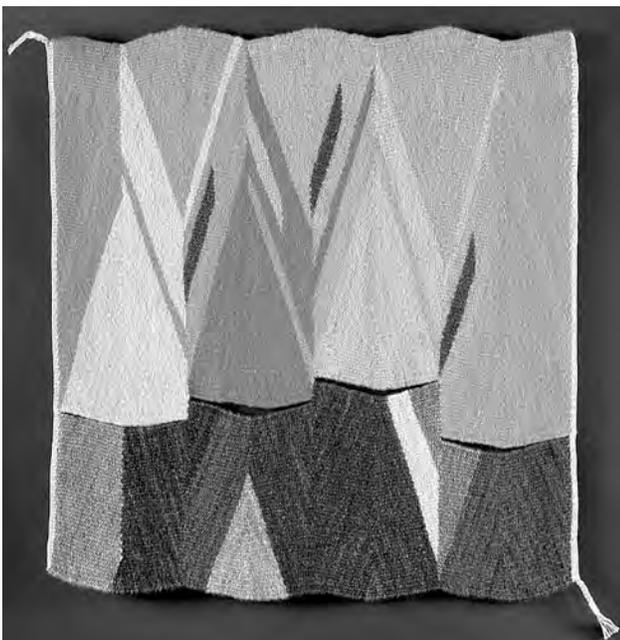
By Connie Lippert

My first exposure to natural dyes was in 1975. I was an art major at Auburn University in Alabama taking weaving as an elective through the home economics department. A group of us in the weaving class decided to form an independent study class in natural dyes. Under the supervision of our weaving teacher, the late Jane Lorendo, we spent a quarter collecting and dyeing with traditional materials as well as anything else we could find to throw in the dye pot that might give color. We all ended up with a thick notebook of samples, which is one of the few items I still have and use from my undergraduate and graduate education. For the final project in my rug weaving class the next quarter, I dyed yarns with natural dyes and wove a rug in the corduroy technique using Peter Collingwood's recently released *The Techniques of Rug Weaving*.

But all of this weaving and dyeing experimentation brought me to a conflicted moment in my life. I was devoting much more time and energy to my weaving elective than my other art courses. Art departments in the south in 1975 were all about drawing, painting, and not-too-experimental sculpture. The two fields were like east and west and "never the twain shall meet." There was no way for me to put the two interests together. I thought I would change my major to Home Economics. However, when I looked at the required courses, I was not interested in that either. So I "dropped out" and went on a Transcendental Meditation course in Europe for 6 months.

When I returned, I did the logical thing - I became a botany major. Weaving took a back seat while I completed degrees in botany and soil science. Soon after graduating and getting a job, I bought my first loom. I traveled down the weaving path for many years, mainly weaving bound-weave. In 1990, I saw a slide at a guild meeting of a wedge weave rug. Wedge weave is a technique where the weaving is done on the diagonal instead of the usual horizontal orientation. Weaving on the diagonal forces the warp out of its vertical position that in turn causes the edges to scallop. For years I held on to the desire, but could not find any information about how to do wedge weave. Martha Stanley, from whom I finally learned the technique in 1999, pointed out to me that my old Collingwood book, which I had had since the 70's, describes wedge weave. The *Techniques of Rug Weaving* is notorious for its poor index.

I do not think I would have come back to natural dyes if I had not gotten interested in wedge weave. After experimenting with wedge weave for a while, I felt I needed a different "kind" of color. Wedge weave's Navajo roots also



Connie Lippert, "Leaf series: Acer rubrum"
25" X 24", Linen warp. Vegetal dyed wool weft
(madder, goldenrod, indigo)

influenced my color decisions. A patch of goldenrod got my attention one day when I was sitting outside with my feral cat, and I was off.

In 1975, as the books instructed, we used a lot of mordant. When I returned to natural dyes, the recipes were more refined and the resulting yarn had a better hand. At first, I tried to use only plants that were available locally. Fortunately for me, the South Carolina botanical garden, located close to where I live, usually has a large indigo planting because of its importance in South Carolina history. Indigo was a major economic crop in South Carolina in the 1700's. The garden director allowed me to take all the indigo I wanted, and I did a lot of experimentation and dyeing with fresh leaves. Rita Buchanan's *A Dyer's Garden* and *A Weaver's Garden* gave helpful information for this process. I still use goldenrod and black walnut from local sources, but now I mail order materials to have a wider range of colors.

I do admit that I like the gathering, the growing, the outdoors on cool fall days, the experimentation, the unexpected outcomes, the magic of an indigo dye pot.

The naturally dyed yarns bring something to this particular weave I practice that I want it to have. I do not want consistent uniform colors or evenly spaced gradations. Natural dyes have lately evolved to the point where they can be consistent and uniform, but that is not what I am after. I am after the color of chance, surprise and wonder.

Ying and Yang of Natural Dyeing

By Doris Florig

During the "Back to the Land" days of the 1970's, I spent four years living in northern Ontario, Canada. Natural was the way of life, so there was no consideration of using other dye methods. I would spend days wandering though the wide-open, abandoned farm fields, learning to identify flowers and collecting plants. Upon filling a four gallon bucket, I would return to my outdoor fire pit, simmer the wool in the mordant, steep the plant fibers and watch the colors appear. It was always satisfying to see the results, but the greatest pleasure came from the entire outdoor experience.

As the decade progressed and I returned to the US, my days of natural dyeing began to fade away along with the back to the land lifestyle. Settling into Vermont, which was a more populated area, I began to look at wild flowers as something that should be left for everyone to enjoy. My direction in design had shifted to the abstract; I needed a brighter palette of color. I gave natural dyes one more chance, when I read that lichens produce a purple. After

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scraping the lichens off an area of rock, I went back to the house and began reading the dye recipe. The instructions pointed out that it takes 50 years for the lichens to grow back. At that point I knew my natural dye days were over.

I became committed to the sole use of fiber re-active dyes. The color intensity, the ease of mixing any desired color and the quality of fastness had me convinced. That is, at least until this summer when I moved to my new home in Wyoming. Many plants I had used for dyestuff years ago are now considered invasive and need to be eradicated; therefore, natural dyeing would be beneficial to the environment.

With that thought in mind, I headed off to spend the winter sailing to the Bahamas. I provisioned the boat with pounds and pounds of yarn to weave for my exhibit "Aquamarine Living," which will be hung at the Florida Aquarium during Convergence. My return to natural dyes began when I realized that I had no brown yarn onboard. With no access to commercial yarn, I pulled out a box of black tea and simmered away until the desired brown yarn appeared.

Now, I have come full circle. In the future, I will be more open minded and take advantage of the benefits of both chemical and natural dyes.

Cultivating a Color Palette: A Life with Natural Dyeing

By Jane Hoffman

My first experience in dyeing yarn was as an art student at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. This was in the early 1970's, and I had just transferred to the University because fiber was included in the art department. After exposure to all types of art mediums, I found tapestry to be my true calling, and so for the past thirty-plus years tapestry has been in my art repertoire.

Under the fiber curriculum, students were introduced to natural dyes. Little was written about natural dyes at the time, but the student book store was able to stock two slim paperbacks. Most of the information was based on folk lore with few guidelines on weights, measurements or even safety. However once I experienced the magic of producing color from plant material, I was completely hooked. After graduation and a move to New England, I set up a studio on a farm and began weaving tapes-



Jane Hoffman, "Blue Vista - Rose Peak"
31" x 45", 1996

tries for commissions and shows. Plant identification books and books on natural dyeing helped me identify dye plants found in the surrounding meadows and woods. I learned what colors were fast or fugitive. After two years in New England, I married and moved to the high mountains along the Arizona/New Mexico border. With a new set of plant identification books I hiked in the Apache/Sitgreaves National Forest and collected native dye plants. Eventually, we bought land and started a small farm/studio. I began teaching natural dyeing through the local community college in the 1980s and since retirement have continued to offer workshops and lectures on natural dyeing at my studio, at the Desert Weaving Workshop in Tucson, and at regional conferences.

Although I do occasionally use fiber reactive dye for weft yarns, natural dyed yarns provide my workhorse colors in my tapestries. The endless range of intensity and values of color produced by natural dyes provides a color palette that truly reflects the colors found in the landscape of the Southwest. In recent years my technique has come full circle from the 1970's; I find myself incorporating more texture into my tapestries by dyeing silk, handspun mohair, wool, and alpaca weft. The different protein fiber wefts reflect light differently and also take dye differently. By dyeing a variety of protein fibers in natural shades of white or gray, I can dramatically expand the range of color from just one dye bath. An advantage of using natural dyes is the longevity of the dye bath. I usually begin with a strong dye bath for intense color, and then I keep exhausting the bath. The resulting color from exhaust dye baths are usually lighter in value, but sometimes surprises result from oxidation or other chemical reactions. Intuition acts as a guide while mixing different baths or amounts of dye material. Another variable in color (besides type of fiber, color of fiber, and amount of dye) can be obtained from types of mordant used on the fiber. Over the years I have eliminated the common mordants: chrome and iron. Chrome mordant is toxic to the dyer and the environment and iron deteriorates protein fiber over time.

