Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

www.americantapestryalliance.org

Spring 2007 Vol 33 No 1

Celebrating 25 Years 1982-2007

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Mark Adams, "California Poppies," 54" x 36", 1977 woven by the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop.

Greetings from Becky and Linda

As we approach the Silver Anniversary Celebration, excitement is growing among board members and volunteers who have been planning various aspects of the April 27-29 events in San Jose. We will be hearing from some of the early members of ATA who envisioned the networking and educational opportunities that a national organization could provide. We know not all of you can attend, but

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there will be reports and images of the events in future issues of *Tapestry Topics*.

While the Anniversary Celebration, GFR lecture, and ATB6 at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles are destined to be great events, we believe the 'super buzz' is around the Fundraiser Raffle of Barbara Heller's tapestry. What exquisite fun, to donate to ATA and have the chance, the hope, the dream of ending up with that fabulous tapestry! In the end, whichever lucky donor ends up owning the tapestry, the real winner will be ATA.

ATA's ability to mount world class exhibitions, organize workshops and seminars, produce an increasingly professional documentation of contemporary tapestry in the quarterly newsletter, and sustain the wonders of our website is always under pressure from rising costs. We want to keep membership and participation in activities affordable while we continue to increase our standards of excellence.

Tapestry Topics is one of the outstanding benefits ATA members receive. It informs, inspires and provides that connection to other tapestry weavers that sustains us through many hours of working in isolation on our tapestries. The web site, where more Anniversary images and information will be posted, is another benefit ATA provides. It is always exciting when one of you sends images for the Artist Pages encouraging us by the variety of styles and subject matter currently being woven.

The site is a great promotional tool for artists seeking exhibitions, gallery representation, commissions or just showing family and friends that your work is part of the larger art community. It also helps establish ATA as a professional organization giving us visibility world wide. Through the web site, without leaving home, we are able to see what is being accomplished by tapestry weavers, like the delightful online exhibit, "Tapestry on the Edge," that TAPS posted recently. It is a great way to promote the outstanding work of tapestry artists living on the western "edge" of North America. We look forward to more regional groups working with the web site committee to showcase the tapestry work being done in their areas.

One way to help ATA achieve its goals is to donate to this wonderful organization. Donations can be in more than one form: monetary, through increased level of membership or purchase of tickets for the raffle of Barbara Heller's tapestry, and/or time, through the donation of your skills as a volunteer. Both contributions are needed and appreciated. Without either, we can no longer function. Thank you to all ATA members, those who have already contributed and those who will do so in the future.

Our founders had a great vision for bringing the tapestry community together from diverse geographic areas. Now it is up to us to support the expanded programs and technological offerings that we all have come to expect. So buy raffle tickets, upgrade your membership category, and support your organization by working on one of the many projects ATA has in the works.

Happy weaving and Happy Birthday ATA!

The California Scene

By Linda Rees

This year the newsletter is endeavoring to quantify our progress over the past 25 years towards becoming a fully respected art form. While each issue will feature historical perspectives, we encourage reviews of current exhibits, books or other commentary.

Next Issue: ATA Then and Now Deadline April 1

From my perspective, contemporary tapestry first gained strength on the west coast. The burgeoning activity extended all the way up to Portland and Vancouver, BC, but the locus was in the Bay Area of California. With that in mind I chose to feature two ATB6 artists from that part of the state, Tricia Goldberg and Christine Laffer. Both artists contributed to the visibility that tapestry received there during the 1980s and 1990s.

In reading Tricia Goldberg's artist's statement, I was struck by the way her conversational discourse concisely reveals information about her personality, what the tapestry means to her, and insights into how she approaches her designs conceptually. It displays a level of professionalism that characterizes the Bay Area artists. It was then that I understood the California legacy. But before we consider these two artists whose careers have surprising parallels and even joint experiences, other aspects of the story precede them, especially the overall influence of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop.

Student Award

The deadline for submissions will be 15 April of each calendar year. The winner will be notified in early May. The American Tapestry Alliance reserves the right to withhold the award in any given year. Submissions for the American Tapestry Alliance Student Award should be mailed to: American Tapestry Alliance Student Award, PO Box 28600, San Jose, California 95159-8600, USA For guidelines, see: www.americantapestryalliance.org

Wanted:

Photos from past ATA events for an ATA "memory lane" bulletin board at the Anniversary Celebration on April 28, 2007.

Send NOW to: Sonja Miremont
156 Shelina Vista Lane
Petaluma, CA 94952
(707) 778-8267

Email Sonja at: sonjabm1@comcast.net

Tapestry: The French Connection

by Joyce Hulbert

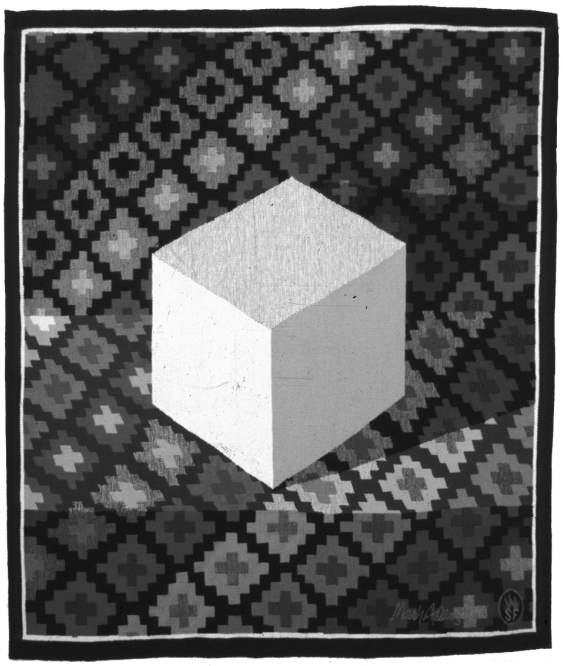
Reprinted from the catalog "The Fabric of Life," 150 years of Northern California Fiber Art History,San Francisco State University,
Sept.21 - October18, 1997

Tapestry is described as "a pictorial wall hanging woven by hand in a weft-faced plain weave creating mosaic-like patterning by use of discontinuous wefts." For Northern California and this essay, the words "pictorial wall hanging" play a major role, for the tapestry I will discuss . . . is primarily pictorial because the most influential artists in this medium have their roots in the French pictorial tapestry tradition. The brevity of this essay commands that I center my attention on key artists whose efforts and works continue to have lasting influence on the community and artform. Through the history and works of Mark Adams, Jean-Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie, and Katherine Kilgore, I will explore some of the forces at play: the role of the tapestry artist/designer, that of the artist/weaver, the effect of culturally based craft traditions on contemporary expression, and the history that creates the roots of the "movement" in Northern California.

Artists including Trude Guermonprez and Hal Painter were using pictorial images in their work by the late 1940s. Though not working in the strict tapestry definition, they were influential and innovative as teachers.

Mark Adams completed his formal art training and moved to San Francisco in the late forties. He began a body of work that stressed the importance of the relationship of art and architecture, including work in stained glass as well as the tradition of French tapestry. As Adams explained, "There was a magic for me about this medium that was capable of being wall-sized yet not part of the wall, that could appear so solid and yet be moved by a breeze."

. . . By 1961 Adams had two solo exhibitions of his tapestries at San Francisco museums, and 1962 brought him the distinction of exhibiting his tapestry "Great Wing" in the 1st Lausanne Biennale at Musee Cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Switzerland. Since then he has accomplished many important private and public commissions in tapestry [such as] the mural scale



Mark Adams, "The White Block," 52" x 44", 1977
woven by the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop.

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triptych panels "Pond In Golden Gate Park," "Garden In San Andreas Valley," and "Garden Outside the Gate" [commissioned] by the Joint Committee of the San Francisco Arts Commission and San Francisco Airport Commission.

. . . Mark Adams is an American example of the culturally-based French concept of the "tapestry designer." He conceives and executes a painted "cartoon" for a tapestry and commissions a tapestry weaver or workshop to weave it. All through the late 1950s - 1970s he sent painted cartoons to France to be woven. After that time he employed the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop or two of its best known weavers, Rudi Richardson and Phoebe McAfee to create his tapestries. His work exults in a play of color and value in a rather Zen-like discovery of figurative, religious, and still-life themes and embodies fully the French quality of a two-dimensional flatness to create a vision of great clarity.

