



# Tapestry Topics

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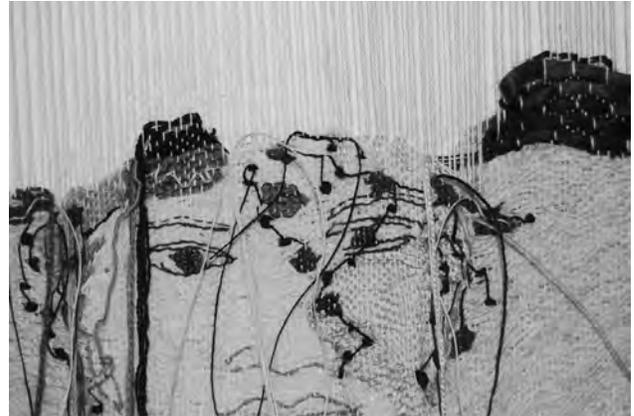
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## Tapestry and Tactile Experience

**By Ellen Ramsey**

I initially suggested the theme Materiality of Surface because I felt it was a key element in some of the work I most admired, but a feature that was glaringly missing from my own tapestries. With the encouragement and guidance of Editor Linda Rees, my explorations into the idea of surface and meaning have become this issue of *Tapestry Topics*. Of course every tapestry has some degree of materiality by virtue of it being woven cloth, but what I was really after was work where surface and conceptual content were inextricably fused - in other words, work that embodied tactile experience.

The spark for my exploration began last year at an exhibition of paintings by San Francisco Bay Area artist Squeak Carnwath. Smitten by her work, I later discovered, on the internet, an interview with Squeak from 2001 where she made a statement that was so appropriate to how I felt about tapestry that it stopped me in my tracks:

A lot of artists are using more photo-based images or photo-based processes to make paintings or to make art-

continued...

work. Photography is everywhere. I really want to make stuff that comes from the hand.... If everything goes digital and we're able to put everything on a chip, it's all going to have the same kind of depth, or resonance, and *we're going to need something that your eyes can dig a hole into*. Even though it might seem unfashionable, I'm interested in developing my own sense of material expertise—a sensitivity to the material and how the material can telegraph my feelings. . (Whittaker, Richard. "Interview: Squeak Carnwath." *Works & Conversations*. March 2001)

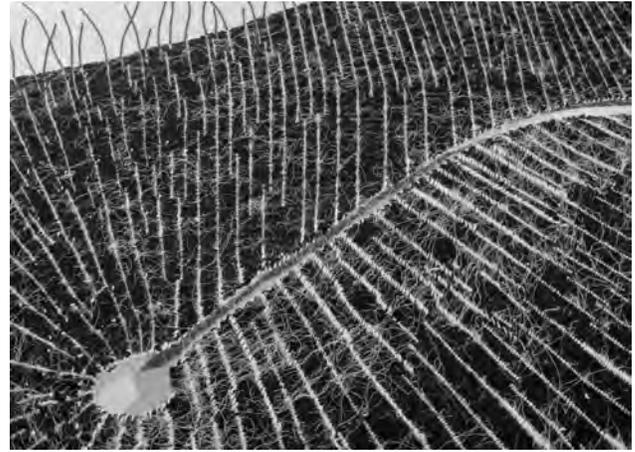
Personally, I think that tapestry has more potential than most media to telegraph meaning via material sensitivity. As evidence, we present the work of Wlodek Cygan, Alex Friedman, Aino Kajaneimi, Fiona Hutchison, and Pascale De Coninck. Jane Kidd opens the discussion with a thought provoking rumination on authenticity, risk taking, and materiality that you will find echoed in the personal statements of every one of our featured artists. Let your eyes dig in!

## Greetings from the Co-directors

By Becky Stevens and Linda Wallace

After our long, cold winter and spring, we hope you are enjoying the warmth and blossoming life now waiting outside your studio. Of course, some members, who spend all year in warmth and are now facing the intense heat and hurricanes of summer, will seek comfort in cooled studios. In the economic climate we are enduring, the process of being creative, filling our days with exploration and intense engagement while surrounded by color, friendships and art, makes us rich in ways money can never come close to doing.

This issue of *Tapestry Topics* is filled with articles you will truly enjoy, but we also have a lot of ATA news to share with you. First, we want to thank everyone who made a donation to the February Valentine's Day fundraiser. After deliberation the board decided to use part of the funds to purchase a digital projector for use at our symposiums and workshops. We were saved from a near disaster at Convergence last summer by Pat Spark of Fine Fiber Press who loaned us her projector when the convention center's equipment did not materialize. To prevent that problem in the future and avoid the high



Wlodzimierz Cygan, SEEN FROM...,  
50" X 63 (126cm x 161cm) See article on page 6.

cost of rental, the board decided a purchase is in our best interest. Thank you members!

Our new exhibition, "Connections: Small Tapestry International," ATA's inaugural, juried biennial created to highlight small format work, opens at the San Jose Quilt and Textile Museum, in San Jose, California, in May and will travel to Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, in August. We received 184 entries by 98 artists from 19 countries. The quality of submitted work made the selection process difficult as the juror, Jane Sauer of Jane Sauer Gallery, narrowed the possibilities into the final group of 40 tapestries. Many of you will have traveled to San Jose to see the exhibition, attend the gallery talks and participate in our educational workshop, "Toolkit of Tapestry Techniques", taught by Christine Laffer. For those of you who were unable to be there in person, the catalog is available for purchase through the ATA website. Priced at only fifteen dollars a copy, we expect it to sell out quickly. Don't be disappointed by leaving your order too late.

We would like to extend heartfelt 'thank you's' on your behalf. Kathy Spoering, chair of Connections, and her committee have worked tirelessly to take this new biennial exhibition from idea to reality. The catalog, designed by Kathy and the committee, is truly a gem. We would also like to thank Friends of Fiber Art International for their continued support of ATA and for their grant to assist with the production of the Connections catalog. Another group we want to thank is Tapestry Weavers West for their financial donation to the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles in support of Connections: Small Format International.

There is great news! ATA is one of the beneficiaries of the Henry Day Ellis Charitable Remainder Unitrust. Mr. Ellis was a friend of our founders Hal Painter and Jim Brown. He recognized the need to support ATA's cultural and artistic endeavors. The final amount has not been confirmed, but we believe it will be over \$20,000.00! We are honored to be selected as an organization whose work was considered worthy of a bequest, and we are so very grateful.

The business of ATA increases as we expand our programming and will soon require outside professional help in some areas if we are to continue to operate projects supporting our membership at the beginner, hobbyist and professional levels of tapestry weaving. We are looking into setting up an endowment with the Ellis Trust money which will allow us to use accrued interest for our programming and administrative costs while keeping the principal intact. We want to make it possible for anyone wishing to support hand woven tapestry to be able to make donations to this endowment or name ATA as a beneficiary in their estate planning. We could use the advice of any members who have experience with endowments, planned giving or estate planning. If you have any expertise you can share with us, please contact either one of the Co-Directors.

As we said earlier, the financial climate has caused us all to examine how we manage our lives and our money. We want to assure you that the Board of ATA is careful with the funds entrusted to us. We strive to find a balance between fiscal responsibility and providing service to our membership.

Finally, we are delighted that Rebecca A.T. Stevens, consulting curator of the Textile Museum of Washington, DC, has agreed to be the juror of ATB8. In addition, ATA is pleased to announce the creation of the Teitelbaum Family Award, which will be given for the first time at ATB8. As you may recall, ATA was a beneficiary of the Teitelbaum Family Trust last year. Some of that money has been designated for a first place award of \$300.00 and a second place award of \$200.00. Rebecca A. T. Stevens will determine the recipients of these awards. So, if you haven't already begun weaving your ATB8 entry, get going!!

## Connections Small Tapestry International

### First venue:

San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles  
520 South First Street, San Jose, California  
May 5-July 26, 2009

### Second venue:

Leeds Gallery, Earlham College,  
801 National Road West, Richmond, Indiana  
August 20-Sept 20, 2009.

### To order your catalog:

Connections: Small Tapestry International 2009

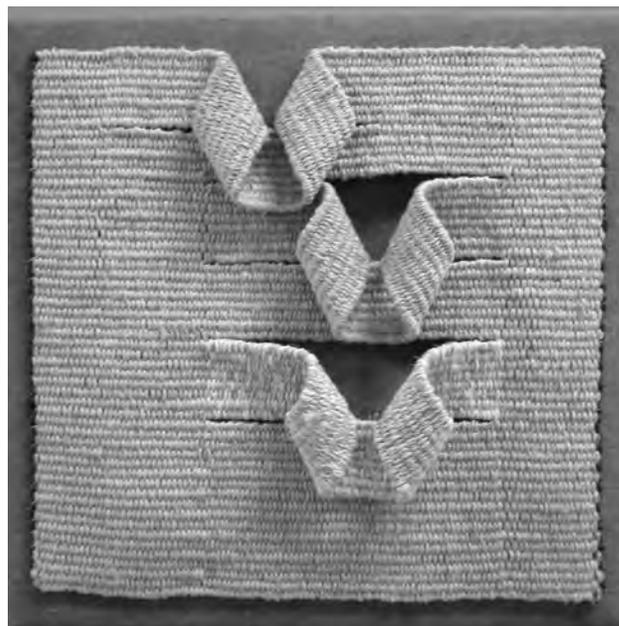
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Alex Friedman BIG SOFT FLIPS, 9" X 9" 2002  
See article on page 9.

## Themes To Come

A big thank you goes out to Ellen Ramsey for facilitating this fascinating theme issue and for giving us the opportunity to explore the work and thoughts of several international artists.

**July 15: Exhibitions - Our Public Voice.** Presentation and professionalism, pros and cons of various selection procedures, theme shows, and the role of exhibits as a means for promoting tapestry will be considered.