Rita Buchanan's book led me in the direction of cultivating dye plants. With no qualms, a portion of the vegetable garden was converted to dye plants. Happily many vegetables such as carrot tops provide additional dye material! Along with the sustainable native dye materials found in the national forest around the farm, dye plants from the garden supply dye for my wefts and my natural dye workshops.

Six volumes (three ring notebooks) burst with cards

holding yarn samples from every dye bath I have ever brewed! One card from one dye session of a dye material may have as many as twenty samples of different shades of yarn. In the early 1990's, Ann Keuper of Desert Weaving Workshop introduced me to Trudy Van Stralen's technique of using a percentage system to base all dye and mordant measurements on the weight of the fiber. This measuring technique revolutionized my record keeping and dramatically improved my results with natural dyes. Using the percentage system makes it very easy to reference a color sample from the notebooks to see what ratio of dye and mordant was used to obtain a hue.

The tapestries that I have woven over the years now reside in private and corporate art collections. It is extremely important that the dyes I use are reasonably lightfast. All the dyed yarns are light tested and recorded. Any that show signs of fading from long-term exposure (at least one month) to indirect sunlight are eliminated.

It is hard to put into words the pleasure that I receive from cultivating, harvesting, curing, and eventually dyeing with natural dyes. I feel connected to my environment and climate. I feel connected to my materials as I weave. Most of all, I feel satisfaction in the realization of a vision inspired by my surrounding environment into a colorful tapestry.

Dye Magic

By Mary Colton

Dye magic began for me in the mid 1970's with a warp Ikat workshop. I learned to make the colors of my warp change from one yard to the next. Every advance of the warp was a visual adventure. Using the simplest of plain weave or twill, I was creating fabrics that were distinctly mine. I could explore a palette and fibers and yarn textures, establishing a style even as a relatively new weaver. My interest was in the flow of color, and for 20 years I wove either warp or weft Ikat fabrics which I constructed into clothing and sold. With experience I learned more control of resists so that my last Ikat's were hangings that had images created by combining warp and weft Ikat. When I changed focus from garments to tapestry, dyeing was already one of my tools.

Since tapestry weaving is time consuming, a weaver must have compelling reasons to take time to dye too. I have several. When I started accumulating yarns for tapestry, I found no one source that had enough choices. There might be a light, medium and dark of a hue, but not 5 value steps. Yarns from different companies that might fill holes in a color range often were not the same size or density.

I find there is a compatibility of colors that results from dyeing with mixtures from a few basic stock colors. While the "straight from the bottle" hues from commercial dye might be harsh, I soften hues by adding a touch of their

complement, and I harmonize my colors for a project by adding a touch of each dye mix to the others.

Next is the cost of materials. Buying a few basic dye colors (I use 2 reds, 2 yellows, 2 blues and black) and a discountable quantity of undyed yarn is less expensive than buying a skein of each needed color (though this does not add the time cost of dyeing.)



Mary Colton, "Spring Dance," 42" x 27"
2001, Hand-dyed wool.

The most compelling reasons for dyeing are to design one's own palette, to learn about color mixing through experience, and to have those surprises when a dyed skein is even lovelier than expected.

However, besides taking time, dyeing has important safety requirements. That first Ikat workshop in which we somewhat carelessly used sulfuric acid scared me into learning about dye chemicals. Then, after an early experience of wiping blue traces from the kitchen table where my children would eat, I knew that my dyeing would require controlled space and methods.

I do not have a separate weaving or dyeing studio. My looms are in the family room; I draw water and rinse in the utility sink by my washer; the rest of my dyeing occurs in the garage at warm enough times of year. Even there I exert controls.

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I have an OSHA-approved mask, which I faithfully wear when I am measuring dye powders or stirring in volatile chemicals. I wear old clothes, a dye shirt that stays in the garage and a plastic apron. All my dye powders go into stock solution in the garage where they are not blown by the wind but where they do not get into the house. No one else in the family need be exposed, and I protect myself.

Another concern is for the environment. For each project that requires dyeing, I estimate the amount of dye I will need, measure my dye stocks accordingly and try to have only small amounts of stocks left. I weigh each skein to be dyed, measure the correct amount of dye for that color and value, and dye so that I exhaust my dye baths. I believe that the exhausted baths, once brought to the correct pH, are safe to pour into my septic system. (Since any leftover dye stocks have a limited shelf life, I use them on painted stole warps.)

For tapestry I use dyes for protein fiber - wool and silk. When I started serious dyeing, I was still weaving clothing so I needed both lightfast and washfast dyes. The Lanaset/Sabreset dyes by Prochemical, a "1:2 metal complex and reactive dye" combination were described in several sources as best for my needs; the recommended acid is now white vinegar or citric acid crystals. Newer dyes are available, but I see no reason to change.

Over the years I have collected many yarns including fine yarns that I can use as multiples to create colors by blending. If I have enough of the right colors available for a project, I do not dye - or I dye only to fill in missing hues.

If I am feeling particularly guilty about the race between my stores of yarn and the time I may have left to use them, I can dye to use up miscellany. My "Light in the Darkness" series was the result of using black to overdy small amounts of various colors, discovering that the blacks were not all alike, and designing to use my almost-blacks. (see *Tapestry Topics* Summer 2006)

If I have a design idea needing a range of hues and values that I cannot acquire from another source, dyeing lets me create my colors.

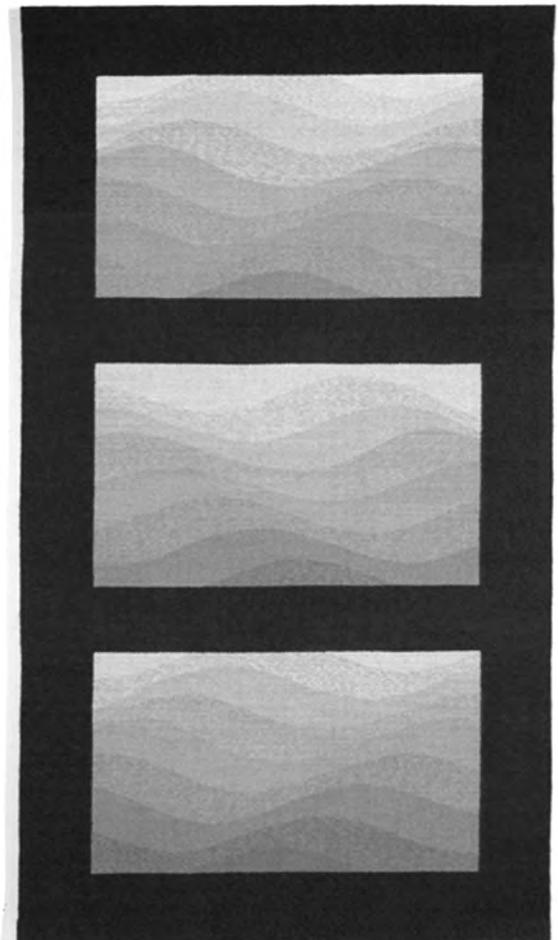
WHY DYE?

James Koehler

I began dyeing various fibers in 1977 when I entered a Benedictine monastery in New Mexico. At that time, it was a community of five monks. Prior to visiting the monastery, I did not know that the monks were weavers. I had never woven and knew nothing about looms or textiles or dyeing. The monks supported themselves financially, in part, by weaving liturgical items, prayer rugs, tapestry, clothing, and home accessories.

The most popular items they wove were ponchos. My first job was learning how to wind 30-yard chain warps for those ponchos. Each autumn, we wandered through the canyon where the monastery was located and collected plant matter to dye the wool used for the ponchos. The local vegetal matter we gathered was sage, chamisa, cholla cactus, Navajo tea or cota, mountain mahogany, and various lichens. We had commercial sources for obtaining black walnut, cochineal, and indigo. After dyeing the wool and weaving the ponchos, we sold them in the monastery gift shop.

During the early years spent at the monastery, I met Evelyn Anselevicius. She had been a student of Josef Albers at Black Mountain College. Later, she worked as a textile designer for Knoll Associates in New York. Evelyn first visited the monastery after closing her studio in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, where she worked for many years and employed several Mexican weavers. She wove large-scale tapestries and twice had her work shown at the Lausanne Biennale. Evelyn learned about the weaving that was done at the monastery while looking for weavers to help with her own work just after moving her studio to Albuquerque.



For a period of about two years, Evelyn would spend a week each month working with another monk and me. She had learned about dyeing from the chemists at Knoll and taught us how to adapt those commercial dye processes for our own purposes. We collaborated with Evelyn on a couple of tapestries that involved dyeing vast quantities of wool. Primarily, we dyed combinations of complementary colors to produce numerous hues in graded saturations. Our goal was to dye a palette that would enable us to weave images with very subtle saturation and hue gradations. These dye projects took well over a year to complete, and one benefit of working through the process was that it gave me a much better understanding of color theory.

