



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

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Tapestry in a Digital World

HONORING TRADITION, INSPIRING INNOVATION

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Cover image: Alistair Duncan, "Interconnection," 2018, photo:
 © Alastair Duncan. Also, BTG Sound and Weave exhibition
 tapestry <https://vimeo.com/317442365>

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Directors' Letter, Fall 2019

Dear ATA Members,

Welcome to this compelling issue of *Tapestry Topics*. Many of us spend our days physically and mentally bouncing between our very tangible looms and our computers that keep us linked to the digital world. It can at times feel like a strange way to live, but we all find ways to embrace both worlds, and there are some amazing things that happen when these two worlds collide. Theme Coordinator Sally Reckert has put together an interesting array of articles that provide us with many insights into working in the digital world.

As usual this is a very active time for ATA. The postcard exchange has been a great event (I know I was thrilled with getting my postcard in the mail!) and we hope that you have all enjoyed seeing the images online even if you didn't participate. **Small Tapestry International 6: Beyond the Edge** is at Augustana College Teaching Museum of Art in Illinois from September 6 - October 12. We hope that many of you have entered **ATB 13** and we all look forward to seeing the show and catalog next year. The Board and other volunteers are already hard at work making sure that our Members Meeting and workshops in Knoxville will be a great success. We hope many of you are planning to join us there next July. And of course, the ever popular unjuried small format exhibition will be on view in conjunction with *Convergence*.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of ATA and we want to especially thank the *Tapestry Topics* team who work so hard to produce these issues, which remain one of the most popular and appreciated perks of ATA membership. Leslie Munro (editor), Robbie LaFleur (copy editor), Patricia Jordan (layout), Pat Williams (proofreader), and Ruth Manning (mailing) are all to be commended for their hours of volunteer service to ATA. We hope that you have noticed the new index for *Tapestry Topics* on the website. A thank-you also goes to volunteer Kim Mumbower for her diligence in compiling the new *Tapestry Topics* index. And finally, we want to thank all of the members who contributed articles and images for this edition of *Tapestry Topics*.

Enjoy!

On behalf of the entire Board,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan".

Susan Iverson
Director at Large, President



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tommye".

Tommye Scanlin
Director at Large

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Tapestry in a Digital World

by Sally Reckert

In the digital age, do we risk losing our haptic senses? Social media is constant, visual, and transient; tapestry is tactile, slow time, and textures that convey stories about how we see the world and the human connections that exist in the objects that we craft.

How are we weavers meeting the challenge of the 21st century digital age?

Why did I want to explore the above theme in Tapestry Topics? I was pessimistic about the future of hand-fabricated art in a virtual space, skeptical about AI and digital technology in tapestry, shocked by the savagery of online bullying, and unwilling to join in the trivia of social media. And yet...

And yet, I have happily used digital technology since Clive Sinclair first introduced his ZX Spectrum computer into the UK in 1982. It was a tool to be mastered and used, no different than the tapestry bobbin in my hand. Today, people just as easily use the smallest digital devices to run their lives. Is using a Jacquard loom so different?



Shelley Socolofsky, work in progress on a Jacquard loom, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky.



Jane Riley, weaving "Kelp," photo: © Becky Sunter.

Online exhibitions can reach out beyond gallery brick walls to show artists' work anywhere in the world. Digital transmission has become a tool that enables artists to reach out to audiences across time and space. Artists can choose whether to weave slowly, their hands shaping the rhythm of the fell line, or they can combine the materiality of the hand-woven with the digitally-woven. AI has opened up new questions on what it means to be human in the 21st century; weavings, however created, can subvert whilst keeping their tactile qualities. Artists have always challenged our thinking of what tapestry should be—the tools they use to do that are the ones that work best for them.

Reading these articles, I'm inspired by the challenging work and the creative intelligence of these weavers as they explore digital technology. And I'm almost won over to dipping my toes into Instagram.



Photo: © Nicholas Reckert.

I'd like to thank Leslie Munro and the team for giving me this opportunity to explore the work of today's tapestry weavers. And, importantly, taking the time to grapple with the thorny issue of ensuring artists' copyrights are respected.

Sally Reckert lives in the English Northern Pennine Dales from where, through her iPad, she: joined in online courses from America; edits the British Tapestry Group magazine *Tapestry Weaver*; sits on the 'Weaving the Future' panel chaired from Australia by Dorothy Clews; and is constantly challenged in all things tapestry by her ATA mentor, Christine Laffer. In real time she has initiated weaving projects with local Young Careers and Syrian refugee children who have now come together in weaving a tapestry for a BTG exhibition, *Fabric of the North* to be held in 2020.

She is the editor of *Tapestry Weaver*, the journal of the British Tapestry Group (BTG). She works with children whenever possible. She was a beneficiary of ATA's "Weaving the Future" grant both as mentor and facilitator. In 2019 she will begin the second phase of tapestry learning with Christine Laffer under ATA's Mentoring Program.



Shelley Socolofsky, studio showing her work in progress on a tapestry loom, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky.



Brita Been, work in progress from the back, showing warp weights, photo: © Brita Been.

Thank You to Our Contributors

Including Sally Reckert, Theme Coordinator

Dorothy Clews emigrated from the UK, lived in outback Queensland, Australia, for the last 30 years, and recently moved to the Wet Tropics in Far North Queensland. Graduating from South West Institute of Technology and Further Education (SWIT), Warnambool, in 1997, she has continued to push the boundaries of tapestry—exploring structure, its textile nature, and the characteristics that endow her tapestries with qualities of fragility, reflecting the land she inhabits.



Stacey Harvey-Brown

weaves, teaches, and writes on weaving from her studio in Gascony, southwest France. She explores tactility in weaving through materials, structures, and finishing techniques. Author of *Honeycomb Hybrids*, she is currently writing a book on stitched double cloth, giving workshops, and exhibiting internationally.



Christine Laffer switched to textiles after studying architecture at the University of Illinois in Chicago. She studied at the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop (1982), the Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins in Paris (1985), and completed her MFA in Spatial Arts at San Jose State University (1995). She continues weaving and teaching tapestry in the San Jose area and through ATA's mentoring program.



Photo: © Mike Rodgers



Line Dufour is an artist and writer. If you would like to participate in the Fate, Destiny and Self Determination installation, and/or subscribe to her newsletter, email Line at linedufour.tapestry@gmail.com. To see her current work, go to www.linedufour.com.

Originally trained in tapestry weaving and design at Cleveland College of Art, **Alastair Duncan** moved to Wales in 1983 where he established a studio. He has completed numerous large-scale commissions for the corporate, private and public sectors in the UK and Ireland, and has exhibited widely in the UK and Europe. He has a solo exhibition of his interactive sound and weave tapestries in June/July, 2020 at Sunbury Embroidery Gallery in Sunbury-on-Thames, London.



Photo: © Hannah Duncan

Rebecca Mezoff teaches tapestry weaving around the United States in workshops and around the world in her online school. Her tapestries can be found in various public and private collections. You can find out more about her online classes and view her work at www.tapestryweaving.com.



Photo: © Cornelia Theimer Gardena

Sandra Martinez and **Wence Martinez** are internationally recognized artists who represent themselves in their gallery, Martinez Studio, in Door County, Wisconsin. Awards include: 2018 United States Artists Fellowship in Collaborative Craft; 2017 Finalist for Rare Craft Fellowship from American Craft Council; 2019 Excellence in Fibers IV: Best in Show for Wall/Floor Works; and 2016 Smithsonian Craft Show, Silver Award for Overall Excellence. Permanent collections include Smithsonian Institution, Museum of Wisconsin Art, and National Museum of Mexican Art.

Wence uses a Nikon 810E. Martinezstudio.com



Shelley Socolofsky is an artist living and working in Portland, Oregon, USA. Informed by long histories of textiles, pattern, and decoration, her work memorializes natural and constructed systems through a digital and haptic practice. Concepts range from examining complexities between built and natural environments

to questioning historical and authoritative narratives surrounding colonial and domestic othering. A recent Fellow of The Civita Institute, with a forthcoming residency at Civita



Photo: © Joaquin Socolofsky

di Bagnoregio, Italy, Socolofsky will create a series of data embedded tapestries from sensory data collected during her stay.



Christine Sawyer lives and works in Exeter, UK. Initially trained in Fine Art, she became “obsessed” with woven tapestry in the mid 1980’s. Drawing, painting, and weaving are intertwined in her practice: they feed each other.

www.axisweb.org/christine_sawyer
christinemsawyer@talktalk.net



Photo: © Louise Scott

EmmaJo Webster is a professional weaver with her own practice based in Glasgow, Scotland. During her career EmmaJo has worked for professional studios and currently is a permanent part time weaver for the Dovecot in

Edinburgh. EmmaJo Webster’s Instagram account is @weavewebster.

Interactive Audience Engagement

by Alastair Duncan

A few years ago, I started thinking about integrating sound with tapestry weaving — an interest that developed from my work in field recording for my StillWalks® business and past experience of directing interactive digital media projects. I was keen to bring the two areas together and prompt the audience to be more directly involved in the work, to take a more active role in their own viewing experience.

This approach to sound recording relates to my interest and enjoyment of the textural and rhythmic aspects of weaving. When listening to the sounds of an environment, or indeed music, I focus on the textures and patterns more than anything else. These aspects of weave and sound are becoming such important elements of the work in both fields that the interconnection of the two is almost inevitable. Therefore, finding practical means of integrating them through tapestry weaving and the materials and technology available is a primary consideration when developing design ideas.

Despite being familiar with field and voice recording and the techniques, technology and software used to produce soundscapes and more experimental manipulated audio, I was not familiar with the computer technology needed to allow interactivity in weaving. I was aware of, and had witnessed in operation, open source modules such as Arduino and Raspberry Pi, but it was only through looking more closely at the area of wearable electronics that I discovered conductive thread and electric paint.

When the British Tapestry Group (BTG) invited proposals for its Sound and Weave exhibition, it gave me the impetus to put my ideas into practice. With my proposal accepted for the exhibition, I approached and collaborated with the Music Technology Department at Swansea College of Art UWTSD (University of Wales Trinity St. David) to



Alistair Duncan, "Interconnection," 2018, photo: © Alastair Duncan.

learn about coding for Arduino—this was a steep learning curve and I still have a long way to go!

I knew what I wanted to achieve as an artist and tapestry weaver. Through further research carried out with the help of two grants, a Theo Moorman Trust Award and an Arts Council of Wales research and development grant, I was able to test different sensors and means of integration with the weaving, connection to the Arduino unit, and methods of interaction.

Following a period of intense work in my studio I was able to control the triggering and volume of sounds linked to the tapestry using light sensors. At the very last minute the tapestry was packed up and sent off to the Gracefield Arts Centre in Dumfries, Scotland.

On arrival the tapestry was hung without issue but unfortunately the sensors embedded in the weave would not trigger the linked sound files. A trip to Scotland was called for and on arrival I was able to recalibrate the sensors to suit this

new environment. They worked—albeit somewhat erratically. Under the controlled lighting conditions of my studio, the technology had worked well. However, in gallery spaces affected by the changing light of different weather conditions, the sensors were unpredictable.

Since then I have worked with a Raspberry Pi, a PiCap, conductive paint and thread to manage touch-sensitive control of the audio element of new experiments in tapestry weaving. The prompt to the audience to interact and engage creatively with the work has been very successful with the small experimental tapestries I have exhibited. I still have much to learn regarding the coding and technology for these methods of interaction, but one of the most enjoyable aspects is developing solutions to encourage the audience to take part and physically engage with the work. Audiences are so often asked (told) not to touch works of art.