**October 1: Tips and Tactics.** We are depending on you to submit the clever solutions to tricky problems with looms, cartoons, techniques, studio design or whatever innovation you have tucked up your sleeve.

**January 15: Proportion.** Other than the limitations of our loom capacity, how do we tapestry artists determine the size of an image? How do scale and proportion relate to design elements? This is an opportunity for the mathematically oriented designers to come to the fore.

If you are interested in writing about these topics or being the facilitator and selecting authors for them, let me know, lerees@comcast.net

**Belated correcton:** In the 2008 Spring Tapestry Topics review of Micala Sidore's exhibit "Black + White + Red All Over" the author's description of the weaving of BLACK EYE, RED EYE, should have read that "the insets were woven in place, by Micala, in between shots of a fly shuttle." and, the eyes were from pictures of friends at home rather than the folks at the weaving center in Kerala. (And, the nicest news about that piece is that the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, NH, has purchased it!)

## Materiality and Tapestry

By Jane Kidd

Magdalena Abakanowicz made the following statement about her relationship to fibre materials at the height of the Fibre Revolution in the late 1960s and 1970s:

I see fiber as the basic element constructing the organic world on our planet, as the greatest mystery of our environment. It is from fiber that all living organisms are built - the tissue of plants, and ourselves. Our nerves, our genetic code, the canals of our veins, our muscles. (Abakanowicz 1978)

Tapestry makers, like Abakanowicz, recognized and celebrated the potential of their materials and the powerful position of the individual maker. Abakanowicz, Sheila Hicks, Ritzi and Peter Jacobi amongst many others, embraced a practice that involved hands-on production; they created the work themselves and were intimately involved with materials and process. They recognized that the materials and process were ripe with meanings and by this close association they understood the dynamics of materiality. Through their hands the physical presence of the woven form became not only a means to create innovative surfaces and structures but also a metaphoric vehicle that gave voice to creative ideas and personal expression - even as they referenced historical tapestry practices.

A generation later we appear to have come to an impasse. While ideas of materiality in tapestry continue to engage the maker (just consider this current issue of *Tapestry Topics*), it would seem that it is primarily the image that has become recognized as the sole marker conveying the conceptual voice of the tapestry maker. A recent publication *Contemporary Textiles: the Fabric of Fine Art*, illustrates these observations. The promotional text on the back cover describes the publication as "an inspiring and comprehensive survey of the many and varied creative expressions spoken through the language of textile fine art." Certainly, the book provides excellent essays by Bradley Quinn and Janis Jefferies and illustrates and discusses many inspiring works. Nonetheless, of the over 50 artists profiled not one is working with the process of tapestry, a situation I find perplexing considering the importance of tapestry in the evolution of the fibre field and the depth and integrity of much of the current work in tapestry.

Has the unique material identity and commitment to skill that we as tapestry makers hold dear begun to inhibit our involvement in a broader critical discussion? Or has the critical world become myopic, equating fine craftsmanship with a lack of conceptual content? In this essay I will argue that materiality continues to be integral to the tapestry discipline and that material and process should never be excluded from meaningful discussion of tapestry as a visual art practice.

Design Historian, Dennis Doordan, defines the term materiality as issues, themes, potentialities and limitations that arise out of the materials employed in making. He sites materiality as a complex negotiation of idea, context and experience that comes about through an in-depth understanding of materials and process. Doordan recognizes that the maker's intimate knowledge of materials and process are an inseparable aspect of materiality. This reading is essential to an understanding of tapestry as a material process invested in skill that draws on a long and well-established tradition of material sensitivity and technical ingenuity.

To understand the relevance and power of tapestry, it is crucial to recognize that it is through this interaction that the weaver has the potential to be involved in constant interpretation, translation and innovation. Tapestry engenders a form of woven speech spoken eloquently through the skill of the maker's hands, the result of knowing hands shaping a sequence of thoughts through actions. Tapestry is an activity invested in the maker's intimate and immediate involvement with the present through the physical imperative of materiality. Craft historian, Peter Dormer, refers to this as "the workmanship of risk" suggesting that process in this state is open to failure at any point as well as spectacular success and that it fosters discovery. Through this temporal state of active engagement, the maker meets with the potential for innovation and the prospect of originality.

In our contemporary culture, which is dominated by the reproduced object and the mediated and appropriated image, handmade objects such as tapestry stand for authentic experience. Like other constructions that are brought to life through the skilled negotiations of handwork, tapestries are infused with a sense of originality and authenticity. Their material presence provides a direct link to the original act of making that circumvents anonymity for both maker and viewer. Its essence acts as a catalyst for the interaction of material, form, process and idea, evoking a confluence of factors that brings the original creative act into focus. Thus it is through engagement with materiality that the tapestry maker has the opportunity to personify skill and vision in communicating the authenticity of original experience to the viewer of their work.

Tapestry as a language of material and process has remained a discreet practice that appears somewhat

out of sync with the hybrid nature of contemporary art. In contradiction to current trends, continued respect for traditional materials (yarn) makes it less likely that makers will choose to access the memory and meaning embedded in found and recycled material as a means for social engagement. The seemingly wild and free use of familiar and unconventional materials that have defined materiality in much of contemporary fibre practices and garnered fibre a place in contemporary art criticism does not translate well into the skill-based focus of tapestry making. Tapestry remains a demanding medium with a long and involved history, one linked to royalty, power and patronage. It is a history largely unfamiliar to the general public. Further, unlike embroidery, quilting and garment based work, it does not provide a direct means to access the social history of the everyday, domesticity, feminism and identity. It is not a process that can easily be taken up and applied in the service of a popular theme or concept. In other words, it remains relatively closed to artists from other disciplines and hence an outsider in the interdisciplinary exchange.

From this viewpoint the discreet material identity of tapestry could be seen as a detriment not a strength. In fact, I would argue that tapestry's rather shadowy presence in contemporary fibre criticism offers an exciting challenge: one that asks us to reassess our relationship to material and process and find ways to be more engaged in the broader dialogue that addresses the rematerialization of the art object. The dialogue about materiality is continually evolving to embrace multiple perspectives including Fine Art, Design and Craft. Many of the elements that are essential to an understanding and valuing of tapestry as a material process (such as tradition, skill and the handmade) are once again part of this discussion. And we must be ready to take this discussion into our studios - and onto our looms.

The acquisition of skill and familiarity with materials can inspire extraordinary insight but it can also lead to complacency. Makers involved with skill-based work processes like tapestry can be lulled into a false sense of security that is defensive instead of productive. We certainly do not need to abandon traditional tapestry practice, but we must be willing to let the material identity of the process evolve. The material presence of any object, whether it is traditional or highly innovative, is at its most dynamic when the object reflects the active engagement of the maker,

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and the viewer can sense the original touch and the integrity of the maker's perception. Materiality is at its most dynamic and expressive when it reflects the workmanship of risk - not certainty.

Tapestry making is itself a challenging process. If our medium is to move forward and participate more actively in the broader cultural field, we must be more than willing to take risks. From my experience, and given our history, tapestry makers are tenacious, optimistic and able to look to the future - we are ready for the challenge.

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Matthew Kangas, *Craft and Concept the Rematerialization of the Art Object*, (New York: Midmarch Press, 2006) 57-60.

## My Unique Way of Warping

By **Włodzimierz Cygan**

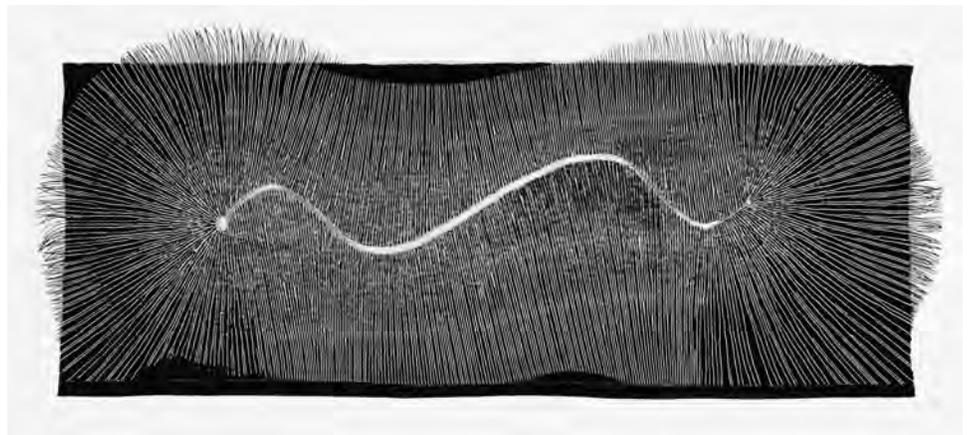
Professor, Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Art

Technical University, and Institut of Architecture of Textiles, all in Lodz, Poland

When trying to determine why the means of artistic expression in tapestry was becoming archaic, I realised that one of the reasons might have to do with the custom of treating the threads of the weft as the chief medium of the visual message. The restrictive technical definition of "tapestry" allows for little more than the creation of images woven by a coloured weft. Yet fabric consists of both warp and weft. I decided, therefore, to devote more attention to the warp, which—though sometimes exposed, dyed or otherwise highlighted—is always subordinated, auxiliary and structural in nature. Once it has been prepared before the actual weaving begins, it is rarely modified.

These observations led me to wonder how the artistic language of textiles might benefit from the use of a warp whose strands would not be parallel and flat, as is usually the case, but convergent, curved or three dimensional. Unlike a parallel warp, which is more or less the same throughout the fabric, a convergent or divergent warp fans out from a single point getting wider as it gets less dense. This expansion requires constant adjustments in order to obtain a sufficiently regular consistency and number of warp threads per decimetre. Since its shape is not fixed at the start, it gives greater control and encourages modifications at all stages of the weaving, for instance, by using a different thickness of warp threads. Another advantage is that the surface of the fabric made on such a warp is dynamic by nature, not by virtue of the image produced with the weft but, so to speak, genetically. The colours or patterns are determined separately.