Understatement was one principle that Evelyn passed on to me. It was of paramount importance to her in design and color and has become a very important aspect of my own work. The scale of the tapestries I design and weave is relatively small, permitting me to work with a limited palette of very subtle gradations. Obtaining such a palette would be difficult if I did not dye the wool myself.

There are other advantages to dyeing the wool and silk used to weave a tapestry. When I process and dye wool, I know that all of the lanolin has been removed from the fiber. This greatly decreases any likelihood of an insect infestation. As part of the process, the fibers are treated in a natural cedar solution to further discourage any moth damage to the woven textile. This information is helpful to potential clients and collectors.

I rarely have to deal with variation in dye lots. Hues derived from synthetic dyestuff are extremely reliable. Precise dye procedures further limit variation between dye lots through working directly with dye powders rather than stock solutions and measuring everything to 1/100 of a gram. This is important if a client wants me to match a color sample or if I do not have enough fiber in a particular hue and saturation to complete a tapestry. I simply can dye it with confidence that there will not be any detectable difference between the dye lots.

The process of dyeing wool is an arduous task, but the advantages far outweigh the difficulty. Apprentices working in the studio often help with the process. Generally, I dye about 400 pounds of yarn each year. Most of it is for my own use. I also dye a full spectrum of hues in several saturation levels for my students.

I work with two types of dyestuff. Most hues are the result of mixing a premetallized dye with a leveling acid dye. The premetallized dye is especially color and light fast, but the hues tend to be dull. The leveling acid dye produces brilliant color that is more fugitive than that created by the premetallized dye. I mix a small percentage of acid dye with premetallized dye to boost the brilliance of

the resultant color. After much experimentation, I have found the critical point at which the fastness of the color is not affected by the addition of the leveling acid dye. The yarn is dyed to a brilliant hue that is both light and colorfast.

Yarn is dyed in hue and saturation gradations using a percentage system. Geometric progressions determine the transitions so that differences in the resulting color are actually visible and not too subtle. The process is mathematical and precise. Given the tapestries I create, this level of precision is necessary.

I learned many of these dye procedures from Evelyn Anselevicius and am happy to pass them on to others. Due to the level of precision and degree of liability inherent in the process, I do not teach dye workshops to groups. However, I do teach individual dye workshops in my Santa Fe studio. Information about all of the classes taught in my studio can be found on my website: www.jameskoehler.com.

Dyeing and Creativity

By Patricia Dunn

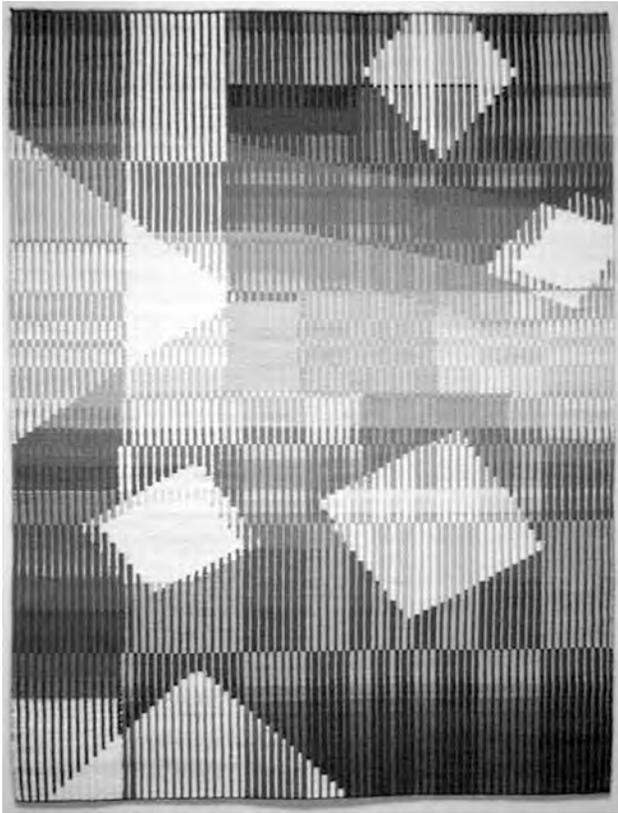
Creativity and dyeing, in my experience, go hand in hand. In the 1980's, the idea that fiber is an entity unto itself became apparent through knitting and spinning, which was such fun that before long I had miles of natural hued yarns. Wanting color, I eagerly signed up for dyeing and color theory workshops whenever they were offered by the Handweavers Guild of Boulder, Colorado. The skill of dyeing offered me freedom from "fashion" colors and quest shopping. Eventually weaving, using commercially spun and hand dyed yarn, and my 60" Glimakra counter march loom became essentials of my creative expression.

As the adventure began, the practice of dyeing became a teacher. I chose to use Lanaset fiber reactive dyes because of their repeatability and resistance to fading. The blue, violet, scarlet, dull red, magenta, yellow, gold yellow, navy blue and black powders are the basis of my palette. It was liberating to discover that dyeing is nothing more than carefully doing a step-by-step process. The basics are: weighing or measuring specific chemicals, water, yarn and dye solution; adding them in a certain order to the dye pot; and cooking them for a specific time. The dye solution is made by mixing dye powders with water in a 1:100 ratio. The dye formula, e.g., for a medium value of the hue 90% blue 5% yellow 5% red, is achieved by mixing 90 ml blue dye solution, 5 ml yellow, 5 ml of red for 100 grams of yarn. There are many options, e.g. a different blue would result by using navy blue, gold yellow and magenta.

My early work was a series of abstract landscapes. With great naïveté and enthusiasm I would take my dye-sample book, *The Shades of Wool* (Knutson) into the

Left: James Koehler, "Harmonic Oscillation XXXVII"
57" x 32" photo by James Hart

continued...



Patricia Dunn, "Zacatecas 4: City, Sun and Sky in Eternal Mosaic," 57" X 75", 2002
photo by Mark Dunn

woods, down the canyon or into the higher mountains. Many lessons were learned by my efforts to achieve the correct formula for the BLUE of the sky. I would hold the dye samples of blue up to the sky. I observed that the pure blue sample yarn was not the blue of the sky. I discovered that the formula for the sky in Colorado was 90% blue, 5% yellow and 5% red. In Florida the sky is 95 % blue, 2.5% red, 2.5% yellow; in Zacatecas, 80% blue, 10% red, 10% yellow. Curiously, I then noticed that the blue of dawn is different from that of noon. The blue is more intense in the zenith than at the horizon. In fact there is no "formula" for the blue of the sky. I noticed that there are other color names for the sky, like violet or turquoise. The lesson of sky and blue is that I might get the formula for the blue of the sky correct in a certain moment. By the time I pull the dyed yarn out of the dye pot, that particular blue sky no longer exists.

How has light contributed to my visual experience of the world? Although I "experienced" it passively for much of my life, it was after our move to Zacatecas that I became actively aware of light. In the dry season, the mountain sides were scratchy, gray, beige, dusty pale green. The rains came, the vegetation transformed into many shades of green. They inspired the tapestry "Zacatecas 2: Cerro del Grillo. The Time of the Rains."

That year the rains came to an end and neither they, nor clouds, returned for seven months. The sun blazed and the light glared. The muscles of my eyes tired of squinting. Everything dried out.

My awareness of the light came full circle on a trip in November to a northern latitude. The sun's rays came at me obliquely, while the soft light, filtered by the density of the air, caused the colors to glow. My eye muscles relaxed. The contrast to the light of Zacatecas informed my understanding.

In the "classroom" of dyeing, I observed an interesting and slow change in my "yellow" source. In the beginning gold-yellow rather than yellow predominated. For example, for orange I used dull red and gold yellow. Reflecting this choice, the palette was duller. Later, selecting colors for "Zacatecas 4: City, Sun and Sky in Eternal Mosaic," I realized I had changed to using pure yellow as the "yellow." Sub-consciously, it had seeped into my selection of color formulas. This change was clearly in response to the light of this high altitude desert.

Inspiration and the will to create provide the energy to ignite the "fire" under the receptacle transforming it into a crucible. The passive components actively change into a different reality. This is where the artist joins hands with the dyer, the weaver. Each choice is a variable that carries consequences, both intended and unintended. Problem-solving will accompany the process throughout as the artist deals with those consequences.

To illustrate the point, my current project involves collaboration with a couple that lives in Ohio. The addition of these two people fuels the energy under the crucible. They want the tapestry to reflect something about them and their environment. We chose a basic palette of green, blue and red, two-ply wool and tussah silk. The different nature of these two fibers will help determine the color formulas. In response to the more diffuse light of Ohio, I will dim the power of the complement contrast.

Each artist picks and chooses according to her/his own personal vision, creating diverse responses to any given inspiration. We bring to the creative process ourselves, each self unique from the others.