We were fortunate in the BTG **Sound and Weave** exhibition to have the four tapestries using audio, all delivering it in different ways. This, along with careful arrangement of the works, allowed the audience to experience the exhibition and the individual works without a cacophony of mixed sounds. However, where sound is an important part of the audience experience of more than one tapestry, or indeed all the tapestries in an exhibition space, is the only answer to provide headphones?

Headphones can often be the most appropriate means of presenting sound as demonstrated by Katie Russell in her **Sound and Weave** exhibition piece, “Epilepsy.” For my own work, I have some that work well with headphones and others that are better presented with loudspeakers. The challenge, as with the BTG Sound and Weave exhibition, is to arrange and install exhibits in such a way as to present each to its best advantage.



Alistair Duncan, “Cube Constellation,” small cubes—4 x 4 x 4 in, large cube—10.5 x 10.5 x 10.5 in, 12 epi, 2019, photo: © Alastair Duncan. Tapestry weaving suspended in suspended steel mesh cubes; wool and steel wire on cotton warp. Photo at right shows detail.

The primary aim with each tapestry I weave that includes an audio element, is producing a work that satisfies me in terms of design, technique, texture, colour, and subject matter. This applies equally to the audio element.

As I become more familiar with this technology and develop ideas for tapestries, I envisage further possibilities for the combination of tapestry weaving and sound as a means of expression. The inherent interconnections between sound and weave, and the textures, colours, shapes, and forms provide a fascinating crossover between one medium and another, and I look forward to creating new work that utilises and demonstrates that interconnection.



Alistair Duncan, "Cube Constellation" in situ at Maker in Focus, Mission Gallery, Swansea, Wales, 2019, photo: © Alastair Duncan.

Links to current work:

"Interconnection"
— BTG Sound and Weave exhibition
tapestry_
<https://vimeo.com/317442365>

Experimental interaction —
<https://vimeo.com/326061809>

"Metamorphosis"
(maquette)
<https://vimeo.com/326061007>



Alistair Duncan, "Metamorphosis" work in progress, 2019, photo: © Alastair Duncan. Finished size 51 in x 60 in, 8 epi. Tapestry weaving, wool and conductive thread on cotton warp.



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A Detour into Online Exhibitions

by Christine Laffer

FindingHome@tapestry.ca/au formed out of a tapestry exchange begun by Dorothy Clews and Linda Wallace. Woven to send messages of home from very different locales, fifty small tapestries traversed continents and an ocean between Australia and Canada simply by mail. Re-collected, the tapestries became a touring exhibition (see Debbie Herd's blog at <http://debbieherd.blogspot.com/2011/12/findinghometapestrycaau.html>) and the first online exhibition hosted by the American Tapestry Alliance in 2005.

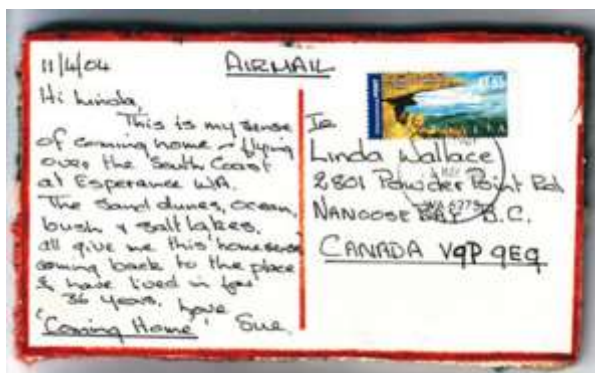
This was not the first online exhibition of tapestry. Helga Berry, the founder of ITNET, the International Tapestry Network, saw real potential with advances in internet technology. She had already mounted two juried international shows, both in real space, and circulated each of them to six venues (ITNET Exhibit 1 in 1990, ITNET Exhibit 2 in 1992) after which she developed a schedule of shows for online-only display to commence in 1997. Originally

mounted at <http://www.alaska.net/~itnet>, only a partial copy shows up in a Wayback Machine archive. Somehow the internet has extended the life of this seminal show beyond any reasonable expectation. Most of the images do not appear, although a few remain. (See ITNET 3 artist Brigitte Anne Amarger's page <https://web.archive.org/web/20000916034547/http://www.alaska.net/~itnet/itnet3/itnet-3-artists/itnet-3-artist-text/baaz.html>)

The text and layout of the show set a standard that has not radically changed in over twenty years: essays followed by tapestries displayed in thumbnails that enlarge when clicked, all on a white background, each piece fully captioned. More freedom in the details of presentation would allow exhibitions to stand apart from one another and viewers could establish some sense of location. For example, **The Power of Slow** curated by Anne Jackson (https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/text_ata/the-power-of-slow/the-power-of-slow-gallery-4/) displays each work in full view sequentially, having the viewer wait for the full image, already invited to spend time. When ITNET 3 initially launched, Berry expressed



From **FindingHome@tapestry.ca/au**, 2005, TEx@ATA
Sue Arvidson, "Soul's home," front and back.



From **The Power of Slow**, March—June 2013
Annika Ekdahl, "Definitely Gold," 300 cm x 300 cm x 5 cm, 2008, photo: Åke Nilsson. Warp: linen. Weft: wool mostly, sometimes with shiny "golden" effect threads. Collection of Västra Götaland Region, Sweden.

great optimism for the future of virtual exhibitions. In her Introduction she writes:

“ITNET 3 involves extraordinary opposites: the ancient, tactile, luxurious art form of tapestry electronically available through cyberspace, where the newest work done in one of the oldest techniques becomes accessible to viewers everywhere—all over the world ...”

More importantly, she asks questions that echo still today, not only in regards to tapestry:

“Artists, organizers, and viewers alike will surely become aware of effects of cyberspace on the future of tapestry itself. How will the public react? Can we imagine influences on how tapestry will be taught? Aesthetic influences? Will designs and formats change? What about effects on the tapestry market? On curators, galleries, collectors? Who will be the prime tapestry surfers?”

Answers to some of Berry’s questions don’t exist, since we have no data at all either from ITNET 3 or from ATA’s online exhibition site at Tex@ATA. However, with fourteen years of virtual tapestry shows totaling thirty-three at TEx, a few things become evident. We have answers to unasked questions such as: What can a virtual space provide that a real space cannot?

“Glove of Incapacity” was woven for the ITNET 3 online exhibition, to directly underline the absolute lack of tactile access to the real work in a virtual space. Everything depended on the manipulated photograph created by digital means and augmented by a computer screen lit from behind. I tried to visually describe the lack of access to tactile responses by replacing fingers with outdated electrical engineering parts, in this case resistors, into an assemblage where tapestry stands for something foreign (that is, human) in a virtual world.



Christine Laffer, “Glove of Incapacity: Sensitivity Test,” 17 in x 17 in x 5 in, 1997. Linen, relief tapestry.

With the current exhibition in July 2019, Tommye McClure Scanlin curates a solo exhibition, **Pat Williams Has Stories to Tell**. Notably, over half of the shows ATA has hosted at TEx, sixteen of them, are solo shows. Clearly, the strongest benefit of a digital venue stands out here—it provides a chance to assemble a mature body of work by an artist that has earned recognition and deserves documentation. This service many museums and commercial galleries would decline to offer.

Another aspect of online exhibitions is that they allow artist-curators to actively engage with aspects of tapestry that enliven the field in unusual ways.

For example, in their background statement the curators of FindingHome@tapestry.ca/au wrote:

“[The postcard] subverts the usual perception of tapestry as art form and treats it like an everyday object. [...] At the same time, it addresses the void left by the wonders of instant communication, delivered by technology but leaving no object. An envelope received in the mail today can be infinitely precious, containing handwritten messages, drawings, and photos. In e-mails there is no imprint of the sender’s hand. The sense of the tactile is missing. The concept of tapestry woven postcards is the antithesis of electronic communication.”

The irony of sending these intentionally crafted missives to a specific destination, recalling them to stage a group show, assembling a virtual exhibition, and then finally returned home, was not lost on the participants. When they finally reach virtual space the irony dissipates, replaced by the imagined lives and journeys of postcards now frozen in an unchanging digital life. Can the tactile or the itinerant nature of tapestry ever be restored at that point?

Once a spokesperson for the haptic experience, Tom Grotta has developed a photographic aesthetic that allows fiber objects to rest easily in space.



From **Pat Williams Has Stories to Tell**, July 2019 TEx@ATA:
Pat Williams, "Refugee," 37 in x 38 in, 8 epi, 2018, photo: Tim Barnwell.

Whether wall mounted or standing, a gentler light suffuses the gallery rooms at browngrotta.com and their tactile surfaces do not get erased by bright white studio lighting. Technology allowing, this could have formed the basis for virtual galleries constructed with sophisticated computerized tools that better emulate a real space. Presumably such technology involves prohibitive costs as well as skilled personnel, because even a successful commercial gallery relies on YouTube and Artsy to produce a virtual exhibition. (See "An Unexpected Approach: Exploring Contemporary Asian Art," March 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiBLVwbJAXq&feature=youtu.be> and <https://www.artsy.net/show/browngrotta-arts-an-unexpected-approach-exploring-contemporary-asian-art-an-online-exhibition>)

Browngrotta also hosts a blog at arttextstyle.com, part of their virtual web of promotional tools (including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn). In June they presented their latest publication, "Art & Identity: The Catalog" that returns to the portable, itinerant nature of textiles:

"The catalog includes an essay, The Textile

Traveller, by Jessica Hemmings, Ph.d., Professor of Crafts, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, which creates perspective. This exhibition, 'reminds us that the textile is an expert traveller—adept at absorbing new surroundings and influences while retaining elements of previous contexts and functions. Many physically embody the buzz word of our times: resilience. Attention to the textile's many histories and journeys can help us trace and begin to understand the, often overwhelming, complexities contemporary societies face.'"

In contrast to these expressions of concern for tapestry in the virtual realm, new takes on what tapestry can convey through image and social media constantly emerge. Particularly on Instagram, works in progress appear frequently with tactile qualities, whether in the hands of @crossingthreads, @emilynicolaides, @rachelhine_art, or @tapestryline and her **Fate, Destiny and Self-Determination** project, and many others. Limited by the scale of a cell phone, these posts still engage us. Artists show their work with an immediacy that seems to evade the aesthetics of mainstream gallery spaces. They prefer other real spaces: artists' studios, local co-op galleries, pop-up shows in vacant storefronts, yarn-bombed light poles, and so on. These real spaces welcome the traveler as well as the neighbor, and even, in the case of @kpannepacker, those who temporarily might have no home.

From finding oneself at home in unexpected places to an existence that always remains uncertain and transient, web exhibitions open themselves to a viewing at any location provided that one's device can connect to the internet. The fact that tapestry has a presence in cyberspace remains astonishing. Challenges to our current production values could result in a movement away from easy-to-assemble templates, an effort to resist feeding the speed-surfer, and focus on approaches that get a viewer involved. Could an exhibition open with a closeup of a post-it note that says "Where did you hide the" with an arrow to click? What about opening with a video completely black that gradually illuminates the edge of a tapestry? What other possibilities might lie just beyond the white page?

Images from TEx@ATA used with permission.



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Fringeless: Four selvedge warping with
Sarah C. Swett
(produced by Rebecca Mezoff)



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Timely Shift

by Dorothy Clews

Thoughts about time.

“Time is the warp of life.... Oh, tell the young, the gay, and the fair, to weave it well.” Joshua Marsden

We run out of time, waste time, make time.

As we experience time, it represents perceived changes in mind, related to what we see/feel. As our physical mental-image processing time and the rapidity of images we take in changes, so does our perception of time. Each of us has our own “mind time” unrelated to the passing of hours, days, and years on clocks and calendars.