It is similar in the case of a curved warp where the strands run parallel to one another but do so along an arc. As they change direction, the strands enable the weaving of circles or arcs, especially useful when making relatively narrow and elongated fabrics without as much need for labor intensive adjustments. While working with an elongated format, modelling its shape and flow also makes it possible to modify the warp within the fabric and



Włodzimierz Cygan ORBITREK 39" x 118" (100cm x 300cm) 2007, awarded with Grand Prix at the 12 International Triennial of Tapestry in Lodz, 2007

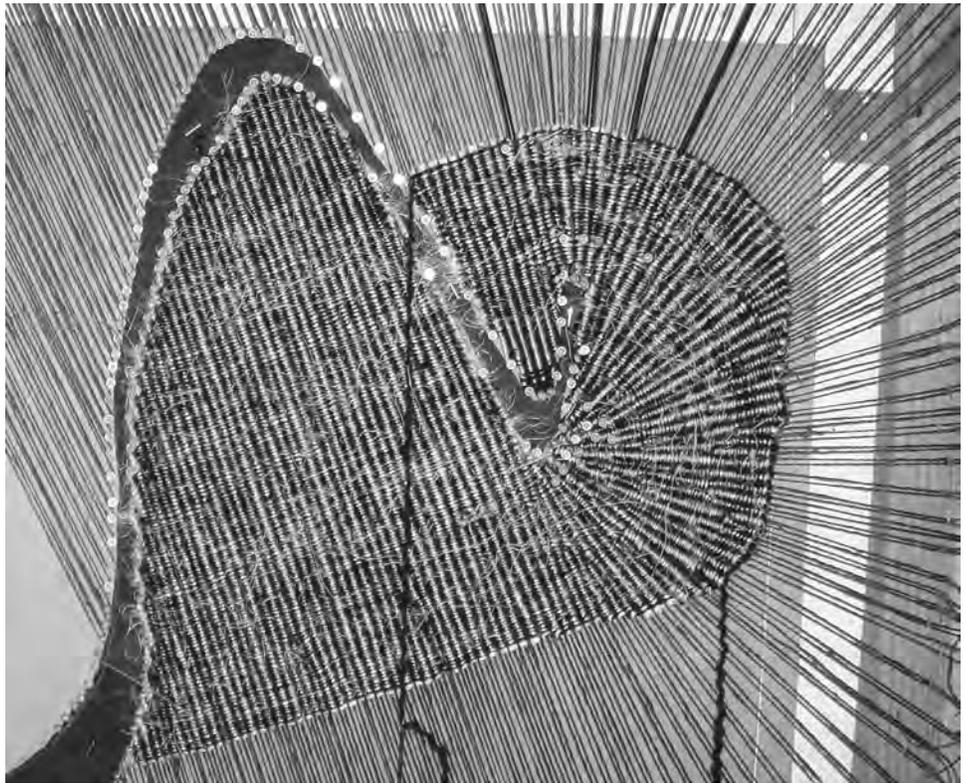
enables random selection and rejection of entire batches of the warp's strands.

Another way I like to arrange a warp is in an open-work structure in 3-D where the textile is made up of an arrangement of horizontally and vertically stretched strips of the warp whose surfaces are perpendicular to one another. Such architectural form makes it possible to look through the textile, and the resulting design combines structural discipline with lightness and simplicity. See online newsletter excerpts.

When weaving my compositions, I prefer to use natural raw materials because of their corporal identity and authenticity. My small works are most often woven of flax and cotton, with wool and sisal predominating in the bigger ones. I have often been asked why I like sisal so much. There are many reasons. Back when I was learning to weave, sisal was the cheapest and most widely available natural material. Though it absorbs dyes wonderfully, it looks best in its natural state. Its substance reminds me of a magnified flax yarn, which brings up the material aspect of the entire composition. Straw-colored and slightly glossy, sisal looks best next to matte black wool. The relationship between these two materials is not affected by the fact that sisal oxidizes and gradually yellows as it ages, since most of my textiles are two-color compositions anyway.

I most often use flax as my warp, though when I need a lighter and more elastic building material I sometimes resort to polypropylene. Its "shape memory" is a disadvantage though, because when the fabric is kept rolled for a long time it can be difficult to straighten out.

The surface is a reflection of the structure of the warp, and the one usually shapes the other. Under the epidermis lies the supporting structure of the warp. Its arrangement is emphasized using the pick-and-pick rug technique of alternating two differentiated wefts (one light and the other dark, for instance). The



Wlodzimierz Cygan, Loom setup for interior opening and diverging warps

texture of how weft covers the supporting ground is congruent with the path of the warp strands; therefore it does not always run along a straight line. I give it different directions thus drawing patterns by means of the warp, which are then reflected on the surface of the fabric. Such "warp drawing" would not have been possible on a loom with harnesses or treadles. With a wooden frame, I can stretch warps in every direction, and - owing to its lightness - rotate the entire set, which enables "circular weaving."

I want the surfaces of my works to be coarse and light at the same time, and their appeal to be a function of the natural beauty of the material in accord with the logic of the structure. In my recent works, I have purposefully disturbed the continuity of the surface by introducing orifices, cracks and slits. These gaps are to be filled in by the viewer's imagination. Openings made in the surface of a flat fabric by means of slitting or parting of edges have what one might call an inner shape or edge. Hence there are two types of shape in one composition: the inner and the outer.

"Circular weaving" leads to a number of interesting consequences. First, the fabric is not built from the bottom up (from the beginning to end). The

continued...

sequence of weaving depends on the arrangement of the warp; it is often necessary to start from the middle and work in several different places. Following its own logic, the weft gradually fills in the warp, creating different shapes in the fabric as if incidentally. This relieves the monotony of the weaving process and helps one focus on its progress.

The experience of tracing ever-new and not always predictable shapes can serve as inspiration for new projects. Weaving from the middle outwards makes it possible to determine the best layout for the external edges of the fabric and to modulate its rim accordingly. It also makes it possible to expand the format beyond what was originally intended. Once the piece has been cut off the frame, there is no distinction between the initial and final edge and the lateral edges. There is also no need to tie the endings of the cut-off warp because the edges do not fray. No matter how the warp may curve, the weft is still essentially woven perpendicular to the warp and therefore goes around the most outer warp in that row.

I consider that the "Architecture of Textiles" is also a field of contemporary textile-making which I am now exploring in the hope of blending my own method of picking with unique ways of warping. The autonomous objects produced as a result of these explorations are still fabric, yet serve primarily as vehicles for imagination. My works are, in a sense, conceptual models expressing selected emotions, thoughts, and subconscious states. I want them to speak of me and of themselves in a language all their own.

Installation photographs can be seen at [www.cyganart.com](http://www.cyganart.com).

References: *Fibres & Textiles in Eastern Europe*

## Alex Friedman's New Twist

By Linda Rees

In recent years, Alex Friedman has made a dramatic shift from her earlier architectural style of pictorial tapestry and the results are exciting. Her recent "Flow" series has the capacity to touch the very heart of why an artist might be drawn to working with fiber. The three Flow pieces address a basic element of the medium, the physical qualities of yarn. They present a significant contribution to the current investigation of how to best represent compositions in a way unique to the tapestry medium.

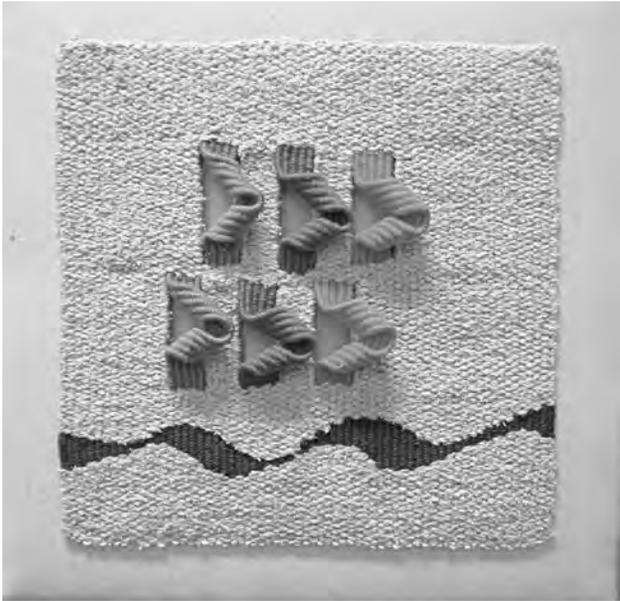
By the mid 1990s what was "cutting edge" needed to do more than display good technique and interesting designs. The number of competent tapestry artists was growing and so was competition from other forms of fiber art. The "buzz words" voiced at conferences, workshops or in catalog essays were addressing the challenge to define and capitalize on what distinguishes tapestry from other visual expressions. Delving into the notion of "tapestry as textile" has become one of the main thrusts for this exploration.

After leaving college, Alex took a job in an architectural firm in Boston as librarian, model maker, photographer and occasionally interior designer. Her attraction to weaving was its structural aspect. Her interest in tapestry began when she worked on the Pan Am commission in the New York studio of Michelle Lester. Attracted to architectural detail, she explains, "as I wove the pictorial elements of buildings in my earlier tapestries with the shadows and other trompe l'œil effects, I began to think how else I could work the medium to express dimensionality." (See ATA catalogs *American Tapestry Today* 1990 and *ATBI* 1996 for her earlier work.) Alex figured that you ought to be able to manipulate warp and weft to construct a surface that was more than two-dimensional.