Judy Chicago "Dinner Party Banner," 60" x 37" woven by the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop.

Mark Adams' visibility in the San Francisco art scene brought about a piece of synchronicity that continues to stimulate and inform the tapestry world of Northern California. Jean-Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie moved to the Bay Area from Mexico City in 1968, bringing with them a vast history and knowledge of French tapestry tradition. Yael Lurie, a tapestry designer from Israel, trained as a painter with her father Jacob Lurie and painter Jacob Wexler. Jean-Pierre Larochette, a third-generation Aubusson tapestry weaver, studied with his father Armand Larochette, as well as Raymond Duncan and Jean Lurçat, when Larochette was an instructor at the Nazareth Tapestry School in Israel. Larochette and Lurie met at this school, married, and then began travels that brought them to San Francisco. In 1971, the two artists came to see Adams to talk of tapestry and to seek teaching opportunities in the Bay Area.

Knowing of Margery Livingston's interest in French tapestry and her position at San Francisco State University, Mark Adams referred Larochette and Lurie to her. In 1973 and 1974 they taught summer workshops in tapestry at San Francisco State. This opened the door for another great opportunity. In the words of Livingston:

"Jean-Pierre had taught two summer sessions at SFS-that's where I met him. Those classes were enormously successful. There's a tremendous demand for weaving. The whole medium of fiber has been very important and the West Coast is the center. And so the timing was perfect. We had a core of enthusiastic weavers just as Anna Bennett (Curator of Textiles, M.H. de Young Memorial Museum) was pulling together her exhibit ("Five Centuries of Tapestry" held at the Legion of Honor in 1976-77) and talking of a demonstration project. She got a grant to build the loom, which Jean-Pierre Larochette built with a Berkeley woodworker. We had the weavers. Mark Adams designed a cartoon that he felt would be simple but effective ("California Poppies") - something that could be done in 6 weeks. Miraculously, it all came off!"

Once the demonstration project was complete, Jean-Pierre Larochette along with three students involved in the project, Ernestine Bianchi, Phoebe McAfee, and Ruth Tanenbaum(Scheuer), set the groundwork for forming a tapestry workshop. They established the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop in 1977 which became a nucleus and well-spring for a growing interest of fiber-based artists in pictorial imagery. Over 300 artists worked or trained at the SFTW over the years and many continue as professional artist/weavers today.

The San Francisco Tapestry Workshop completed many important commissions during its reign on

Chattanooga Street in Noe Valley. The first was a series of tapestry hangings and upholstery for Temple Emanu-el (Lake St., San Francisco), designed by Yael Lurie. This was followed by a highly-visible collaboration with artist Judy Chicago for six tapestries for her "Dinner Party" exhibition. Ten tapestries by Mark Adams were woven at SFTW, including "White Block" and "Sunset With Palms".

Yael Lurie was a designer for the SFTW, yet her continued collaboration with husband Jean-Pierre Larochette has born even greater fruit since those times. Characteristic of their work is a lyrical fragmentation of imagery that is calligraphic and full of movement. They see their work as a "confluence" of the different cultures they come from and with which they resonate. They include this in their work by mixing structural and pictorial-based weaving techniques of different cultures with imagery both unique and culturally symbolic. They continue to produce both public and private commissions and after the closing of the SFTW have continued to be important teachers of tapestry.

Larochette and Lurie have maintained the classic French division of cartoon artist and tapestry weaver, yet in their dynamic relationship of collaboration have made the vision and the making integral. Most Northern California tapestry artists today are both artist and weaver.

I will close this discussion by highlighting an important tapestry artist who studied at the SFTW and produced, I believe, one of the finest bodies of American pictorial tapestry to date. After completing an MFA in painting at Arizona State University in Phoenix, Katherine Kilgore (1930-1994) moved to San Francisco to pursue her art career. She started weaving tapestry around 1975, when in her words "My paintings took on a weaverly quality to such a degree that I simply took the leap into weaving." To perfect her capacity to weave, Katherine attended the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop in the fall of 1978.

Kilgore was a mature artist of nearly 50 when she took on the techniques of French tapestry. Her design process for tapestry became a mix of preliminary sketches and weaving improvisation focused by a new technique. The images developed equally on paper and on the loom. "I allow the loom to describe the design, and a transformation takes place. Each tapestry is a growing original." An idiosyncratic, handcrafted play of color is a direct result of this improvisation. Kilgore used this interplay of light/dark and warm/cool in her exploration of ideas of spirit, of energy, of the inner force. As a result, many of her most prominent commissions were for churches, including the 11'6" x 11'6" triptych "There is a Light in the Midst of Darkness" on public view at Cavalry Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, and private commissions featuring angels and saints.

Katherine Kilgore embodied quintessentially the role of artist/weaver that is important in the development of many tapestry artists in Northern California including Victor Jacoby, Jan Langdon and Jan Moore. Through the efforts of these artists and many others, American tapestry has Northern California at its center. This fact is underscored by the many exhibitions dedicated to highlighting this work at such venues as the California Crafts Museum (1994), the Bedford Gallery at the Regional Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek (1991), and shows organized by the San Francisco-based group Tapestry Weavers West.

We have seen the role of tapestry designer through the work of Mark Adams, the role of tapestry designer and tapestry weaver in collaboration through the work of Jean-Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie, and the role of the artist/weaver in the work of Katherine Kilgore. Though their roles in relation to the creation of an artform have originated in French culture from a legacy of many centuries, these artists continue to find foundation and inspiration from this history towards making art that is expressly unique and in no way derivative. Tapestry, through the efforts of these artists and many others, can be considered a definitely American artform, especially at its center in the region of Northern California.

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C. Smith: Conversation with K. Kilgore

The author would like to extend thanks to Christine Laffer, Candace Crockett, Constance Hunt, Courtney Shaw, Jan Janeiro and the artists covered in the essay for their great help in providing source material for this essay.

THE SAN FRANCISCO TAPESTRY WORKSHOP, 1977-1988

Glimpses and Recollections

By Jean Pierre Larochette

The preceding years: When we arrived in San Francisco for a short visit in the summer of 1971, one of the first people we met was Margery Livingston. Margery was to become an important and dear person in our personal lives and a leading member of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop board of directors. Her initial role in that project was to coordinate a weaving demonstration during the "Five Centuries of Tapestry" exhibition (1976). This exhibit, which took place at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum, was a germinal event in the formation of the workshop.

At the time we met, she was Head of the San Francisco State University Textile Program which she had started a decade or so earlier. A Francophile with a passion for traditional tapestry, Margery invited me to come to teach the following summer and immediately connected me with some of the people involved with tapestry in the city. Among her friends was Hal Painter, a gifted weaver who lived in San Francisco and was to become instrumental in the formation of American Tapestry Alliance. There was Sigmund Wenger, owner of a tapestry gallery on Montgomery Street showing contemporary French artists. There were a few prosperous tapestry workshops in the area. Large commissions were much talked about, with new skyscrapers mushrooming in a city known for its taste for public art.

But it was during the California Palace of the Legion of Honor's weaving demonstration, in the fall of 1976 that the idea of a non-profit educational organization and tapestry workshop started to unfold.

Letter to a San Francisco museum visitor

Dear museum visitor:

The morning of the opening at the museum, you and your wife were the first, out of thousands of eventual visitors to the show, to enter the gallery where, very excited and nervous after weeks of work and preparations, we were ready, weaving at the demonstration loom with great expectations. It was, to remind you, at The California Palace of the Legion of Honor's "Five centuries of Tapestry" show. As you approached the loom, you told your wife, in so many words if I remember it right, "Look here honey, what a nice thing to do on a rainy day. . . ." I could not hear the rest of your comment. At first I felt disappointment and indignation, we had been working so hard! Then I felt frightened because I was still unfamiliar with this country and needed the job. I was just coming from Mexico, where I lived for many years, with a wife and a little daughter to support, so you see how worried I could be at hearing your words. He must just be uninformed, I thought. After all, our cousins, the two shed weavers of the world live in dry, desert-like areas. Kilim makers, Bedouin craftsman, old Yancay virtuosos, even our ancestors of Coptic tapestry extraordinaire, all prayed for a little rain, rarely having to weave under it.