Slow weaving time, instant virtual time.

I look out of the studio window and contemplate a towering kauri tree, a direct ancestor that links back to when flowering plants first evolved. The land beneath my feet is some of the oldest on earth. I have collections of rocks in my studio some dating back to when lifeforms first evolved on earth. The rainforest I live in is a small remnant of the forest that used to cover the whole of Australia, when it was still part of Gondwanaland. Deep time, non-human time. Now this remaining forest remnant is running out of time as abrupt climate change takes its toll. A trip to more remote areas this last year has resulted in looking at a harsh disintegrating landscape.

The raffia I use as weft comes from the raphia palm. At one time I wanted to grow such a palm and process the leaves into weft, but it takes 70 years for these palms to grow their leaves to the length required. I should have planted them before I was born.



Dorothy Clews, “Fossils at Riverleigh” (inspiration for work in progress,) photo: Dorothy Clews.



Dorothy Clews, Work in progress, detail 1, photo: Dorothy Clews.
Warp: seine twine; weft: Sari rags, raffia.

As weavers we live in two worlds—virtual and material. The virtual world of Here and (T)here reverberates through my mind and turns into 'Here and Now.' This instant. A post on Facebook or Instagram is seen only for a short time before it disappears down to the bottom of the page or off into oblivion, but still lurks in a server somewhere. The response may be a “like,” but certainly not the warm internal glow of a tapestry seen and felt in reality.

Have you ever smelt raw silk? Raffia? Sheep's wool? Imagine tapestry postcards connecting the sender and the receiver smelling of the environment where they were made. Not something to keep for a short time, but to pin up in the studio, interspersed by digital conversion, exploring different threads.

A tapestry postcard has the opportunity to delight and intrigue the postal workers from one side of the world to the other. Fast emails that might connect the sender and receiver have words, but the words have lost the flavour of the personal; all



Ruth Manning, “The Perfect Vacation” tapestry postcard in progress, photo: Ruth Manning. Wool, cotton, silk.

the text is the same. No human has ever touched an email--no touching, no feeling, no smell.

My first experience of artist postcards was almost before our area had internet. The exchange was between textile artists all over the world. This led to one artist, who received a postcard from me, going to see the exhibition of **FindingHome** in Montreal and meeting up with Linda Wallace, the co-curator of **FindingHome**. Sometimes the connections are long and convoluted. **FindingHome** was the impetus for **Here and (T)here**. Material links in the real world.

Emails, messages, postings, words printed on a screen and swallowed up into the ether, to come out at the other end, intact, but somewhat sterile, encompassing a different type of time experienced. Email, click, sent, gone. Text might be within textile, but there is no textile in text. Posted on Instagram in a series of work/time in progress images extends the idea of time momentarily. Tapestries and tapestry postcards leave their own trail of cut and trimmed threads—cartoons; a number of bemused postal workers; conversations. Time spent at a different level of experience.

The virtual makes a peculiar sense of our time but at the same dissolves away the individual moment into nothingness, resulting in loss of time spent in the material world. It makes sense to weave that story of our existence rather than digitalise it.

Laying down each thread carefully in order. Feeling the weft pass through my fingers, the inconsistencies of the raffia fibre, softer and slightly stretchy, especially in the Wet Season, and a few inches further along, somewhat ribby and stiff. It might be harvested plant material, but it does not feel dead, it still feels like a leaf, its texture recording the time/seasons it took to grow. Will the sari rags stay together? The weave structure strengthens the cloth that has been worn and discarded. The act of weaving conceals/

reveals the story of time and at the same time holds together the warp of time.

Time says that chronology and continuity are just a story we tell ourselves in order to make sense of our existence. Much like tapestry. Time is an integral part of the universe. Without time as a real property of the universe, the existence becomes meaningless.

Thermodynamics and entropy were much on my mind weaving composted tapestries made out of a compacted time process, into quicktime ancient-looking fabric. But all the parts of the original fabric are still in existence, scattered, in another form, not lost, but part of the web of nature within my various gardens. Entropy makes sense, nothing is entirely lost. Unlike lost emails that float around in the inaccessible aether in bytes and pieces, still (t)here, but not making any real sense in the material world.

I battle with the contradictions of slow time and instant time; digital and material. One day I might throw my computer into the creek, but it does keep me connected.

There are, however, some decomposed tapestries that have long gone and only reside in the aether on my laptop. Another reason to keep it.



Dorothy Clews, Work in progress, detail 2, photo: Dorothy Clews.
Warp: seine twine; weft: Sari rags, raffia.



Dorothy Clews, "Lawn Hill Gorge:" (inspiration for work in progress,) photo: Dorothy Clews.

My Warp and Weft of Social Media: How I Weave It In

by EmmaJo Webster

I have used social media for a long time to promote my own work; I am on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Personally, I prefer the more visual nature of Instagram; there is a tendency to use images that are less static, often work in progress or seen from a different angle than the other two. Twitter is much more wordy, and images are often presented as links (though it has gotten better). When I'm often just flicking through quickly, I probably won't click on a link, to be honest. I have had a tapestry page on Facebook for a while and it was responsible for helping me find other tapestry weavers from around the globe, which has been wonderful. Social media has changed my working life.

At first I just didn't get Instagram and it and it took me a while to use it. I tend to use it for work in progress shots, and it seems that they are the ones that get the most interest, according to my insights. I always have to remind myself to add a few relevant hashtags as people follow them; I myself follow hashtags of exhibitions that I might be participating in, or other tapestry exhibitions and textile related posts. This keeps my feed tapestry oriented and I often find artists that are new to me and images that are inspiring. I don't post all the time, compared to other people, so my post count is relatively low. While I say that, I'm very impatient and if I'm working well in my studio I will post regularly and sometimes possibly too often!

If I'm posting my own work I tend not to use any of the filters offered as I feel it can give an altered, untrue version of your work. Since someone viewing a picture could be a potential buyer, I would rather show one that conveys an aspect of my work that isn't too far from the real thing. And yes, I have sold work directly from Instagram—it doesn't happen often, but it does happen!

I love to show images of the work as its happening—it could be an armful of multicoloured



EmmaJo Webster, "Tapestry Stack," July 2019,
photo: © EmmaJo Webster.

warp or the wool in my work basket that has ended up in a tangle towards the end of a project (it does start out neat!). One of my favourite posts is a picture of some tapestries piled up, ready to be mounted, and I love that the edges convey a 'solidness' to them as well as the colour hues—which can sometimes inspire new work! When I post these more immediate, almost "live" posts, I like to think that viewers feel that they are almost with me in my studio! I can get quite a buzz when I've been working away alone (as is often the nature of tapestry) for a few hours and I post a quick colour snapshot of my bobbins of wool mixes. It's incredibly heartening to find half a dozen or so likes almost instantly.

I am addicted to weaving and I love the look of a good tapestry bead! The bead is an important part of tapestry weaving—I enjoy seeing the bead in other artists' posts; it really conveys to me the material that's been worked with and an idea of the sett of the tapestry. I try to convey what materials I'm using just with the picture. At the moment my tapestries are going through a richly coloured phase, and I hope I can convey the sumptuousness of colours and texture through the pictures I take on my wee phone for Instagram.

The light in your environment has a very good role in creating an image for Instagram. I often take quick snapshots with my phone and put the picture straight

onto Instagram. I particularly love it when the weather creates dramatic lighting in my studio and have used this quality for Instagram. The Dovecot used it too for a particularly good shot of “Peel Sound Ice” while we were working on it.

I don't think Instagram needs formal photographs though there is a place for it—to show a final image of the finished piece. This year at the Cordis tapestry prize exhibition there were some brilliant pictures taken by the gallery of work in situ. It wasn't necessarily full body shots of the work, but the juxtaposition of works together, with glimpses around corners and through doorways in such a wonderful venue. I recommend you take a look at their Instagram feed: @cordisprize.

There are many great Instagram tapestry weaving accounts and many more I'm sure I haven't found yet. To name a few to get started with, I follow the American Tapestry Alliance, @americantapestryalliance; Australian Tapestry Workshop, @austapestry; and the British Tapestry group, @btgweavers. It's a great way to get a feel for weavers and their studios. I also am really fascinated seeing other artists' set-ups and their looms.

If you aren't on Instagram yet—give it a go! It's fun and immediate. There is no pressure to post anything; just follow things that interest you and you'll have a fabulous feed to your account to peruse at your leisure. A lot of people make an account and just follow people. If you do post, your account can be made private and people can request to follow you. Your posts can only be seen by your followers. I have mine public as I mainly put up pictures of my work and makings, and nothing family-orientated or personal—though I could argue that my studio and my weavings are like a view into my soul!

I thoroughly recommend Instagram and look forward to meeting you there!



Emma Jo Webster, “Studio Shadows,” April 2019, photo: © Emma Jo Webster.



Dovecot, “Peel, Sound, Ice” tapestry in progress, photo: courtesy of the Dovecot.



Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre

Canadian Tapestry and Texture Centre 2019 Intensive Tapestry Workshops



Colour Blending in Tapestry. 3-day intensive Tapestry workshop

Description: Study basic fibres from natural to synthetic. Learn different ways to transition colour with threads. Have fun integrating metallic threads and paper. Blend, blend, blend

Fees \$ 700.00 CAN **Level intermediate to advanced**

Dates: February 17-18-19

Hours: 9:30 am-3:00pm

Location:CTTC



Iconography on Millefleur Tapestries. 4-Day intensive Tapestry workshop

Description: *Millefleur* was very important art form during the Renaissance; students will analyze the "Hunt of the Unicorn" and "The Lady and the Unicorn" tapestries. The focus of this workshop is on technique, symbolism and iconography. Students will weave a sample of a flower incorporating relevant meaning and technique.

Fees \$ 1000.00 CAN **Level intermediate to advanced**

Dates: May 17, 18,19 & 20

Hours: 9:30 am-3:00pm

Location:CTTC



Natural Dyes: Weaving Petroglyphs and Indigenous Rock Carvings

Description: Workshop on natural dyes used in various geographical areas in the world. A practical study at the Petroglyphs Provincial Park, Kawarthas Region.

Fees \$ 1200.00 CAN **Level intermediate to advanced**

Dates: August 4-8

Hours: 9:30 am-4:00pm

Location:Crowe River Studio, Peterborough, ON



Natura Textura: Nature as a Source of Inspiration in the Creative Process

Description: Get inspired by Nature, Photography, the Kawarthas Region landscapes of the Fall, and enjoy a full immersion week of tapestry weaving

Level intermediate to advanced **Fees** \$ 1200.00 CAN

Dates: October 10 - 14

Hours: 9:30 am-3:00pm

Location:Crowe River Studio, Peterborough, ON

How to Apply

Advance reservation is required. Ask for Accomodation options and packages
Private course can be specially arranged for group *\$150 deposit is required
rates are subject to change without prior notice. **AL MATERIALS INCLUDED
Payment made is non-refundable. We take all Credit Card

For more information and booking please contact CTTC:

canadiantapestrycentre@gmail.com (905)257-2446

Social Media: Distracting Diversion or Useful Tool?

by Line Dufour

In the last six years, social media has served a vital role in enabling me to be a more publicly and community engaged artist. Not only has social media precipitated substantial and pervasive changes to communication, it has profoundly impacted the practice of tapestry weavers and textile artists from being a solitary, isolating practice to an interactive one. Social media has been instrumental in connecting tapestry and textile artists from all over the world, with varying degrees of experience, expertise and accomplishment. Because of it, it was possible to coordinate and create, “Fate, Destiny and Self-Determination: An International Tapestry installation” (FD&SD project) and could not have achieved the success it has without it.