Why I Use Natural Dyes

By Janita Loder

Weaving tapestries with beautiful yarns is a delight. Yarns dyed with natural dyes are beautiful yarns, some intense and vivid and others subtle and delicate. It is not an exact science, but the element of surprise is one of the appealing features. The dyed yarns can sometimes suggest themes for tapestry. A frequent subject that appears in my tapestries is nature, and what could be more appropriate (and natural) than to weave with naturally dyed yarns?

For me, natural dyeing is just fun! Each season has its own pleasure. At this time of year it is looking at seed catalogs and planning my dye garden. When spring arrives, the pleasure is in tilling the ground and sowing the seeds, hoping that the weather will cooperate and the seeds will soon sprout and become plants. The summer brings the satisfaction in seeing the beauty of the blooming flowers. Each morning I work in the garden and pick the blossoms. The fall brings the culmination of all that has gone before—the actual dyeing of the yarns. The ultimate pleasure of putting the uncolored yarns in the dye pot and pulling out beautiful yarns is exciting.

Even though I had taken a workshop in synthetic dyeing and one in natural dyeing, it wasn't until my daughter gave me a book, *The Weaver's Garden* by Rita Buchanan, that I considered dyeing my yarns for tapestry weaving. The idea that I could plant a garden, enjoy the flowers and then use them to dye the yarns really sparked my interest. The first year I started with a few flowers—marigolds, coreopsis, cosmos, and zinnias. The colors were so beautiful and I enjoyed it so much that the next year I expanded my garden, adding woad, dahlias, black-eyed susans, St. John's Wort, hollyhocks and red amaranth. Each subsequent year others have been introduced like Mexican hats, Indian blanketflower, red basil and madder.

I have also dyed with apple and pear leaves and bark. Walnuts are a favorite of mine as brown is one of my choice colors. Materials I have used from other areas of the United States include chamisa from New Mexico and hanging tree moss from Florida. Purchased dyes such as indigo and cochineal provide shades of colors that are harder to obtain from the garden.

Natural dyeing has expanded my knowledge of many things—among them are plants, gardening, seasons of the year, color, and the value of inquiry, attention and experi-

mentation. How many shades of yellow are there? An infinite number, as any natural dyer will tell you. I have also learned about the symbols and myths surrounding flowers, leading me to understand the placement of certain flowers in paintings and writings. Knowing that weather conditions can affect the dye color produced by the plant keeps me watching for changes from year to year. Gardening books and catalogs have become more used than ever before. What are the requirements of a particular plant in terms of soil, sun, shade, watering? How have plants been used by people here and in other parts of the world through the years for dyeing textiles, baskets and even human bodies?

My appreciation of history has increased as I have read about the role natural dyes played in cultures, religions, ceremonies and economies of various countries. (Read *A Perfect Red* by Amy Butler Greenfield to learn about the interesting history of cochineal.) The Silk Road, the most important trade route in its time, influenced textile design and the exchange of ideas between countries. It is estimated that natural dyes have been used to color textiles for about 6,000 years. History provides natural dyers and tapestry weavers with a sense of connection to people throughout the ages.

Tapestry, of course, is a part of the history of natural dyeing. Before the advent of chemical dyes, the dye master was a respected and skilled person in the tapestry weaving process. Although most of the ingredients of the natural dyes are known today, some of the secrets of the dye masters have been lost over time.

Natural dyeing touches relationships with family, friends and others. People are fascinated by the processes of natural dyeing and the weaving of tapestries. It also starts them looking at nature in a different manner and soon they are finding and bringing me other dye materials. Looking at my journal record with attached swatches invites more interest. I have had opportunities to make presentations and displays and share my intense interest in natural dyeing. Discussions take place about both dyeing and weaving, and so their world has grown also.

As awareness develops, so does the ability to see beyond the first glance. New information changes the perception of the world and all it has to offer. This, of course, affects vision and that in turn, finds itself in the woven tapestry. These things are, in part, why I use natural dyes.

Too Close To The Sun

Sarah Swett

Some people crave high profile adventure, impatient to share the transformative bliss of self-induced trauma. "You'd be a fool not to go," they say to my stay-at-home self. Others slip silently into the woods or a studio or an airport, return silent but satisfied, and I bathe in the laughter that flows from their secret journeys.

In my adventures with color I long to be one of the latter, but behave, I am afraid, like one of the former. Eyes surely glaze over when I shout into the telephone, "Just LOOK at this red! No, really, LOOK at it. See, it's not red at all, but somewhere between orange and magenta depending on the light. You could get lost in that color. Isn't it wonderful? You'd be a fool not to try."

My dyeing career began with white yarn and no money. Desperate for color, I checked out a library book, collected lichens (*Evernia prunastri*) from my apple trees and boiled them up. They produced an insipid yellow, but the yarn smelled heavenly, led to more experiments, and for a time I was awash in brown and yellow skeins. Further reading led me to synthetic dyes—the colors were slightly more exciting and the process easy—but though I dyed pounds of yarn I did not bond with the dyes themselves, and when I got my hands on Trudy Van Stralen's book, *Indigo, Madder and Marigold* and learned that it is possible to get vibrant, long-lasting colors from natural dyes, I returned to my first love. Sixteen years later, my interest has not flagged. Although I spend less time gathering (the bulk of my dyes are now purchased from Michelle Wipplinger in the form of natural dye extracts), I still enjoy harvesting weld in the garden or returning from a walk laden with black walnuts.

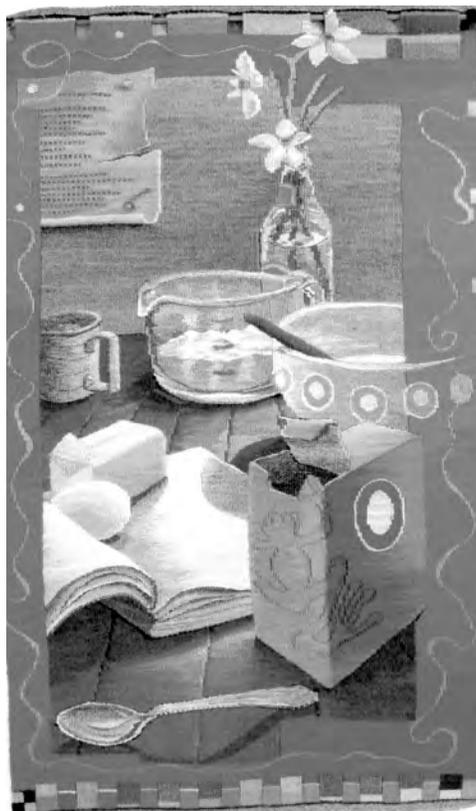
I now use six dyes and one mordant (alum), all of which have withstood the test of time and are not likely to kill me or anyone else: indigo (blue), madder (warm red), cochineal (cool red), weld (yellow), walnut (cool brown), and cutch (warm brown). Like most

artists, I keep a constant supply of the basics on hand and dye more as I need them or as a tapestry demands. I weave directly from this palette.

Drawing cartoons in black and white, I focus on shape, value and composition, then warp the loom, spread yarn on the floor, and stare at it until something leaps up, the obvious place to begin. Every subsequent color relates to the first. This makes the move from drawing board to loom relatively swift as I don't have to match yarn colors to crayons or paint or a computer screen or bits of yarn on a piece of cardboard.

Enthusiast that I am, I sometimes overindulge—using smidgens of every hue in sight—but more often than not I fall madly in love with one dye or another and focus on it. Right now it is madder, in particular the range between the *Rubia tinctoria* and *Rubia cordifolia* mixed with weld. I am promiscuous in my passions, but all have their moments. Sometimes I dye masses of one color then discover that I only need three dots of it in the entire tapestry, or, as happened last spring after a love fest of red, I wove a tapestry with no red at all. I like not knowing what is going to happen, both at the loom and in the dyepot.

A careful dyer can turn out skeins as predictable and level as any commercial product, but one of the perks of the process is the ability to produce colors available nowhere else. Although I am particular about technique—the dyes must be light and wash fast—I am increasingly willing to follow the color into unexpected territory such as a black that is not black but purpley grayish, reddish blue, or a yellow that dances on the border between gold and brown. Planned and unplanned abrash, resist, overdyeing gray yarn and uneven takeup from cramming yarn into jars can all lend energy both to the yarn and the woven surface. And because the dyes do not bleed, I can wash my finished tapestries with confidence. Though many people do not wash their tapestries, I like the fluidity that comes from letting the fibers relax in a tub of water and the feel of the tapestry as a textile. However, the last thing I want is to find that a dot of scarlet has migrated into an adjacent area of white.



Sarah Swett, "Two Recipes for Coffee Cake"
48" x 24"
Wool Warp and Weft, Natural Dyes



Naturally there are drawbacks. The colors are so exquisite that it takes discipline to overdye and risk sully the pure color. Dyeing is also messy and wet so if, catlike, you loathe water, or have to haul it uphill in a bucket, it might be easier to leave it to someone else. And then there are the calculations. Repeatable hues require a certain facility with mathematics.

