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Lynn Mayne, FLOWER TO BIRD, 26" x 23" each piece of the diptych, 2006, photo by Ben Mayne
See article on page 4.

Letter from the Co-Directors

When critics examine our medium of handwoven tapestry, a frequent complaint used to centre on the lack of critical writing. Now, as we contemplate each issue of *Tapestry Topics*, our difficulty is selecting which of the many possible articles we can include. And this phenomenon is not limited to *Tapestry Topics* and the American Tapestry Alliance. Blogs are increasing in number, the Canadian Tapestry Newsletter is now online with a website, a major international symposium has just concluded in Australia, workshops and retreats operate at full capacity. As more and more exhibitions highlight tapestry and publish catalogs documenting excellence in our medium, we are compiling a history of contemporary tapestry as it evolves through these early years of the 21st century.

Congratulations to the thirty-nine artists whose work was accepted for ATB7! Susan Warner Keene has selected an exciting collection of 40 pictorial and abstract tapestries from 175 international entries. We hope many of you will be able to see the exhibition in person, either in Tampa,

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Florida or Louisville, Kentucky. While nothing compares to seeing tapestry in person, the catalog for ATB7, with images of all the work and the two catalog essays (by Susan Warner Keene and Margo Mensing), is available through the website or can be purchased at Convergence. For those artists who were not accepted, please know that we appreciate your efforts to enter and look forward to seeing your work in a future ATB.

For all of you who create small tapestries, we're thrilled to remind you about ATA's new biennial exhibition, "Connections: Small Tapestry International." The juror will be Jane Sauer, of Jane Sauer Gallery in Santa Fe, NM. We are currently negotiating a venue to host the inaugural 2009 exhibition. Check the americantapestryalliance.org website for details.

And we have amazing news to share! We are pleased to announce that ATA is the recipient of an unexpected and wonderful gift! The Teitelbaum Family Charitable Remainder Trust has named several non-profit organizations as beneficiaries. From this trust, ATA has been given a generous gift of \$20,000. A portion will be used to support ATA's mission through our growing schedule of programs and exhibitions. We are investigating ways to grow the remainder. We thank the Teitelbaum Family for their dedication to helping non-profit organizations and especially for their support of ATA!

Another announcement has to do with expanded programming in the Distance Learning Program. We have added Helping Hands, which is designed for the beginning tapestry weaver who wants to explore tapestry with guidance and mentoring from a more experienced tapestry weaver. More information is available on the website. New weavers and experienced weavers are encouraged to contact Joyce Hayes (joyce.hayes@comcast.net) to participate.

By the time you read this, final preparations will be well underway for tapestry activities at Convergence 2008 in Tampa Bay. Most of the board and a number of key volunteers will be attending. We look forward to seeing you at the Waterfront Gathering on Thursday evening, the opening of Woven Gems and ATB7 during the Friday night Gallery Crawl, and at the forum Reinventing Landscape and the members' general meeting on Saturday morning. If you are going, check the website for ATA events. Also check the HGA website for all related exhibitions and events.

The theme for this issue of *Tapestry Topics* is "Abstract or Representational (Pictorial)?" The varied opinions expressed in the articles our guest editor, Lany Eila, has solicited, encouraged, requested are bound to get discussions going in study groups in all regions of the tapestry world. Enjoy, discuss and use these articles to begin to form your own defined position on some of the issues facing contemporary tapestry artists.

Happy Weaving!

Becky & Linda

ATA Educational Articles

ATA is developing a new area on our website for educational articles. Use the following link to view the collection of articles, including the most recent, "The Space Between the Warps," written by Archie Brennan. If you have ideas for subjects you would like to see covered by these articles, please email your suggestions to Mary Lane, marylane53@mac.com

http://www.americantapestryalliance.org/Education/Edu_Articles.html

In Upcoming Issues:

The Fall issue of *Tapestry Topics* will focus on small format work. Small format, small scale, miniature Small art works are a distinct breed. Through their condensation of meaning and representation, small works evoke ideas and worlds much larger than their actual physical size. The deadline for submitting proposals for the Fall issue's theme was May 1.

The Winter issue will feature Conferences and Events of the Year. This will include reports from the Tapestry 08 symposium in Canberra, Australia, Convergence 08 in Tampa, the "Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor" exhibit last fall at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or any other major events happening in the last year. Feel free to suggest items to be covered even if you are not interested in actually doing the writing. Often we can find someone in the area to do it. The deadline for completing articles and reports will be October 1. See back page for guidelines to submit articles to *Tapestry Topics*.

Merna Strauch has agreed to compile the Kudos and exhibit announcements. Please send any items to her at mstrauch@mac.com.

A Weaver of Stories

By Kathy Spoering

It has been said that "Real Life is the best fairy tale." I grew up loving stories: stories of adventure, of mystery and romance, and even of real life 'fairy tales.' When I read the stories, I became a part of them. I could crawl between the covers of a book and go anywhere, be anything or anyone.

My love of story is what shapes who I am and what I do today. I am a weaver of stories. Although not all viewers may see every chapter and every adventure, there are multi-layered stories in my tapestries. The stories contain symbols that may only speak to me, but may perhaps also find new and unexpected meaning to the viewer.

The history of tapestry is rich with stories. The hunt and unicorn tapestries that were created at the height of our medium's popularity are woven narratives of stories that were familiar to and loved by the people of the era they were woven in. They tell us those stories still, hundreds of years later. I see an abstract or non-narrative tapestry and am wooed by the color and shapes it contains; but it is the tapestry hanging next to it, with the fair maiden woven into it, that causes me to stand awhile, to be drawn in between the warp and weft as I am drawn into the pages of a good book. What is she thinking? What is her life like? How does she live, and what can I learn from her?



Kathy Spoering, FOUR SEASONS tapestries, 56" x 36" each, series completed in 2008, photo K Spoering

In the past I have been told that my tapestries are "too personal" to appeal to a broad audience. But I have learned that quite the opposite is true. The most personal stories that I have woven are the ones that more people have related to. We are all very much alike. When I tell the stories of my life in my work, people tell me that it is as if I have been weaving their lives' stories. The stories in my work are to remind people of the wonder in our lives: the bird song, the moments of peace, the times we dance in the fields or kneel in the garden, the beauty that we too often lose to fear and horror.

One of my strongest beliefs as an artist is that artists are compelled to create because they have a truth they must convey. Sometimes I know from the design process, or even before, what that truth is. But often I am not sure of what truth or message my story will tell until I see the completed tapestry. My stories include many symbols of the truths that are important to me; symbols of peace, of compassion, of stewardship, of time passage, of life changes, of love and loss, of creative compulsion, of connections, of the things in life that weave us together rather than separate us.

I know that narrative work is not always considered to be the highest form of artistic expression. My tapestries have never been 'on the edge of innovation.' Maybe that should bother me, as a working artist, but it doesn't. When I stand soaking in the amazing tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum or the Tapestry gallery in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and get lost in the stories they tell, I realize that, for me, narrative story telling tapestries are the only things I want to weave. I do hope viewers will be reading them for many, many years.

**We would like to thank the
Teitelbaum Family
for their support of ATA
through a generous gift from the
Teitelbaum Charitable
Remainder Trust.**



Martin Miller, UNTITLED [Pin], 2" x 1.75", 2003

Tapestry, Representational, of course!

By Martin Miller

First and foremost, I am a storyteller.

I began weaving Tapestry because of the stories and imagery in the 13 - 15th century tapestries. I enjoy the allegories and trying to figure out what each of the elements means. I don't expect ever to tire of the Unicorn and Lady series.

When I look at tapestries like the Battle Against Ariovistus (Flemish, 15th century), or The History of Moses (Brussels, 18th century), I can follow the story. I find some abstract work pretty. Some of it is masterfully done. But if I can't follow the story, I lose interest.

I have a basic bias against much of the abstract work (in all mediums) that I have seen. In large part this bias comes from experiences such as meeting a painter who discovered he was three canvases short the day before a show. He set up three canvases on the easel, squirted some of each of his grey scale on the palate, held three brushes in his hand and made random squiggles until he had covered each of the canvases with oil paint. He admitted it took longer to think up appropriate (his word, mine is pretentious) sounding titles than to paint them. I have yet to meet a Tapestry weaver with such a low ethical standard, but it does make me insist on seeing an artist's representational work before believing that

their abstract work looks like they intended, rather than being the result of random chance and an attempt to hide a lack of talent.

The first tapestries I wove were geometrics. I still weave them to practice and teach technique. I also set up cartoons with basic squares, diamonds, and very gentle curves when giving demonstrations at various shows or in schools.

When I weave for my own pleasure, or for sale, I weave representational images. My favorite images are from stories (Pegasus, unicorns, the Queen Ann's Revenge [Blackbeard's Ship]), or flowers. I've taken a lot of the mille fleur images and done them as single images or put two or three in place. I've also taken my camera and sketchbook around Alaska. I have cartoons of different Alaskan wildflowers that should let me weave for two or three decades without running out of images.

Flower to Bird

By Lynn Mayne

I'm responding to nature in a straightforward way. My recognizable images speak to the naive, the innocent or even primitive eye. I like to work with an image by simplifying it and adapting it to tapestry techniques. Most of the art work to which I am drawn has this quality of the familiar at its core.