Real connection with others, however, comes in the physicality of doing, in materiality, in actions, interactions, and events shared by an assortment of individuals and groups. Consequently, the “Fate, Destiny and Self-Determination” initiative has been and continues to be an international dynamic community building endeavour, an educational initiative and a creative and innovative one.

In 2012 I was reluctant to embrace social media, unable to discern its benefits. Eventually it dawned on me it would be a terrific way to connect with other tapestry and textile artists, as I didn’t encounter them frequently in my daily life, and even rarely at Weaving Guild meetings. I realized that social media could be used to propel an art project forward and that’s when I thought that I would use it to create a publicly formed installation using social media, particularly Facebook, and later Instagram and Twitter.

“Fate, Destiny and Self-Determination” is composed of three sections: first, a tapestry woven panel created by me, referencing the contemporary practice of tapestry where artist and weaver are one. A second, smaller panel was woven by the public, ranging from the inexperienced and amateur to the professional. This referenced traditional tapestry conventions in that many weavers worked on the tapestry at the same time or at various stages and did not contribute to creating the tapestry designs. The final and most important section is composed of irregular shapes positioned at varying heights, between the two main panels, floating freely in



Line Dufour, “Fate, Destiny and Self-Determination: A Tapestry Installation” at World Textile Art 2017, Fundación Pablo Achugarry, Punta del Este, Uruguay, photo: © Line Dufour.

space, as though the tapestry is pulling apart or coming together. Each submission is photographed and posted to the Facebook page for the project. I also include information about the participants such as their website if they have one, and other comments they have made about the project or about their work and/or

lives. Thus far, 811 shapes have been received from 39 countries, and a total of about 484 people have participated. The installation continues to expand as it accepts submissions on an ongoing basis. Part of the exhibition is the list of all participant names. If a label cannot be displayed in the gallery, a QR code label is available so that the gallery viewer can access the web page with the names of all participants.

This initiative introduced me to many textile and tapestry artists, opened the door to new friendships and alliances, and created opportunities for engagement with them. It facilitated discussion between us and “live” encounters with these various artists at various places the installation was exhibited. I enjoyed receiving these small packages in the mail, and was often impressed with their efforts, as well as the stories that accompanied them. Prolific and well-known artists participated, giving the project credibility.

Social media is a great tool for promoting one’s art and craft work. What used to cost artists hundreds of dollars in marketing has dwindled and been replaced by social media. The use of social media has also raised the profile of the installation, resulting in a dozen exhibitions, and invitations continue to come in. Social media has, for me, become an artist version of a newspaper and I peruse it to see what kind of



A small selection of participant submissions, photo: © Line Dufour.

work other artists are creating. I find inspiration, admiration and new directions.

But there are costs to using social media. Besides the negative comments and behaviors that have proliferated, it also absorbs a lot of my time—time that could be used creating in the studio. At the peak of the FD&SD project, it took all my time to document each submission, photograph it, post it on the various social media sites, as well as on my website page for the project. The benefit of engagement with other artists, also takes time from being in the studio. So it’s important to create limits to not just how much time I spend on it, but how I use it. In this way I manage how, and how much, I use social media, to avoid having it dominate my time and attention. In contrast to the speed at which social media weaves word-threads of connection to others, the practice of tapestry weaving and textile work remain slow, laborious, and manual. It’s important to continue carving out time to weave.

For further information: www.facebook.com/pages/Fate-Destiny-and-Self-Determination-An-international-tapestry-project/ as well as on Instagram @tapestryline, Twitter @tapestry_line and my website <https://www.linedufour.com/fate-destiny-self-determination>.

Balancing Digital and Analog

by Rebecca Mezoff

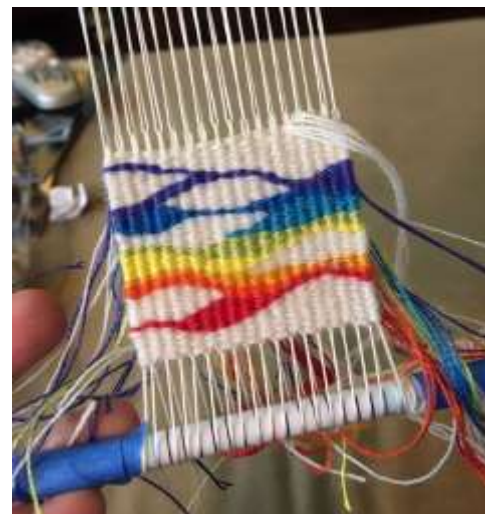
On many days my world rushes by on the screen of my computer. This morning when I clicked the keyboard to wake it up, not one application would work. The memory was full. It was so full that the machine refused to even transfer files to a backup hard drive or my cloud storage. I knew I was pushing the limit last night when I saved a new video for my YouTube channel, but I went right ahead and blithely clicked “export” and this morning my laptop was having none of it.

When the computer told me it was full up and wasn’t going to engage in any negotiations about that today, I did the only logical thing. I clicked “shut down,” leashed up the dog I’m borrowing this week, and went for a nice walk in the morning sunshine. Truth be told, I felt like it was a gift from the tech gods. If my computer doesn’t function, I can’t work in my business. For a few blissful minutes my plan was to move to the woods and live off the land.

By the time I got back from my walk I had realized that I have an old back-up computer which may not have the current files I’m working on but does have internet capabilities so I was not off the hook for at least some work today. But more importantly, a little time outside helped me remember that there is a balance in life and that I’m getting better at finding it. I spend more time working on my computer than I want to admit. Between actively teaching, developing curriculum, blogging, and writing for various publications, my laptop is the most constant object in my surroundings on more days than not. But there are moments where that constant digital interface does not jive well with the hands-on nature of tapestry weaving.



Rebecca Mezoff teaching online surrounded by tapestries and samples, photo: © R. Mezoff.



Rebecca Mezoff, “Rainbow Silk” in process, 2 in x 2 in, 2019, photo: © Rebecca Mezoff. Wool and silk, four-selvedge tapestry weaving.

Creating tapestries is one of the things I love to do most in life, and I’ve built a career around that love. I now think my career is a little unusual to be honest. When I started developing my first online class about



Rebecca Mezoff, "Lifelines," 24 in x 72 in, 2016, photo: © Gregory Case. Wool and cotton.

six years ago, I just thought it was something that might be useful for people who couldn't get to a tapestry workshop and I had no idea that it could become a full-time job. I had a laptop and the patience to figure out how to use a very long list of programs and applications. I took a pile of business classes and leveraged my love of teaching and here I am today with a few thousand students and an unending list of ideas about what to teach next.

But tapestry weaving is analog. And that kind of flies in the face of the digital interfaces I live in a lot of the time. I know deep inside that the computer is a distraction. When I hear myself thinking, "Oh, I should grab my phone and take a photo of this tapestry diary piece in progress so I can post it to Instagram," occasionally I pause. Sure, sometimes I unconsciously allow the interruption and just post the photo, but other times I realize that that moment of taking a photo and posting it for other people to see has just interrupted the flow my hands and brain were engaged in a moment before. Often I allow the interruption in the name of building a business, whether that is good or bad for me as a creator.

There is a state that I think most tapestry weavers have experienced that is called flow. This idea was presented through research by psychologist

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in the 1990s. In the preface to his book *Flow*, Csikszentmihalyi says, "This book summarizes, for a general audience, decades of research on the positive aspects of human experience—joy, creativity, the process of total involvement with life I call flow." I find that when I'm completely engaged in a project, that state of flow is an amazing place to live for a while. Time stretches out and my brain works clearly and I find if I stop long enough to realize it, that I'm having such a wonderful time. This happens frequently when I'm weaving. But it isn't a process that only comes with analog activities because I experience the same thing when I'm developing curriculum or writing something I'm really engaged in.

When I don't find that flow state is when I'm running down a to-do list or scrolling through a social media feed or learning how to use yet another piece of tech. These interruptive digital processes don't allow my brain to go into that creative state where ideas slide together and become something new.

I don't have any answers about how tapestry should or does intersect with the digital world beyond my own experience working online. But I will say that the times that I turn off my digital devices, get out my yarn or pencils or looms, and I just dive into the making of something... those are the best times of my

creative life. I do think the world of the internet has wonderful things to offer all of us lucky enough to be able to access it. Social media platforms like Instagram provide wonderful ways to connect with other people. But they also have the power to take over lives and derail real work if overused.

That said, the best thing about my digital world is the community. It is true that it isn't the same as communities formed without a digital interface. The connections I make when teaching in-person workshops are different than the ones formed through my online classes, Facebook group, and blog posts. But the web of people that enrich my life from all over the world expands every day and this is the thing I am most grateful to the internet for. The digital world allows connection in a way that would never happen otherwise. True, many of those connections are superficial and fleeting, but many become deep and lasting friendships. These connections have also taught and shown me things I would have to live three life-times to experience without them.

And that community makes me a better teacher. My original pedagogical training was in the fields of music and health care, but I don't think it matters. Teaching is about understanding how people think and learning to communicate with them where they are. The sheer number of questions I get every day helps me understand what is and isn't clear in my teaching in a very short amount of time. I would have to teach decades of workshops to get the experience I've garnered in just six years of online teaching (with the fortunate addition of teaching lots of in-person workshops of course!).

It turns out that shutting down my computer gave it enough breathing space to allow it to function again. Seems like a metaphor for the rest of life, right? For now I continue to work for that "total involvement in life" that Csikszentmihalyi talks about. I schedule time away from the computer and often turn my phone off to focus on the people right in front of me. I use the digital world as a powerful tool but I do realize it has the power to derail the important things that need to be accomplished and experienced in life.



Naming and Reframing; Tapestry in the Virtual

by Shelley Socolofsky

one

I am a maker of objects
that are embedded with images,
that are not installed on the floor,
that are vertically mounted,
that are pliable,
handmade,
tied to histories of power & prestige,
and commemorative representation.

Such a list follows the logic of Tapestry.

Continuing on with this game:

I am a maker of objects
that are associated with a lineage of monumentality,
that are historically linked to narrative
documentation...

What if we take this same list—but change our lens?
We might then recognize it as following the logic
of painting. Or of sculpture. Or video projection. At
what junctures do the differing media categories
depart from the list? I use such naming strategies to
pull, knead, and expand the conceptual framework
of my thinking. For it is true that contemporary
tapestry has the capacity to encompass a logic that
is not of painting, nor sculpture, nor photography,
nor the digital image, yet engages them all
simultaneously.

While Gobelins tapestry is my first language,
introduced on the heels of 2nd wave feminism, my
current practice embraces both the analogue and
the digital collaboratively. My introduction to tapestry
predates the digital and was intentionally chosen as
a strategy in opposition to the academic machismo
departments of painting and sculpture. The process,
coupled with my pastoral leanings towards the
commune, delighted me. I was geared for the
handmade.

two

My friend, a renowned Jacquard hand weaver,
talented designer, and maker of fine 'faux' tapestries

of photographic accuracy, recently told me she was
worried about the future of tapestry. Recounting
being brought to tears when meeting up with a
medieval tapestry on her recent trip to France, she
encountered, what I call "the bumping up against a
tapestry's aura."