Dyeing also takes time—getting to know the dyes, watching pots simmer, learning the look of a reduced indigo vat—but there is no need to do it all at once. Try one color, weave with it, and then try again. Like any journey it can be scary, particularly if you do not know the language, but there are excellent guidebooks, and dyeing is not nearly as traumatic as getting on an airplane. It is, in fact, a terrific way to get an adrenaline rush without flying too close to the sun or melting the wax on your wings. You can, of course, talk about it or not, as you see fit.

Left: Sarah Swett, "October," 72" x 3.5" Wool Warp and Weft, Natural Dyes — cochineal, madder, weld, walnut and madder on gray yarn

Five Colorful Reasons to Own a Dye Pot (or Two)

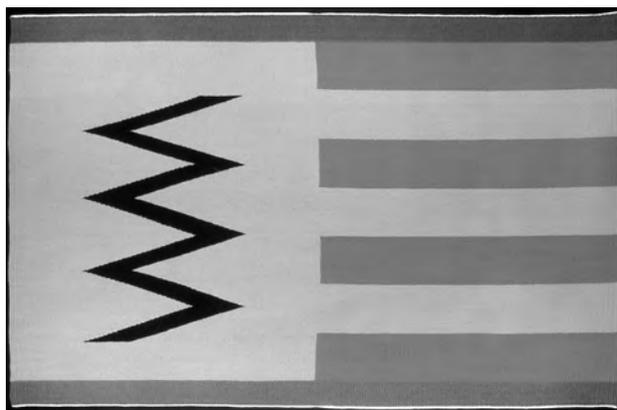
By Mary Zicafoose

Reason #1: Ultimate control of your universe. You will never, ever again be stranded (forgive the pun) with yarn colors that do not match, complement, or sing. When you become a dyer the world of color is YOURS. Within a process akin to mixing up a box of Jell-o, you can create exactly what you need, when you need it. Good-bye Halcyon, Webs, and mail order yarn swatches. Good-bye shelf after shelf of odd lot colors. It's so clean and simple. You buy natural white yarn and turn it into breathtaking, mouthwatering colors. Four times a year a giant box of white yarn from Henry's Attic is delivered to my door. And what happens after that is based on the power of my dreams.

Reason # 2: Dip into the field of infinite color possibilities. Dyeing your own yarn allows you to steer the

ship on a spectacular color voyage. You are no longer tagging along on some yarn manufacturer's random color cruise. The rainbow is at your feet, to do with it what you will. Pick a color, any color, and you can create three inches or three miles of it. I rip out areas of colors I love from fabric swatches and magazine ads and tack them up in my studio. Then I begin crunching numbers to determine the perfect dye formula for the perfect color.

Reason #3: Fun and Games. Dyeing is fun, satisfying, and actually quite easy. If you can follow the directions on a box of Jell-o, and successfully wash and dry a load of laundry, you can dye yarn. You are envisioning gallons of water and toxic dye everywhere, aren't you? Don't panic, proceed to Reason # 4.



Mary Zicafoose, "Crossfire," 62" x 41", 2003 slit woven tapestry, hand dyed wool on linen warp

Reason # 4: Overcome your fear. You truly do not need a state of the art dye facility to create beautiful color. Nor do you need a degree in chemistry. What do you think the 10,000 years of dyers/weavers before us used? A little fire, a pot, water and a coloring agent will get you started just fine. Of course, I am over simplifying this-and so it should be. I want to make sure you understand that you have all the right instincts and natural intelligence, as well as plenty of raw materials right in your basement or garage to take control of your creative world. Do you own a camp stove, a picnic table or card table, a canning kettle, a Pyrex measuring cup, and some wooden spoons? Great, you have got your outdoor dye kitchen right there.

Reason #5: Do your homework. There are all kinds of dyes out there for all kinds of fibers. Start with learning one dye system for the family of fibers (animal or vegetable?) you use the most. PRO CHEMICAL & DYE COMPANY (1-800-2-BUY DYE) is a fantastic source/resource for dye and dye supplies. Pro has an industrial chemist hotline that will answer any questions and

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walk you through an entire dye session. They have an instructive catalog with how-to-dye instructions, dye books, resources and inspiration. They will work with you at whatever level you are. Sign up for a class. Start a dye study group. Get a book from the library. Pick a day, a yarn and a color and just start. I first began dyeing, on a wing and a prayer, with Cushing mill dyes. I recall having 2 pots simmering on my kitchen stove, stirring the spaghetti pot with one wooden spoon and the Cushing brew with another! I only bought wool yarn that was on the sale table and over dyed everything with Cushing Mulberry and white vinegar. It could not get much simpler than that and I adored it. As my confidence grew, so did my courage and desire to create lavish, one of a kind, permanently dyed pieces. And the rest is history. I have been dyeing wool with Pro-Wash Fast Acid Dyes from Pro Chemical for 16 years. I love to dye and I love this dye.

I offer a two day and a three-day workshop, Dyeing for Tapestries & Rugs, in Cedar Bluffs, Nebraska.

Contact: mzicafoose@cox.net for information and 2008 workshop schedule.

Collective Resources:

(Initials are for who recommended it).

Earthues www.earthues.com Source of natural dye extracts, instruction, information.

A Dyer's Garden by Rita Buchanan J.H., J.L.

A Perfect Red by Amy Butler Greenfield JL

Indigo by Jenny Balfour-Paul

Indigo Madder and Marigold by Trudy Van Straalen J.H., S.S.

Koekboyla by Harald Böhmer J.H., S.S.

The Art and Craft of Natural Dying by Jim Liles C.L. S.S.

The Colour Cauldron by Sue Grierson S.S.

Wild Color by Jenny Dean J.H.

ATA: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Contemporary Tapestry

Panel Discussion, Installment #2

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.

Moderator: Mary Lane. Panel members: Joan Griffin, Marti Fleischer, Judy Shuster, Jim Brown, Barbara Heller, Christine Laffer.

Mary Lane: Christine Laffer, as co-director of ATA along with Alex Friedman, you were responsible for instituting many of the ideas that were developed in the Red Book. Can you mention a couple of changes and how they have improved ATA's ability to serve its membership? And then, what kind of developments would you like to see in ATA's future?

Christine Laffer: To tell you the truth, I'm not sure that I would have gone on the ATA board without the Red Book. The Red Book provided a plan of action. All we needed was the team. When I was contacted, the team was already starting to form and I was invited to be a member. That to me seemed a lot more doable and a lot more exciting than being just another Vice President trying to help an organization. That is my preface for my enthusiasm for grabbing on to what turned out to be a huge project. ATA has always had some really fabulous volunteers.

One of the first things we did was re-design the ATA logo. The original logo is on the cover of *Tapestries in Public Places*. It is a lot like a weaver's mark, something you could easily weave into a tapestry. But what we needed was something that could give an identity through the print media, a design we could attach to anything. Amazingly enough there were so many talented people. Elinor Steele designed the logo. After that we could present ATA in, for instance, magazine ads, and be assured that we had a good, clean, vibrant presence. That was very exciting.

Then, of course, we wanted to develop a website. Anne McGinn did a lot of brainstorming for the first website. Her plan was really pretty simple. We needed information and services for our members. We also wanted information for the general public. Anne came up with the idea of hosting web exhibitions. It took a while to get all of the needed skills together. I was learning web design as I went along, and I put something together that at least nobody complained about. We actually felt that it was good enough for a start. I built on Anne's template and then re-designed the template because it needed some improvements. The website has grown since then. It is one project that I have been involved with on a personal level that has been very rewarding.

We are in the electronic age, with all that that implies about communication flow. ATA has done a lot to improve information flow among volunteers and, in a sense, we have become not exactly

nomadic, but almost a virtual organization. We come together when we can. At other times we are able to work independently and still communicate. That is critical.

The blossoming of ATA's volunteer community is another significant development. We have well over forty volunteers who are making ATA's programming possible. Many of those people are in the audience today. The continuing involvement of members as volunteers is incredible.

What developments would I like to see? Are you ready? Are you holding on to your chairs? I would like to see paid staff in ATA. We have done a wonderful job operating with volunteers, and we will continue to rely on volunteers, but paid staff could help us. We have goals and we are achieving our goals, but we can only achieve those goals at a certain pace. Having someone, whether it is a consultant who comes in to help with grant writing or a consultant who comes in to help with our exhibitions, would bring ATA to a new level of consistency and professionalism. As you can see here at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles, ATB is a very big project. It has enormous visibility and it deserves the most professional approach we can supply. Paid staff is a step that I would like to see ATA take.