The World Without Us by Alan Weisman has stirred my feelings for the preciousness of the natural world. He cautions that man is threatening the balance of nature. He writes, "Without us, Earth will abide and endure; without her, however, we could not even be." Before I wove my first Bird of Paradise piece, "Flower to Bird" (see photo on page 1) I read the Irving Stone biography of Charles Darwin that fate seemed to have placed in my way in the tiny community library in Florida. Learning about nature before man is fascinating. Just think that dragonflies existed before there were dinosaurs and that fossils of the insect with two-foot long wingspans have been found.

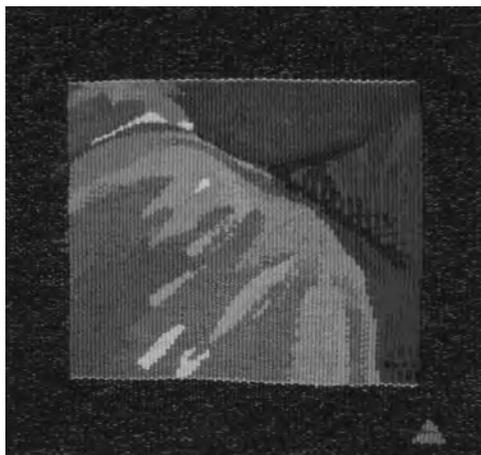
Abstracted Not Abstract

by Jan Austin

In art history classes I was taught that Wassily Kandinsky was the first painter whose work was purely abstract, with no reference whatsoever to representation (see Kandinsky's "First Abstract Watercolour" (1910) at www.abc-gallery.com/K/kandinsky/kandinsky20.html). By this standard, I've never thought of my work as abstract, because I always begin with an image.

In graduate school, I was taught to paint from direct observation, and to look at the world around me for my inspiration. I'm not offended if others consider my work abstract, because by the time I finish a tapestry, I have abstracted the image through various processes, until it's no longer recognizable as an object. Or so I thought, until Jennie Jeffries wrote that my tapestries in the series "Red and Green Apples" "have a starting point... an 'appleness' to begin with."

I'm delighted when people recognize the "appleness," but I don't mind if they only see an abstract design. When I was in high school, I made paintings of abstracted nudes that consisted of flat fields of color with just a few lines suggesting a hip or breast or leg. I was not trying to be mysterious; they seemed obvious to me, but I found I had to explain them to my family. Eventually they began to look forward to these "Find the Body" games. I found it perplexing that something so clear could be invisible to others.



Janet Austin, RED AND GREEN APPLES II
12" x 12" , 2004

For years I've wondered why I need to begin from observation, since the final product is hardly recognizable. My efforts to design from my imagination have always bored me. Recently, while hiking in the Superstition Mountains, thousands of miles from home, it came to me: that the constructions of my own mind tend towards regularity, symmetry, pattern and order; after all, I am also a librarian.

Neatness, tidiness and order provide a sense of stability, harmony, peace, and tranquility that is reassuring in my daily life, but in my art I am looking for something else: the energy that comes from spontaneity, discord, irregularity, volatility, unpredictability.

I rely on nature to provide the randomness, the messy, chaotic energy that is always lacking in the designs that come from my own orderly head. While the organic compositions that captivate me in nature may appear chaotic and disordered, the underlying order and purpose are mysterious, powerful and compelling.

I hope that the energy and spirit of the original subject survives and is communicated to viewers, although they may not consciously recognize the apple or the flower.

To capture the spirit of the subject, I must eliminate the superfluous elements. I begin by making a color copy of an old painting or drawing; for some mysterious reason, it seems to take years for them to become interesting to me. (That's another question to contemplate another time). Then I select and cut out areas that best express the essence of the subject. These "excerpts" are enlarged and woven as tapestries, or they undergo further alterations. The designs for the recent "Chaos" series started as a colorful oil painting of my messy studio table, but then the excerpt was traced with black colored pencil, adding and subtracting marks.

Whatever image remains after the design process is further abstracted during translation into tapestry. The ingredients include the subject as seen by my eyes, the painted marks that represent it, the editing of the composition, the changes in those marks during the design process, and then the woven marks that translate the entire design. There is always suspense, because it is only during the actual weaving that all of those elements come together.

A Personal Experience of Abstraction or, You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks

Cheryl Silverblatt

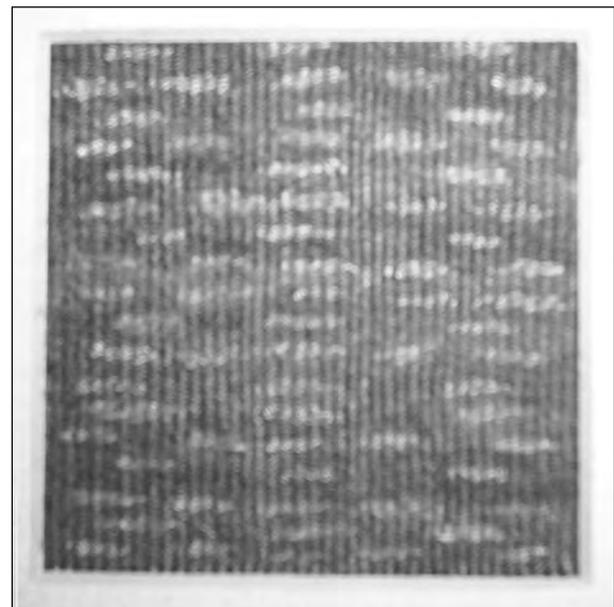
After I had been a librarian for almost twenty years I decided that I wanted to give over the left-brain life I had been leading and go to art school. It was in a drawing class with Brian Shannon at the Oregon College of Art and Craft that I had an "Ah-Hah!" moment and finally, at the age of 54, understood the nature of abstraction. I don't actually remember the exact phrase that made it all dawn on me, but I do remember that Brian was talking about the difficulty of drawing from nature, how hard it is to capture the life of the object without being clichéd. We had several really inspired drawers in our group who made sketching difficult subjects like trees in winter seem effortless. I was not one of these people. I could not and still cannot draw in a representational way. What Brian's drawing class did for me, though, was to help me understand the principles of composition and the nature of abstraction.

"Abstract art depends upon the assumption that specifically aesthetic values reside in forms and colours, entirely independent of the subject of the work of art. ... The philosophical justification of abstract art may be found in Plato..." (*The Penguin Dictionary of Art and Artists* by Peter and Linda Murray, 1993) Platonic Idealism can (and has been) challenged on many philosophical fronts but the elemental "idea" that the essence of an object or color or value like beauty is real, independent and timeless makes abstract art make sense. From this essence or idea come notions of "chairness" or "redness." The idea of a field, or its essence, is absolutely clear and present in Sara Brennan's tapestry, "Ploughed Field Black Hill and Cloud" (1991). It is not representational of a ploughed field on the side of a black hill with a cloud overhead. You cannot see furrows or shoots of wheat coming up. It is an abstraction of the essence of a ploughed field, or the "idea" of a ploughed field that is recognizable immediately by its core. Another wonderful abstract tapestry which was included in the American Tapestry Biennial Six [and featured in the Winter 2007 issue of *Tapestry Topics*] is "Weather Forecast / H2O" by Ibolya Hegyi. It is the essence of water woven into the fabric of the tap-

estry. The rain isn't necessarily falling from the sky but it is "real" in the Platonic Idealism way that ideas are real.

I spent a year learning art and tapestry weaving at West Dean College in West Sussex, England. When I arrived, the first thing I saw and fell in love with was flint stone. Most of the buildings (including the large main house) at West Dean are made of the local flint stone, which is very beautiful in its solidity and age. Pat Taylor, the Tutor in the Tapestry Weaving Program there, did me a great service through her understanding of abstraction and the essence of objects. I wove many very small tapestries, which were inspired by flint stone. Some were of walls abstracted, some were of individual stones abstracted, and a few were of the colors of the stones abstracted. These small pieces were not symbolic of flint stone, symbolism being very different, but my attempt to capture the idea or elemental core of this stone. I don't think that all of these small tapestries were successful artistically, but they are successful as abstractions of those beautiful, ancient stones.

Left-brainhood seems to be my lot in life. Betty Edwards could not help me activate the right side of my brain however faithfully I did the exercises. But reading, studying the tapestries and paintings of others, and many good teachers have given me insight into the nature of abstraction that has been vital to my work as a tapestry artist.



Cheryl Silverblatt, FLINT STONE WALL
2.25" x 2.25", 2003

Which Way to Weave?

By Linda Rees

Throughout my four decades of weaving, my work has included abstract color studies consisting primarily of bold, often symmetrical, geometric shapes. I originally gravitated to abstraction after being fascinated by the colors in Mexican serapes as a child. I also found symmetry to be very rewarding; with very little effort the lines and angles simply snap into place. I had always been able to draw but did not feel I had any message to convey and had no interest in trying to capture the grandeur of nature. With a simple but well-balanced design, I could let myself focus completely on color interactions with no worries about what to "say" in the tapestry.