In 1996 she moved with her husband to London bringing one loom with her. However it was not a time for much productive weaving. They frequently had visitors, her area for weaving was small and Alex confesses that London was a "glorious distraction." She did find a weaving group but very little tapestry action. Then, shortly before moving back to the San Francisco area of California, she discovered a tapestry exhibit in London and met many major British weavers at the opening.

The most important new perspective she gained from the 9 years in terms of the medium came from the opportunity to observe old tapestries. Alex comments:

Living abroad exposed me to a much looser definition of tapestry. When I studied older tapestries in museum collections, I realized they took liberties with technique. For them the image was the priority and the technique followed in order to fit the pictorial need. With the more contemporary tapestries,



Alex Friedman, PINK FLIPS WITH RED JAZZ  
9" X 9" 2002

it seemed that modern tapestry artists were exploring different materials, mixing weft sizes, using a mix of setts, adding different materials such as metal, wood, glass, etc. and combining techniques. And it was being treated not only as wall hanging but sometimes it was in the round or off the floor.

At the beginning of the 2000s, she produced about 10 small tapestries with portions that flipped out from the surface. Although pleased with their success, she still realized they were limited in size because of the nature of the materials and the demands of gravity on them if large scale. Also she hesitated to make pieces that might require special care in handling. So the challenge was abandoned for a while even though the conviction that there was a solution to achieving more dimensionality lingered in her mind.

It was during this gestation period that the phrase that tapestry should be about textile registered with her. She started by contemplating wool and yarn, drawing until she had captured the nature of wool plied and formed into a skein and created a cartoon that began the Flow series. It was 2005 by then, and she was back in the Bay area with room to weave.

For the first piece she chose to angle the weft along the lines of the cartoon representing the direction of the plies instead of building the twists of yarn on the horizontal plane. The unexpected result of that decision was dramatic after the first tapestry was cut from the loom. The flat skeins of the cartoon contort-

ed and bulged. It was then that she understood in practical terms what eccentric weft could do. Here was the solution for her earlier quest, and as a bonus, she also observed that its contrast with the flat parts of the tapestry increased the dynamic effect. Alex had not considered this as the specific technique called wedge weave but simply chose to let the passes move along the diagonals as drawn. It had most in common with the way Sylvia Heyden created the very fluid imagery of her early eccentric weft pieces except that Sylvia (and others) worked out a way for the structure to lie flat, which could be why Alex did not see the connection to this style.

All the backgrounds in the series allude to traditional discontinuous, weft faced weaving with diagonal breaks and each adds to the effectiveness of the concept. Flow 1 had an additional element of squares to the side of the three skeins that, as Alex must have surmised, diminished the potency of the convoluted surface. The squares are attractive elements, but they do not add to her message. The focus on the skeins comes across much more clearly in the second and third images. FLOW 3 (See TT Winter 2008) has a fine balance between the vibrant golden diamonds and the yarn, which seems to hang free to curl in the air.



Alex Friedman BOUND, 45" x 35" 2007  
Photo by Kate Cameron

continued...

BOUND is a fourth tapestry in which she uses the eccentric weft technique. (See ATA artist pages for FLOW I, 2 and BOUND) Woven before Flow 3, it is the first in this style to use color to add contrast between background and its central structure, which is very sculptural and weighty in form. The decorative elements behind the massive column serve in this piece as a horizontal counterbalance and, like the colored surface of FLOW 3, enhance the liveliness of the convoluted and bound object. The bold configuration could be a fabric that was rolled and tied, then when set on end, slumps into this random position—or maybe an immense rock formation that time and gravity have shaped.

Alex says she has a whole notebook filled with ideas waiting to be tried. The pieces do need extra attention in packing and exhibiting since the 3D parts can be crushed or crumpled if not properly handled. She is not deterred though, explaining that: "I decided to work with the problems as they develop and to see where the rest of my exploration goes."

## About my work

By Aino Kajaniemi

I like drawing and weaving. I like black lines on white, and white lines on black and the tones between them. I like things that include contrasts.

I am interested in photos showing stopped moments in magazines, books and home albums. There is something about the posture or facial expression of a human in relation to its environment that can create a memory or an association in my mind to something I have experienced. I use limitless amounts of pictures as material to my advantage; I combine and eliminate pictures in my own creations.

I weave narratives using a tapestry technique in which a human is in the middle of life's complexity and multi-layerism, including contrasts and controversies. I aspire for a little bit of order in the middle of a chaotic world.

I make pictures from small, concrete things, moments and atmospheres in a human's life so that they form a metaphor of something greater in my mind. I would like to achieve even more with small gestures. In many images I search for an emotion: longing, insecurity, fear, jealousy, joy, guilt, shame, success, the difficulty of communication and co-existence. In addition to a human there is some symbol in

a picture that completes the story through the viewer's imagination. The symbol can be a plant, an animal or an ornament. I am also interested in objects designed to veil and decorate humans, such as dresses, socks, shoes, gloves, belts, scarves, collars, hats or capes, laces and pleats. They can protect or reveal, chain or cheer up. Because one essential feature of textile art is to appeal to the tactile sense, these well-known objects that are close to skin are naturally associated to tapestry.

I make small and large tapestries. The small ones always include a human and the tones are black, white, grey. They form, as in an assembled comic book or diary, a story about my life. Small size is intimate; one must see close, come close.

In the larger pictures I deal with colour. The tapestries do not have a story; the colour and the lines create the content. With the lines I build a view of the world to my liking; between the lines I colour the world the way I want just like in colouring books in my childhood. In my opinion colours are filled with emotion, energy and power. In these tapestries the subject isn't the most important thing. It can be a starting point involving the history of nature or textile, for example the Tapisserie-series, homage to older tapestries.

The most difficult thing is to start. Routines help me to take a pen to my hand and sit down by the handloom. To start the drafting is the most agonizing part. I can sit at my desk for half a day rolling my pen before I discover a new idea. I take a picture that has been bothering me as a starting point. The most impressive thing about it can be the expression or posture of the person or even the profile of the skirt. When I find the idea, I draw multiple sketches at the same time. I also often vary the same subject. I do



Aino Kajaniemi, UNDERSTANDING, 12" X 16"  
(30 x 40 cm) 2006, linen, cotton, wool, hair

not immediately carry out all the sketches but leave them waiting. I can continue drawing them after several years.

There is a perfect sketch for each of my tapestries. I put the paper draft behind the warp of the handloom and follow the figure as I weave. Only when the drawing changes into a tapestry do the threads, the lines begin to live and the surfaces get depth. As a material textile, it brings

softness and optimism to the picture. At this point I choose the colours, tones and materials of the threads. Weaving is about making decisions; do I combine threads to form different tones or use original colours, do I want the surface to be shiny or rough, do I create structure and effects using thicker materials? Do I want the tissue to be dense so that it cloaks the warp threads or should the texture of the tapestry stand out or the fabric become almost transparent?

Nowadays I get all of my threads from flea markets. That way surprising tones and materials appear in my colour pallet. Weaving is also finding; even though I have practiced this technique for over 30 years, I am not in complete control of the threads. Chance has its role: for example when I weave a face, the threads may position themselves so that a smile turns into sorrow or anger becomes joy.

The execution demands relaxing and trusting the threads and technique. The materials and my handloom are not a challenge but a work partner. Every now and then after I have made a decision, the threads and technique set the limits; then you just have to see the opportunity and a different solution that the new situation brings.

In both the sketching and the execution I want the work to have large surfaces and smaller details. Like in life, tapestries have different levels, entities and little moments and events. These different areas emphasize the nature of each other like sensitivity and clumsiness, intimacy and space. I back this idea up in the process by choosing different materials in a tapestry, ranging from thin weaving thread to thick, unhandled hemp and jute fibers. In the most intense areas, like faces, I use thinner threads, but, for example, an eye needs at least three threads of different thickness to look alive. Because technique and materials require



Aino Kajaniemi, THINGS I NEVER DID, 2007

concentration, I have faded colours out of my smaller tapestries. Tones, the co-existence of lines and surfaces and the different essences of materials are enough to create the right atmosphere.

I build texture with the help from a pattern starting from the bottom corner and progressing in the order the lines and surfaces determine. Sometimes the edge of the fabric can even go at an angle

of 70 degrees if the pattern requires that. Because I use an upright loom and not a frame, I use pedals so that I do not have to pick up the leases. In my opinion this frees me to concentrate on what matters: being expressive and the choices it requires. I attach the weft to the structure with an ordinary fork. Sometimes I feel like being a solid part of my handloom. The connection occurs in many ways: my feet pedal, eyes watch, brains decide and hands interknit.

I am happy that I have found weaving; no other technique contains similar history that is recognizable all over the world. With tapestry weaving I can express all emotions from sensitiveness to fear and brutality.

In talking about my work, Hannu Castrén, a visual artist and art critic comments:

A line serves many functions in the picture: it outlines figures, specifies details, creates vibrant dynamics and finishes the state of mind contained in the picture. In other words, everything begins with sketching. And everything also culminates in it. In Kajaniemi's tapestries a line dominates the whole. The line is not, however, a visual authority but a sensitive plot-weaver and a tireless sentimentalist.