Another issue that is always relevant is keeping up to date with technology. ATA has a few volunteers who are very engaged with the high tech world. For example, Jackie Wollenburg, who is self-taught, has done some incredible things. Many of us have engaged with technology, but I know that there are still a lot of us who turn off our answering machines. We are good at de-attaching technology. We actually excel at that. ATA needs to keep an eye open for people who feel as comfortable at the computer as they do at the loom, or whatever the next technology turns out to be. I am hoping that ATA will continue to keep current in this area.

I'd like to mention one anecdote. Years ago, Helga Berry, who has so much great energy from her experience in the corporate world, said to me, "What's your fax number?" I said, "I don't even have a fax machine." Admittedly this was a few years ago, but Helga was personally involved with encouraging many of us to get connected. Sometimes it does take that kick. So I did get a fax machine, and she even mailed me my first modem.

There are two other issues of importance to me. One is location. I like being a nomadic organization. On the other hand I know that Jim and Hal at one time had a vision of ATA having a physical location. It's a dream that will recur. Is it a nightmare? Is it a pipe dream? Is it real? Is it not real? I think that some day it will be possi-

ble for ATA to have a physical location. Location is going to take a big effort by the membership and board. There are prototypes. The prototype that I think of is what Dale Chihuly and other glass blowers established in Washington State, Pilchuck School. I think that would be a really cool thing to happen.

The second issue I want to discuss is our audience and our membership. We are a society. We're practitioners; we're artists. In order to establish the vision that others have had and make it grow, we must include people other than artists/practitioners. We need scholars and writers and collectors in our membership. Even though we have had that as a goal for some time, it is very difficult to change the way our programs are geared. In the future you may see some programs that are geared towards bringing in a more diverse membership.

Mary Lane: Thank you, Christine. I am going to shift the focus to ATA's programming. We will start with exhibitions. Christine mentioned that exhibitions are one of our biggest projects. ATA sponsors the American Tapestry Biennial every other year and also the unjuried small format show that takes place at Convergence. We are also planning a second small format show, a juried exhibition planned for 2009. We know that the opportunity to exhibit is important for our membership, and we are trying to continually offer new avenues for exhibiting.

My first question is for Barbara Heller. Barbara, you participated in many of ATA's exhibitions and were also the Exhibition Chair for ATB 4. What new directions do you think a long-standing and respected exhibition such as the Biennial should pursue in order to stay fresh?

Barbara Heller: First I want to say that I also believe that ATA needs paid staff of some kind in order to increase our membership and to attain the kind of stability that an organization like HGA has. HGA is able to launch large projects, support regional guild affiliations and attract younger people. It's our next big step and it's a scary one, but I think that we are ready. Our membership is now over four hundred and thirty people. That's extraordinary.

As I said in my talk earlier, ATA needs to support the continuing expansion of the field of tapestry into fresh and exciting areas. When I look through old catalogues, I realize that ATB has always been fresh and exciting. People have always bent rules in order to serve their artistic vision. We need to encourage innovation.

One thought about ATB. ATB now tours for about a year, and then everyone takes a deep sigh of relief and gears up for the next edition. Wouldn't it be wonderful if

continued...

it could tour for two years? Another idea would be to find ATB a home venue. If ATB could always be at one repeating venue every two years and then tour, it could become a destination for tapestry weavers, in the same way that we have gathered here in San Jose.

As a volunteer I have been richly rewarded. I joined ATA way back when. Then ATA decided that only Americans, not Canadians, could participate in the next big exhibit, and I remember having a very long and heated discussion with Jim on the telephone. I dropped out for a while and then Olga [Neuts] roped me back in by asking me to curate the show in Vancouver. She didn't mention that that meant that I was also on the Board of Directors! ATA is family. It was wonderful to come in last night and there were all these people I wanted to hug. You really get more than you give when you are a volunteer.

Mary Lane: Thank you, Barbara. Another part of ATA's exhibition programming is the shows that are being hosted online. They take a variety of forms, and I would like to ask Christine Laffer to talk about not only the Web Exhibition program, but also the opportunity for artists to have their tapestries on the Artists Pages through the Studio Circle level of membership.

Christine Laffer: We wanted to set up a place on the ATA website where members could show their tapestries. The development of that idea coincided with a restructuring of the membership, and it made sense that if members wanted to contribute more, ATA could offer additional services. One of those services was the Artists Pages. We now have over thirty artists showing their tapestries on the website. Each Studio Level member is allowed to post three images on their Artist Page. You can update your page once a year as long as you renew at the Studio Circle membership level. You can also include a link to your website and post your email address. We are not, however, marketing members' work. We are offering a place for your work to be seen by a wider audience and a means for people to contact you. The more artists that are represented on the website, the more people there are who visit the web site. It is a circle that feeds itself. If you are interested in the Artists Pages, upgrade your membership to Studio Circle.

The Web Exhibitions were on the original plan for the ATA web site, but it took us a while to figure out exactly what that program was going to look like. The first idea was that ATA would invite a curator, and they would curate from members' slides. It was a good idea, but it has been hard to find enough curators to sustain three or four shows a year. Also, we wondered whether members would always want to see other members' work. Or would

we want to see something outside our normal channels? We decided to solicit proposals. Anyone can submit a proposal for a Web Exhibition. David Johnson (urbanwild@earthlink.net), a wonderful volunteer from Chicago who also happens to have web design skills, puts the Web Exhibitions together. As web mistress, I put them on our server and set up the links.

The Web Exhibition program is almost a year old. We have hosted three or four exhibitions and we need more proposals. It could be a proposal for a solo exhibition. It could also be an historical show. We saw some slides of Katherine Kilgore's work today. She is an artist whose work, I think, would be perfect material for a virtual exhibition. These are just a few ideas of shows that could happen online.

Mary Lane: Thank you, Christine. One part of many people's tapestry experience is membership in a regional tapestry group. ATA would love to be able to interface with, and serve the regional tapestry groups. The networking session this morning was designed to give the regional groups an opportunity to be recognized and to share and learn from one another. I want to ask Marti Fleischer, who was a regional group representative this morning, how she thinks her group, Tapestry Weavers South, might benefit from an alliance with ATA. For example, is there programming that TWS would like to offer that could be supported by ATA?

Marti Fleischer: That's difficult to answer. This really sounds unbelievable, but TWS has been a great organization, and I really don't see how ATA would benefit us. We have done remarkably well on our own. We are the youngest of the regional groups. We have just celebrated our tenth anniversary and, in that time we have sponsored three workshops: a continuing series with Archie and Susan, a workshop with Susan Iverson and an author who gave us some very honest critiques. That was really wonderful. For an organization that is only ten years old, that's pretty heady stuff. We started out with 18 members and we now have 55 members, most of whom live in the southeast United States. Maybe ATA could help promote regional groups on the ATA web site. I would also love to see reports from the regional groups in the ATA newsletter.

---The final installment of the Panel Discussion will be printed in the next *Tapestry Topics*.---

Members Making a Difference: 2007 Silver Anniversary Fund

By Ellen Ramsey

ATA wishes to extend its heartfelt gratitude to the following people who contributed to the Silver Anniversary Fund through their participation in the Barbara Heller tapestry raffle and through outright contributions to the Fund in calendar year 2007. The campaign raised a total of \$6,000, which has been set aside to benefit present and future programs deemed to have a special capacity to further the mission of ATA.

Special thanks go out to our benefactor, Barbara Heller. Her very generous donation of the tapestry Nova Scotia Morning, valued at over \$1,500, not only made this whole campaign possible, but the raffle of this coveted work provided the festive centerpiece event for our Silver Anniversary Celebration in April, 2007. Thank you, Barbara.

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Review:

"Black + White + Red All Over"

By Sandip Wilson

The exhibit, "Black + White + Red All Over" featured 47 tapestries woven by Micala Sidore at the New Hampshire Institute of Art in Manchester in October, 2007. I first learned about this collection twelve years ago after Micala had been working on it for three years. Those early pieces, that I admired for their impeccable technique and for what I thought of as ingenious subject matter, captured ideas she had been contemplating intellectually. Before I saw this recent exhibition, I visited with her on Monhegan Island, Maine, where she began the work with a study during summer holiday. It gave me a bit of background to the collection, but until a tour of the exhibition, when Micala explained its concept, I had not thought that the work might be characterized as a kind of "what if" exercise. What if she used a limited palette to explore the possibilities of three words and the colors they represent? The results of her fifteen years of work in progress were more than I was prepared for. The variously sized and shaped pieces invited a viewing and reviewing. They showed how tapestries, exploring an ostensibly simple idea, offer an experience that captures the qualities and history of the art form while enveloping viewers in a rich artistic experience. The collection is like pen and ink drawing; the artist limits options to explore the world more thoroughly.