Now I know better. You and your wife must have been quite an enthusiastic couple of art lovers, waiting in line at the doors to get there first, early in the morning. Now I realize, your comment, coming from a citizen of that lofty city, just "sounded" casual. Its significance was prophetic but most meaningful. A pastime for a rainy day! Of course you know your geography; Europeans weave tapestry in Aubusson and not in Saint Tropez, in Edinburgh and not in Naples. The wisdom of your comment contained even a predictive look into the customs of this country, where this style of tapestry is more likely to flourish in Portland than in Phoenix. Now, how could you have foreseen tapestry as a hobby? Indeed you were right. It is at the hands of dedicated, non-commercial practitioners that this centuries old tradition is going to survive with integrity.

Let me tell you, dear visitor, how much I have come to appreciate your views, how much I have learned because of them, in a world contained just in a seemingly trivial line - how much I may still learn.

The model: When the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop (S.F.T.W.) opened its doors in the fall of 1977, it described itself as patterned after the European "atelier," with an educational and hands-on program that allowed for extended studies and professional experience. At that time the city of Aubusson, France, had about 50 registered production workshops; its tapestry program at the Ecole Nationale des Art Décorative (E.N.A.D.) art school was in full swing, and graduating students found easy employment at the local venues.

Yael Lurie "Harmony"
woven by the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop.

The S.F.T.W folded in 1988. Today, just 30 years after the workshop's promising inauguration, in Aubusson only a handful of workshops have managed to stay in business and E.N.A.D has discontinued its tapestry program. What has happened in the span of a generation that could cause such a significant and dramatic change?

Certainly there was an expression of idealism and love for the art form that today is generally considered lost or at the heart of far too few individuals. Three decades ago, the young, and not so young, could take the time to dedicate themselves for months, even years, to a discipline that, in the U.S, characteristically lacked the incentive of material reward. Today, a mere weeklong workshop seems unaffordable. Time appears to have accelerated to the point of making laborious handwork inconceivable. And then there are the known culprits, the economy, the changing architectural priorities, and the always-shifting social patterns. One may argue that they have all existed before: world recessions, dismissing fashions (such as the commercialization of wall-paper during the mid 19th century dismissing the use of tapestry). The list is long.

In its 10 years of existence the S.F.T.W trained hundreds of students, professionally wove over 40 mural-size tapestries, and organized a considerable number of exhibitions and public demonstrations. Looking back, its human component and the individual passion of its members are definitively what made its considerable accomplishments possible. A belief in the strength of communal effort permeated every aspect of its functioning. The old weaving ateliers of Europe were re-incarnated in an American not-for-profit art organization. The compensations did not come in the form of goods - so many barrels of wine, bushels of grain - and the pay was meager. But it did not matter; the rewards were in the beauty of the task and the pleasures of feeling creative.

The Goals: *Appreciation of the Fine Art of Tapestry* - Tapestries in their highest form are objects of lasting cultural significance. No American sources have existed for this very valuable art form. The opening of the Workshop avails the opportunity to develop tapestry as a fine art in the United States. *Innovations in Technique and Design* - From the development of more efficient high-warp looms to the innovation of new concepts in weaving design, a fresh interpretation of French tapestry is evolving. *Education of Artists in an American "Atelier"* - As at the Tamarind Institute for printmaking, artists expand their knowledge by working directly in their medium. Formerly designs were exported to Europe to be woven in impersonal and costly production workshops. *Providing a Resource Center for Tapestry in the U.S.* - The San Francisco Tapestry Workshop acts as an informational clearinghouse for professionals and public alike. Heightened awareness of fine tapestry is achieved through museum demonstrations, exhibitions and community lectures.

Responding to the immediate need for weavers, at first the curriculum focused on teaching tapestry techniques. Out of that period came the realization of several large commissions and the weaving of six tapestries for the Judy Chicago Dinner Party project. Design classes were included later on, and an exhibition room was kept open on a regular basis.

At any given time there were three to five staff members weaving but available for instruction, students, and associate weavers working on their own projects—about 10 to 15 people in all. The facility at 23rd Street and Chattanooga had one large instruction and weaving room and two weaving rooms with one

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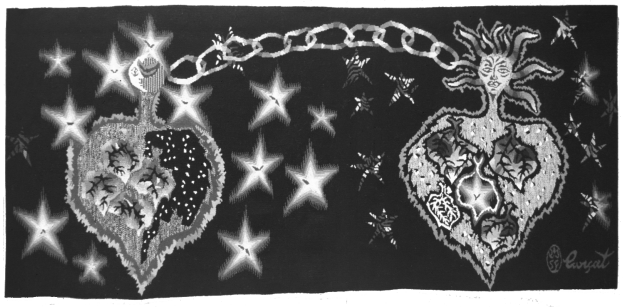
low-warp loom in each for commissioned work. During the last years the office was turned into a gallery, and the desk was moved to the kitchen.

From the beginning several weavers attended the workshop to develop their own projects, everybody learning from everyone else. Some stayed for months, some for years. They were the spirit of the place, the energy that kept the dream going. Most had to make great sacrifices to be at the workshop. There were always a few students from out of state - San Francisco being the exciting place it is, people would come from all over the country. Opportunity for study was offered every other month, and the list of prospective students was often booked for a full year. Monthly tuition was $150.



SFTW weavers, "Gemini," from a Lurçat cartoon

For $20 on May 21, 1983, from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM (breakfast and lunch included!) you could attend "Presentations," the first San Francisco event co-sponsored with the recently formed organization, the American Tapestry Alliance. The announcement read: "We will look at various ways to further public awareness of tapestry. We would like to invite you to participate in this gathering of weavers and promoters of this art form, as we discuss ways of better serving each other."

Letter to a patron of the art

While going through some of the files and memories of that long ago project, I saw you standing by the door of the workshop, looking in with a blend of curiosity and surprise. You must have been intrigued by what was there waiting for you to see, the doings, maneuvering, fabrications of a group of young people you knew very little about. And yet you have trusted them with your money and your ideals, beliefs that were so disguised in your businessman's language that we did not always recognize them. Because if we thought of camaraderie and egalitarian principles, you thought of commitments, working tools, and respectability. But we always sensed that, like us, you believed in the power of a collective vision. Your investment was there for you to see: the colored yarns and the bobbins carrying them into the weave; the new loom we were dressing for the next tapestry. And you listened to the laughter, the coming and going, the phone-calls inquiring about courses.

When asked to write an article about that long ago project, I thought of you, and I wondered if the shrewdest businessman's calculations could have ever predicted such generous returns on your investment.

Epilogue

Coincidentally the activities of the S.F.T.W. ceased where they had started, at an event at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor Museum. A last weaving demonstration was held during Jean Lurçat's "Song of the World" exhibition, in 1988. A section from "La Poesie," "Gemini," from a cartoon facilitated by Simone Lurçat through the Musuem of Anger, France, was completed by a group of S.F.T.W. weavers and today is part of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco tapestry collection.

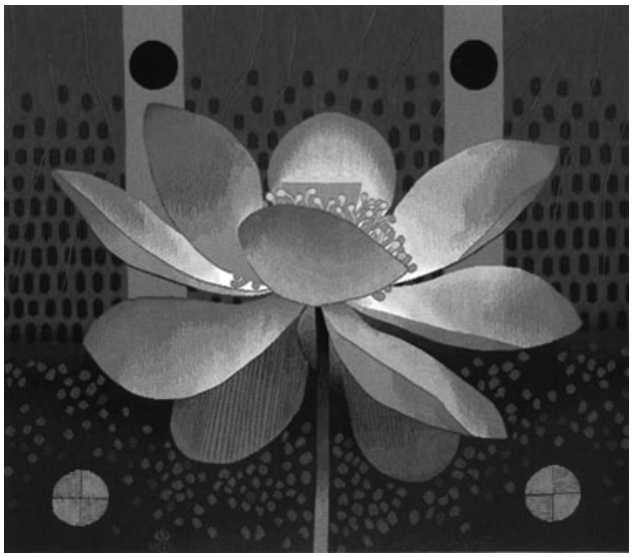
Mark Adams - 1925 - 2006

By Jackie Wollenberg

The impact of losing Mark Adams in 2006 was felt near and far in the world of the visual arts. We who design and weave tapestries knew him particularly for his prolific tapestry designs woven in the French manner. His three grand scale tapestries at the San Francisco airport are a constant delight. Mark Adams knew at an early age that art and design were what he cared for most. He learned a variety of disciplines while in high school and college and then studied privately with Hans Hofmann in New York where he was engrossed with abstraction. Soon after that period he created various commercial displays, first in New York, and later in San Francisco where he produced stunning windows for Gumps, a fashionable high end store.