The tapestries are very graphic. When the artist chooses her sketching tool, such as a pencil, a charcoal or drawing ink, she has an idea of a certain kind of a line, as each tool creates, after all, a different type of line. The line in the tapestry is therefore unique, and it is precisely this uniqueness that Kajaniemi has developed to accord with her pictorial and emotional world. (Elina Puranen and Hannu Castrén, *Telos Portfolio Collection Vol 39:Aino Kajaniemi*)

## Structure and Surface

By **Fiona Hutchison**

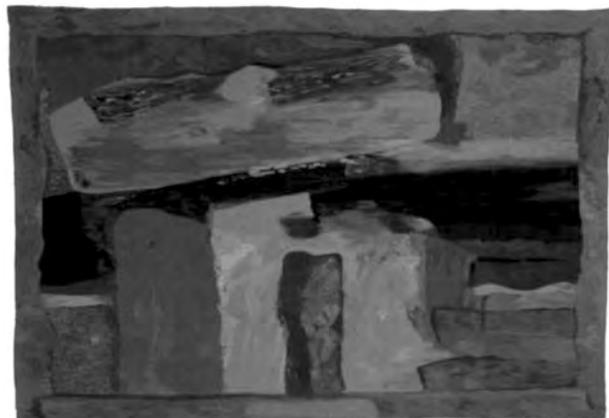
Tapestry can be monumental or miniature, figurative or abstract, highly textured or have delicate jewel like surfaces. It can even be sculptural and 3D, but above all it must be true to itself and not be an impersonator of other mediums. The possibilities within this medium are endless. For me it is the surface of tapestry that gives it its truly expressive quality.

The process of tapestry weaving fascinates me, the building up of a structure of warp and weft. When constructed with a variety of materials, natural or man-made, traditional or experimental, each contributes its own surface and character. A structure produced under tension will relax when cut from the loom and take on its new identity. Tapestry is an art form that can command a presence, a physical presence that no other art form has.

Developing a personal language was foremost in my training at Edinburgh College of Art. The ideas and what you had to say with your work were paramount. As with any creative process you must be true to your self, work with what you know and understand, and then it will have a more powerful voice.

The images I create are immensely personal; they come from my life experiences, loves and interests. For me the subject is the sea and my relationship with it. My work carries no great message or story but expresses this deep and personal relationship with the sea. Living in Scotland we are never more than 50 miles from the ocean, so it is not surprising that it is ever present in our lives. I was brought up near the historic harbour of Newhaven, a part of the city of Edinburgh where the Carrack or Great Ship "The Great Michael" was built for King James IV in 1504. I have been a keen sailor for many years, and this perhaps begins to explain the close bond I have with the sea.

There are many stages in the birth of a tapestry. The relatively slow building process requires much thought and planning. Ideas, designs and process must be thoroughly resolved before starting, and for me careful planning is essential. Effective planning allows flexibility and the confidence to engage freely with the materials and the process of making. But the first stage in this process is finding your inspiration and creative voice.



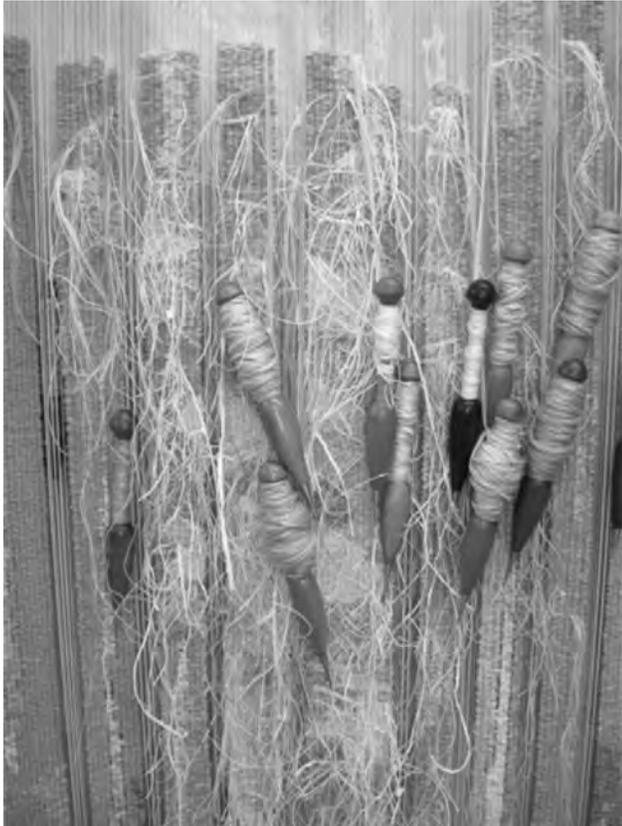
Fiona Hutchison, SEA DOOR, 59" x 42"  
(150cm x 107cm) 1993

From inspiration to design can take anything from 6 months to 2 years. The process starts with research: from personal experiences to drawing and photography, reading poetry, history, travellers tales, anything that is related to my subject (and if it is a commission, the subject the client has chosen). With all this information I begin to build the images, producing a series of small studies and paintings. A selection of these paintings will be placed on my studio wall where I take time to contemplate their qualities, deciding which I will evolve into tapestry. They will be the foundations for a body of work, a collection that will develop over a period of 6 or 7 years.

To help me make these decisions I begin to weave samples, exploring the colours, marks and textures that I see in the paintings. I take time to experiment with a range of weaving materials, traditional and non-traditional, anything that I feel will give me the desired surface effect. Natural materials are my starting point, wool, cotton, linen and sisal, but I am continually manipulating these to change their handling qualities. Playing with materials is important and many new ideas are discovered by accident. This sampling and playing will help me to decide the size and scale of the work. It is often the smallest painting that I will develop into the largest tapestries.

The tapestry SEA DOOR was inspired by a Scottish poet George Makay Brown. It is woven on a black mohair warp at 8 epi and weft of wool, cotton, and linen - very painterly in style. One of the reasons I started to go to a much more textured surface with my work was because everyone thought this piece was a painting. It just goes to show what you can do with tapestry.

Between 1998 and 2000 I developed and exhibited a series of large tapestries "Sea Journey - Scottish Collection" that were bold in design, strong in colour and rich in surface texture (First solo show 1998 at PatrioHall Gallery and 1999 Firth Gallery, Edinburgh). These works were an exploration of the surface textural qualities that could be achieved in tapestry weaving and a reaction to my earlier more painterly style of SEA DOOR.



Fiona Hutchison, OVER FALLS on the Loom, detail, overall image 95" x 20" (240 x 50cm)

For example in the tapestry MORNING PASSAGE the image is of a solid harbour wall offering safety and security to the seafarer. By exploiting the rich textural qualities of dyed spun sisal, I hope to heighten the feeling of structural strength, security and safety. The tactile qualities of this work were inspired by the original surfaces in the painting (layers of collaged paper on acrylic paint) and interpreted by building the shredded and deconstructed sisal into the surface of the tapestry.

Recent trips to Japan led me to explore the possibilities of creating a lighter, more delicate quality within large-scale tapestry in "Water Marks - Japanese Collection." These works have been refer-

encing the surface and flow of water. In HOW CALM THE WILD WATER and WHERE TWO TIDES MEET I have altered the characteristics of the yarns by treating them with paint and PVA glue and combining them with paper, monofilament (fishing line) and linen threads, before weaving them into the tapestry as floating wefts. (See the ATB7 Catalogue and *Tapestry Topics* January 2009) This gave me the light linear qualities of my design drawing, but meant they were still an integral part of the tapestry structure.

As a creative person it is important for me to be continually pushing the boundaries of my work, whether it is the subject, the materials or technique. I do not want to be identified and defined by the medium, the process or indeed the historical definition of tapestry. As far as I am concerned there is no material, process or technique that is out of bounds. If it catches my imagination and I can engage with it, I will explore it, manipulate and exploit it to suit my work. No matter the range and variety of materials and techniques I investigate, I am a tapestry weaver at heart and will always come back to that structure of warp and weft. A selection of my work can be seen on [www.fionarhutchison.me.uk](http://www.fionarhutchison.me.uk) or in the *Telos, Art Textiles of the World* - GB book 3

## Beneath and Hidden

By Pascale de Coninck

More often than not what you see is not what is. I am frequently amazed at the difference between our first perceptions or impressions of other people and who they really are. Seemingly old people might be very young inside, young people very old. People who seem different or interesting can be very shallow and everyday people can have tremendous depth. We easily categorize people with the first image we receive, or we send an image of ourselves that categorizes us but is not necessarily who we are.

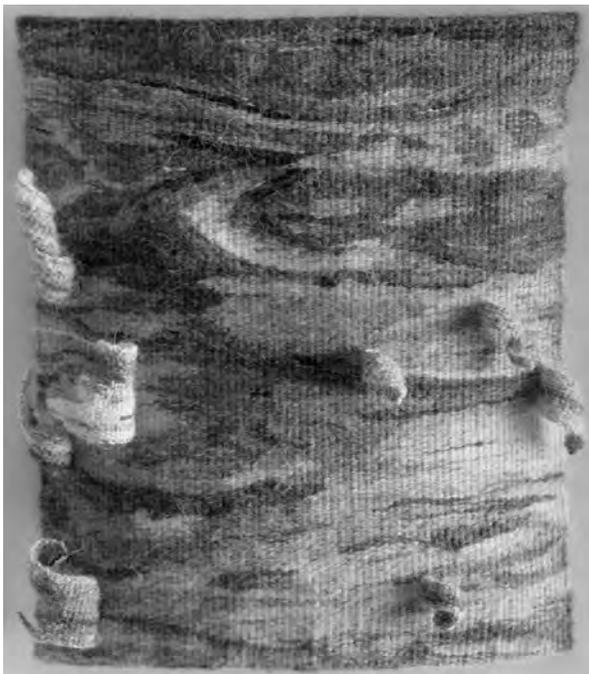
Often I wish I could see underneath the top layer. By being open and not letting the first images stop us from really listening and seeing, we get to know the people around us, thereby peeling off the layers to reveal the hidden qualities beneath.

On a walk with my friend in a beautiful woods, we came across a group of silver birches. They were old and incredibly silver and had peeled a lot. When we think of silver birches we expect to find white, silver and grey tones. But looking closer at the curling

continued...



Pascale De Coninck, HIDDEN, 7.75" X 6.5"  
(20 cm x 17 cm)



Pascale De Coninck, BENEATH  
8.5" x 7.5" (22 cm x 19cm)

peels, I discovered under the raised edges an amazing orange, yellow and even pink colour: all quite strong, fresh and contrasting to the silver grey of the top layers of the bark.