As a designer and fabricator of both classic and "faux"
Jacquard tapestry, I am well aware of their differing
superpowers. Inaccurate to compare the two with the
same measure, the genuine tapestry stands apart due
to its intrinsic relationship and reference to the body.
It is through the classic tapestry's sheer density—its
materiality, its mass, its underlying physical demands



Shelley Socolofsky, "Concubine" (in progress),
104 in x 89 in, 10 epi, 2019, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky.
Wool, cotton, silk thread, linen, glass coated thread,
deconstructed woman's sari, Disney child's sleeping
bag & designer scarves, hand dyed silk with onion skins
and fruits, grocery vegetable netting, peacock feathers,
contractors mason twine, survivalist's twine, chain, Gobelin
tapestry, soumak, Swedish knotting, assemblage.

which speak directly of time, its organically shaped surface and edging, and the earthiness of its woven matter (being of the body: wool,) the true tapestry emits a presence that the faux cannot. Nor can our other image embedded media from our list above.

three

In a recent essay published in *Art Journal*, “Laboring Under Globalization: Tapestries by Contemporary Artists,” K.L.H. Wells, assistant professor of art history at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, attempts to contextualize the contemporary artist’s interest in utilizing the medium of tapestry as a distinct practice and interprets this work through the lens of globalization by examining how these “tapestries” are produced. She argues that the appeal of “tapestry” for these artists, curators, critics, and collectors rests in

the medium’s insistent materiality, which counters the relative immateriality of globalization. Tapestry is thus constructed in terms of its authenticity, as a traditional craft or as an auratic presence that “militates against globalization’s erosion of authentic culture.”

It is important to note that Wells uses the word ‘tapestry’ to include piecework, embroidery, and industrially woven Jacquard, in addition to one example of Gobelin tapestry. While none of these artists



Shelley Socolofsky, “Stars & Stripes,” 6 ft x 3.5 ft, 12 epi, 2011, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky. Wool, cotton, repurposed wool serape from Mexico, ink, paint, and wax on board, Gobelins tapestry, textile construction, drawing.



Shelley Socolofsky, “Trade Blanket (hybrid bride),” 8 feet x 7.5 feet, 10 epi, 2012, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky. Wool, cotton, horsehair, human hair, silk handkerchiefs, thread, marker, Kevlar trim, Gobelin tapestry, rya pile, piecework, crochet. Installation: Bellevue Art Museum.

have fabricated their own “tapestries,” but rather have outsourced their production, Wells argues that these works—by virtue of their materiality or hand labor, carry an aura of authenticity. The Gobelin work, a William Kentridge designed tapestry, “The Porter Series: Egypte,” 2006, was outsourced to the Stephens Tapestry Studio in South Africa. The labor of this work is exploited in the promotional and exhibition materials as a way to authenticate, romanticize, and brand the work by paralleling the weaver’s labor to that of farm labor and rural life. Conflating the labor of dyers and weavers in favor of bringing attention to the loss of farmland in South Africa, Wells states “Here, tapestry weaving becomes romanticized as a rural cottage industry that, like traditional farming, is in

danger of extinction under the forces of global capitalism.” The other projects outlined in the essay work in similar post-colonial/Imperialist framing, creating the spectacle of authenticity as a global marketing strategy.

four

In the beginning my maquettes were realized through crude paper collage. Paper eventually gave way to digital collage, allowing for transparency and nuance. Increased meaning resonated between the

spontaneity of digital design and the slow pace of tapestry weaving, an ethereal connector between past and present.

Eventually, I desired a deeper relationship with the warp. Complex warp/weft structures spoke of new conceptual possibilities: binaries, opposing systems, systems of hierarchy, to name a few. My interest of embedding image into cloth remained, as did my surprised delight in the digital. Jacquard weaving was the natural next step, offering up an alternate voice to the larger, classic tapestries. Propelled by the process of the digital hand loom, ideas surrounding algorithms, surveillance, GPS mapping, sacred geometry, and data driven information arose. A new link between the antiquity of classic tapestry and the hyperreal relics presented by the Jacquard works surfaced; their processes, while diametrically opposed, spoke to one another in a call and response fashion.



Shelley Socolofsky, “Hermetica” (Ursa Major) (Mount Shasta, California, USA/ 41.4099°Nx122.1949°W), 35 in x 29 in, 52 epi, 2018, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky. Jacquard hand woven/ metal, cotton.



Shelley Socolofsky, “Hermetica” (Phoenix) (Hindu Kush mountains, Afghanistan/ 36°14.45”Nx71°50’38”E), 45.5 in x 28 in, 52 epi, 2018, photo: © Shelley Socolofsky. Jacquard hand woven/ metal, cotton, silk.

As woven objects, classic tapestries conjure prayer rug while the thinner Jacquard works call up warning signage and prayer flag. Together they form bodies of work consisting of one monumental classic tapestry as the Mother Ship with a dozen or so supporting Jacquard works. Jacquard weaving allows for the opportunity to work through ideas and woven images more quickly, editing for clarity and importance, while classic tapestry is reserved for the monumental overarching narrative.

In the studio the high warp and TC-2 looms stand side by side; the old wise woman and her troublesome little sister. With the multitude of crafting and DIY popups abounding, our need to experience the aura of authenticity is alive and well.

I reassure my friend that genuine tapestry is here to stay.

Noisy Planet

by Christine Sawyer

The current long-term project I am working on has an umbrella title of *Signs of the Times*. This particular series, which has been in progress for around ten years now, has its root in my lifelong interest in the natural world.

While climate change and environmental issues have been the mainstay of the series, recently the effect of social media on our lives has crept into the mix. No other species has ever created such an uproar. A separate subgroup of drawings and tapestries is emerging, which I've gathered under the name *Noisy Planet*.

When I'm working and a news item catches my attention, I may make an annotated drawing as a record, or I just absorb it until it either germinates into an idea or connects to something similar.

"Out of the Blue"

"Out of the Blue" came about after a prolonged period of really bad news from the media. Global

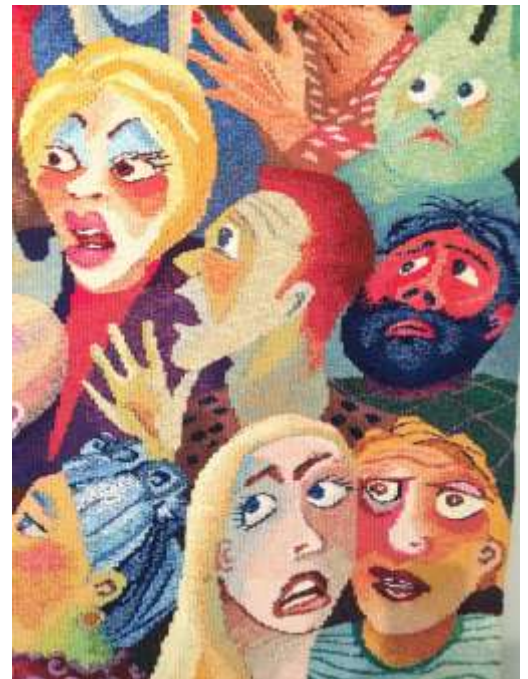
financial crises, famines, conflicts, and epidemics, concurrent with UK domestic accounts of missing persons, murders, reduction in social care and such, accumulated to acquire the character of a bombardment, inducing fear and uncertainty. On a personal level, any individual can suffer a catastrophic change of circumstance that can occur "out of the blue".

For this tapestry I explored the notion of caricature having always been fond of the English satirists and artists such as James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, and George Cruikshank. From freely made drawings in felt tip pen, imagined faces emerged. From these I chose individual faces, cut them out, and assembled them into a collaged cartoon. Although I am serious about getting the point across, I like to soften the impact by injecting a little humour. I am not a pessimist by nature, although I do address sombre subject matter.

The grey apparition threatening the humans represents an undefined menace, our fragility,



Christine Sawyer, "Out of The Blue," 200 cms x 145 cms, 2014, photo: © Christine Sawyer. Studio dyed worsted wool and cotton, on a cotton warp, 6 e.p.i. Detail at right.





Christine Sawyer, "Vox Humana," 60 cms x 60 cms x 110 cms, 2018/19, photo: © Christine Sawyer. Woven in cotton, on a cotton warp at 8 e.p.i. Supported by foam board cubes on a canvas covered plinth. MP3 player triggered by a proximity sensor.

Christine Sawyer, "Vox Humana" detail (r), photo: © Christine Sawyer.



vulnerability, and fear of the unknown, all exacerbated by the exaggerations of media journalism.

"Vox Humana"

This work was made for a touring show called Sound and Weave, organised by The British Tapestry Group. I saw it as an opportunity to further my *Noisy Planet* theme.

We live in times when social media has become a means of communication throughout the world, a wonderful opportunity to link likeminded people, creating access new ideas and images without boundaries. Everyone should have the right to be heard, but such technology can also be abused to spread hatred and cruelty without redress.

I wanted to cover several aspects of how voices are projected, heard, or not heard. I started

with small paintings of mouths and placed them in appropriate proximities to suggest the ideas I wanted to portray.

I have always enjoyed exploring the three-dimensional possibilities of tapestry, and the problems involved in how to support the woven fabric. The cube form I chose to use is a take on "voice box". The cubes assembled together make reference to ordinary conversations with friends and family, a stack of political hyperbole, and voices that are repressed, deleted, or forgotten. The golden sphere alludes to the frequently overloud exposure of "celebrities", most of whom I confess are unknown to me.

So many mouths needed real voices. It became apparent that I would have to make a sound element to complete the story. My immediate neighbourhood has a diverse population from

Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Eleven local people kindly contributed a short recording in their own language for a three-minute sound collage which plays when a proximity sensor is triggered. “Vox Humana” makes a comment about the richness of a diverse community.

“Tower of Babble”

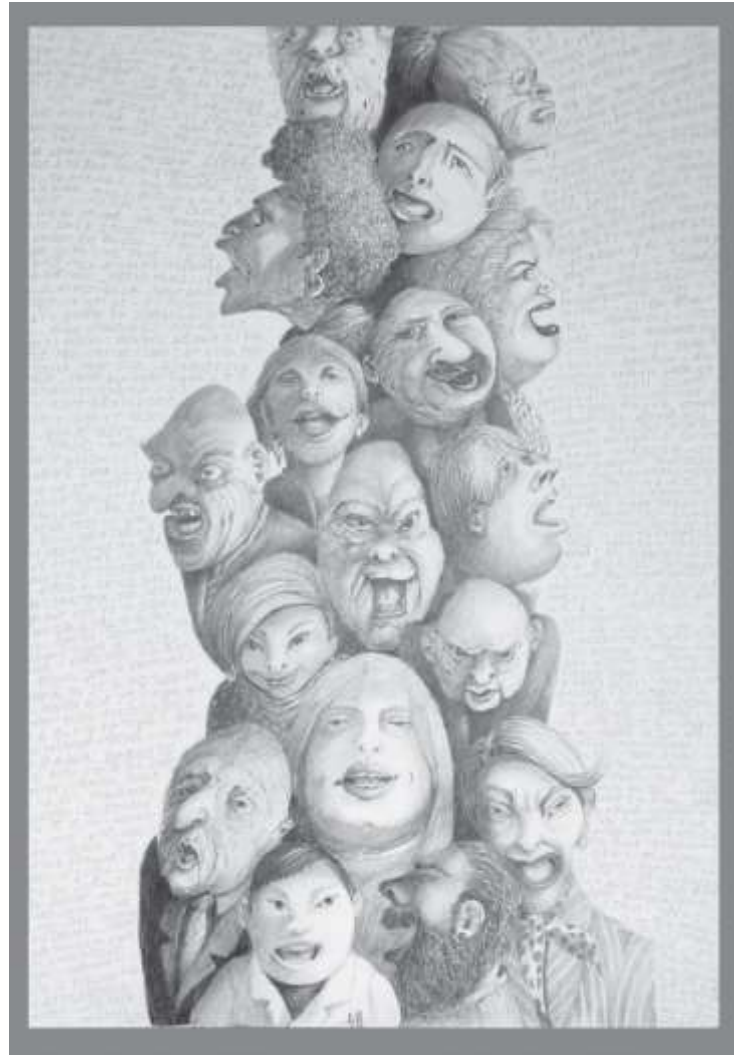
I include this drawing for “Tower of Babble” which points to the next work in this series. The background texture is made up of Internet headers from email properties. I’m unsure yet how to tackle it in tapestry, so am letting it ferment for a while.