After a brief return to study again with Hans Hofmann, Adams settled in San Francisco to work in water color, exploring his fascination for color combined with light. There was an immediacy to this work as opposed to designs he created for others to execute. In the early 1950s, he and his wife, artist

Beth Van Hoesen, wrote to Jean Lurçat, wanting to study with him in France. Lurçat wrote back, "Yes, if you'll come and work on this farm and work hard." Eventually, Adams did study for a period with Lurçat learning a great deal about designing for the medium. Adams worked mornings on the master's projects, often doing chores which the aging Lurçat was finding difficult. In the afternoons, he did his own tapestry designs which he and Lurçat would later critique. There evidently grew a close, intimate friendship between the two men who were so passionate about their artwork.



Mark Adams, "Lotus, Sumatra," 80" x 92", 1989. Woven by McAfee/Richardson. Collection of the Fine Museums of San Francisco

Adams also learned from the weavers in Aubusson. While in Aubusson he became close friends and collaborators with M. and Mme. Paul Avignon, the weavers who wove all of Mark Adams' early designs after he returned to San Francisco. A good source of information on these early works is the catalogue, *Mark Adams, An Exhibition of Tapestries, Paintings, Stained Glass Windows and Architectural Designs*, from the 1970 California Palace of the Legion of Honor exhibit. It contains an excellent introductory essay by William H. Elsner, then Curator of Museum Services. Though this book is illustrated primarily in black and white, it contains striking color photos of two early tapestries from the sixties, "Joseph's Coat," 1961, and "Ranunculas," 1968.

In the several books I drew from, the works are presented in a totally mixed sequence, as if to say, "don't segregate us, we're all part of the picture." For me, the benefit of these juxtapositions comes from being able to see first hand the strong design connections they reveal. On some occasions one is forced to look closely to determine just which medium one is actually viewing,

Over the years Mark Adams showed a consistent dedication to working in a variety of media. He drew endless inspiration from elements of nature, and his fascination with light and color never waned. He seemed to need the contrasting demands of translating his ideas in water color, acrylics, oils, glass, or woven tapestry. This versatility placed him in a good position to answer the myriad of demands from private art lovers and architects who sought him out to fill commissions, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area where he and Beth Van Hoesen lived in the Noe Valley district in a building which was previously a fire house. Their studio was on the ground floor and their living quarters were on the long, narrow second level. It was in this firehouse studio that so many tapestries and leaded stained glass windows were designed.

In 1976 Anna Bennett, textile curator at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco organized an amazing exhibit at the Legion of Honor Museum, titled "Five Centuries of Tapestry." That exhibit had a great deal to do with my eventual passion for tapestry. I was a student in Ed Rossbach's last graduate class, at U.C Berkeley, and we were asked to write something about any aspect of what we saw in those amazing works at the Legion of Honor. I can remember being mesmerized by a section of a tapestry depicting Jacob. I wrote the paper on a small section of Jacob's knee that, when isolated, formed a wonderful abstract design with its volume and form created by shading carried out through simple single hatching and hachures. I wove a miniature of that abstraction to accompany my paper. I turned it in with a conviction that some day I might actually be able to spend time doing this seductive kind of weaving.

Anna Bennett asked Mark Adams to design a special tapestry to be woven in the vestibule of the museum while the exhibit was ongoing. Jean Pierre Larochette constructed a traditional Aubusson style low warp loom for the occasion, and he and a group of students from the textile department took turns (sitting in pairs), weaving "California Poppies." That loom now resides in the front room gallery of Pacific Textile Arts in Fort Bragg, California, donated by Larochette so that it would be used and preserved.

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Evidently the designer was quite happy with the results because, from that time on, Adams had his tapestries woven by local weavers. The demonstrators, who became the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop, wove "The White Block" followed by "White Petunias," "Hawaiian Sunsets," and others. Two of these weavers, Phoebe McAfee and Rudi Richardson produced the first of three commissions Adams received from the San Francisco Arts Commission. The tapestries are still enjoyed by travelers at San Francisco Airport every day. After the first piece, Rudi and Phoebe rented a space at Bethany Methodist Church where they wove more of Adams' designs and actually collaborated at times on the drawing of the final cartoon.

In my quest for an understanding of the complete Mark Adams, I have been struck by an interesting note. Several people who worked for him in those days made independent statements that had a similar ring to them. Jean Pierre Larochette says,

> Mark insisted that cartoon designing was a very calculated and much rehearsed process. He would advise one to draw the same general composition for five or six consecutive days before entering in detail. I remember that once he asked me if I would come to see a cartoon for a tapestry he was working on for a Texas hotel, a Cabeza De Vaca, so large that it had to be sent to be woven in France. To the full standing figure of De Vaca, Mark had pinned about six or seven different heads. Standing on a ladder, he started pealing the portraits off one by one while asking which one I thought to be most efficient. Mark wanted his tapestry work to be efficient, clear, well defined. His cartoons were easy to weave, fast but never boring. He was very disciplined and expected the same from others."

Jean Pierre also talks of how Mark Adams was genuinely interested in the Larochettes' work when they first arrived in San Francisco about 1972. He introduced them to Marjorie Livingston and talked of the possibility of having them weave for him locally.

Phoebe McAfee, in her well considered essay written for the TWW May 2006 Newsletter, has many similar things to say about Mark Adams. In all, she counted twenty-four projects that she worked on with Mark, at the Tapestry Workshop, at Bethany with Rudy, and in her home studio. She talks about how much he loved to travel and how that travel often was the inspiration for new projects, such as his trio of "Hawaiian Sunsets," and the "Lotus Sumatra." She points out that he liked to depict small, ordinary things such as a glass of water or a single flower in both his paintings and his tapestries. In one of her favorites, "Rose and Dogwood," the portrayal of a spotted dog sitting on a colorful, patterned rug on a deck surrounded by dogwood blossoms seems complex at first glance. But Jean Pierre is right. When you take a second look at this charming scene, you realize, as a tapestry weaver, that all the lines are turned just the right way to make this tapestry a perfect manifestation of the Adams efficiency credo.

Mark Adams, "Rose and Dogwood," 72" x 80", 1986.
Woven by McAfee/Richardson.
Collection of Gould, St. Louis, MO

Jean Pierre says that Mark Adams was a very good student of Lurçat

> He understood Lurçat's mural objectives and loved large surfaces. During his time in France he worked with weavers and dyers in Aubusson, creating a rosary of colors similar to Lurçat's. "California Poppies" was woven with colors from Aubusson. When, a few months later we wove the "White Block," I presented him with samples of available colored yarns and a technique he had not used before and that would much affect his later work, *chinee and melange*. The great colorist he was, he turned the limitation of working with commercial yarns to his own benefit and deeply influenced other works woven during those early years at the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop.

Mark Adams was a dedicated artist with passion and a strong work ethic. Phoebe says, "he had a dry sense of humor, and loved puns and word plays." Others have pointed out how important music was to him. All those who have written about him agree that he had a good long, productive life and that he will be greatly missed.

A very moving tribute to Mark Adams appears on a "FlashPoint" web site by writer, Robert Starkey, titled, "An Appreciation of an Artist and Friend." Mr. Starkey writes,

> "Mark's passion lives on through the vibrant kaleidoscopes of color he so artfully blended into images that provoke joy and wonder in the observer. But most of all he leaves a legacy of deliberate and calculated works that when deconstructed lead to the heart of a man obsessed with interpreting the shadows and light and color that makes our world come alive."

Other sources

Mark Adams, Pub. Chronicle Books, by Johnson, Mills and Price. Forward by Wayne Thiebaud. 1985

Web sites for the Jane Haslem Gallery, John Berggruen Gallery and the San Francisco Museums shed some light, particularly by listing the chronologies of his accomplishments.