I chose to weave a close view of this shedding bark as an expression of the layers in people and the surprise of finding other bright colours underneath. I started looking at other trees and found a couple more that were hiding amazing colours and decided to weave two tapestries based on the barks of these trees, calling one BENEATH and the other one HIDDEN.

One of the main characteristics of weaving, namely that you construct the fabric as you are creating the image, allows you to build in different directions or to work in 3 dimensions by adding layers. Since layers are the main theme of these two pieces, I decided to use the possibilities that working with a warp and a weft gives me.

I worked out on paper what I wanted the tapestries to look like when finished, so I just had to find a technique to achieve this with the weaving. Since the process is mainly connecting warp threads to each other with weft threads, there had to be a way to attach the layers so that they were part of the whole woven structure rather than attached afterwards.

For the peels of BENEATH, I needed to discover a method for weaving very small flaps with selvages. The pieces were going to be too small to sew in the warp threads to finish the edges. On top of that I needed to find a way of attaching them to the tapestry so that they could be seen as splitting away, showing the oranges on one side and the silver on the other. The peels also had to curl.

The Helen Banes' technique for tapestry jewelry in which a warp goes back and forth around pins in the form you are making came to mind. I experimented with the method and decided to weave the small peels with 3 selvages. I wove the pieces with long strands of weft, letting a tail hang out at the fourth edge, weaving 4 picks and letting the rest hang out as well. This gave me a fourth selvedge with long wefts hanging out. These wefts were used to weave the sections on the main tapestry where the peels needed to be attached, giving continuation of colour from bark to peel as well as an invisible anchor. Before I wove the peels into the tapestry, I pulled the wefts slightly which made them curl.

HIDDEN needed a totally different approach. For this piece I wanted two large layers curling out from top to bottom. The layers needed to be thinner and finer than the main part but the lines and colours needed to run smooth-

ly from the one to the other and the layers would not meet in a straight line. I ended up weaving the back surface on one frame and the first of the two layers on a separate smaller frame with a finer warp. I attached the smaller frame on top of the larger one and wove both layers together until about a centimeter above the joining line after which I cut the fine warps and knotted them at the back of the piece. This whole procedure was repeated for the second layer.

The unique character of the images came about because I had the possibility of altering the flat surface of the tapestry. Besides the layers, the handspun yarns and the fact that they are textiles also help to create the feel and the texture of the bark. The layers, because of being a textile, behave very much like the real bark peels. No other medium would have given me the same result. I wonder what other possibilities lay hidden in the warp and wefts.

## ATB7 Artist Maximo Laura

By Linda Rees

Assessing the appeal of a work of art is a very subjective activity and I suspect that even within the individual viewer, what appears attractive is not predictable from year to year. Collectively, too, we change through the decades, if not yearly. I had spent time with the "American Tapestry Biennial 7" catalog long before having the opportunity to visit the exhibit at the Scarfone/Hartley Gallery in Tampa last summer. But being familiar with the pictured images did not prepare me for my responses to the work when it was in front of me.

Of most surprise was my reaction to the Maximo Laura tapestry, CAMINO ARDIENTE A LA LUZ. Despite being a colorist at heart and naturally drawn to expressive displays of color, I am a minimalist and my soul resides in a place of simplicity. I had no tools for connecting to the exotic image in the catalog. But when I got up close to the tapestry hanging in the gallery, I was captured by its texture. It was as if the balance between plain weave and highly elaborated areas of soumak formed pathways for me to enter the visual action. I could look at individual creatures, see each shape as an entity emerging from a more predictable background and absorb the tangible richness of the surface.



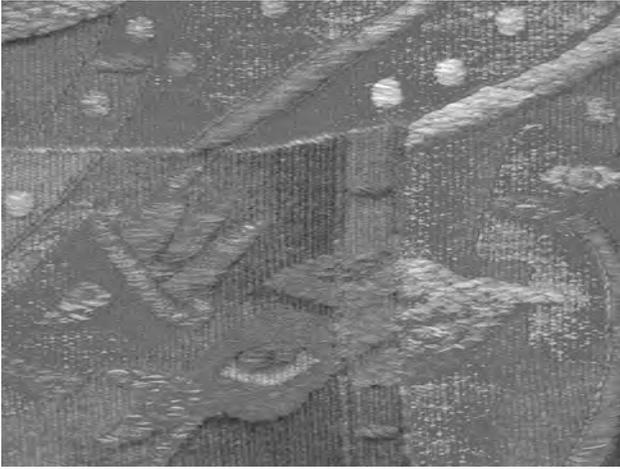
Maximo Laura, CAMINO ARDIENTE A LA LUZ, 47" X 93"  
photo by Humberto Valdivia

What I also interpreted from the image in front of me was clear evidence of a passion for the process that went into the creation of the tapestry. It revealed an involvement with movement that relied on boldly applied vertical soumak, brocade-like horizontal soumak and the creation of patterns by alternating sections of flat weave with raised areas.

The November-December, 2006 issue of *Fiberarts* magazine has an excellent account by D. Wood that gives a well rounded picture of Maximo, his life, connection to his Peruvian culture, both ancient and contemporary, and his passions, such as wanting to be a poet. There are also many sources of information about him easily available online, including his commentary about the inspirations for his symbolism on a You Tube video produced by Anne M. Schewe of AMS Imports (<http://www.amsimports.com/>), and many pictures of his vast number of tapestries from various gallery web sites.

I remembered my vivid response to the surface of CAMINO ARDIENTE A LA LUZ and a conversation I had with Janet Austin in Tampa last summer. She had attended a presentation by Maximo the previous year, so I contacted her recently for more details about his manner of weaving to achieve such textural effect.

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Maximo Laura, *MIRADA ESPIRITUAL DEL ANDES*, detail, photo courtesy of AMS Imports

Jan's primary interaction with Maximo happened when Anne Schewe of AMS Imports, a major facilitator in the US for his work, invited members of the TWiNE group to a luncheon and showing of his work. Her lasting impression was that "he was a man who loved to get his hand between the warps." He was quick witted and eager to share his enthusiasm for the process. He designs the cartoons, but the tapestries are woven by local people that he has meticulously trained in his style. About 50 people work at a variety of tasks in his studio, which takes up the lower two floors of his house. Above this, two or more floors provide living quarters for about 20 or so of the workers who are also relatives.

Jan explained that the weavers work with large bundles of yarn for the soumak sections, using a fairly hefty weight and always in a range of color grades, carrying the bundle over several warps before looping it behind varying numbers of warps. He works with different setts depending on the effect to be achieved. Text on the AMS Imports website mentions that beside traditional Aubusson techniques and soumak, he uses an Andean form of looping called Anillado. The overall surface of the plain weave is fairly coarse too, with all wefts being a combination of at least 4 relatively thick yarns of varying colors. The yarns are dyed at the studio, and the gradations are calculated with precise formulas to his specifications.

Maximo is involved in all stages of the weaving, but his main impetus is to create a "perfect painting" to use for the cartoon. He loved to paint as a child, creating a mural on the wall of his family's house at age 9, and he applied for entrance to his local art

school, the Escuela de Bellas Artes de Ayacucho, but was turned down because he was only 12 years old at the time. Despite not being accepted, he attended classes there anyway, without getting credits. In a blog commentary by Lauren Hodges about photographer Arrow Ross, she mentions that Ross was frustrated when trying to talk to Maximo Laura about one of his paintings because all Maximo wanted to talk about was the tapestry that would result from it. (Hodges, "The Mystery of History: Arrow Ross debuts his photo journal of Peruvian Weavers" March 11, 2009) The photographer also discussed seeing the "butterfly room" where the yarn combinations were being assembled and made into butterflies for pieces in progress.

One comment that Jan made about Maximo Laura's tapestries in our recent conversation was that she had the opposite reaction as mine upon actually seeing the first of his tapestries in person: the texture almost was a distraction. She was so enthralled with his connection to his cultural mythology and his imaginative expressiveness, that to elaborate the surface seemed superfluous. Needless to say, we bring our own biases to the experience of understanding a work of art. Fortunately CAMINO ARDIENTE A LA LUZ, which I choose to interpret as Intense Path of Light (combining all the meanings of ardent) presents plenty of visual appeal for viewers of whatever ilk.

## **ATA Study Groups: Text, Art, Shelters and Bottle Tops**

**By Dorothy Clews**

There were two ATA study groups in 2008-09, one facilitated by Sharon Marcus about decoration and subversion in art, and the other by Dorothy Clews discussing materials and structure in art. Participants in both groups had the opportunity to choose a reading about an artist's work; the group then put forward various questions to promote discussion and further questions.

Artists chosen were varied and while there was a bias towards textiles, artists Barbara Todd, with Lucy and Jorge Orta, who made a series of fabric shelters in the Antarctic as part of a large installation were discussed. Artists using textile techniques or forms but using other media, included El Anatsui who creates tapestry-like artworks out of metal beer tops. Artists using other art forms were also studied, including

Janet Lawrence whose paintings and photographs on glass were placed amongst living trees outside a gallery with installations of plant forms in glass vessels, and Jennifer Angus who uses thousands of insects. Text was a recurring theme in the works of Sharon Marcus, Wronsov (aka Otto von Busch) and Elaine Reichek.

Themes raised included time and labour, women's work, feminism, beauty, art history, as well as references to indigenous art. The issue of whether certain work could be considered art, or just political statements/propaganda, was also discussed.