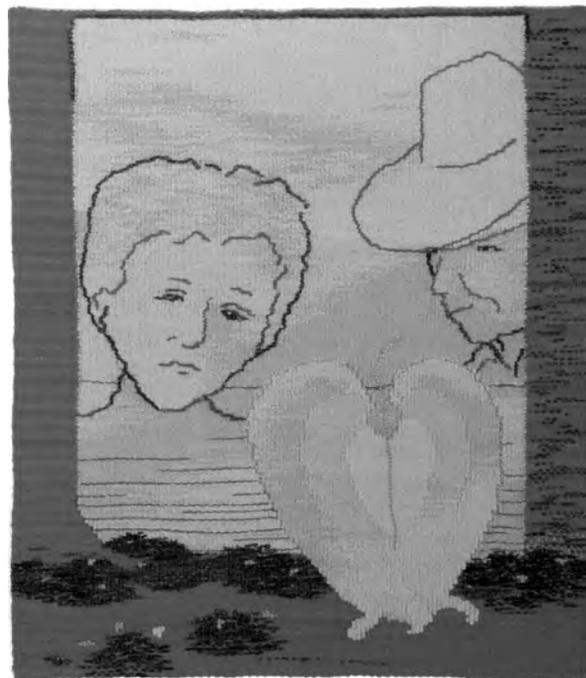
In 1980, I started an intensive project in which I sent away for 50 pounds of sale yarn, requesting they include the most unpopular colors, determined to find combinations of colors that would highlight them positively. It was an incredibly stimulating experience. This effort to push what was happening with color effects sustained me until the end of 1985. I probably produced a tapestry every month during this time. A surprising number were successful in accomplishing this mission.

But by then, my world was changing, and color studies were far too distilled to express the chaos I was feeling.

The shift to a more personal expression did not come easily. I was helped in the transition by seeing Linda McFarland's resist-dyed fabric collages, which create highly individualistic characters and tell stories by use of subtle variations on a central theme. At the same time, Layne Goldsmith's felted hangings utilized a few realistic objects as symbols to express her ideas. One in particular depicted "The Fury of Restraint" with a hand holding a crow down so that it could not fly. Understanding how gesture could so easily portray emotion was an immense discovery. It broke the mental log jam I was experiencing and guided me to much greater range of options for producing interesting results. Most of my work in the 1990s was figurative, possibly considered surreal.

By the late 1990s, I again found myself in transition. I was overwhelmed by an exhibit of Navajo early Chief's Blankets at the St. Louis Art Museum, curated by Ann Hedlund. It completely ratcheted me

back to a core connection with the simplicity of bold graphic imagery. Soon after this exhibit, I started researching and becoming influenced by the work of Muriel Nezhnie. Intuitively, she had a deep understanding of the need to discover completely different paradigms for expression in fiber than had been used in paint. She was brilliant at using line and in connecting with the structural dictates in dynamic ways. Her imagery was complex but efficiently designed.



Linda Rees, BLEEDING HEART Indigo Series #7
27" x 24", 2006

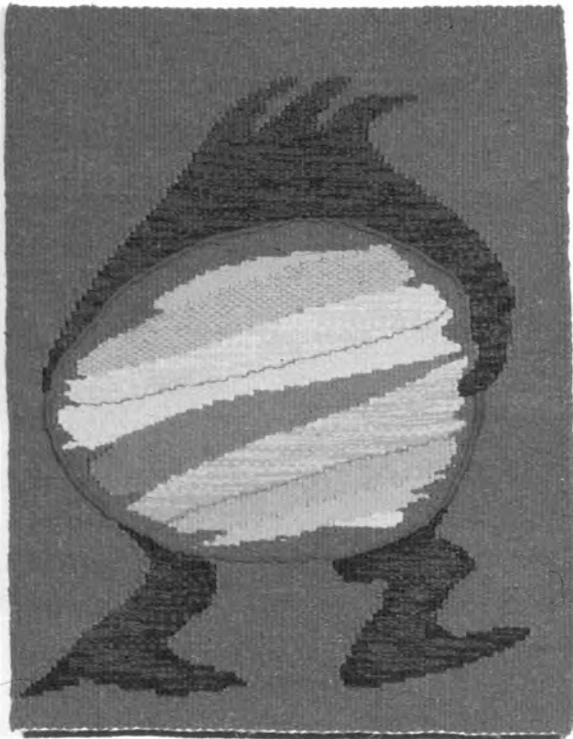
Despite the fact that I switch between geometric and figurative imagery, I work in the same way with both. I select a very limited number of colors, generally fewer than eight yarns for any composition. The restricted number in itself forces a level of abstraction that is well suited to the medium and integral to my aesthetic sensibility. What interests me is determining what subject matter and style can best convey my intuitive response to the color selection. I also find that using three-color patterns with pointillist blending, especially in transitional areas, creates a livelier, and surprisingly descriptive, interaction. Most of the figures I weave do not have shading, but rather simplistic hints of dimension.

Another characteristic of my tapestries has been to make blatant use of the grid, rather than to negate it. As my abstract designs loosened up to include more

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flowing shapes, I chose to not concentrate on achieving perfectly smooth curves but rather to let all images stair-step. To my sensibility there was a dynamic boldness that I found exciting. The stylized blockiness worked for figurative imagery too because my concern was more about capturing gesture than depicting a realistic figure. Often I "sketch" gestural figures in soumak or couched embroidery techniques that run on top of the surface and can be manipulated without affecting the structure.

In recent years I have wanted to combine the two styles, but it has only happened serendipitously. A few years ago I spent the entire summer trying to reclaim a geometric tapestry that had not come together, despite many areas that excited me. After many trials, I realized that it was crying for a landscape. I wove the landscape separately and pulled its warp threads to the back. The end result is structurally compromised but the image is strong and reminds me of seeing landscape in an eye-blink or in transition as we pass by in a car or train. I hope to carry out this type of merger again in the future. In fact, I am about to embark on a piece that will attempt to do just that.



Linda Rees, RUSH IN TO RETREAT, 23" x 18", 1988

It Takes Both to Tango

By Lany Eila

The virtuosity of fine craftsmanship can be breathtaking. And yet, the soul of art, I believe, is to communicate, be it a feeling, a concept, a story, or some twining of these. After stating 'I am here' or 'This exists' or 'This is the relationship between these,' art, when most alive, also offers a sense of why such a thing matters enough to inspire the creative effort. My own experience has been that I know the 'here' or 'this' long before I ever figure out the 'why,' and that the process of making art and living with it is the only path to the 'why.' For me, it is only through wrestling with the tangible (even if only a feeling) that I can access the intangible web that holds and gives meaning to it. Abstraction and representation are part of this dance.

The terms abstract and representational can be easily caught up in semantics; abstract work often 'represents' something, at times the same feelings and concepts expressed in representational work. Also, because even the most faithful rendition of a place or object isn't the same as the actual place or object, all representational work is to some extent abstracted. Likewise, the hard-wired tendency of the human mind to read things into even abstract images and inkblots could render any work 'representational' regardless of the intent of its creator.

The way I'm using these terms here is that 'representational' means the extent to which a work of art consciously references places or things in the physical world, and 'abstract' means the extent to which a work consciously deviates from or disregards such references to the physical world. The references and deviations may be in form and/or in color.

For millennia, philosophers, theologians, artists and poets have debated whether the intangible is best accessed directly (a basis of abstract art) or through an intermediary (a basis of representative art). Another angle would be to ask whether deeper truths are to be found through introspection or through relationship. When I've created abstract work, it has felt like a direct expression of my inner feelings. When I've done representational work, mostly in years of figure drawing classes, I've felt the challenge and intimacy of needing to integrate into my art the truth of something outside of myself.

For many years, all of my tapestries were abstract, and I still find it satisfying to draw and paint that way. In recent years, I have also felt a growing need to depict faces and bodies in tapestry. This has puzzled me, as the pixelated grid of tapestry resists both the flowing lines of figure drawing and the telling details of photographs. I have come to realize that weaving faces and bodies has been a challenge to reconsider faces, bodies and weaving. The effort has been forcing me to learn a new dance.

The process is only beginning. For about a year and a half, I have been weaving small squares of tapestry, using only black and white weft. I feel that I'm working with the bones of these issues as I play with image, value, and technique. By limiting myself so much, I've realized that even the choice to twist the bundle or lay it flat can influence the emotion of the piece, and I've been stunned by all of the possibilities I hadn't noticed because I'd had too many others to distract me, such as the seduction of color.



Lany Eila, HALEY AT 10, 6"x 6", 2008

With this mix of possibilities, I've been asking myself, what of the particularity of this world is necessary to reflect, what of that particularity is even possible to reflect in this medium, and where can the lack of such particularity (by choice or necessity) break open space for something else, something as true or truer, to shine through?