ATB6 Artists' Profiles

By Linda Rees

After phone interviews with Christine Laffer and Tricia Goldberg, I realized that their stories intermingled to the extent that it will work best to profile their careers in one narrative. Perhaps that might be the case had I interviewed any two of the many established tapestry artists from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Christine Laffer took an analytical approach to a career blended with a visceral response to subject matter. It first directed her away from a profession in architecture to a mandate to explore the properties of Cloth. There was a series of false starts, such as a term at Rhode Island School of Design and her discovery that there were very few opportunities or university programs that had intensive fiber programs. Moving to California offered the most choices, but it still took years of searching to find a resource to fit her needs.

After working with pile weaves for her early explorations, Christine followed her former husband's suggestion that tapestry was the medium for greatest personal expression in fiber. Still, her first tapestry class was not to her liking, seeming simplistic and crude. Fortunately, in 1981, she saw a demonstration by SFTW students and a few months later signed up for a two month session.

Christine Laffer, "Cloth of Construction: Tarps," 102" x 138", Bas Relief tapestry, wool. Photo by Jack Toolin.

She was hooked by tapestry's potential to incorporate structural concerns and explore cloth conceptually. After the session, she rented a loom at the workshop for her own work and thrived in the productive environment of the building. Commuting from her home in San Jose at least three days a week kept her at the workshop enough to be the person others came to with questions. The large attendance of eager weavers at the symposium sponsored by ATA and SFTW in 1983 emphasized that there were many people interested in tapestry who, like her, sought to expand their knowledge of the medium. As the community of weavers got to know each other, it became clear that through sharing insights, everyone benefited. It is at this time, by 1985, that her path and Tricia Goldberg's really came together in the founding of Tapestry Weavers West. In fact, Tricia recalls that it was at a gathering Christine organized to welcome Joyce Hulbert to the area that the idea of forming a group came about. They were excited because Joyce had just come from the Ruth Scheuer Studio, adding another professional to the mix of tapestry artists in the Bay Area.

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Textiles have appealed to Tricia since learning to weave in high school. She used a floor loom to weave 4 shaft fabrics. Later, after moving to San Francisco in 1977, she sampled tapestry in a casual class held at the home of a local weaver. Tricia only became excited about the technique, though, after seeing the six tapestry banners in Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party" produced by the SFTW. The beauty of these first contemporary tapestries she had seen was captivating. She enrolled in a two month session of instruction taught by Ernestine Bianchi. Only one other student was in the class: Jackie Wollenberg. A year later Tricia took a second two month session with Jean Pierre Larochette. This session was shortly before the workshop collective owners disbanded and vacated the original building. SFTW was relocated to the Larochettes' studio. They were interested in working on their own collaborative tapestries and teaching, in addition to managing the workshop, which became divided to handle a variety of commissions including the airport commission and others for Mark Adams.

Like Christine, Tricia recounts that SFTW was a tremendously exciting place for learning, with many commissions being woven and enthusiastic weavers dropping in or taking classes. After the formal organization left, Tricia, Care Standley, and Ruth Jones rented a studio in the building, and Tricia started working on "Burano," her large tapestry displayed in the ATA "Panorama of Tapestry" exhibit in Toronto, 1986. She had no previous training in painting or drawing but received vigorous coaching from Ruth. Tricia admits that today, while doing design work, she still asks herself what Ruth Jones' comments might be.

While this joint studio did not last long, working in a communal setting was a very stimulating, if tumultuous time, as the three women in their twenties tried to define and establish themselves as artists. Tricia went on to have a small studio in the building where Phoebe McAfee and Rudi Richardson had their studio, as did Constance Hunt. She recalls it was where she wove "Market Woman," her entry in the ATA exhibit "American Tapestry Today" in San Jose, 1990. She immediately became a member of ATA at the first gathering in 1983, equally excited as Christine about the number of tapestry artists attending. Tricia wrote articles for the ATA newsletter as early as the mid 1980s, about presentation, activities at Convergences, and other related topics. Now she reminisces about being naïve in submitting "Burano" to the "Panorama" exhibit and vividly remembers going to Toronto, discovering just how very impressive the exhibit was. She continued to get into prestigious exhibits such as the traveling "World Tapestry Today" in 1988 and "American Tapestry Today" in 1990.

Once Tricia had children, she set up her studio in her home. While her primary energy went to the care of her family, the need to stay active and weaving was a great impetus for Tricia to seek out other weavers. Tapestry Weavers West chose not to have much structure, instead opting for a triumvirate of Tricia, Christine, and Constance Hunt, who were loosely in charge of getting meetings planned and communications disseminated. One or the other of these three would initiate a meeting or arrange for a lecture. According to Tricia, the three of them would get together to write the newsletter on the spot.

Christine's search for visual refinement to connect with her conceptual goals continued, even after finding the right medium and a community. It motivated her to do an internship in 1985 at La Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins, in Paris, and then much later to get an M.F.A. in Spatial Arts from the San Jose State University in 1995. She worked for several years after receiving her degree in various arts administrative endeavors while maintaining her own studio in San Jose. Long before getting her M.F.A., Christine kept a high profile as instructor, lecturer and juror. She was one of seven panalists at the ATA Tapestry Day at Convergence 1988. She also became vice president of the ITNET organization in 1991, and of course only recently resigned as co-director of the ATA board. Besides her media specific oganizations she has been active in the Bay Area Caucus for Woman in the Arts. Her early search for opportunities to grow artistically made her receptive to the need for arts organizations that provide consistent resources.

In recent years her studio work utilizes eccentric weaving to convey the spacial qualities of fabric, its drape and pliability. (See TT Winter 2004) With steady persistance, the long journey to find the unique visual vocabulary that could achieve her initial intent has resulted in highly individualistic tapestries. "Cloth of Construction: Tarps" was started in 1991 but has undergone modification and issues of presentation until recently ready for exhibition. It was one of very few tapestries to not be minimalized by the specific environment of the Grand Rapids venue for ATB6, which was a gallery designed for installations and sculptural art. Indeed, the lighting enhanced its

contorted twists and wrinkles in contrast to the flatly woven building in progress on the right edge in the tapestry. It looked at home on the high ceilinged cement wall, and more recently commanded attention in the entry hall of the Bellevue Art Museum, the second venue.

Tricia Goldberg, "Stamps," 38" x 49", wool silk cotton. Photo by Dan Dosick

For the past few years, Tricia has been taking life drawing classes to augment photography as inspiration for designs and enjoys the expressiveness and greater control the practice gives her. She feels lucky to have had the luxury to do tapestry and to have been in the right place at the right time to learn the skills needed amidst such a dynamic community still existing in the Bay Area.

I had a chance to visit Tricia in her studio a year ago. As we sat chatting, I could see "Stamps," her ATB6 tapestry, all aglow in the natural light of the studio. What kept demanding my attention was a delicate edging between the creamy perforation and the green-gray border. The subtle outlining enlivened the border, balancing it with the varied calligraphy and painterly imagery of the stamps. The composition, with its disparate sides, seems unlikely to have occurred in any other way than chance. It makes me curious to see the original stamps. How much of the success revolves around Tricia's shifting of elements to achieve such continuity? How much of the overall effectiveness depends on what is revealed in the cancellation or on the depth of black in the lettering of both sides, or on the wash of blue green in the black and white stamp?

There are many tapestry artists across the country who have shown equal dedication to tapestry and artistic growth, but what came together in the Bay Area is quite akin to the early home computer history of rapid growth and refinement resulting from shared energy and a learn-as-we-go attitude. There were many fiber artists already working in the medium and more after that era, but the discovery of power in joint endeavors.greatly escalated the energy.

Review: Tapestries in Conversation "Tapestry on the Edge"

By Ellen Ramsey

What do you get when you combine one very professional tapestry group with a sensitive juror and a fiber savvy museum curator? You get "Tapestry on the Edge," an exhibition of work by artists from California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and British Columbia organized by Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound and juried by Rock Hushka, Curator at the Tacoma Art Museum. The tapestries continue on view in cyberspace on the ATA website.