The instantly accessible virtual world of social media is understandably attractive. It is the alternative universe, backlit and responsive. Our marvellously evolved parallax vision, giving us the ability to interact with existing 3D objects in real space, is redundant in that two-dimensional illusionary world.

Weaving a tapestry is almost the exact opposite in terms of experience. Generating the image for what you want to say, choosing the right materials, beautiful in themselves, and full of potential, but inert until manipulated into something tangible, palpable, made in real time to exist in the world.

I prefer to work quietly in my studio, to a background of sounds from the neighbourhood. I hear children going to school, birds, dogs, snatches of dialogue, and am aware of the weather and changes of light. The ongoing conversation I have with the work is absorbing enough for me.

Image making is one of the oldest recorded human activities, stretching back thousands



Christine Sawyer, “Tower of Babble” study, 42 cms x 60 cms, 2017, photo: © Christine Sawyer. Pencil and graphite on paper.

of years. Contemporary practitioners are part of that unbroken line, and it’s impossible to imagine that the desire to make things by hand will disappear. Technology is now an essential part of our lives; perhaps the current obsession with it will lessen in time and it will take its place as a useful tool, and as a creative outlet.

Tactility and Technology—Natural Bedfellows in the 21st Century?

by Stacey Harvey-Brown

I am proud to call myself a weaver. But what does that mean in the 21st century? Weaving sounds anachronistic, and yet this is a marvelous time to be a weaver. This is a time that emphasizes connectivity via a virtual world, prioritizing the visual and remote, but weaving is a tactile, intimate, and physical process leading to a tactile, intimate, and physical product. Tactility seems to be a second-class sense and yet we are wrapped in textiles from birth to death and our sense of touch is vital to our well-being and safety.

I weave art, focusing on three-dimensional growth forms that are inspired by geological processes, growth patterns, and erosion. These forms become different things to different people, depending on their own life experiences. I encourage touching of my art. That resonates with audiences wherever



Stacey Harvey-Brown, "Growth Form—Clamshell," 12 in x 17 in, 36 epi (combined sett), 2013, photo: © Stacey Harvey-Brown. Cotton and wool warp; cotton, Austrian paper, monofilament and wool wefts, stitched quadruple tubular cloth.

they have been exhibited. For my masters degree, I explored our growing physical disconnect with nature through the medium of weave. We are no longer permitted to touch stalactites, for example, as the acids in the sweat transmitted through our fingertips is destroying what sometimes took millennia to form. We crave more and more contact with nature, whether through hiking, eco-tourism, gardening, diving, yet our interaction with nature is seriously and detrimentally affecting that which we crave. We also seem to need slower activities to compensate for the speeding up of our lives due to technology.

Weaving is one of those processes that uses all the brain, similar to learning and playing a musical instrument. It requires diligence, delayed gratification, practice and commitment to achieve a certain level of competence. My fingers give me so much information about the materials I handle, the fabric I am making. It matters not that I am a shaft-loom weaver rather than a tapestry weaver. I still have contact with my yarns, although perhaps not as intimately as a tapestry weaver. And yet, despite the intervention of a mechanical loom, I still create slow fabric. I visualize all my sculptural pieces in my head, then work out the physical plan on squared paper. My brain works best that way. I have an early computer-assisted loom (it has an electronic interface where solenoids replace



Stacey Harvey-Brown, "Growth Forms" (installation illuminated), various sizes, maximum 143 in x 28 in, setts various 24-36 dpi, 2013, photo: © Stacey Harvey-Brown.

Cotton and wool warps; wefts various – chenille, cotton, Austrian paper, Japanese paper, monofilament, silk noil, lurex, wool, linen; techniques various – woven Shibori, seersucker, stitched quadruple tubular cloth, overshot for texture.

the old pegs and lag system of nineteenth-century dobby looms) and I enter the liftplan I require onto a laptop rather than placing pegs into bars of wood in order to lift the selected shafts to create the layers and patterns I have designed. That is all the digital element of my shaft-loom weaving does for me, although it has the capacity to do much more.

Using the sample hand-jacquard looms that I have dating from the 1880s, which were used to train the budding fabric designers of the day in Leeds (UK), I find myself working on the computer for the designing aspect. I cut and lace the cards by hand to operate the chain of cards (themselves the binary system inherent in all computer code used today). It is the complete opposite of the shaft loom process. When looms like this were used in industry of the time, each element was undertaken by an individual specialist. The designs were created by a designer. They were painted onto graph paper to fit the aspect ratio of the required fabric by a draughtsman who applied the required weave structures using a series of dots and lines. The card cutter would cut the cards and the lacer (either a person or a machine) would lace them together into a chain that was put onto the loom where the weaver (or a machine) would physically weave the cloth. And so on.

Using these hand-looms, and the modern equivalent computer-assisted jacquard handloom such as a TC-2 (Thread Controller), the weaver is still intimately engaged with the yarn, the fabric construction and the fabric. Although the use of digital technology can speed some elements up, and alterations can be done in a fraction of the time, the hand is still intimately involved with the production of the cloth, whether for art or for function. However, the input of time required is a luxury compared to a few generations ago.

In the 21st century in western cultures, most hand-production is for art.* This is a privilege that was almost impossible before the rise of digital technologies and one that is forgotten with the ubiquity of modern devices and accessibility for most. Indeed, without the rise of self-publishing, for example, I would not be able to be an author unless I was taken on by a publisher. Now I can write and edit my own book, add images, put it online and make it available for purchase worldwide in order to share my knowledge and passion and generate an income. We can create tutorials on video and post those online.



Stacey Harvey-Brown, "Growth Forms" (exhibition view, Holland), various sizes, maximum 107 in x 28 in, 36 epi, 2016, photo: © Stacey Harvey-Brown. Cotton and wool warps; wefts various—cotton, Austrian paper, monofilament, lurex, linen; setts various 24—techniques various—seersucker, stitched quadruple tubular cloth, overshot for texture.



Stacey Harvey-Brown, "Sea Form—Coral," 8 in x 14 in, 24 epi, 2016, photo: © Stacey Harvey-Brown. Cotton warp, Austrian paper weft, double cloth, woven Shibori.



Stacey Harvey-Brown, "Summertime,"
24 x 17 in, 48 epi, 2006, photo: ©
Stacey Harvey-Brown. Cotton warp,
cotton and silk weft, brocaded jacquard.

We have the best of both worlds.

For us, it is a choice to slow down, to engage with our hands, to speak another language through the vocabulary of textiles and touch, to make connections through our art, to bring our tactile sensibilities to our homes and work places. Tapestry is a means of expression that, to textile people, has more depth and personal engagement than painting and photography. My artwork, with its fascination and focus on three-dimensional weaving from a two-dimensional plane, is designed for tactility and for material properties to be assessed and discerned through the sense of touch. In the process of interpreting my work, the viewer slows down, feels, recalls memories of places visited, experiences, re-connects with themselves, their personal sense of touch, their history. It is a moment to breathe amongst the speed of modern living and connectivity. In the process of making these pieces, I reflect on the time nature takes to create its forms, and that I too am slowing down in order to weave them, but also that I can share them far and wide through social media. We are so fortunate to be able to use a mix of technology and hand-skills that connect past, present, and future with nature and the man-made.

* I am including high-end fashion and interior fabrics/products under this heading.

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Photo Tips in a Digital Age from Martinez Studio

by Sandra and Wence Martinez

As artists with a 32-year history of collaboration, we blend our unique visions through drawing, painting, and weaving. Our work points to textile's history of preserving symbol and myth, while integrating both indigenous and contemporary aesthetics.

Martinez Studio is our working studio and gallery in rural Door County, Wisconsin. We create original tapestry designs that are handwoven from hand-spun Oaxacan Churro wool on walking floor looms. Sandra is a designer and Symbolist painter. Wence is a designer, colorist, master weaver, and photographer. Wence frequently travels to his home village, Teotitlan del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico, to work closely with our Legacy Project team of weavers, including our daughter Malena and son-in-law Jacobo Martinez.

High-quality documentation of our artwork is necessary for archives, inventory, social media, calls for entry and marketing. Wence developed skills, in our early years, of photographing our work to save time and money. In this article, we will share a few strategies we employ with tapestry artists who are interested in photographing their own work.

The most important qualities for successful photos are focus, color, and contrast. Expensive cameras and fancy tripods are great, but use what you have. We have friends who achieve excellent photos with only cell phones and minor edits. We always use a tripod to focus the camera lens on the center point of the tapestry to avoid skew and use a timer or trigger cable to avoid jiggling the camera.



Martinez Studio interior, 2019, photo: © Sandra Martinez.



Wence Martinez, "Buffalo Robe Scallop," 117 in x 74 in (297 cm x 188 cm), 6 epi, 2019 (right), photo: © Sandra and Wence Martinez. Wool warp, hand-spun Oaxacan Churro wool weft, flat weave, indigo, pomegranate skin, undyed grey, aniline red. Private collection. Outdoor set-up (left), edited photo including tapestry outer edges (right).

We prefer to shoot our work outdoors on calm, cloudy days to attain the closest color match. When impossible, we shoot indoors with whatever lights we have. We do not recommend fluorescents or flash and avoid direct sunlight by blocking windows as needed. We evenly distribute light by having someone hold up sheets of white foam core at various angles and distances. This is a trial and error method that works well for us. An alternative is to set two soft boxes on either side of the camera approximately 5 feet (152 cm) from the art, aiming at the center of the art at opposing 45 degree angles. We shoot with 2-3 light exposures for each textile.

To minimize editing, we check photo color against original art before putting set-up away. We transfer photos to a computer screen to assess whether they are successful working files. The screen on a phone or camera is too tiny to make this assessment.

We mount our tapestries flush on a wall using fabric sleeves and conduit pipes. Our sleeves are hand sewn with a slip stitch about every 0.5 inch (1.25 cm) to evenly distribute the textile's weight. To photograph weavings without sleeves we safety pin a temporary sleeve. A 0.75 inch (1.9 cm) diameter conduit pipe or thin strip of wood



Sandra and Wence Martinez, "Tronco Grande," 95 in x 54 in (241 cm x 137 cm), 7 epi, 2017, photo: © Museum of Wisconsin Art and Wence Martinez. Wool warp, hand-spun Oaxacan Churro wool weft, flat weave, aniline and undyed. Permanent collection of Museum of Wisconsin Art.

is inserted into the sleeve, extending a bit beyond sleeve ends. If using pipe, nails are driven at an upward angle on the wall. They and the pipe remain invisible and do not poke through weaving. If using a wooden strip, drill holes on both ends that are slightly larger than drywall screw heads. Drill screws straight into wall with heads protruding far enough that the wood rests securely behind the screw heads. After mounting, check that the tapestry edges and bottom corners are flush and square. We use small squares of self-adhesive Velcro as needed.

We always photograph the full outer edges of tapestries because museums, galleries and calls for entry prefer images with edges. We crop out edges later and reduce resolution to 72 dpi for website and social media; 300 dpi is required for advertising and print.