Distillation of Concept

By Maria R. Kovacs

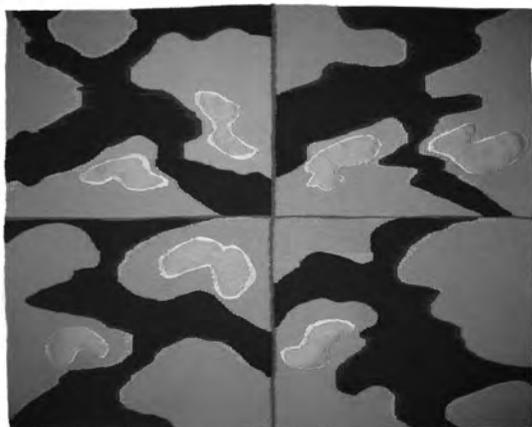
Abstraction has been defined by art historian Marilyn Stokstad as "any art that does not represent observable aspects of nature or transforms visible forms into a pattern resembling something other than the original model." Another encyclopedic definition states that abstraction uses a strategy of simplification, wherein formerly concrete details are left ambiguous, vague, or undefined; thus effective communication about things in the abstract requires an intuitive or common experience between the communicator and the communication recipient. In philosophical terminology, abstraction is the thought process wherein ideas are distanced from objects. Abstraction can mean art unconcerned with the literal depiction of things from the visible world. It can also refer to an object or image that has been distilled from the real world.

There is of course much excellent work being done in tapestry that is abstract. I could try to analyze other artists' work and use them as examples; however, I can only speak with certainty about my own work. The definitions of abstraction used initially challenge me to clarify why I use this form of communication. For me much thought and research precede the design stage of the work. I am passionately interested in the environment and consider myself an eco artist. I research an issue, and distill the concept with my feelings into an abstraction. Thus I hopefully unite and refine the concept of the place or thing with emotion to its abstract essentiality.

I am most enthusiastic about my abstract pieces. A concept is developed into its essential, fundamental visual form. Lately I have concentrated on air pollution at Acadia National Park, housing developments, and the like. Being at a place that objectifies good land use challenged me to create a tapestry of another sort. Specifically, in a

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recent tapestry "Hope, Solitude and Dedication Joined," I considered Tide Mill Farm's responsible stewardship of the land. The land has been in the Bell family since 1765 and is one of the oldest continuous operating farms in the US. Prime coastal real estate here in Maine would fetch a fortune; however, housing estates with ocean views do not exist in favor of the original farmland with grazing livestock, and production of hay, wood, and vegetables. Along with spectacular views the tidal and coastal ecosystems remain a haven for wildlife.



Maria R. Kovacs, HOPE, SOLITUDE, AND DEDICATION JOINED, 29" x 37", 2007

Once schooner ships docked in the bay and offloaded grain to be milled. Tidal flats now stretch with fields and woods behind the farm. They are changes to the landscape, albeit responsible development. In the tapestry, the farm is abstracted into four views of the essential, primal shapes of the land and water. Smooth, shaped tapestry landforms are appliquéd topographically to the main landforms. The land changes with the tide leaving islands of land. The colors blue and green, for water and land, also represent solitude and dedication, two traits so clearly demonstrated by the family's commitment to keep the land intact. Specifically green, especially yellow-green is a symbol of hope. Solitude is represented by blue violet. In addition, the four views are bisected with a zigzag red join. The family, the views, the land and water were joined together through personal sacrifice: clearly not a smooth join.

I struggled with years' worth of drawings of realistic views of Tide Mill Farm. To me they were just pretty pictures and did not communicate my goals. I needed to distill the essentials of concept with form,

design and color into the visual abstract. Hopefully, the viewer can at least relate to the land and water forms with the red joins, and perhaps will be intrigued enough with the ponderous title to wonder, what is this all about?

Abstraction for me is really the distillation of the concept with my point of view to form the work. This distillation is necessary for my artistic process. It just makes sense for me. Certainly abstraction is not the only means of communicating an idea, but it is the one that challenges my multiple thoughts and purposes into a satisfyingly simple form that the viewer may process on differing levels.

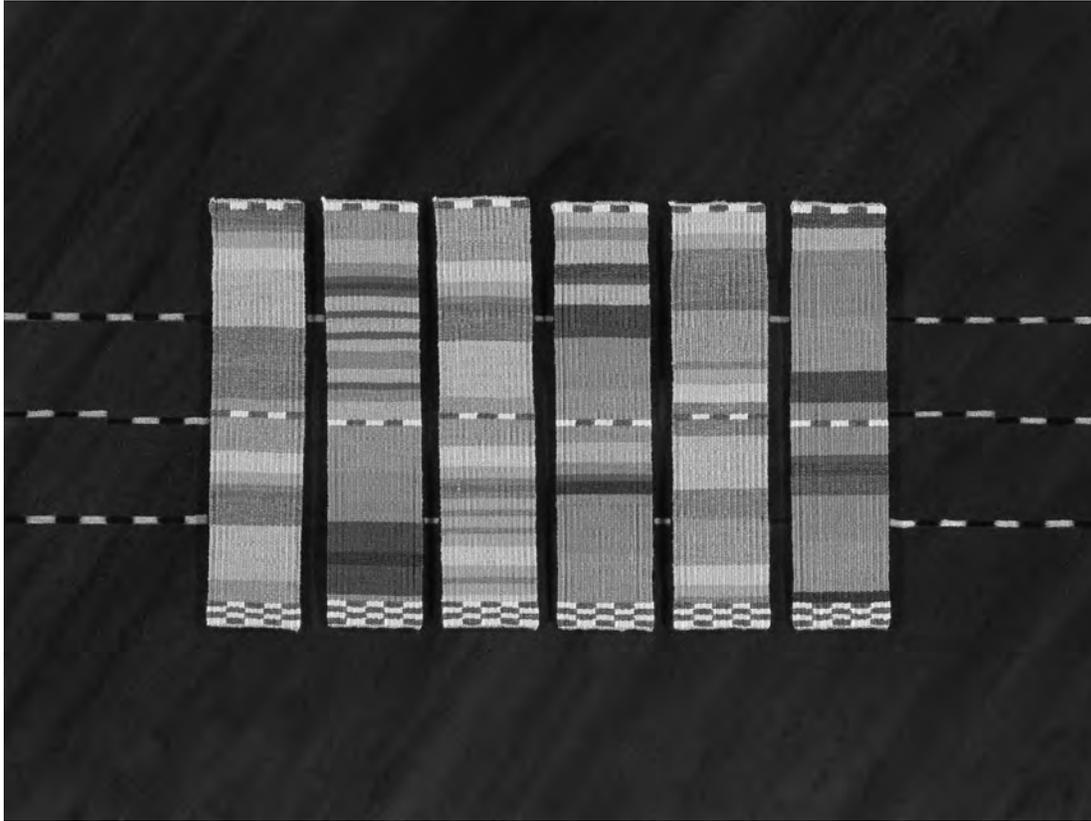
Abstraction Preferred

By Joyce Hayes

Looking back on my life as an artist there have been several defining moments that encouraged my preference for abstraction. Most importantly, after four years of college and countless hours of figure drawing and painting classes, I realized that the faithful representation of the figure and my surroundings held no fascination for me. I found it difficult sitting in front of a model for hours on end trying to create something of interest. Instead, I needed more freedom to interpret my world. Printmaking and abstraction offered these possibilities.

Many years have passed since my college days during the late 1960s. In this time, I have been a printmaker, a weaver of large bound-woven wall rugs, a watercolorist, and most recently a small-format tapestry weaver. Throughout it all, my interest in abstraction and the ways which it plays out in my own work continue. In an era of figurative and often political work, abstraction can seem superfluous and at times hard to justify. Nevertheless, it is what interests me and what I want to do.

For me, music is the most abstract of all art forms and the one that inspires me the most. As a child, I was surrounded by music. Rhythm, patterns, and repetition have been imprinted on my brain. Pitch and the subtle vibrations of a string instrument invoke color and its many wonderful nuances. Patterns of notes and fingering on both the violin and piano play a large part in my artistic aesthetic of rep-



Joyce Hayes, BACH 2 PART INVENTION #2, 12 1/2"x 16 3/4"
2007, Art and Soul

etition. I loved playing the Czerny etudes and Bach inventions; these exercises inspired my interest in systems and problem solving. The dynamics of a musical piece influence how I think about a tapestry and help me determine if a piece will have a lot of open space or be very dense, be quiet or loud, or a crescendo that quietly fades away. Will the rhythm of the piece be a precise allegro or a subtle legato?

Tapestry weaving is a very tactile and physical experience. For me the materials, the process, and the design all need to align. I want the interlacing of the warp and weft to be intuitive for my mind and hands. After several hand surgeries I could no longer weave shape building at 20 epi. Instead I began to use a beater and work from selvedge to selvedge. This allowed me greater freedom and gave me an opportunity to explore the warp and weft grid both physically and visually.

Repetition of a line, stripe, or pattern can essentially be infinite, continuing until the image is complete; like breathing and the heartbeat. Every tapestry is a fragment or a part of a larger whole with subtle explorations of change. In many ways they are

autobiographical; the small changes of each piece mirror those in my life as it changes ever so slightly each day, month, and year. Working in series and exploring an idea or a system with parameters allows for subtle growth and each weaving suggests another. It is a conversation between the process, the tapestry, and me.

In the past five years I have experimented with systems of color, checkerboards, and musical scores. It is always interesting when a series either is put aside or comes to an end; there is a stall and some false starts, but at that point you have nothing to say. Then out of the blue something very different appears on the loom. Past experiments and ideas congeal and a new series is on its way.