To move through this exhibition was to be orchestrated through a thought provoking tapestry experience. Taking her lead from the juror's selections, Marianne Forssblad, Executive Director at the Nordic Heritage Museum, in Seattle, Washington, artfully arranged each piece to be "in conversation" with neighboring work. "The neighbor has to complement, and yet also stand by itself. . . . you have to work with it to see that each piece comes alive" she explained. The accompanying chatter made the task of focusing on each piece in isolation nearly impossible for me. I found myself comparing and contrasting works at every turn and asking broad questions to groups of pieces instead of hyper focusing on just one tapestry at a time. As a result, this was one of the most satisfying tapestry shows I have ever seen.

The first gallery, with dark walls and dramatic lighting, was referred to by Marianne as the "peaceful" room. All the work was full of texture and the colors flowed from one piece to the next in a calm and balanced procession. Lezlie King's large free-standing kimono, "Kiamaki," was the focal point of this gallery. This mixed media piece was arranged to

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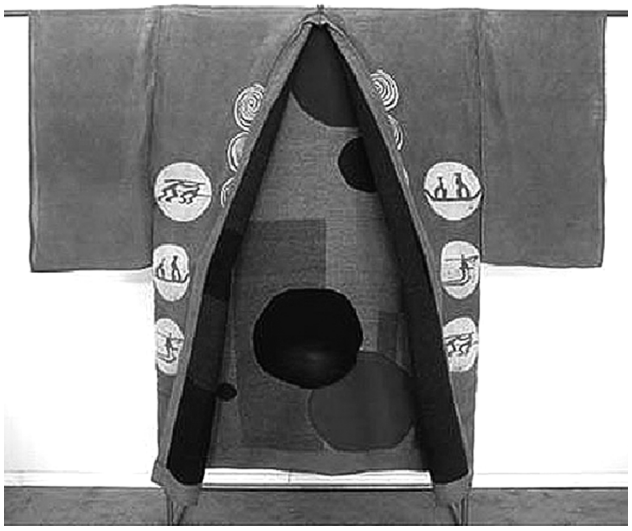
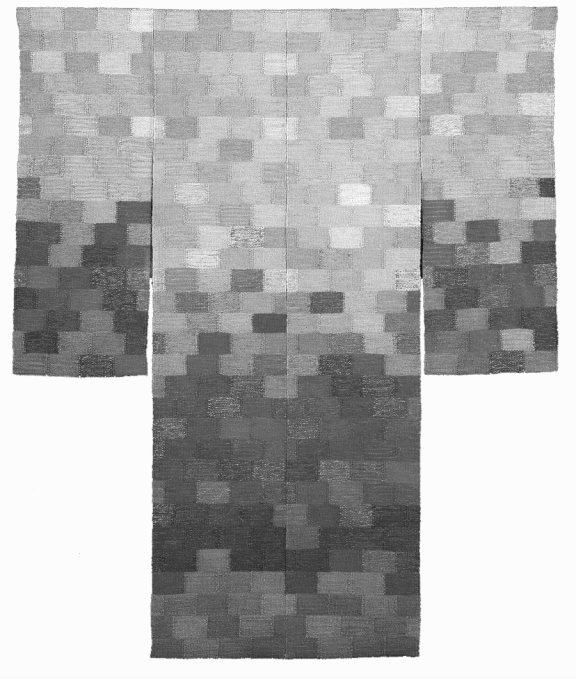


Lezlie King, "Kaimaki," 67" x 76" x 8", 2005 HV Teck, tapestry and katazonmi

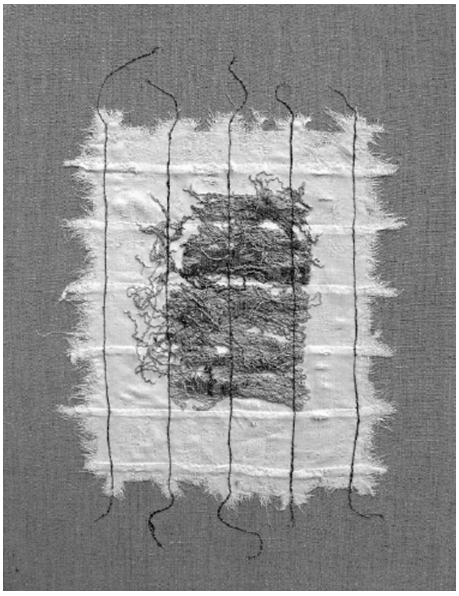


Michael Rohde, "Reparations," 58" x 48", wool silk, natural dyes.

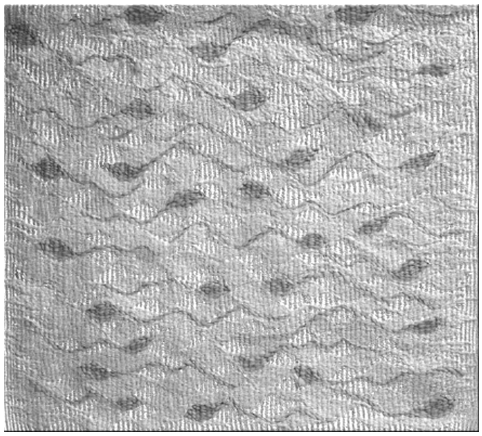
display the tapestry woven lining within the stenciled silk exterior. King's approach is introspective and rife with questions about identity, with the dark abstract tapestry on the inside representing the "shadow side" of the self. (See www.lezlieking.com) Nearby hung Michael Rohde's more extroverted interpretation of Japanese aesthetics, "Reparations." The bright colors and two dimensionality of "Reparations" stood in contrast to King's take on the garment aspect of the kimono form. Michael interlocked his color-blended rectangles to create raised vertical seams throughout, a conceptual nod to the act of repairing. The kimono shape further ties the work to the definition of the title as it refers to compensation to a country defeated in war. Similar cultural inspirations, but I enjoyed each interpretation more than twice as much by their juxtaposition in the gallery.

There were so many amazing conversations going on in this first gallery. Rohde's "Failed Chief" and Norgaard's "Red Crosses Dyptich" were having a lively chat in the corner about deconstructing the iconic associations held by certain symbols and patterns. Joanne Sanburg's "Gwen" and Mary Lane's "Untitled #124" were nearly shouting at each other about the role of embellishment as a conceptual and design element. And perhaps my favorite of all was the conversation between Natalie Olson's "Searching for Eggs" and Linda Wallace's "Implantation Series: Diminishment of Hope." Photographs do not begin to do justice to Wallace's series involving the composting of weavings described in *Tapestry Topics* Summer 2006, where Linda explains the efforts that were taken to "counteract the preciousness" of the woven fragments, and her labors to "reclaim and preserve" them in their presentation. When I finally saw this work in person, I was not prepared for how visually beautiful they are. The antique linen backing is abraded, but it is bleached to glowing. The fragments are extensively couched with lustrous cotton threads that reflect the light throughout. It is as if this meticulous act itself will somehow breathe life into the infertile seed. The presentation of the fragment becomes the metaphor for the hope and the physical embodiment of longing. Olson's eccentrically woven sperm imagery is the perfect complement to Wallace's poignant decay. The white cotton sperm are visually wet with fertility. By the placement of Olson's piecee near Wallace's work, but separated from it by the entryway to the next gallery, the potential futility of the search was not lost on the viewer.

In contrast to the "peaceful" room, the next gallery was themed as the "active" room. This room was presided over by Barbara Heller's "Ozymandias" on one wall and surrounded by a cornucopia of wedge weave and abstract work on the remaining walls. The swooping diagonal movement of the bird, the diagonal lines of the explosions at the horizon, and the intense colors of "Ozymandias" created an unexpectedly harmonious pairing with such optically intense works as Deborah Corsini's "Shield." Near Heller's work, Alex Friedman's two pieces "Checked Out" and "Flow" were having an interesting conversation amongst themselves about technique



Linda Wallace, "Implantation Series, Diminishment of Hope: Nongravid 22 July" 20" x 16", 2006 tapestry, earth burial, cleaning, stitching, abrasion: wool, linen



Natalie Olsen, "Searching for Eggs," 23' x 25"m 2003

and design. "I wanted people to see the contrast of techniques in work by the same artist. I think it is important. I think it is great," Ms. Forssblad confided.