The most successful photos become masters. We store master photos at 300 dpi in a permanent folder that is securely backed up and maintained as an archive. When ready

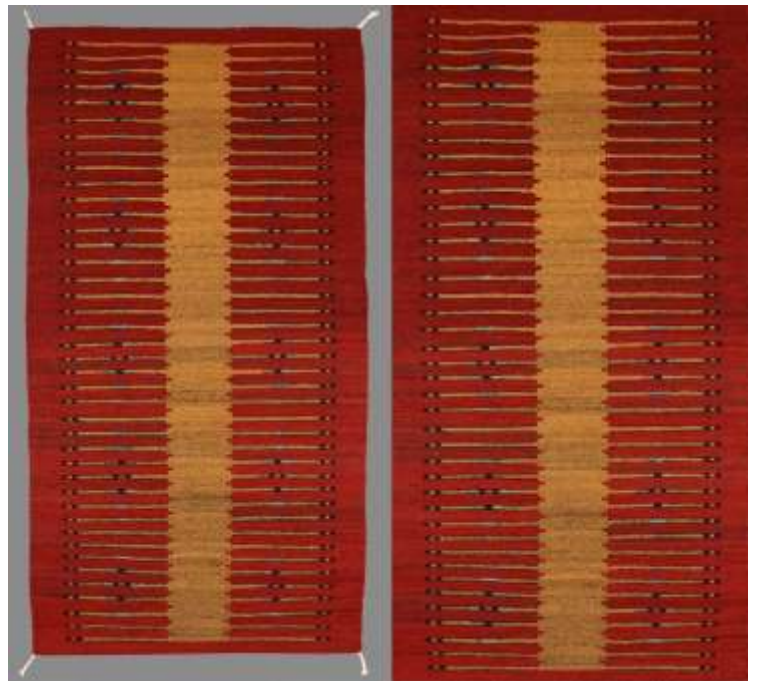


Pinned temporary sleeve (left), Hand sewn sleeve and pipe (right), photo: © Sandra Martinez

to use the original photos, we always make copies for editing. We never remove the original file from the master archive. We use Photoshop to adjust exposure, brightness, tone and contrast to match original art. If major edits are required, this is a sign we need to reshoot.

If you need help photographing your textiles, many further tips are found online or from people you may already know. We especially love to hire students. Many are tech savvy and eager to assist at an affordable hourly rate.

Celebrate and embrace the digital age! With a few simple clicks, your work can quickly and easily reach a global audience. Most importantly, share photos of your art using what tools you already own to develop and grow your audience. The support and feedback you receive will enrich your practice.



Wence Martinez, "Buffalo Robe Red Central," 51 in x 27 in (130 cm x 69 cm), 6 epi, 2015, photo: © Wence Martinez. Wool warp, hand-spun Oaxacan Churro wool weft, flat weave, goldenrod, aniline and undyed. Private collection. Photo of weaving that includes outer edges (left), cropped photo for social media (right).

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Online & brick and mortar. Retail by appointment.*

*Between & Etc. - Sales of tapestry bobbins (9 variations), bones, beaters
a newly designed M.E. style metal tapestry beater, grattoirs, warp,
specially designed tapestry tools, produced locally and Atv Norwegian Tapestry
yarns. A market place for used tapestry equipment and books, as acquired
or placed on consignment.*

*And of course - Books written by Kathe Todd-Hooker and Pat Spark:
Tapestry 101, Line in Tapestry, Shaped Tapestry, So Warped (with Pat Spark)
And some books by others (Linda Rees, Nezhnie - Weaver & Innovative Artist)*

Watch for - Tapestry and Friends will be available in June.

*We offer all levels of instruction: design and making it happen!
Or by private instruction, where you create your own agenda of learning.
Instruction can be one on one, group or workshop. I also offer private critiques
and consulting, and am available as an itinerant tapestry instructor,
traveling around giving workshops and private instruction.*

And, yes, gr! It is both small format and large format.

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ATA Appreciates Having YOU as a Member!

We know that you have many ways to spend your money and we are very thankful that you value a membership in ATA. We also hope that you take advantage of the many benefits of membership.

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 - Free **Mentoring Program**
 - **Donor recognition** in ATAcatalogs

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- All Individual and Studio Circle benefits listed above, plus:
 - **Early registration** for workshops

Collector's Circle Benefits:

- All Individual, Studio Circle and Curator's Circle benefits listed above, plus:
 - **Complimentary catalogs**

Creating Complexity: Strategies to Expand Your Approach to Designing and Weaving Tapestry

Jane Kidd Workshop
Damascus Oregon, June 2019

by Nancy McRay

My goals in taking this workshop with Jane Kidd were to meet more tapestry artists, gain confidence in my skills, and improve my design capabilities.

One thing I learned is that ideas are born slowly. They need fullness of time and thought. Devoting four full days to tapestry design, in the company of other weavers and a brilliant but gentle teacher, is a rare opportunity. While not everyone left the workshop with a fully worked out cartoon, everyone left with a tapestry design that had more meaning and complexity than when we started—exactly matching the title of the workshop.

The workshop was situated in a charming old school building. Built in 1874, this building has been the Damascus Fiber Arts School (or Damascus Pioneer Craft School) since 1967.

There were two large main rooms and a spacious kitchen with a long center table, often filled with snacks. The coffee was always on. We were greeted by Terry Olson, an instructor at the school and coordinator for this ATA workshop. Terry's warmth and expertise helped make the whole experience delightful.

This four-day workshop was to be focused on tapestry design development. The goal was to push beyond the expected, to move us all a bit outside of our comfort zones. To that end, the first morning was filled with introspective guided writing. The goal of the questions was to help each of us home in on who we are as artists, what things in life we care about. We wrote about the things we like most about weaving and the things we did not care for so



Group shot outside Damascus Fiber Arts School, photo: Terry Olson.

much. By lunch time, our brains were fully drained. That afternoon was a welcome respite of looking at Jane's design process, to see how she has answered those same sets of questions.

We had been asked to bring an abundance of source materials to manipulate. We got the materials out and Jane made the rounds, asking each of us questions about our process and where our design idea was at the time. Suggestions were made in the form of nudges. Jane was brilliant at pushing and encouraging without really guiding. All of our choices were to be our own, with no value or judgment attached.

At the end of the day the whole lot of us took our tired brains to a local restaurant where we enjoyed some burgers and beverages and got to know each other a little better.

Side note: it is fun to meet a new friend, ask if they are on Instagram, and find out you already follow them.

Friday morning was more time spent on design development with more individual conferencing with Jane. My own design ideas had gotten pretty murky.

New possibilities were opening up, and I didn't quite know where to put them. In the afternoon we looked at slides from each workshop participant. We each had a chance to talk about our own work, and how it relates to the design on which we were currently working. There was feedback from Jane as well as from the others in the room. This was incredibly valuable. I enjoyed seeing other's work and hearing the stories behind it. It is so helpful to get feedback from the others about the direction they see your work taking. I was struck by the kind, generous

and thoughtful nature of the feedback from fellow weavers. Comments were insightful, helpful and supportive.

After the indulgence of two days of deep thinking and questioning, some important design elements fell into place for me. I realized how autobiographical my piece is to be. I understood exactly which elements of the piece are the most important to me. I realized that it has become important to me to weave this piece. I also knew there were to be some tricky parts, and it would be great to try them out in the company of 13 expert weavers. I commenced warping on Saturday morning, happily weaving for the rest of that day (after a couple of quick tips from Terry, to help me warp a little faster). Around 4:30 the school started to smell really good, as the local tapestry weavers group arrived with a most delicious spread for us to share. After eating and meeting, we were treated to another slide presentation from Jane, this one focusing on her work over a span of time.

Sunday morning back to work, either weaving or refining our designs. There was a mid-morning break to take a look at other artists, including painters, collage artists, and weavers with discussions about the effectiveness of the compositions, and even the motivations behind the work.

More work time in the afternoon—but our group was starting to break up as people needed to get back home. One more round of looking together at each artist's work, and progress through the weekend. Rarely do you have the gift of a dozen sets of informed eyes looking at your work in progress.

Overall, I got exactly what I came for in this workshop. I had been wanting to go deeper in my work—but that can be hard! With a guide and companions, it can be a beautiful experience.

Nancy McRay is a tapestry weaver living and teaching in Northern Michigan.



Getting feedback, photo: Terry Olson.



Friendly critique, photo: Terry Olson.

ATA Volunteer: Kim Mumbower

What brought you to tapestry weaving?

My passion for fiber arts emerged when I was a child, viewing my first tapestry in a museum.

How did you find out about ATA?

I discovered ATA's website six years ago when I searched online for wedge weave tapestries.

Describe what you do for ATA.

I am indexing *Tapestry Topics*. I also maintain two web pages: Links and Tapestry Weaving Technique Videos.

What do you value about volunteering for ATA?

I can contribute to an organization which encourages and supports international tapestry and education of weavers.

About Kim.

I balance my career as a cataloger and librarian with my love of learning and working with fiber.



Kim Mumbower, "Agate III" detail, 22 in x 21 in, 1982. Wool, plastic strips.

ATA News

Welcome New Board Members!

Please help us welcome Ginger Thomas and Lisa Almeida to our Board of Directors! Ginger has been elected to serve as the Director of Membership and Lisa will be serving out a formerly vacated term as the Director of Exhibitions.

Saying Goodbye....

The entire Board of Directors would like to express the deepest gratitude to our retiring Executive Director, Mary Lane who stepped down on June 30. Through her dedicated service, Mary has helped the organization grow and evolve into what it is today. The Board of Directors speak on behalf of the membership by wishing Mary well in her retirement that will hopefully be filled with many more days of tapestry weaving!

In addition to Mary Lane's departure, long-time Board member Pat Dunston is also stepping down from years of service as the Director of Membership. Any member who has become a member since 2013 has been in contact with Pat as she has also witnessed the growth of our membership that is now over 1,000 members!

And last but not least, our social media promotions guru and assistant to the Executive Director, Rachel Fesperman, is also stepping down from her post as she heads to Europe. We wish her well in her travels and thank her for her tremendous dedication to improving our social media presence.

Latest TEx@ATA Exhibition is live!

Check out the amazing show, **Pat Williams Has Stories To Tell** curated by Tommye McClure Scanlin. Pat Williams's tapestries showcase a narrative of whimsy, fantasy, and humor, and the complexity of just being human. This in-depth interview with Williams provides viewers insight into the creative genesis of her work. Scanlin prompts Williams to share strategies she uses to develop her work and is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in tapping into their creative juices. View the exhibition here: https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/tex_ata/pat-williams-has-stories-to-tell/.

American Tapestry Biennial 13 Entry Deadline October 15, 2019

Entry to **ATB 13** is open to all artists who design and weave their own tapestries either individually or collaboratively (all assistants shall be named).

We are honored to announce the juror for this exhibit is Nick DeFord, Program Director at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. ATA is honored to have him curate a vision of contemporary practices in tapestry today.

For the purposes of this exhibition, tapestry is defined as handwoven, weft faced fabric using discontinuous wefts. Artists who work in both traditional and more experimental methods are encouraged to enter. Multi-media work will be considered as long as the primary medium is tapestry. Artists may submit up to three pieces, but a maximum of one piece per artist will be accepted. Submission deadline is October 15, 2019. Go here to call for entry details: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/atbiennials/american-tapestry-biennial-13/>.

Take Your Tapestry to the Next Level!

Attention Circle Level members! We have a limited number of openings in ATA's **Mentoring Program** for students who would benefit from a one-on-one learning relationship with an instructor. Participation is free for Circle level members.

Read more about the Mentoring Program on our website: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/tapestry-weaving-instruction-mentoring-program/>

"At first, I was trying to make my weaving too much like the photo and got discouraged. [My mentor] continued to give good direction and support that helped me begin to relax and let my weaving become my own. I got more confident in creating shapes and blending colors. This has been such a great learning experience and I am so grateful for this opportunity."