My most recent series is subtle and what I call compulsive. By combining stripes and hatching with a grey scale of weft threads, I am able to develop the patterns of infinite repetition that I am drawn to in both music and abstraction. Throughout my creative process I take care to make tapestries that are not only abstract and pared down to their essence, but also interesting to weave and look at.

ATA: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Contemporary Tapestry

Panel Discussion Installment #3

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: Judy Schuster, you were involved in organizing the ATA retreat in Cincinnati, and since then ATA has sponsored other workshops and retreats. Could you talk about the Cincinnati retreat and share other ideas for future retreats or workshops?

Judy Shuster: We decided in 2000 that we would hold a retreat. Jackie Wollenburg was ATA president at that time, and she arranged for the retreat to be at Northern Kentucky University. It was great fun. The purpose of the retreat was to allow participants to meet and hold discussions with the many jurors for ATB3. Jean Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie were the lead jurors and they, along with most of the other jurors, came to the retreat and presented information about their own work. Those people included Rachel Brown, Mary Dietrich, Julia Mitchell, Sarah Swett, and Irvin and Lisa Trujillo.

From a personal point of view what was probably the most meaningful experience during the retreat was the contact that I made with the Hungarian artists. Ibolya Hegyi, whose work is also in ATB6, came with her husband to the retreat from Hungary. Jean-Pierre and Yael invited Ibolya to address the group and talk about her work and the techniques she uses. All of that led to a wonderful trip to Budapest. I contacted Ibolya by email and asked if I could meet with her over lunch and talk about places to visit. I also had two friends coming with me, one of whom was a history professor who wanted to meet Ibolya. Ibolya entertained us for three days. She took us everywhere. We saw the Hungarian col-

laborative tapestry woven to celebrate St. Stephen, the patron saint of Hungary and the 1000th anniversary. They also invited us to their home. It was a marvelous experience. So through that trip my experience of tapestry became a little more international. It was really quite wonderful and I would hope future gatherings might result in those kinds of experiences. The opportunity to get to know each other and learn from each other was for me the most valuable part of that retreat. The survey from that retreat suggested that retreats should not be associated with Convergence, but rather with an ATA Biennial venue in the Convergence off year.

Mary Lane: Thank you Judy. ATA offers a variety of wonderful programming and participants have the kind of fantastic experiences that Judy described because of ATA's dedicated volunteers. ATA is an all-volunteer organization. We are very lucky to have Joan Griffin as our Volunteer Coordinator. She has made a huge difference. I am sure many of you have had a chance to talk to Joan personally, but I want to let her talk about the volunteer program at ATA and the sorts of opportunities in which you might be able to become involved.

Joan Griffin: When we wrote the Red Book, we divided all of the tasks involved in running ATA into discrete areas so that people could make commitments to specific, manageable tasks. I realized that we would also need a Volunteer Coordinator, someone who could identify volunteer needs and find members to help. I decided to take on that job as my own volunteer commitment. When I approach people to volunteer, I try to identify a particular need or a particular program that would match that person's skills. Sometimes the job is very short and in other cases it is an ongoing job. One of the problems I have is that I don't know what kinds of talents you have other than tapestry weaving. If I knew that someone was a fundraiser or a grant writer or exhibition expert, my job would be a lot easier.

As an example, the updated Directory of Tapestry in Public Places that Judy mentioned could become a reality if a few people decided that they wanted to work on that project. We also need people with fundraising experience and someone to market the ATB catalogues. Alex Friedman can always use assistance with ATB. Our new small format juried show will need volunteers. We also need people to work on membership promotion. If you are interested in

any volunteer opportunities with ATA, please contact me by email at joan@joangriffintapestry.com, or by phone at (434) 979-4402. If you have any other kind of skill that you think might be useful at some point, just mention it to me. Barbara mentioned how much volunteering has meant to her, and I want to say that I hear that from all of our volunteers. When you work on an ATA project, you meet other tapestry people and develop friendships with them. It is really very rewarding.

Mary Lane: Barbara, did you want to add something?

Barbara Heller: I just wanted to add that you get more than friendship as a benefit of volunteering. When you plunge into something like coordinating ATB, you learn skills that you can apply to your own career. For example, if you work on a catalogue, you learn how to produce a catalogue for yourself. If you coordinate an exhibition, you see it from the juror's perspective, not just as an entrant. Nothing you do is irrelevant to your own work. Everything you learn you can use in your own career.

Mary Lane: Thank you Barbara and thank you to all the panelists today. Linda Wallace, one of ATA's co-Directors, will offer the concluding remarks. Thank you.

Linda Wallace: This has been incredible. I really am at a loss to provide a synopsis of all of the stimulating presentations we have heard this weekend. It was wonderful being able to collaborate again with the Gloria F. Ross Center for Tapestry Studies. Their Annual Lecture is an event that I am not always able to attend so I appreciate having that opportunity and being able to offer it to all of our membership. We have ATA members attending the Silver Anniversary Celebration from all of the regions of the United States. We also have members from Mexico and Canada present. ATA is really becoming a world organization. I want to commend again the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles for hosting ATB6, for doing a magnificent job hanging and lighting the exhibition and for offering their space for our Silver Anniversary Celebration. It has been fabulous.

Last night I went to bed with my head buzzing. I had images in my mind of a reception room filled with the din of excited voices, of people's faces lighting up with pure joy, of hugs, of old friendships being rekindled, of new connections being made and of the faces of people whose inspired vision led to the formation of ATA twenty five years ago. To hear our founders' dreams for the future was invaluable. To hear experts in our field talk about the history of tapestry while being surrounded by the inspiring contemporary work exhibited in ATB6 was unique. ATA is a magnificent organization and at this precise moment in time it is filled with an energy that is so important to harness and build upon. Our membership and programming are growing along with the sophistication and stature of the medium. It is because of all of you, and your work, that ATA exists. I hope you will all embrace ATA, stay engaged, volunteer, and join us in the journey of the next twenty-five years.

Thank you so much. It has been wonderful meeting you all.

Jim Brown: May I have the last word? I am so pleased to have been associated through the years with most of the people at this table. I want to echo everything they said. One of the biggest joys in my ten years of devotion and love for this medium was working on the exhibition, "World Tapestry Today." I met so many people whose names I still recognize in the current exhibition. Some of this weekend's discussion of ATA's international membership reminds me that artists from around the world have been connected to ATA for many years. It will be important to continue to foster this global community.

I am amazed at ATA's membership, at the professionalism of the organization and its long list of accomplishments. I hope all of you will find an opportunity to give to ATA in some way. Weaving is an entanglement of threads that binds us all. Thanks to all of you. I consider you my family. I may be living under a rock again but you are always in my thoughts.

"Last night I went to bed with my head buzzing. I had images in my mind of a reception room filled with the din of excited voices, of people's faces lighting up with pure joy, of hugs, of old friendships being rekindled, of new connections being made and of the faces of people whose inspired vision led to the formation of ATA twenty five years ago."

Linda Wallace

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Book review:

Artists' Tapestries from Australia 1976-2005

by Sue Walker

Review by Debbie Herd

The Beagle Press Sydney

ISBN 978-0-947349-50-9 {hbk}

284 pages full color images, some black and white

\$120.00 AU

Sue Walker has given to the world of art a rich, detailed and intimate account of the history of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop (VTW). This publication invites you into the workshop at ground level, to gain great insight into the creative and often physically demanding process of large-scale tapestry production.

The book begins by setting the mood of the Australian art world from the mid 1950's and discusses tapestries by Australian artists woven in overseas workshops. In 1970 to 1971 an exhibition of 17th and 18th century French tapestries was held at the National Gallery of Victoria. Lady Delacombe, wife of the then State Governor Sir Rohan Delacombe, felt passionately that Australia could produce its own tapestries, by Australian artists, using high quality fine Australian wool. A highly enlightened group of enthusiastic supporters began to form, including Dame Elizabeth Murdoch who, as this book documents, has been a most generous patron to the Victorian Tapestry Workshop from its beginnings to the present day.

Walker describes in detail the lengthy process of establishing the proposed workshop. It was not until

1975, after a feasibility study was completed and Archie Brennan was chosen as an advisor, that the go ahead was given for the establishment of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop. The book continues with the early, courageous first years of the VTW. You feel that you are invited inside to watch the training of the weavers, gaining insight into the magnitude of setting up a new tapestry workshop in a country with no tradition of weaving. With visually rich images of all aspects of their production, early works and commissions are discussed in length, noting difficulties and how they were each overcome.

Walker continues to chart the escalating growth of support for the VTW as new commissioned works were completed. The first ever tapestries to be woven from Aboriginal art were produced, a great technical challenge and achievement for the workshop. Over one hundred tapestries had now been woven, including major works with new suites of tapestries by Rodger Kemp and Mary McQueen.