The historical heritage of tapestry is a constant influence in these tapestries. Medieval tapestries express images in picture and word that jostle for the viewer's attention; the background, the drape of a cloak, words inscribed in a banner or along the border of a gown, display the lore and language of a culture. The richness of medieval tapestries encouraged multiple meanings, and pieces in this collection invite a similar experience. For different periods in history the subject matter of tapestries was set formally in designed woven frames. In the square piece, "Black + White + Red All Over #33: insiDe," 2005 (future references are abbreviated to the subtitles), the subtitle word forms a block in the center of a large white field, a frame or decorative background, suggesting wall paper, as Micala has described it, woven in varying tones and shapes of cotton and wool. The letters of the word are depicted in right angles, except for where the upper curve in the letter "D" forms the boundaries of the small space filled with red. Yet, the word is only part of the subject matter because the frame, the background, has much to tell the viewer and, to me, suggests the decorative background of mille fleurs tapestries.

Although narrative ideas of tapestry may not focus on directionality, it is a central feature of the art form and in



Micala Sidore, "Black + White + Red All Over" Gallery Installation. photo by Jan Austin

this collection pieces focus on directionality undisguised by representational images. The piece, "#9, bottom to top," 1995, joins the visual experience with the meaning of the words. In "#4: the Radical Right," 1994, the weaving of "Left" in five fonts weights the long horizontal piece to one side with the single "Right," woven in red on the far right. Micala speaks and writes a number of languages, and they are represented in different pieces such as the "#26: Labor...and Likud (smole and yameen, left and right)," 2002, which shows a variation on the radical right theme.

The effect of light on the fiber of tapestry is a quality that Micala has explored in the interaction of light with different textures of cotton and wool. For instance, in, "(Black) + (White) + (Red) All Over #21," 2001, the words black, white, and red disappear in three blocks of color, hiding the words. The words in parentheses are clues to the piece, which I came to understand after several viewings. As cotton and wool show the play of light on fiber in these and other pieces, Micala toys with words in different combinations of graphic design with her limited pallet. Word and design work together to focus on one of a number of variables and change the meaning of the viewing. I have been puzzling over why I have the feeling of humor and a sense of whimsy evoked in the tapestry, "#14: LOST & FOUND," 1998, where black is lost in its field and FOUND, written in black, sits on a white field with a willow ampersand connecting the black and white blocks

The exhibit's reference to distinctive qualities of tapestry does not get to the heart of why the show is masterful in its content and technique. It offers more in its ephemeral quality of humor gently, modestly suggested. Perhaps the simplicity of the designs, the concept that less is more in these pieces, is part of my sense of the grouping. The humor in the puns emerges in the "#6" with the phrase "What I weave you read," in which "read," a homophone for red, can be read as present or past tense. While viewing the piece I noticed other people repeating the sentence giving it different readings, looking at one another in surprise

and pleasure as though sharing a piece of music. In contrast, the shaped tapestry, "#15: teeth," 1998, works less as a hint of humor than as the influence of technique on meaning, in this case, slit weaving that defines the shapes in this piece. The smile invites a perspective of readiness for commentary on politics and culture that emerges in other pieces, such as, "#9: SEEING (red)," 1998, in which the red (with its lower case red woven in cotton) covers one end of the piece and splashes over "seeing."

The collection includes pieces woven in India representing a completely different weaving technique where the fine warps are painted, yet the pieces reflect the playing with words. For instance, in the piece subtitled "#40: black eyes, red eyes," lines sewn in red, similar to the tight sewing of button holes, overlay the piece that depicts many pairs of eyes of people at the weaving center in Kerala where Micala wove. They show how such different forms of weaving contribute to the coherence and meaning of the whole collection.



Micala Sidore, "Black + White + Red All Over#26:Labor...and Likaud (smole and yaneen, left and right)," 2.5" x 29", 2002

Art causes us to see things and people, even familiar ones, in new ways. Seeing the ordinary, such as the words we use, as sources for play is an important feature of language, learning language, and extending language in poetry and prose. Micala shows how language itself is a motif to be expressed as visual element. The piece subtitled, "#45: Gdye krasnaya ploshchad? No. 2," is a crossword puzzle in which each red square is a needed component to complete the meaning. In the phrase "WHATS B--- IN THE BONE" (a reference to a novel by Robertson Davies in his Cornish trilogy), the missing "red" is a red square. When reading I had to pause for an extra second to interpret the square, just as readers would catch themselves with an unfamiliar word, or a familiar word made strange, yet the black and white matrix in its black frame invites approach. The coherence of the forty-seven pieces is based on multiple meanings of words, shapes, and hue in positions that are connected to one another, yet the content gives viewers a variety of ways to engage the work. Symbols and marks have meanings by themselves, but in relation to other symbols their meanings change. Micala has made the familiar strange and new, causing the viewer to rethink and re-view meanings that are taken for granted.

Obituary: Lillian Tyrrell 1944-2007

By Linda Rees

Tapestry weaver, Lillian Tyrrell, died on November 20, 2007, at the age of 63, after battling a rare blood disease for much of her three decade career. Her great contribution to our field was in producing the series of political tapestries known as "Disaster Blankets," woven primarily in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These daring, beautifully composed tapestries depict events that we do not want to consider, yet they compel us to acknowledge their message. They have been featured in major exhibitions internationally and have drawn attention from the press wherever they are presented. Despite her poor health, Lillian produced at least 18 such tapestries on the theme of disasters with the last one woven in 2003, and one hanging from 1996 with a large camouflage fabric frame around a small tapestry inset.

Born in London, England, where she admits to having played in the rubble of bombed out areas as a child, Lillian moved to New York in 1967 along with husband, Brinsley Tyrrell and their two children. The following year they settled in northeastern Ohio where Brinsley, a sculptor, began teaching at Kent State University. She learned to weave in 1974 from Janet Taylor, at Kent State, and focused on landscapes, often commissions, before embarking on the issue of violence and destruction in 1985. Many of the landscapes are distinctive for their combination of graphic aspects superimposed on an idyllic scene, although others attend to aspects of the environmental debris generally avoided in art, such as in "Relic of an Ornamental Fence" from 1981, that foreshadows her later work.

As I heard of her death in November, I had to ask myself why I knew so little about her? Of the weavers I thought might have known her, very few could provide much information, although they may have interacted with her at various times. Considering her ill health, it made sense that she would direct her energy toward her work and not overextend herself with external distractions. Becky Stevens recalls an exhibit in South Bend, Indiana, during the early 1990's of 10 disaster blankets and Lillian's gallery talk:

I remember vividly standing in the gallery viewing the airplane burning on the tarmac, the terrorists at the Olympics and a blue piece with floating ghost-like bodies from a boat capsizing... I think she was an artist with very little ego who did not promote her work or herself as much as either deserved.

continued...

Fortunately she was very well known in the artistic community of northeastern Ohio. In searching on the internet, it is easy to discover much more about her life and work. While friends knew of her health struggles, it was not well published and might explain the reticence tapestry artists have observed. It was also the impetus for organizing a major retrospective exhibit early in 2006 at the Spaces Gallery in Cleveland, which produced a very comprehensive catalog including a chronology which even listed the purchase of her looms, and other extensive documentation. A video produced by WVIZPBS channel in Cleveland can be viewed on YouTube. Much of the video was filmed in either her studio or at the gallery during her exhibit and provides a marvelous opportunity to visualize the work, as it reveals the self directed, passionate yet understated woman, Lillian Tyrrell.

We are in the process of organizing an ATA online exhibit of her work in the near future. "Suspicious Fire/The Arsonist" can be seen in the 1988 "World Tapestry Today" ATA catalog and "Collateral Damage" in the 1994 HGA "Visions/Tapestries" catalog.



James Koehler with the Governor's wife, Barbara Richardson. photo by Missy Wolf

James Koehler Receives Governor's Award

By Letitia Roller

James Koehler was one of the recipients of New Mexico's 2007 "Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts." The artists' fields varied from the visual arts to theater and music, but in the 34-year history of this award, only three other weavers have been so honored. It is an extraordinary achievement that James was chosen as one of the awardees.

Governor Bill Richardson stated that, "Each year we present this prestigious tribute to artists, craftspeople and art supporters who exemplify the energy and creativity of our state. This year's recipients of the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts proudly reflect New Mexico's reputation as the 'State of the Arts.' Day in and day out, year after year, these artists work to enrich our lives, our communities, our spirit."

As an extremely well disciplined artist James gives 12-hour days to the art of tapestry through planning, precision dyeing, and weaving. He also finds time for teaching tapestry and taking care of all the other essential and nonessential daily tasks that all of us must tend to. From January of 2001 to October 2007, he created 237 one of a kind tapestries that are sold as quickly as they are exhibited in galleries. This is a phenomenal production of over 30 tapestries a year.

Nevertheless, James always makes time for visitors to his studio in Santa Fe, and places a high priority on teaching. He is constantly in demand and travels across the U.S. and Canada to teach workshops as well as instructing the students who come to his studio for the unique experience of studying tapestry in ways that only James teaches. He even taught several workshops in Iceland at the beginning of 2007 at the behest of the United States Department of State, American Artists Abroad. Whether he is engaged with a beginning or an advanced student, the focus is always very specific and, regardless of level of expertise, the student comes away with an amazing amount of information.