The current study groups will finish in July/August. Registration for the next session will start in August. Anyone who is interested in suggesting future themes/subjects or in facilitating a study group please contact Dorothy Clews on adsl8633@tsn.cc

## **Maria Estela Serafini (8-23-1948 - 4-2-2009)**

**By Jan Austin**

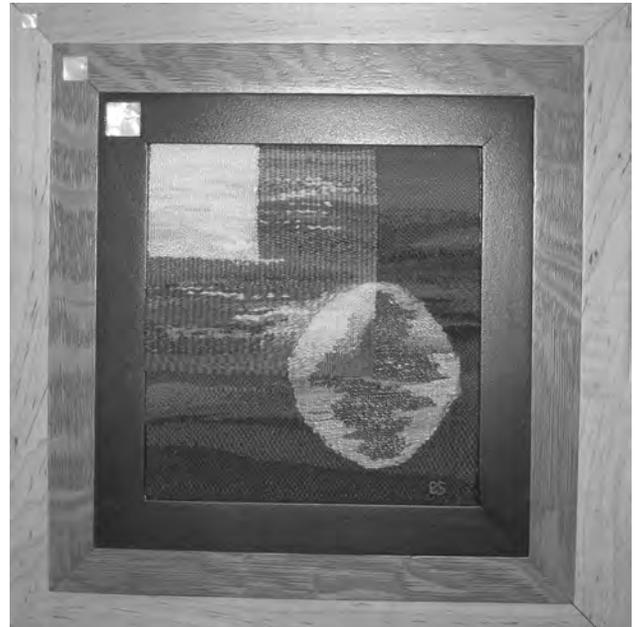
Maria Estela Serafini died on April 2, 2009, surrounded by her family in Westford, Massachusetts, after a battle with cancer. She was born in Cordoba, Argentina, and was married for almost 40 years to Eduardo Acosta. She is also survived by her two sons and two grandsons.



Estela learned to weave tapestries at La Rueca, the studio of Gabriela Szamrey in Cordoba. She and Eduardo arrived in Massachusetts in 2001 to be closer to their grown sons, and she promptly joined TWiNE (Tapestry Weavers in New England).

At her first TWiNE meeting, Estela asked "What is this 'ends per inch?'" She had learned to weave on a picture frame with tiny nails on the top and bottom and lots of fine cotton warps. Without any shedding mechanism, she was free to use various setts within the same tapestry, sometimes weaving over one under one, other times weaving over 3 under 3, thus achieving wonder-

ful variations in texture using just a long tapestry needle. In a lovely musical reference, Estela called this "Changing the Rhythm," and it's something that happened quite naturally in her tapestries. She was unconstrained by the concept of "ends per inch," and we were intrigued by these tapestries that were like nothing we had ever seen before.



Estela Serafini, GEOMETRIZING CONCEPTS, Wool, cotton, wire, 7 x 6 1/2 inches, 2002 Photo: Barbara Burns

Eduardo was her collaborator and made the custom frames and mounts from wood, copper, plexi-glass, or whatever materials he and Estela felt were perfect for each tapestry. Estela told me that she always had to include one of these 3 materials in each tapestry: silver, mother of pearl, or copper.

Estela received the ATA Award of Excellence for her tapestry UNFINISHED DREAM at "New England Tapestry 2004." This tapestry portrays La Isabela, her home in Argentina. (See *Tapestry Topics* Winter, 2004)

In January 2007, Estela exhibited her work at the Winchester (MA) Public Library, and a small group of TWiNE members met her there. She described an interaction in which a woman dragged her over to a tapestry to show her the little part of it that had moved her almost to tears. Estela said, in wonder, "I don't know what it was that moved her so much about that part of it, those particular threads." "You

continued...

wove that tapestry from your heart and it spoke to her heart," suggested Eve Pearce. Estela replied that she wove with her gut; when a tapestry was finished she would be exhausted; her arms, her legs, even her HAIR felt tired. It was not only tapestry: Estela approached every aspect of her life with complete devotion. We all remember her emails that said "I hug you with my heart," and there was never a doubt in any of our minds that she really meant it.

Estela's name suited her perfectly: she twinkled just like a star. Her energy and joy were infectious, irresistible. I asked TWiNE members to help me describe her, and it is amazing how similar the descriptions are. Tamar Shadur wrote: "I don't think I saw Estela more than three or four times, but it seemed as if we'd known each other a whole life time because of her warmth, lovely smile, and giving personality." Michelle Mancini summed up with this observation: "When I think of Estela, my heart warms and I see her beautiful smile." We all miss her terribly, but in the middle of all this sadness, the memory of her smile will always lift our spirits. We were so lucky to have known her.

## The ATA Award

By Merna Strauch

The ATA Award of Excellence was bestowed on Margaret Swanson at the recent biennial conference of the Association of Southern California Handweavers (ASCH) in Riverside, California.

Margaret loves watching the sailboats in the marina near her Coronado home (near San Diego) and was inspired by them to weave her winning piece, RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET, a 15" x 19" tapestry woven on a cotton warp with hand dyed wool weft. She works mostly from photos and weaves one or two tapestries a year.

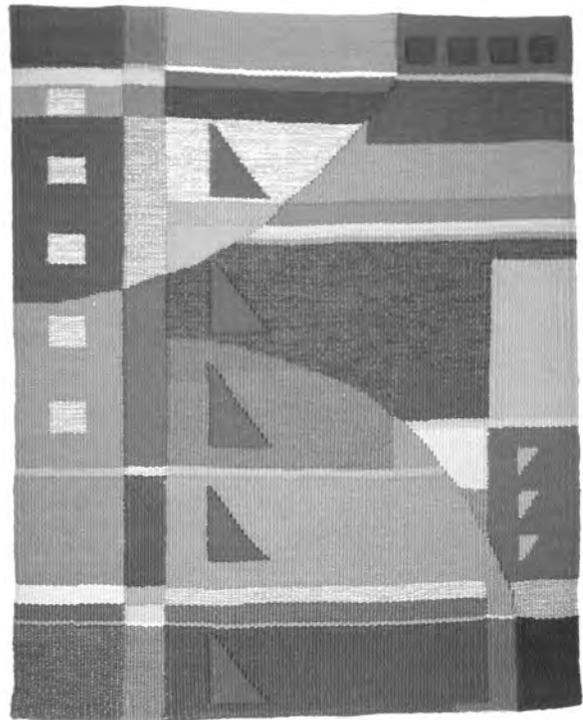
Margaret says: Weaving has been a consuming hobby of mine for over 30 years. I have been self taught, have taken classes at Syracuse University and from several well known weaving instructors intermittently over the years. I have for the past 10-12 years focused mostly on tapestry after developing an enduring love of Navajo

weaving. Much of my tapestry weaving has been developed along those lines with color fields and geometric forms. Early in my tapestries I constrained myself using only natural colored wool, but as the years have passed, I have grown to love and work with deep concentrated colors.

Those deep concentrated colors usually come from Margaret's own dyepots and are inspiration in themselves. Her next tapestry, still in the thinking stage, could be an abstract Bird of Paradise flower. New colors need to be dyed and photos need to be taken.

Margaret is an eclectic weaver. She loves the whole gamut of styles, and has belonged to guilds in Syracuse, NY, and Estes Park and Boulder, CO. Currently, she belongs to the San Diego Creative Weavers' Guild and is part of their Tapestry Art Network.

Congratulations, Margaret!



Margaret Swanson, RED SAILS IN THE SUNSET,  
15" x 19" May 2007,  
Cotton warp, wool weft, hand dyed

## Volunteers Make it Happen: Elaine Duncan

Compiled by Ronda Karliukson

It was such a pleasure to interview Elaine. Elaine weaves everyday. She says a day without weaving is like a day without sunshine! Elaine is going to respond to my questions in her own words. Here is Elaine's response to my questions:

I live in a small rural community called Errington to the west of Parksville on Vancouver Island, B.C. Canada. This area is well known for its artists, crafts-people, musicians and actors.

In 1968 I attended Oregon State University in Corvallis to study Clothing and Textiles. I started weaving on a dare. A young chemistry graduate student came to class one day wearing a handwoven, fine wool, twill, tartan shirt. He said that he wove the fabric and his mother had sewn it. Immediately I wanted to weave. I signed up for a beginners weaving class in the fall of 1969 and never looked back. My teacher was Jean Scorgie. I have never seen my chemistry friend since, but Jean and I have been great friends for the past 39 years.

I have been intrigued with many forms of weaving. I wove a lot of garments for sale, worked with a Fashion Consultant, and had weavers and sewers work for me, all passing phases. Tapestry has held my interest since the beginning. Each pass of the weft creates new decisions and challenges. That is what I love about tapestry. There will always be new things to learn, new images to weave, new threads to try. I am constantly engaged with the design and the process.

Everything inspires me - nature, people, authors, colours, poetry, songs, travel. I get so excited as I see

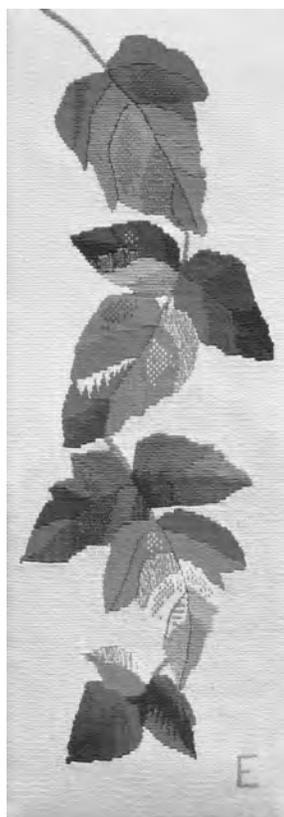


Elaine Duncan, LA MADRE DEL MAIZ

the potential of a tapestry in things around me. Images evoke feelings and feelings evoke images.