In a chapter titled "The Great Turning Point," the book provides an overview of the International Tapestry Symposium convened and hosted by the VTW, held in Melbourne, Australia in 1988. A highlight is the Arthur Boyd tapestry, commissioned to hang in the Great Hall of the new Parliament House in Canberra, believed to be the second largest tapestry in the world. It measures 9.18 X 19.9 meters and is the largest commission ever to be woven by the VTW. Walker discusses in detail the mammoth task of undertaking the production of this tapestry. Should the work be woven on the side or horizontal? Should it be woven in sections joined together with industrial Velcro or woven as one piece? The most important discussion is the daring interpretation of the design

into tapestry, including the setting of the tonal values, as it was decided that due to the scale of the tapestry, the color needed to be intensified.

Also, it was to be woven in panels with different weaving teams over a period of the next three years. The need to keep color accuracy throughout would be a daunting task. Accompanied by the fabulous images, the reader gains the sense of scale of the tapestry with images of the cartoon



Leonie Bessant, woven by Victoria Tapestry Workshop, PARADISE IN TRUST
one of a suite of 6 tapestries, each 1.80 meters x 4.00 meters

spread out on the floor of a film studio to be viewed, and when the last panel was completed the entire tapestry was laid on the floor of a nearby Town Hall and, in the presence of Arthur Boyd, viewed in its entirety for the first time ever.

With a world economic downturn and the need to keep experienced staff, VTW secured funding and began to focus on the building of an Exhibition Collection. New artists' works were interpreted into tapestry, including for the first time 64 small tapestries measuring approximately 20 x 20 centimeters in size. The book progresses with commentary about ongoing commissioned works, successful Artist in Residency programs that were to include Patrick Herron from the U.K. and other overseas artists, along with international commissions and exhibitions. Leonie Bessant's sumptuously rich suite of six tapestries for Melbourne Airport, "Paradise in Trust," are shown in full color imagery along with numerous other grand scale works. A portrait of Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, the workshop's staunchest patron, was the first ever tapestry portrait commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

The book ends with a unique new suite of contemporary tapestry. Australia's most monumental piece of collaborative art ever was the Federation Tapestry, commissioned to celebrate the Centenary of Federation. Over 40 meters long and 2 meters high, the tapestry was woven in ten panels and is on public display along one wall in Melbourne's new Museum. The tapestry represents the work of some seventy-two artists, weavers and school children in a narrative vision of the achievements of Australians past and present.

From humble beginnings the workshop has progressively grown into an artistic enterprise that would change the profile of tapestry worldwide with the production and public installation of contemporary Australian tapestry.

Sue Walker was the founding Director of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop, holding the position for some twenty-eight years. Often historical accounts of art institutions are well researched by art historians and academics but this is a book that has been written with the passion and conviction of a woman who firmly believed and was involved in the production of contemporary Australian tapestries. The book is an unprecedented, definitive, thorough account of the history of the VTW and its artists, such has never before been published about any tapestry workshop or studio, and over-

flows with high quality photos. The images of the interior of the workshop, most of the three hundred and fifty tapestries produced over this time, looms, samples, weavers at work, the making of cartoons, the daunting task of warping for monumental scale tapestries, and the rich color pallets set up on tables, are an absolute feast and images that other weavers want to see! Beautifully presented, this fabulous publication is an absolute MUST HAVE for anyone with an interest in tapestry. If there has ever been a mark or shape made in art, you can guarantee that the weavers here have interpreted it into tapestry, which makes this publication a rare and valuable resource for any tapestry weaver.

<http://debbieherd.blogspot.com>

Workshop Review: Connecting Image to Process/ Process to Image

By Joyce Hayes and Susan Edmonds

From October 16-18, 2007, Susan Martin Maffei conducted a workshop, "Connecting Image to Process/ Process to Image," in New York City. Two participants in that workshop offer the following commentary:

Joyce Hayes:

Workshops are wonderful because you are exposed to new information, but they are so condensed that sometimes not all the ideas are fully understood and implications can be missed. Oftentimes I need to go home and mull over in quiet what I heard in order to formulate questions, which I must then answer. For our first weaving of a bird, we were asked to work bottom up using slits-and not to use cartoons. Not that big of a deal, I thought, but not being able to do any preparatory sketching to organize thoughts was discomfoting. Our second project was weaving another bird, this time flipped 90 degrees, using single weft interlock and weaving selvedge to selvedge. This was difficult and

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unintuitive especially when doing the joins. What do these exercises teach us about pre-Columbian weaving?

One of our readings, "Structure as Meaning in Ancient Andean Textiles" by William J. Conklin, was helpful for understanding the importance of textiles in pre-Columbian culture. First, weaving was both a primary form of wealth and also a form of communication in a society with no written language. It was their iconography and was understood between different regions and also from generation to generation. Second, the technical aspects of the woven structure carried as much meaning as the visual image. In Western art we often separate the art and technology/technique, which was so evident in exhibit 'Tapestry of the Baroque.' For example, we would often start with a painting or drawing on canvas or paper, then make a cartoon, and then proceed with weaving the tapestry using our sophisticated techniques. In pre-Columbian weaving the process did not involve these separations.

This is where the workshop and pre-Columbian tapestry met. Instead of using a cartoon or other image to direct what we were weaving, we tried to establish a more direct route from the image in our mind to the image we were weaving. Abstraction was not the only result of our attempts. The exercises gave us a greater understanding and appreciation for the grid of warp and weft. Furthermore,



Susan Maffei's class at the Textile Conservation Laboratory at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. L-R: Susan Edmunds, Marlene Eidelheit, Joyce Hayes, Sarah Warren, Pam Davis, Deborah Holcomb, and Susan Maffei

pre-Columbian weavers used pattern and positive and negative space very effectively through repetition, rotation and mirroring. Finally, the surface and color of their weaving was spectacular; the colors were flat with no modulations and the pinks, greens, and blues were standouts. The weaving was usually very fine so the surfaces were smooth; the slits or joins added to the surface texture, as did the use of lazy lines and S and Z twist yarns.

We would like to thank Mary Lane for organizing the workshop and thank Susan for her generous and informative teaching. It was a mind-opening and intense look into Peruvian tapestry along with new insights into contemporary tapestry. We have both gone back to the readings to consolidate and further our understanding of these beautiful and exciting tapestries.

Susan Edmunds:

We may easily agree on what constitutes an image in a tapestry, but what is process? Partly, of course, it is how you warp your loom and orient your image. Susan Maffei challenged the participants in this workshop to weave two small images of birds, one in slit tapestry with the image building from bottom to top on the warp, as the Chimú and Chancay weavers of coastal Peru worked. The second image was to be woven in the manner of the weavers in the high Andes (Wari and Tiwanaku), interlocking the wefts, and building the image side to side on the warp. We worked on pre-warped looms, which were set up for four-selvedge weaving using doubled warps.

Slide lectures the first two days, as well as articles to be read as homework, introduced us to the characteristics of pre-Columbian weaving in the Andean region. Tapestries of the two groups vary in other ways too, such as the use of cotton warps (predominantly lowland) vs. camelid fiber warps (predominantly highland), and loom types (backstrap with relatively narrow warps in the lowlands and wide frame looms in the highlands). These distinctions were apparently neither a response to practical necessity nor a lack of contact between groups, but rather a conscious cultivation of meaningful difference.

Abstraction of images is a characteristic of Peruvian tapestry. Often the images are so abstracted that an uninitiated viewer sees only pattern. Susan's guidance in identifying, for example, the characteristic faces in Wari tapestry was helpful. No one now, however, can completely 'read' this ancient visual language. We can only ponder and try to learn from various effects, for example the compression of abstracted images that occurs next to similar uncompressed images on Wari tunics.

With a magnifying glass in hand we went on field trips, which gave us a chance to examine a number of actual Pre-Columbian tapestries. At the Cathedral of St. John the Divine Conservation Lab we saw a piece from a private collection that was woven with slits in the coastal style. At the Gail Martin Gallery, we saw a number of very fine interlocked pieces, one of which we were allowed to handle. Again, the magnifying glasses were useful. On the third day, a trip to New York's Museum of Natural History gave us a look at very beautiful pieces from various cultures in the region in the context of other types of artifacts.

The workshop schedule coincided with the exhibit "Tapestry of the Baroque" at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Two other wonderful exhibitions, of Archie Brennan's tapestries at Gail Martin Gallery, and of The Wednesday Group, Archie's and Susan's long-time students, at Gallery Two07, further enriched our tapestry diet.

Hanging in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine is Susan's magnificent tapestry "Blessing of the Animals" which commemorates an event that takes place there each year. Asked about her process for designing the work, Susan remarked, "I was there. It was what I saw." She said the same the next evening, when we saw, in her studio, a tapestry showing the Pompidou Center in Paris. She had lived in an apartment opposite; she had been in the place and experienced it. However, the image was not just a view, but an abstraction. What were, up close, small two- or three-colored irregular shapes resolved at a distance into human figures, complete with individual gesture and stance.

Volunteers Make It Happen: A Conversation with Jan Austin

By Ronda Karliukson



Janet Austin, photo
by Kim Austin

At one point or another we all decide what role weaving will have in our life. Some of us make this decision consciously and others unconsciously. Regardless of the amount of time we spend or do not spend at the loom, this decision is shaped by our ideas of how weaving fits into our life.