To have someone like James Koehler receive the Governor's Award elevates the profession of tapestry. We send hearty congratulations for his achievements and are inspired by his example of disciplined hard work.



James Koehler, "Harmonic Oscillation XLVIII - LIII," 48" x 24"
each photo by James Hart

Irvin Trujillo Wins NEA "Lifetime Honors" Award

By Linda Rees

Congratulations to Irvin Trujillo for being awarded a National Endowment for the Arts "Lifetime Honors" 2007 NEA National Heritage Fellowship. The fellowships were awarded to 12 honorees from 9 states. The selection was made from a pool of 259 nominations. Each received a onetime award of \$20,000 and a trip to Washington, D.C. (*Shuttle, Spindle & Dyepot* Fall 2007)

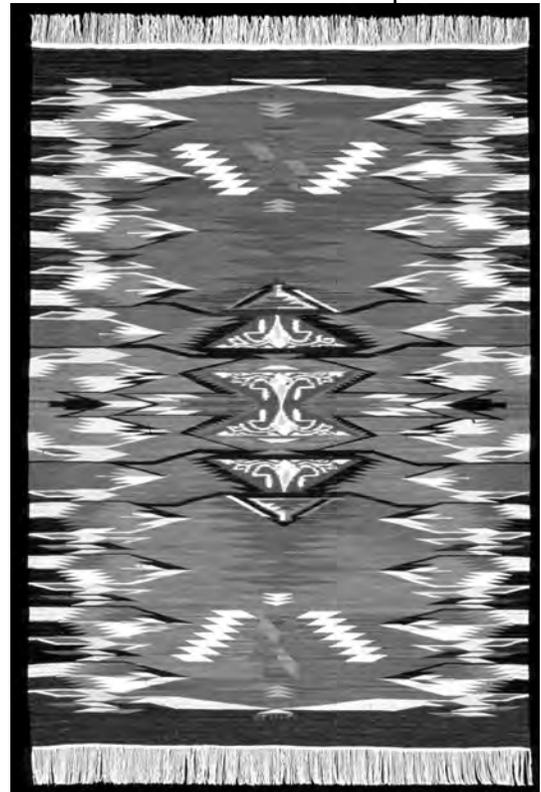
As quoted from the NEA Lifetime Honors web site, Irvin is:

Both a keeper of tradition and an innovator, Irvin has received many awards including three Grand Prizes and the Master's Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Spanish Market in Santa Fe. His work reflects who he is and where he comes from. Weaving only five to eight pieces in a year, he says, "When I do a major piece it is like putting my life on that line of weft. All of my experience goes into it. I am trying to approach the spirit of the old pieces. In doing that, I need to learn from the past, but how to live in my time and environment."

While Irvin is a master at the Rio Grande weaving tradition, his own artwork has explored using weft ikat in combination with more traditional patterns. He is deeply aware of the need to maintain a balanced perspective between the challenge to earn a living that has a plan for his children's future and his drive to find time to experiment and develop his own artistic endeavors. With the family-owned business, La Centinela Traditional Arts, to operate, he is kept busy at one aspect of weaving or another for very long hours. According to an article in *The New Mexican*, October 14, 2007, "Trujillo has created 15 pieces since January of 2007." It also reports that while he appreciates the accolades, he has joked about winning two lifetime awards: "It makes me feel old." For images of Irvin Trujillo's work visit www.chimayoweavers.com.

Above: Irvin Trujillo, "Spider and the Hook," 84" x 54" 1992; wool, natural dyes; photo by Addison Doty

Below: Irvin Trujillo, "RG Fusion," 84" x 54" 1996; wool, natural dyes; photo by Addison Doty





List of ATB7 Artists

102 artists submitted entries totaling 171 tapestries from England, Denmark, Brazil, Germany, Scotland, Romania, Czech Republic, Peru, Belgium, France, lots from Canada, Latvia, Mexico as well as many from the US. ATB7 will have 39 artists and 40 tapestries.

Mary Babcock	Finding Center
Liev Beuten Schellekens	Lady with Red Hair
Barbara Burns	Blue Frida II
Gabriela Cristu	The Miragery
Line Dufour	Gravity
Patricia Dunn	Zacatecas 5: Cerro de Grillo: Dry Season Birthplace
Lany Eila	And
Marcia Ellis	Windsong
Joanna Foslien	Arcana
Alex Friedman	Flow 1
Birgitta Hallberg	Minds
Joyce Hayes	Conciliation - Peace
Barbara Heller	The Shaman
Fiona Hutchison	How Calm the Wild Water
Susan Iverson	Dream Sequence
Anne Jackson	Leaving Eden I
Urban Jupena	Blase of Glorie
Lialia Kuchma	Summer in Quincy At the Gate
Connie Lippert	Sacred Places; Emerald Pool
Margo MacDonald	Shimenawa for Puget Sound
Susan Martin-Maffei	Sports Series -Golf at Chelsea Piers
Lynn Mayne	Flower to Bird
Julia Mitchell	Marsh Grass
Ulrika Mokdad	Honour's Victim
Ann Naustdal	Girl II
Inge Norgaard	Fimbulwinter Rasnasrok
Brenda Osborn	Stone Buddah
Kathryn Pannepacker	Two Children on Unicycles
Eve S. Pearce	The Rider
Bozena Pychova	Poetic Line
Robin Reider	Midnight Folly
Michael Rohde	Tibetan Prayers
Jennifer Sargent	Shift and Shift Again
Sarah Swett	Blue Day
Marika Szaraz	Entrelacs Maximo
Laura Taboada	Camino Ardiente a la Luz
Kathe Todd-Hooker	So Sought
Linda Wallace	Homage to Aubrey
Mary Zicafoose	Ancient Text: Ochre Ancient Text: Indigo

Kudos

Alex Friedman's "Bound" was in the 13th National Contemporary Craft Show, "Craft Forms 2007," at the Wayne Art Center outside Philadelphia, PA, December 1, 2007 - January 25, 2008. 83 objects were chosen from 844 submissions.

INTERWOVEN INFLUENCES at the Clifton Arts Center, 900 Clifton Ave, Clifton, New Jersey (on the grounds of the Clifton Municipal Complex), Jan 23 - March 1, 2008. Participating New York Tapestry Artists: **Susan Martin Maffei**, Bojana Leznicki, Ilona Pachler, Mary Ann Sievert, Rita Romanova Gekht, Betty Vera and Sculpture artist: Miklos Sebek www.cliftonnj.org

A tapestry **Lyn Hart** wove for the "Countdown To Peace" project was used on the initial postcard for the project's first exhibit.

Baulines Craft Guild annual exhibition, "Conscious Concepts," included the work of ATA members **Deborah Corsini** and **Michael Rohde**. The exhibit also includes works in clay, glass, metal, textiles and wood. November 6 - December 7 at ArtWorks Downtown, San Rafael, CA.

Monique Lehman received a cash award for excellence from the Weavers Guild of Minnesota for her tapestry garments. She comments, "I try to promote tapestry at fashion shows. More people come to see live models than exclusive art galleries."

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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**
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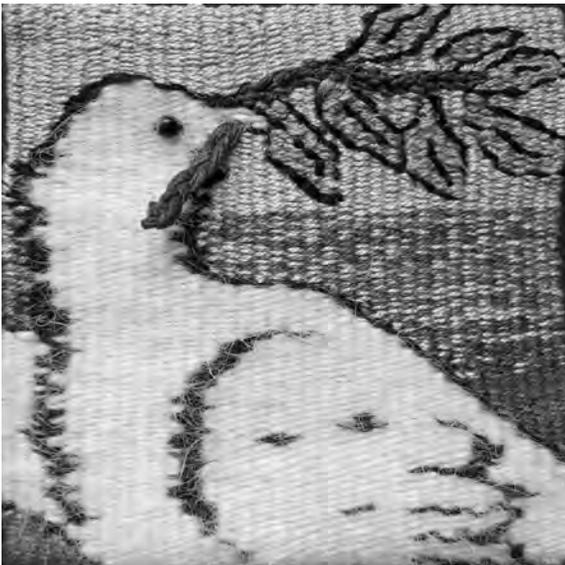
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Tapestry Topics



Lyn Hart, "Peace Dove." 4" x 4", 2007

visit our website
www.americantapestryalliance.org

Guidelines for submitting articles to *Tapestry Topics*:

Note: Addresses and deadlines are not the standard ones for the following two themes.

Next Deadline: **April 1:** Representational (Pictorial) or Abstract?
Send inquiries or material to **Lany Eila at lanyeila@yahoo.com** or send non-digital material to 5940 Camino San Carlos, Santa Fe. NM 87507.

July 15: Small format, small scale, miniature.
Send proposals to Mary Lane, **marylane53@mac.com; (360) 754-1105** by **May 1, 2008.**

October 1: **Conferences and Events of the Year**

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.