The third and final gallery was dominated by a very serious conversation between Shelley Socolfsky's "Vessel of Memory" and Nancy Jackson's "Annunciation (the Ark)." Socolofsky's sculptural and mixed media "Vessel" is without a doubt one of the strongest conceptual works in the show. To fully appreciate it you had to see it in installation with all its component parts. The irregularly shaped work was interlaced with red wire selvedges and various internal wire seams. It was displayed as a hemispherical form about the size of a basketball placed on one end of a long oval antique mirror. From the shaped tapestry cascaded a bundle of red silk cords which flow off the woven work and continue for the length of the mirror. The shape's irregular edge allowed the viewer to see the inside of the vessel itself, a tangle of weft ends and woven "veins," by looking at its reflection in the mirror. Working with the concepts of identity, memory, and ritual, Socolofsky explains her thinking:

> "I started [by] working with onion peels to make 'patterns.' I took the peels off of onions and saw their shape 'flat' - then reassembled them to create a shaped form. The idea of the peel was intriguing. Like we shed our skins at death. Or our shell - that protective thing we call clothing - or even skin or body. How our identity is stripped to reveal who we really are in the end. "Vessel of Memory" is like that: a peel, a casting off or shedding of some outer layer or identity - and how that skin holds all the memory of its wearer before the shedding. The red thread is like the blood line - the umbilical cord attaching this skin or memory or the vessel's past history/identity."

The biomorphic and symmetrical patterning of "Vessel of Memory" was complemented by similar shapes and vessel connotations in Jackson's "Annunciation (the Ark)." If Socolofsky's piece is a layer of our identity, then Jackson's is its CT scan - a cross section of some equally mystical anatomy. Both works make the analogy between our spiritual essence and biology.

There is one stand-out piece in this show that truly does speak most clearly in isolation: Margo MacDonald's "Shimenawa for Puget Sound." If it were to have a complimentary neighbor to talk with, it would be Joan Baxter's "Migdale Kilt" (see TT, Winter 2006) on display in ATB6 across town, but in this show "Shimenawa" has no obvious mate. Up close, it is thick and richly textured. The urge to caress the piece is strong. The tassels of the cord have three dimensional, raised embroidery that cast shadows, adding to the trompe l'oeil appearance of the rope. To step back is to watch the materiality of the weaving dissolve into the transparent watery landscape. Like Baxter's "Kilt," there is a metaphorical connection between textile and landscape. In "Shimenawa" the veil both reveals, and is one with the Sound itself.

As part of this exhibition, members of Tapestry Artists of Puget Sound (Cecilia Blomberg, Carolyn Price Dyer, Joyce Hayes, Mary Lane, Margo McDonald, Inge Norgaard, Gail Temple, and Fran Williamson,) created a group project called *The Webster Project*. The purpose of the project was to "offer our members a way to interact as artists and an opportunity to tackle creative problems that might not arise in our own individual artistic

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practice." The subject matter was inspired by the etymology of the word "tapestry." The artists gave themselves the following limitations: uniformity of size (9" x 9"), uniformity of background color (grey), and the stipulation that the design must include letters found in the words "tapster, tapister, webster, or tapis." Although an interesting design exercise, I found myself longing to see a more conceptual collaboration. This group produces dynamic individual work, in strong evidence elsewhere in the exhibition. The real creative challenge is figuring out a way to infuse a group project with that same caliber of energy.

Marianne Forssblad did a superior job of seeing the connections among a large assortment of work and bringing those relationships forward for the viewer to savor. "People should see a variety. I think that is very important. Each artist has a way of expressing themselves. Some [viewers] respond most to the representational, others to the nonrepresentational. It is the contrast that provides the richness." Well said, Marianne.

Review of TWS "Southern Yarns"

By Sandy Adair

Pack your lunch, put out the cat, cancel your appointments and plan to dedicate a full morning to savoring the Tapestry Weavers South (TWS) exhibit, "Southern Yarns." This fine collection of weaving is now on view in the main gallery of the Southern Highlands Guild Folk Art Center located on the Blue Ridge Parkway just outside of Asheville, NC. I, for one, intend to visit this show again and again, before it closes on May 13th.

The exhibit is a fine example of how artists reach out to engage the viewer in their world. 26 TWS members present over 100 weavings. Storyboards offering the history of tapestry effectively help the viewer understand and appreciate the importance of tapestry through time.

Impressive planning and design are the hallmarks of the exhibit, with even the less noteworthy items in the show still well designed and executed. The show offers a wide variety of approaches to tapestry: abstract, academic, pictorial, geometric, multi-media, and well rendered three-dimensional work. Exceptional use of color is one of the most successful aspects of the show. From the subtlest naturally dyed hues to the most colorful, the selections, in combination with texture and yarns are right on, exemplifying individual approaches to weaving and life. Portraits, nature studies, humor, abstraction, and powerful political statements are just a few of the subjects featured.

Tapestry, like painting, requires an eye for the unique to be truly successful. It is not possible to mention all the good work I saw, but I will start with some fun pieces. Pat Williams' attention to detail, edgy humor, and exceptional technical skills delightfully combine with her strong color sense. The colors pop in fluid combinations of yellows, pastels, bright accents and sparkles, even the mirror in "Obeisance" dances and shimmers. Humor was paramount in "Last Grasp." Williams makes us forget the slow tedium that is tapestry weaving.

Still more fun, Eva Cassel's "Cassels in the Sky" (see back page) is a brightly colored and deliciously executed small weaving that captures all the wonder and joy of adventure. Cassel's shadowing also displays a real understanding of composition and design, and I loved the expression on the green face. Artfully woven and humorously stated, Marianne Vigander's "And the Trolls Came" is another example of using movement and color to draw the viewer to experience the imagery.

There are many marvelous renderings of the natural world: The incredible detail revealed in the specimens that artfully eye you from Terri Stewart's small group of weavings, "Critters, Are You Looking at Me?" and her "Green Eyed Lady," in its spare simplicity, speak powerfully for her appreciation of the natural world. "Birds of Paradise II," a diptych by Lynn Mayne, captures various flora and fauna in an extremely well designed composition. Her shadowing and sense of movement are excellent. A lovely palette and graceful shapes capture the beauty and fragility of the tropical world. I especially liked the repeat motifs at the bottom of each panel

In "Harmony In Nature" by Denise Kraft Roberson, curving lines and mastery of shading convey the moment of interaction between the western bats and their host cactus flowers, helping us appreciate the interconnectedness between all natural things. Joan Griffin's "Into the Canyon," "Black Seeded Simpson," and "Wisteria" also catch the movement, dance, and union of nature with itself. The detail and subtle use of color captures the rich flow of life.

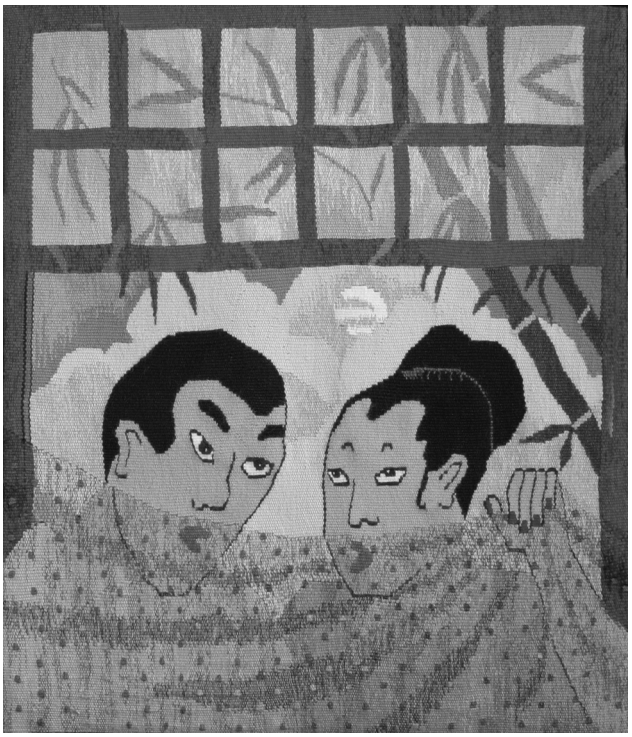
"Black Seeded Simpson," with its deep fecund undergrowth of brackish greens and blacks contrasting with the outrageously vibrant new growth chartreuses, is a reminder of the power of nature.

I found Pat Looper's sense of rhythm in "Crotons" particularly appealing. Her colors sing a tropical tune of deep, lush shade. Nancy Garretson's "Blue Ridge Autumn" landscape and her "Fairy Swing" riot of flowers both utilize a wide variety of tapestry techniques, especially overlay and twining, to create difficult three-dimensional renderings very successfully.