Weaving has been my pathway and my life for the past four decades. I have met and studied with wonderful people: Archie Brennan, Susan Martin-Maffei, Jean Pierre Larochette, Yael Lurie, James Koehler, Sarah Swett, and I feel blessed to know them and their work. I have traveled to study tapestry and have made many friends. Weaving tapestry has made me grow spiritually. It is the meditative process of being in the moment. It has filtered into other aspects of my life.

I became aware of ATA in 1992. I traveled to Washington, DC, for an HGA Convergence and saw wonderful tapestries at the Textile Museum. I attended an ATA presentation and slide show of the members' work. I was very impressed. Until two years ago I paid my membership, read the newsletters and looked at the website. But in the Fall of 2006, Joan Griffin asked if I would be interested in heading up the new PR/Public Relations committee. I thought perhaps I would volunteer and give back to this organization. This has been a steep learning curve for me, which I am enjoying. ATA volunteers and board members are a great group of very hard working and dedicated people. Not only do they devote a lot of personal time to the organization but they weave tapestries as well.



Elaine Duncan, LOGAN  
BERRY LEAVES

## Members News

ATA would like to send a heart felt thank you to all of our Valentines who so generously responded to our February fundraiser. Your expressions of "love" raised a total of \$1,500 for future programming. We would list your names, but you know who you are - you are angels! (xxoo!)

## Kudos

Compiled by **Merna Strauch**

Send Items to: [mstrauch@mac.com](mailto:mstrauch@mac.com)

"Portraits in Tapestry" by **Barbara Burns** is showing at Maine Fiberarts, [www.mainefiberarts.org](http://www.mainefiberarts.org), 13 Main Street, Topsham, ME 04086, through the end of June. On Sunday, May 31, there will be a gallery talk at 1:30 and a reception following from 2:30 to 4pm. To see more of Barbara's work, visit <http://www.burns-studio.com/>

**Anne Jackson's** WITCH-HUNT: MALEFICIUM (IN MEMORIUM), is touring Europe as part of the European Tapestry Forum exhibition, "Artapestry 2"; and has been purchased from the exhibition by the Art Endowment of the City of Aalborg, Denmark. The exhibition began in Aalborg, is currently on show in Bergen, Norway, and will be in Angers, France, in December, and in Lulea, Sweden, in spring 2010. Further details from [www.tapestry.dk](http://www.tapestry.dk)



Anne Jackson, WITCH-HUNT: MALEFICIUM (IN MEMORIUM), 72" x 67" (1800 x 1700cm), 2007.

This solo accomplishment is part of Anne's "current labor of love, looking at all the attitudes to witchcraft, as metaphor for crime or whatever we have had over the centuries."

**Joan Griffin** had two small tapestries purchased for the Stafford Hospital Center in Stafford, VA. This is a new facility which features all original art work throughout the hospital.

**Judy Schuster's** multi-media portrait piece, ODYSSEUS AND THE SIRENS, was accepted among very tight competition in "Beadwork VI: The Beaded Book." The exhibit was showing at Bead Fest Santa Fe, March 12th to 15th, and Bead Fest Philadelphia, August 21st to 23rd. The works will be published in the June/July issue of "Beadwork" magazine, and in early May can be viewed in the online gallery at [beadworkmagazine.com](http://beadworkmagazine.com).

**Klaus Anselm's** tapestries can be seen in a solo show titled "The Life of Color" until May 9th at the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center in Pueblo, Colorado.

**Barbara Heller** is exhibiting her tapestries "Future Reliquaries," at the Elliott Louis Gallery #1 in Vancouver, B.C, May 5 - 23, 2009, opening reception: May 7, 6:30 - 8:30 PM. Gallery Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM - 6 PM and by appointment. For more information contact Ted Lederer at 604.736.3282 or [gallery@elliottlouis.com](mailto:gallery@elliottlouis.com)

**Yael Lurie and Jean-Pierre Larochette** taught "Shared Experiences," a class for experienced tapestry weavers, at the Conference of Northern California Handweavers in Sonoma in April.

**Suzanne Pretty** is an award winner in "Textile Territory" in downtown Portsmouth, NH, until April 17. Suzanne has 32 pieces, a combination of tapestry and paper weaving, in this ambitious four floor exhibit. The show is all fiber related work including felting, quilting, surface design on fabric and painting of fiber.

"Returning," tapestries by **Valerie Kirk**, was shown February 22 through April 5, at the Sturt Gallery in Mittagong, NSW, Australia. Diana Wood Conroy, Professor of Visual Arts at University of Wollongong gave the opening remarks.

**Beverly Kent** and **Nicki Bair** were winners in the Association of Southern California Handweavers' biennial conference in March. Beverly's THEY GROW BIG ON THE THIRD ROCK took second place in the tapestry division while Nicki's TRICOLOR FUSELLI, a long, pulled-warp spiral, took a first in the multi-dimensional category.

**Ruth Jones** was one of four featured artists in "Let Them Eat Cake" at Gallery Atsui in Vancouver, BC. In conjunction with the exhibit, a series of tea parties was held at the gallery on Saturdays throughout February.



## Call for Entries

### American Tapestry Biennial 8

The American Tapestry Alliance is a not-for-profit, member-supported organization seeking to exhibit the best of contemporary tapestry. Since 1986 ATA has sponsored a biennial, juried exhibition. ATA invites submissions from all tapestry artists for ATB 8.

## Eligibility

Entry to ATB 8 is open to all artists who design and weave their own tapestries (defined as "hand-woven, weft-faced fabric with discontinuous wefts") either individually or collaboratively (all assistants shall be named). Entries must be one-of-a-kind and have been completed after January 2006. Artists may submit two entries for consideration.

## Submissions

- The juror will select tapestries from digital images; image quality may influence the juror's decision. Only completed tapestries will be juried.
- For each entry, submit one file of the full image; jpeg or tif format preferred. In any case, send files that are uncompressed and maximum image quality. Images of selected tapestries will be used to make the catalogue. Image size should be at least 2000 pixels in the longest dimension. This would be about 7" at 300 dpi. The actual dpi of your file is immaterial, as long as the total pixel count in the longest dimension is at least 2000 pixels. No detail shots are needed, as the juror will be able to zoom on the full image.
- Submit your digital file on CD; if two entries are submitted, both may be on the same CD. Discs and files may be formatted for Mac or PC.
- The jury process is anonymous. Please name your file as follows: LastnameFirstNameImage#.jpg (eg: DoeJohn1.jpg). The files will be re-named before sending to the juror. Please do not include your name as part of the tapestry image.
- There is no need to submit a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of the CD; notification will be by e-mail.

## Conditions

- Artists are responsible for all shipping and insurance costs to the first venue and for the return shipping and insurance costs from the final venue.
- Entries not accompanied with the completed form, CD and fees cannot be juried.
- Work that differs significantly from the CD submission will be excluded from the exhibition.
- Complete exhibition instructions will be sent to the accepted artists. Accepted works not completely prepared for installation may be returned.
- Tapestries must be available for the duration of the exhibition until July 2011.

## Juror

**Rebecca A.T. Stevens** Consulting Curator of Contemporary Textiles at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.



**AmericanTapestry Biennial 8 ENTRY FORM**

Calendar and Fees

**Calendar**      **Entry Deadline:** November 30, 2009  
**Jury Notification:** January 30, 2010

**Entry Fees**      **\$35 ATA Members; \$45 Non-Members; \$70 Membership and Entry fee**  
 Payable by check, credit card or by International Money Order  
 Make checks payable to: American Tapestry Alliance

**Credit Card payment:**    \_\_\_ MC    \_\_\_ VISA (check one)    Amount of charge \_\_\_\_\_  
 Card number \_\_\_\_\_    Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail Entry to:**  
 American Tapestry Alliance  
 c/o Michael Rohde  
 986 West Carlisle Road  
 Westlake Village, California 91361 USA  
 Questions: mfrohde@mac.com

- Check list**
- CD
  - Fee
  - Completed Entry Form

*Please make a copy for your own records.*

Entrant

**Entrant Information (please print)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Authorization

**Authorization**

I understand that submission of artwork to ATB8 constitutes my permission for ATA to photograph the work and/or duplicate or reproduce my submitted image(s) for publicity and promotional purposes including the internet.  
 I acknowledge that ATA will allow the public to photograph all ATA exhibits. I agree to these terms.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Entry 1

**1. Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Materials \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dimensions (h x w x d in inches) \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance Value USD \_\_\_\_\_

Entry 2

**2. Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Materials \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dimensions (h x w x d in inches) \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance Value USD \_\_\_\_\_



Nicki Bair, TRICOLOR FUSCELLI, pulled warp tapestry.

## Contact ATA

PO Box 28600 San Jose, CA 95159  
[www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org)

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### Member Chair

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### Education Committee: Distance Learning

Tommye Scanlin [tapestry13@yahoo.com](mailto:tapestry13@yahoo.com)

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

Mary Lane [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com)

### Library Chair, Archives & Slide Registry

Joyce Hayes [joyce.hayes@comcast.net](mailto:joyce.hayes@comcast.net)

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### ATA Awards

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## 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 Ellen Ramsey  
 4911 NE 178th Street  
 Lake Forest Park, WA 98155  
 (206) 440-8903

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Visa/Mastercard number

Exp. Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 card holder's signature

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## Tapestry Topics

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

**Next Deadline: July 15: Exhibits - Our Public Voice.** Presentation and professionalism, pros and cons of various selection procedures, theme shows, and the role of exhibits to promote tapestry are among the topics that could be discussed.

**October 1:** Tips and Tactics.

**January 15:** Proportion.

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: Newsletter committee: Proofreader: Mary Colton, Layout: Elinor Steele, Kudos: Merna Strauch, Distribution: Ellen Ramsey, Online excerpts: Lyn Hart,



Maximo Laura, FIESTA DE LA COSECHA EN LOS ANDES, detail 1, photo courtesy of AMS Imports  
See article on page 15.

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