

**Tapestry Topics**A Selection from  
Spring 2021, Vol. 47 Issue 1**Gallery 2****Mary Lane**

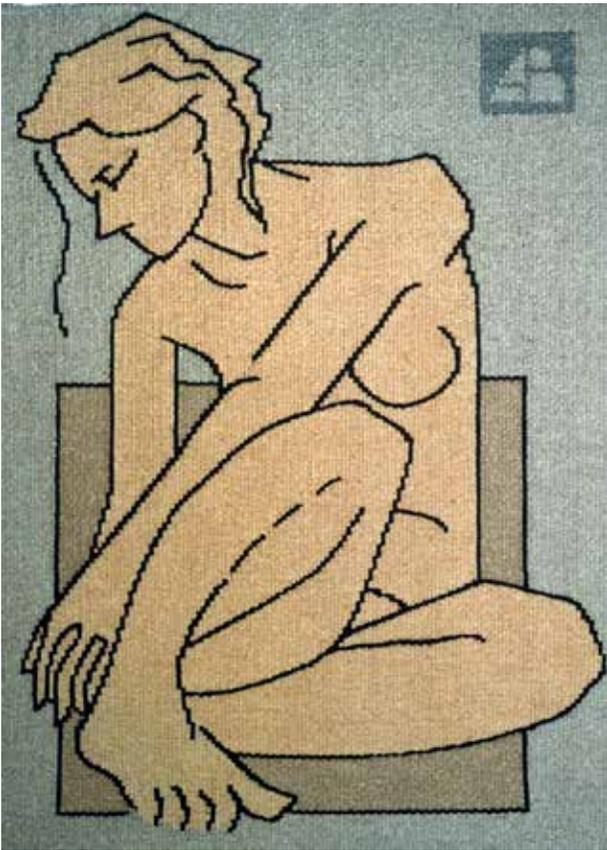
Brennan championed small format tapestries and he used the closer viewing associated with small works to celebrate the woven line and the materials of tapestry weaving. Beautifully accurately woven shapes, whose series of steps coalesce into a smooth line, are spotlighted by strong color contrast, demonstrating Brennan's consummate skill as a weaver. The play of light on "San Diego Woman's" hair is represented by the dots and lines that are the basic marks of tapestry weaving. Slits create subtle lines that add definition to the faces. And, in "Black Eyed Woman," the warp, usually invisible in tapestries, finds its own voice as hair. Brennan's distillation of marks reveals his sophisticated understanding of the medium.



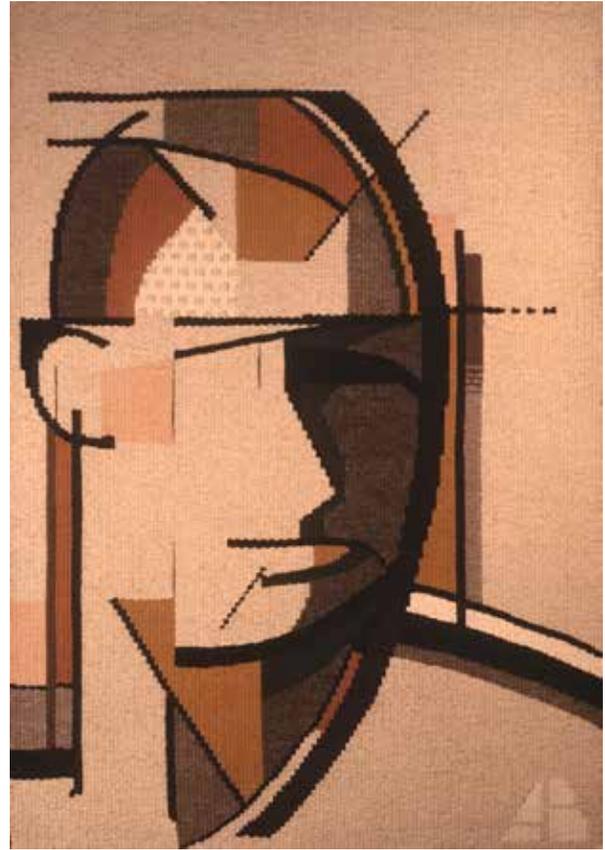
Archie Brennan, "San Diego Woman,"  
4 in x 3 in, 1989,  
photo: Archie Brennan.



Archie Brennan, "Black Eyed Woman 1,"  
4 in x 3 in, 1989,  
photo: Archie Brennan.



Archie Brennan, "Drawing Series XXXIV," 16.26 cm x 12 cm, 2000, photo: Archie Brennan.



Archie Brennan, "Drawing Series XXXV, Butch," 34 cm x 24 cm, 2001, photo: Archie Brennan.

Brennan maintained a life drawing practice throughout his life. He was an excellent draftsman, and it was probably inevitable that some of those drawings would become maquettes for his tapestries. The relationship between the drawing and its rendering in tapestry was very much a two-way street and, as this very large series developed, the grid of weaving seems to have won out. The more rounded shapes of the woman in "Drawing Series XXXI" give way to blocks of flat color, angled lines and stepped curves in "Drawing Series XXXV, Butch." The vertical and horizontal lines that run through Butch's head extend into the background—a reference to the gridded nature of tapestry weave.



Archie Brennan, "Drawing Series XVI, Yellow Door, Red Rug," 30 in x 18 in, 1999, photo: Archie Brennan.

"Drawing Series XVI, Yellow Door, Red Rug" incorporates the features of Brennan's *At a Window Series* into a *Drawing Series* tapestry. The undulations of the curtains are effectively captured despite the fact that the tapestry was woven from bottom to top. Brennan celebrated the steps involved in weaving vertical lines, using dark outlines to call even more attention to them. The rug, whose edges do not recede into space, tilts the perspective plane up while the open door and its angled bottom opens up recessional space. These "contradictions" call attention to the image as an artifact of a set of image making conventions, conventions that are not universal, but vary from culture to culture and across time. The imagery in Brennan's tapestries often engages with the philosophical issues surrounding representation.

The title, "This Rose is not a Pipe," refers to Rene Magritte's painting, "The Treachery of Images (This is Not a Pipe)," in which Magritte reminds us that a painting of a pipe is not a pipe itself. Brennan jokingly tells us that this rose is not a pipe, either. And, although a rose is a rose is a rose may be true, this rose seems to be on its last legs. Or, perhaps, it has cooperated by bowing. For if it were erect, the flower would not be in the picture.



Archie Brennan, "This Rose Is Not a Pipe," 15 in x 7.25 in, 1995, photo: Archie Brennan.