—Victoria Moore

"I know that I've been taken beyond [my original goals]. I feel relaxed and free to pursue my concepts."

—Sally Reckert

Not a Circle member yet? Read about all of the benefits of Circle memberships: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/membership/>

International Student Awards

Lena Schwartz

I have always been interested in craft and working with my hands. My art has developed over my undergrad education through a narrative lens, often examining interpersonal relationships and age.

Tapestry began to figure into my work seriously when I wove my first large scale piece, a realistic depiction of my grandmother gingerly entering a pond. I had done small samples before, and one self-guided piece experimenting with color and blending on a figurative form. However, weaving the large 5'x 3' tapestry was when I truly fell in love with the process. It was alluring—not only the physical action of manually lifting the strings of the warp, beating down the weft, but the additional efforts within the process.

I started to dye my own wool, creating gradients of each shade of color. It felt so interdisciplinary and personal to create the colors, to make my own palette. I use colorfast acid dyes, and often have to use a



Lena Ruth Schwartz, "Georgian Bay," 25.5 in x 26.25 in, 6 epi, 2019, photo: Jill LeVine. Cotton warp, wool weft.

combination of different colors to get the right shade. The next stage is the twisting. To create a gradient, I twist two colors together and make a group of shuttles ranging from dark to light. There was nothing more satisfying than



Lena Ruth Schwartz, "Betsy in the Pond," 58 in x 36.5 in, 6 epi, 2018, photo: Jill LeVine. Cotton warp, wool weft.

watching the colors so beautifully and smoothly blend together.

I have often reflected on the slowness of tapestry; how one can sit for hours and hours weaving and not get bored. It's like falling into some sort of trance. There is a therapeutic nature in repetitive motion. I sit, walk back, redo, caught in a transient and joyful state of process. Its laborious nature has influenced the concepts I confront in my imagery. The piece must merit the time; the image must have some sense of monumental worth. My thesis work explored portraiture of my grandmother, young and old. My work is snapshots of moments I have found to be striking and affective, but perhaps a mundane, everyday event on a first glance. For example, my grandmother entering a pond is unceremonious even at 90 years old, but when woven, this particular snapshot is memorialized.

When you work for an extended period of time on a piece—and my larger pieces have taken four to five months to complete—you have to love the process. My semesters were dedicated



Lena Ruth Schwartz, "4:47 P.M. September 3rd, 2018," 69 in x 38 in, 6 epi, 2019, photo: Lena Ruth Schwartz. Cotton warp, wool weft.

to sleepless nights in the studio, just my tapestry and me. It becomes a part of you as you work so much; there's love and even tears and stress if you have to unweave a section and try again. But the final product is a reward worth achieving.

My imagery is a mixture between realism and impressionist background. Since I have only been weaving for about two and a half years, I do a lot of trial and error while weaving the areas that may be very difficult to articulate with wool. I work with photos as a reference, but there is a limit to what can be imitated perfectly with weaving. The woven landscape becomes a vibrant collective of shapes and colors. By weaving in smaller threads of color that contrast from the area I'm weaving, but relate to a different section, you can create a cohesive natural flow to the piece. When weaving my grandmother's body in the water, I twisted light blues into the flesh tone, reflecting the blue of the surrounding water.

When looking at tapestry, there's a sense of appreciation for that time spent. I often ponder its historical significance. Weaving is an ancient medium and we continue a legacy as we dedicate ourselves to the craftsmanship. I got a chance to visit the Metropolitan Museum's tapestry conservation department a few months ago. To see these conservators working on deciphering, learning about, and repairing these tapestries

made centuries ago was such a lovely reminder in appreciating the past and seeing how important the medium is. It has such a rich and a beautiful past. In our fast-paced modern world, there is something special about commitment to such a time consuming and tricky craft.

There still is so much for me to learn in tapestry and I'm excited to continue to experiment and build a body of work. I would like to test the boundaries of what I have seen in tapestry, and challenge and push

myself to grow. My position as an artist is translating this craft into an emotional counterpoint, a visual that may have never been seen in this manner.



Photo: Jill LeVine

Lena Ruth Schwartz is a recent graduate of Skidmore College who currently resides in her hometown of New York City.

Emese Kádár

Emese Kádár lives in Budapest, Hungary. She earned her bachelor of Painting at the University of Fine Arts in Hungary in 2019. Her work has been featured in various group exhibitions in Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Poland and in two solo shows in Hungary.



Mari-Triin Kirs

To be honest, this series consists of my first tapestries. While studying, I learned to weave. I have woven rugs, fabrics, scarves and clothes. Soon it was clear to me that I wanted to weave more. Thanks to innovative professors at my school, it was possible to do the impossible: change the fabric shape and threads' positions while weaving on a loom. I discovered tapestry almost at the end of my studies. I am glad that I did, because otherwise I would not have gotten to know this amazing medium—the same technique but completely different rules and possibilities.

At first, I was a little afraid of this time-consuming activity, but surprisingly the more I wove the more I started to like it. We had to make tapestry based on a story and quite soon I knew I wanted to make it as a tribute to my mother and family. In my opinion, tapestry is great for telling stories. Just like in paintings, you can give visual emotions to the viewer by using certain colors, images and combinations.

I do not consider myself as a very good painter. But while weaving I realized that tapestries are like paintings in many ways. Only instead of paint there is yarn. It makes such a big difference—whether to use paint or yarn. For me, paint is abstract while yarn is something you can touch and feel. It is three-dimensional and makes up as a physical item in the end. Tapestries do not need frames when they are finished and quite often paintings are the designs for tapestries.

Weaving the series “Home” was a new experience for me. Petal by petal I gained confidence in blending the yarns together. I am glad that I was allowed to approach it in my own way. I did not weave a background. I simply made the tulip, floating petals and a beehive. All the tapestries are off-scale: some too large, others too small compared to real life. When knotting the ends of warp threads, the tulip turned alive—the petals started to curl and shape just like a real-life tulip.

Recently, I have studied the concept of process in making something. I have learned that nature



Mari-Trin Kiirs, “Home,” 30 in x 25 in, 2018. Cotton warp, wool and viscose weft. Detail shown in center and right photos.

is constantly in progress: seasons and weather change, once-bloomed flowers turn into soil, and one forest is not the same tomorrow. There also are no identical things in nature. Every snowflake has a unique structure, every blossom blooms in its own way. I take my art pieces the same way: the beauty is in the process. I cannot imagine how something will look before I start making it. It is important to feel the material and eventually it will tell you what it wants to become and how to work with it.

Most of the time I have material first and then I start doing something from it. When weaving my tapestry “Home,” I had the idea first and the materials came second. I knew I wanted to depict a beautiful sight from my childhood. I also wanted to do something untraditional. A Canadian tapestry artist, Line Dufour, makes her tapestries from lots of small irregularly shaped woven pieces. This is where I had the idea to weave my tapestry piece by piece.

Another inspiration for me was an Estonian painter, Malle Leis, whose abnormally huge flower motifs I had seen from children’s books. My tulip is in full bloom and already starting to lose its petals while a small beehive floats in front of it. It can be said that the tulip represents my mother and the beehive is my father—small but important part of the flower’s life. Without the bees there would be no tulips.

As said before, I try to value process in my life. This is why tapestry is a very interesting medium for me. Yes, it is time-consuming, but there are not many activities left in life that can be done without thinking about how to do it quicker and more efficiently. I think that people need this kind of slow activity. It gives a chance to clear your mind from all these quick stimuli we get from phones and television.

In order to weave a tapestry, you have to feel every yarn with your fingers and learn how it moves, twists and finally works for you. Tapestry is full of the maker’s fingerprints. This is also quite unique nowadays. People have mostly mass-produced items in their homes. These items do not show the flow of process and making. Handmade items are being replaced by identical and unemotional things. I am not saying that everyone should have a tapestry in their household. I simply like the idea of making something with one’s hands or having such things in life.

I am a first year’s graduate of Pallas University of Applied Sciences in Tartu, Estonia. I studied in the textile department and received the “Young Textile Artist of 2018” award from the Estonian Textile Artists’ Association.





Emma Straw

I graduated from Bath School of Art and Design; Bath Spa University with BA(Hons) Contemporary Arts Practice in 2017. I am now studying MA Visual Arts, specializing in Textiles and Tapestry, at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation. I am focusing my practice on weaving fluid imagery and experimenting with the various plain, eccentric, and three-dimensional qualities of tapestry.



Emma Straw, "133 Hours; Woven Watercolour," 144 cm x 188 cm, 2019. Wool and cotton.

Emma Straw, "Dispersed Colour," tryptich, 50 cm x 70 cm, 2018. Wool and cotton.



Emma Straw, "59 Hours; Woven Watercolour," 40 cm x 60 cm, 2019, Wool and cotton.

Important Dates

October 12, 2019

Small Tapestry International 6: Beyond the Edge, closes at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois

October 15, 2019

American Tapestry Biennial 13 Entry Deadline

November 1, 2019

TEx@ATA opens online.

HERE AND (T)HERE

A total of 139 registrants have been paired and are busy weaving post cards for exchange.

Don't forget to submit images of completed works by October 15, 2019 to share with fellow members in an online exhibition that goes live on December 1, 2019.

Tapestry Topics Themes and Deadlines

The Fine Art of Tapestry Weaving

February 1, 2020

Is tapestry weaving accepted in the world of fine art? Tell us about your experiences and the direction you are headed. Are tapestry artists looked at (or not looked at) because working with fiber is considered women's work? Or, are we part of the world of fine art but simply do not realize that we are in the same boat as all other fine artists—just another “starving artist”? While writing your story, feel free to email me with your thoughts and ideas.

If you plan to submit an article, please contact Theme Coordinator, Doris Florig, 2dmagic@gmail.com.

“Every picture tells a story, don't it?” (Rod Stewart)

Deadline: June 1, 2020

From medieval times to modern day, allegory, symbolism and narrative have been fertile ground for tapestry weavers. Let's take a look at historical precedence, and modern-day practice. Methods of communication to larger audiences has changed much in the last 1000 years. Then, tapestries could be used to communicate power or celebration, victory in battle, religious lessons, and cautionary tales. Now, communication about current events, entertainment, and politics happens almost instantly via social media, and in case you missed it, on the nightly news.

What role does story-telling play in contemporary tapestry, with its slow and deliberate delivery? How has the use of symbols to communicate meaning changed? Are current symbols universally recognized—or do they tend to be more personal and elusive? As the individual tapestry artist practice continues in our own time—what is the role of narrative and allegory? Who are the artists using symbols to indicate meaning, and where do these symbols come from? Tapestries have been called “mobile murals” indicating both the usual scale of a narrative tapestry as well as its portability. Can small scale tapestries—so popular today, tell a story as effectively?

If you plan to submit an article, please contact Theme Coordinator, Nancy McRay, nmcray@mac.com

Call for Theme Coordinators

Do you have an idea for a theme? Would you like to be a Theme Coordinator? Email: newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org.

Tapestry Topics Team

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The Back Page

“Roundel with Winged Horse”

10.5 in x 7.25 in (57.2 cm x 18.4 cm), 9th century. Wool, linen; tapestry weave.
Attributed to Egypt. Rogers Fund, 1974. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Retrieved 20 August 2019.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/452540>



“Traces of another medallion at the lower edge suggest that this fragment may have come from a hanging or other textile decorated with a repeat pattern of rows of roundels. Such patterns in tapestry weave must have been made in imitation of woven silks. In this case, despite the blurring of forms, a highly stylized winged horse with beribboned ankles can be recognized. The image is ultimately derived from a Sasanian prototype.” [Stauffer 1995]