Since I am struggling with determining this for myself, when interviewing ATA volunteer Jan Austin, I asked her if she had found it easy to make the transition between learning to weave and selling weaving. "Honestly, I have never made that transition in tapestry weaving," she said. "Back in 1974, when I moved to North Carolina with my boyfriend (now my husband), I joined a couple of crafts cooperatives and sold my work there. That was when I was weaving functional stuff: rugs, shawls, scarves, placemats, pillows, even bookmarks. I did that for 8 years, but after I quit my part time job and started weaving full time, I was shocked at how little profit I had made, even though I was selling a lot: \$1,700 for the year! I decided that the only way to make a living would be to focus full time on the business and hire apprentices to do most of the actual weaving. My feeling was that if I wanted to be a full time businesswoman (which I didn't), I'd sell something more lucrative than handweaving. So instead I pursued an MFA in painting, thinking I would become a college professor, not realizing how rare those jobs were. Soon after I finished my MFA, my husband had a good job, and we had 2 children, so I had geographic limitations as well."

I admired her response. Jan knows how weaving fits into her life, and it has been a conscious choice not to turn it into a career. Each of us it seems has had an individual unique experience in how we have found weaving or depending upon how you look at it how weaving found you. Jan's story was no exception. She told me, "I signed up for a weaving class when I was a student at Massachusetts College of Art, in 1972. It was sort of random, the class fit into my schedule in art school, and it was one of those

continued...

things that had always interested me. At that point I was really into the idea of making things; I had a fantasy of living in a completely handmade home. After the first day I went out to Earth Guild (which used to be right down the street in Cambridge before they moved to NC) and bought a small Toika loom with the \$200 I had saved from my summer job."



Janet Austin, CHAOTIC FRAGMENTS: PART 1
10" x 10", 2008.

Since each of us has a personal story about how we became a weaver, I wondered if what inspires each of us individually is also unique. I asked, what inspires Jan today? She said, "I always get very excited by a new empty warp; it has the potential to become anything! I like the surprises, since I never know how I will translate my designs into actual tapestry until I do it. My inspiration comes from abstract shapes and marks that I discover in my other artwork, drawings and painting. Discovery: first I discover the images, then I have to discover how to translate them into tapestry. I really like weaving small tapestries because I have too many other interests to spend 8 hours a day weaving, I like finishing things fairly quickly, and I get bored easily. In art school my professors were always trying to get me to do bigger drawings but it just felt unnatural; I like the intimacy of small work; it pulls you in close."

Interesting! Our inspirations are surely as unique as our fingerprints. I asked Jan about the two tapestries represented here and she told me, "The new tapestries both come from a drawing, which is a detail

from an old painting I did about 27 years ago, of my messy studio table. The text (Out of Chaos: Creation) in "Chaos" is a pun that refers to both the messy studio table and the fact that the cone of yarn lying on its side looks to me like a black hole in space. "Chaotic Fragments: Part1" is the first in a series of smaller tapestries that are derived from "Chaos," in which parts of the "Chaos" design are cut up and reassembled with more drawing added."

Jan has been a volunteer with ATA since about 1994, and on the ATA board since 2001. She maintained the Membership database for 5 years (2002-2007), and before that was the New England Correspondent for the newsletter. She has made many other contributions to the newsletter, as well. Thanks, Jan for your much appreciated effort and dedication to such a wonderful organization as ATA!

Susan Warner Keene: ATB7 Juror Profile

By Linda Rees

The career of Toronto, Ontario, fiber artist Susan Warner Keene appears to include a vast array of activities within the craft/art fields. Besides her sustained production of exhibition work and commissions, she has participated in the promotion of her field.

For nine years she was one of the editors of Ontario Craft magazine, published by the Ontario Crafts Council. In 1990, as guest curator for the Museum for Textiles, Toronto [now the Textile Museum of Canada], she organized a major three-person exhibition, Pictorial Space: New Textile Images, which included the work of tapestry weaver Marcel Marois. Her exhibition reviews and feature articles have been published in *Fiberarts*, *Surface Design Journal*, *International Tapestry Journal*, and *Ontario Craft*.

From 1993-2004 she taught in the Craft and Design Program of Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario, where she was Co-head of Textiles Studio from 2001-2003.

Keene has served often as a consultant to arts organizations such as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Ontario Crafts

Council. From 1992-93, she was president of Surfacing: Textile Dyers and Printers Association, a Canadian organization of professional textile artists, and she has served on the Public Art Policy Advisory Committee for Metropolitan Toronto.

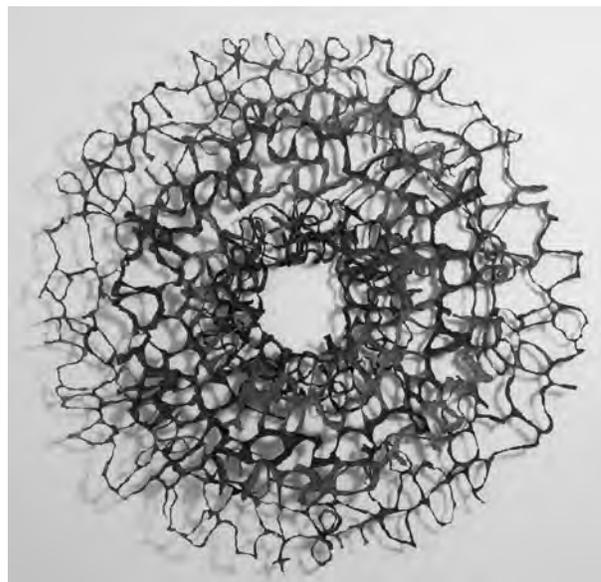
As a textiles student at the Ontario College of Art 1975 -79, Keene studied fabric weaving and tapestry before embarking on an independent study of felt-making, which had a profound effect on her subsequent work in handmade paper. In 1980 she began exhibiting colorful shaped wall reliefs that have been shown internationally in such venues as the Lodz Tapestry Triennale (1992), the American Craft Museum, and the Canadian Museum of Civilization, which holds six works in its permanent collection. She was the 1991 recipient of the Prix Saidye Bronfman Award for Excellence in the Crafts, a Canadian national award.

More recent exhibitions, such as *Mimesis*, (2001), *Verso* (2004) and *ReVisions* (2007) have presented work that appears to be more about the qualities of paper itself, often referencing the written word, calligraphy, or the book form. In these works, the "page" becomes an amorphous, open, net-like surface that has the pattern of text.

Keene's talent is in working within the physical parameters of papermaking and pushing the technical boundaries, allowing her to create objects that go against the established notions of how paper should be and act. Paper is intended as a stable support that receives imprinted marks or information. For Susan the encoding is built into the work as a result of such mundane concerns as shrinkage, translucency and surface texture. There is a great deal of effort that the works undergo in order that they appear effortlessly as part of a natural world to her devising. (from the Prime Gallery statement about *Mimesis*)

In her 2007 statement for the David Kaye Gallery in Toronto, Susan explains:

Fragments of historical text have been redrawn with liquid paper pulp in cursive script in arrangements suggested by their content.... The intimacy of handwritten script connects the body to the capacity for abstract thought which language manifests. It is the relic of a past when the copying of texts by hand was a means of learning and celebrating as well as disseminating valued texts. In our era, electronic transmission is altering the way



Susan Warner Keene, *REBUS #1*, 28" diameter x 1.5" deep, 2007. Handmade paper (abaca fibre), pigment.
Source text: "Round as yet round my dreams keep revolving," the last lines composed by the 17th-century Japanese poet Basho.

we generate, consume, and value written language. It seems timely to consider other uses for a page of text than information to be consumed as rapidly as possible.

Susan Warner Keene's comments about her process of selecting ATB7 artists:

In keeping with the spirit of a biennial, it was my decision to include a broad representation of approaches to tapestry, rather than to focus more narrowly. As the sole juror, I made a point of looking beyond matters of personal taste and interest to the intent and achievement of the work itself. Within the size limitations of a traveling show, I attempted to select a group of works that would be engaging for audiences new to this medium as well as for the connoisseur, and I believe that all of them contribute something meaningful, intriguing, thought-provoking, amusing, or amazing to a consideration of the tapestry form.

Funding for the American Tapestry Biennial 7 and its accompanying catalog was supported in part by a grant from Friends of Fiber Art International. ATA was one of five organizations receiving grant awards in 2007 from Friends of Fiber Art International, a non-profit organization with a diverse membership of dedicated collectors, curators, critics, artists, educators, and gallery owners.

Student Award Winner:

Erica Diazoni

The ATA Board has selected Erica Diazoni of Santa Clara, California to be the 2008 Student Award winner. Erika learned the basics of weaving as little girl and is currently studying textiles



as art with Professor Consuela Underwood at San Jose State University. Her final paper in her art history class was to compare an item from her textbook with another art piece in the same medium. She chose one of the Unicorn tapestries and, as it happened, the American Tapestry Biennial 6 was at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles at the time so she had a lot of tapestries to choose among. She selected Tricia Goldberg's tapestry "Stamps" as the comparison tapestry for her paper.

Erika said she was "blown away" when she saw all the tapestries on the museum's walls. She said that she appreciated the possibilities of putting content, especially narrative, into the weavings. Her study of fabric weaving was becoming too mechanical and harder to justify when compared with the speed and ease of machine weaving.

On one of several return visits to the San Jose Museum, Erika met another weaver who turned out to be Tricia Goldberg. This encounter led to Erika sharing her final paper with Tricia and subsequently, taking a workshop with Tricia several months later. Erika, a beginner tapestry weaver, submitted one of her first pieces called The Invisible Essential to the Land exhibit in Australia.

Her enthusiasm for the medium persuaded the board to give her the award which includes a prize of \$250 and a year's student membership in ATA. We look forward to seeing how she develops as a tapestry weaver.

American Tapestry Biennial 7

June 16 - July 11

The Scarfone/Hartley Gallery

401 West Kennedy Blvd

Tampa, Florida

www.ut.edu/visitors/Scarfone-Hartley-Gallery.cfm

September 6 - December 31

Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft

715 West Main St

Louisville, Kentucky

www.kentuckyarts.org

Members News

Studio Circle Dues Increase

Effective immediately Studio Circle level membership dues will be \$60 per year and \$110 for two years. All other membership dues rates remain the same. Still the best value for your money, we offer Studio Circle members an Artists' Page on the ATA website and complimentary participation in our Distance Learning Program as our "thank you" for the additional support. Through calendar year 2008, current members may renew or upgrade to Studio Circle membership at the \$55 rate.

Woven Gems Catalog Available

Check out the new catalog order form that is enclosed with this newsletter! In addition to ATB7, the catalog for Woven Gems is now available for just \$12 plus shipping. Bundle your purchase of Woven Gems with any other combination of catalogs and enjoy great savings!

Catalog Clearance Sale

While supplies last, we are virtually giving away our inventory of ATB2 and ATB5 catalogs! As you can see from the enclosed catalog order form, we are

now offering these catalogs free with shipping and handling. Please note the option to purchase a Promotion Pack. In a Promotion Pack, we'll send you a box with as many ATB2 or ATB5 catalogs as you request, or as many as we can fit in the box, up to approximately 30 catalogs. Exhibition catalogs make treasured gifts for students or the perfect thank you for that Guild committee you've been working with all year. Donate copies to your Guild and/or local libraries. If you wish you can even sell the catalogs at a conference or event as a fundraiser for ATA or group of your choice. Please help us get these older catalogs into appreciative hands and assist us in our mission to promote contemporary tapestry.

Advertise in our 2009 Directory

Members receive a 20% discount on ads placed in our Membership Directory. If you would like to place an ad in the next directory, just send your ad in .pdf format to membership@americantapestryalliance.org by October 1, 2008. Ads are \$20 for quarter page (1.75" x 4.75"); \$40 for half page (3.75" x 4.75"); and \$80 for a full page (7.5" x 4.75").

Thank you ATA Donors

ATA would like to thank the following members for renewing their memberships at the Curator's Circle level between July 1, 2007 and April 1, 2008: Janet Austin, Georgeann Blaha, Pamela Gibson, Urban Jupena, Lynn Mayne, William Saunders, Jean Smelker-Hugi, and Mary Zicafoose.

Our special thanks go out to Collector's Circle member Diane Wolf, who made a very generous donation to ATA this year. Many of you who lurk on the Yahoo Tapestry List or receive the CTN newsletter may remember Diane's touching story about finishing a large silk "dragonfly" tapestry designed and partially woven by Bonnie Whittington. Bonnie passed away before she was able to complete the work, and Diane finished the tapestry for the estate and was given Bonnie's eight-foot Shannock loom as a result. Diane recently sold the loom and donated the proceeds to organizations supporting education in the fiber arts, including ATA. What a wonderful happy ending to this story. We're confident that Bonnie would be pleased. Thank you Diane for your thoughtfulness.

Kudos

Karen Crislip's "Tropical Winter - Fractures" was awarded Juror's Choice: Best of Show at the Handweavers' Guild of Boulder (Colorado) Annual Show and Sale Showcase exhibit in December.

Lany Elia's "Setting" and **Kathy Perkins'** "Gift of the Ancients" were chosen to be in HGA's juried exhibit, "Small Expressions 2008," on view April 18-July 6 at the Tampa Museum of Art in conjunction with Convergence.

Pamela J Davis, Nancy Ellison, Susan Gangsei and **Nancy Jackson**, Sharon Marquardt, **Lila Nelson**, Jane Connett, Robbie LaFleur, Jan Mostrom, **Solveig Pollei**, and Mary Lonning Skoy have work in "Symbols Myths and Fairy Tales," March 17 - April 18, sponsored by their Weavers' Guild of Minnesota study group. To see the pieces in the exhibit go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/scanweavers/>.

Tommye Scanlin's "...to the essence of every nature ..." is included in "Back to Nature: An Exhibition of Contemporary Botanical Pottery and Art", Hambidge Center Gallery, Rabun Gap, GA, April 11 - June 7. In addition, Tommye will have a piece in "Mining Surface" at the Swan Coach House Gallery in Atlanta, August 7-September 20, a showcase of art textile works by artists in the South.

"Living with Beauty: Handwoven Textiles for the Home" is an exhibit of decorative and utilitarian textiles for the home interior, juried by Betsy Blumenthal and sponsored by the Pikes Peak Weavers Guild (PPWG) of Colorado Springs, Colorado, that will be on display from June 13 to July 26, 2008 at the Business of Art Center, 513 Manitou Avenue, Manitou Springs, CO. Weavers from 21 states and Australia are represented, including several ATA members. For more information, see www.pikespeakweavers.org.



Karen Crislip, TROPICAL WINTER - FRACTURES
46" x 60" Forty tapestries were woven
separately then assembled.

Contact ATA

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www.americantapestryalliance.org

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ATA Board Nominees

Marcella Fraker, Piedmont, AL. Marcy has many years in leadership positions for the DeSoto Fiber Guild, and was HGA representative 1994-1998. She is a member of Tapestry Weavers South and participates in a tapestry study group and in the ATA Distance Learning Program.

Kathleen Marcel, Denver, CO. A recent convert to tapestry weaving, Kathy has studied with Karen Crislip, Elizabeth Buckley, Pam Patrie, Archie Brennan and Susan Maffei, and participates in a tapestry study group. She is a lawyer and has an MA in Information and Learning Technologies.

Sarah Swett, Moscow, ID. Sarah's tapestries are well known, and she is a writer of fiction, articles for Tapestry Topics and Handwoven magazine, and the instructional book "Kids Weaving." Sarah is a mentor in ATA's Distance Learning Program.

Mary Zicafoose, Omaha, NE. Mary was recently featured in Fiberarts Magazine, and her work is in many collections including the White House, Mobil, and various US Embassies around the world. She lectures and teaches workshops around the country.

ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

	1 year	2 years
Individual	\$35	\$65
Studio Circle	\$60	\$110
Curator's Circle	\$125	\$225
Collector's Circle	\$250	\$450
Student*	\$25	\$45

*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

Send payment to: ATA Membership
c/o Barbara Richards
2160 Devil's Gulch Rd
Estes Park, CO 80517
(970) 577-9728

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Fax/Alternate phone _____

Email _____

Visa/Mastercard number

Exp. Date

card holder's signature

AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE, INC
BIENNIAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

11 A.M, JUNE 28, 2008, Tampa (Florida) Convention Center

THIS PROXY IS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The undersigned hereby appoints Barbara Richards and Rebecca Stevens and each of them as proxies for the undersigned, with full power of substitution, to act and to vote on my behalf at the biennial meeting of members to be held Saturday June 28, 2008 or any adjournment thereof.

Election of Directors:

FOR ALL NOMINEES

OR FOR ONLY THOSE NOMINEE(S) CHECKED BELOW

New Nominees:

- Marcella Fraker - two years
- Kathleen Marcel - two years
- Sarah Swett - two years
- Mary Zicafoose - two years

Returning Board Members:

- Barbara Richards - two years
- Alexandra Friedman - two years
- Rebecca Stevens - two years
- Linda Wallace - two years
- Mary Lane - two years
- Janet Austin - one year

(The Board recommends a yes vote for all nominees.)

THIS PROXY WHEN PROPERLY EXECUTED WILL BE VOTED IN THE MANNER DIRECTED HEREIN BY THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBER. IF NO DIRECTION IS MADE, THIS PROXY WILL BE VOTED FOR ALL NOMINEES.

Dated: _____ 2008

Signature: _____

Whether or not you plan to attend the meeting, please return this proxy by June 14, 2008 to: Barbara Richards, 2160 Devil's Gulch Rd, Estes Park, CO 80517

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Tapestry Topics



Janet Austin, CHAOS, 20" x 24", 2007

visit our website
www.americantapestryalliance.org

Guidelines for submitting articles to *Tapestry Topics*:

Next Deadline: **July 15**: Small format, small scale, miniature.

October 1: Conferences and Events of the Year,

January 15: Tentative theme: Proportions

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

--Or--

1507 Elkay Drive

Eugene, OR 97404

Phone: 541-338-8284

All photographs and electronic images should be accompanied by the following information: size, date completed, and photo credits.

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

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

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