Pat Williams, "Barking at the Moon,"

A realistic landscape, "Barking at the Moon," is one of my favorite Pat Williams tapestries. It features a huge moon, almost resting on a hillside with a dog on it and a house at the lower right corner. The balanced design, exceptional detail, and the vivid yellow/blue color scheme are dynamic. Another landscape, Carol Lennert's "Nevis at Sunset," is a small organic piece that captures a fleeting moment as the sunset and shadows move across a cloud filled sky and ocean. The shadowing of brocade-like foreground green on greens bushes is detailed and lush, giving the small piece weight and perspective.

Tommye Scanlin's "Legacy Series" of weavings successfully combines mixed media with tapestry, making powerful comments on the state of earth's health, government, and society. She varies techniques, formats and approaches in each weaving to state her case. The award she won for her "Legacy of



Rebecca Stevens, "How Can You Say That?"
20" x 24", 2006

Operation Ranch Hand: Tree Fragments" attests to her success. My favorite, "Cryphonectria Parasitica (Chestnut Blight)," which utilizes mixed media and more weaving, is also powerful and compositionally and technically excellent.

Susan Iverson's "Guardian Twins" incorporates military fatigues, flames, skyscraper landscapes, and Twin Tower imagery into the clothing of her twins. This was the most powerful piece, well designed, executed and filled with the irony of our times. Note the red, white and blue background

Several portraits really stood out for their fresh approaches. Linda Weghorst's "BB and the House of Blues'" variegated yarns and bright beadwork background recreates a neon lit smoky dive filled with soulful sounds of blues. BB's face and hands, in superb shadowing, are woven in solid yarns. Terri Stewart's narrow, vertical, Lichtenstein-like, black and white portrait, "Veiled Glances," uses line well and is an exceptionally powerful, well-rendered portrait. "Fleischer's Girls" are twelve seemingly straightforward little portraits by Marti Fleisher, each placed on pleasingly appropriate backgrounds. Yet, the tilt of their heads and their eyes capture each individual's essence in the 12" x 10" tapestries inspired by Mondrian. Becky Stevens "How Can You Say That?"

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catches the moment of secrets shared using just about every tapestry technique available. Her pictorial imagery is outstanding. Technically, her layering, design within design, and color blending is remarkably competent. The veil is amazing and makes this one of my favorites entries.

It is not possible to mention all the weavings I personally responded to, so I urge you to visit the exhibit and see which move you most. You will be glad you did. The show runs until May 13th. Don't miss it.

Sandy Adair has been a member of the Craft Guild in Asheville for many years and a long time tapestry weaver who supports herself with her weaving and a job as park ranger in the summer.

Review of: *The Largest Tapestry of the Americas: Remembering Jacques Larochette*

By Jean Pierre Larochette
124 pages, color soft cover, b/w images;
$20 includes postage payable to Jean Pierre Larochette,
2216 Grant Street, Berkeley, CA 94703, U.S.A

By Estella Serafini

When asked to write a review of this book, an odd chill shook my heart. The subject, which is related to my home country, awoke my memories of the 70's in Argentina. However, none of these memories were related to the tapestry, which was woven there during those turbulent years. Thirty-four years after its completion, I heard about the "The Glorification of St Francis" tapestry for the first time, while I am far away from my home country!

The book was written by Jean-Pierre Larochette about "The Glorification of Saint Francis Tapestry" that hangs at the Basilica of St. Francis in Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina. The tapestry was commissioned by the Ministry of Public Works to replace the altarpiece on the church that was burned down in a particularly difficult period of 1955. This piece of art was directed by Jean-Pierre's brother, Jacques Larochette, working from a cartoon drawn by Horacio Buttler, a well-known local painter. The tapestry took four years to be woven, between 1969 and 1972. To fulfill a stipulation of the commission, the actual weaving had to be done by employees of the Ministry of Public Works. Four masons were selected: Isaias Cativa, Leonardo Rivera, Rafael Alcar and Antonio Falcon. They received intense training by Jacques on two looms that he commissioned for that express purpose.

The book has three main chapters aside from the Acknowledgements, Forewords and Preface. Additionally, there are two pages with black and white pictures of Jacques Larochette, Horacio Buttler, the four weavers and the tapestry itself.

In the Preface, Yadin Larochette, explains: "the story describes the process that brought the largest tapestry in the Americas (36 by 24 feet) into fruition." The full meaning of the word "process" is added next; it seems to answer some of my doubts and those many tapestry weavers might have to face:

> "Process is often lost. We are so interested in the product that the intangible process, which formed it, is often forgotten…I see this process as part of the product: on one hand, historical information places the artistic expression within a context, which can augment its appreciation. On the other, acknowledging the process holds the product within humanistic terms. Process can be annoying, painful, uncomfortable, and even boring. Learning how others handle process can make us feel less isolated and may help us with our own projects in life."

The first and longest chapter, "Gestation," is a very interesting recollection, not only of the difficulties that this big commission had but also of the many details that needed to be considered while having the loom made. It is pointed out how the artists had to push the limits in order to get the loom working properly, and Larochette compared this loom with the one in Felletin, France, where the tapestry "Christ in Glory" was woven. The calculation of the warp and weft is also mentioned, and so is the anxiety that the painter who prepared the cartoon suffered. Horacio Buttler was terrified by the dimensions of the long atrium "where large and bulky forms would fit better and yet harmonize with the colonial style of the Basilica." To draw the cartoon he divided it in nine equal parts and reduced his palette to 14 colors, using Jean Lurçat's idea of the "numbered cartoon." The first meeting between the two artists, whose personalities were completely different, is also described. Buttler was shy, Larochette exuberant. The tempera-

ment of one of the weavers, Cativa, is mentioned because he was the leader of the weavers from the very beginning due to his patience and composure.

The second chapter is titled "Realization." Jacques describes the construction of the loom, spinning the yarn, beginning the education of the four inexperienced weavers, and then warping the big loom. As weavers I think we can fully understand the difficulties, the hard path they faced pursuing a dream, an objective that seemed beyond any possibility. One can feel a triumphant emotion after reading of every achievement they accomplished along the process, after the innumerable obstacles they had to overcome. At this point I strongly agreed with what Buttler wrote: "I came to feel for the director of the project all the esteem and admiration that my spirit is capable to experience."

Finally, the third, last, and shortest chapter: "Remembrances" is a quick glimpse at the relationship between the two brothers, Jacques and Jean-Pierre, dyed with the colors of nostalgia and times gone by.

I have to say that I finished reading the book and found myself wanting to know more details about the weaving process and how the lives of the characters were evolving through that process. To my dismay the Spanish translation is not completely polished although I feel compensated by the attempt to have the book written in both languages, and the tenderness with which the story of "The Tapestry of Saint Francis" is narrated. "The Largest Tapestry of the Americas" is an easy read; each version (English and Spanish) is about sixty pages, but in spite of its short length many lessons can be learned from it, and the reader will have many "threads" to keep dreaming about in "The Glorification of St Francis Tapestry."

Kaija Rautiainen, "Birch Landscape," 33"x 28", warp cotton, weft linen handwoven jacquard tapestry

Between The Hand and The Loom

By Kaija Rautiainen

I studied textile arts in my native Finland and taught weaving for many years before moving to Vancouver, Canada. Here I met an enthusiastic group of tapestry weavers. This shifted my interest from weaving twill tapestries to the traditional technique done on an upright loom. For eight years I shared a studio with Barbara Heller, and I am a founding member in BC Stars (Society of Tapestry Artists).

I began making the transition to jacquard weaving about five years ago. I got a grant from British Columbia Arts Council that made it possible for me to go to Finland to study with Katja Huhmaskangas, one of the first instructors who taught jacquard weaving. I took a workshop with Louise Berube at Convergence 2002 in Vancouver and later on studied the JacCad designing program with Ruth Scheuing at the Capilano College Textile Department, Vancouver. Before acquiring a TC-1 I sent my files to Montreal to be woven, or hired Nina Jacobsto to weave them for me. In her business, Digitaljacqart, Nina specializes in commissions and teaching jacquard weaving classes geared toward specific interests and weaving knowledge.

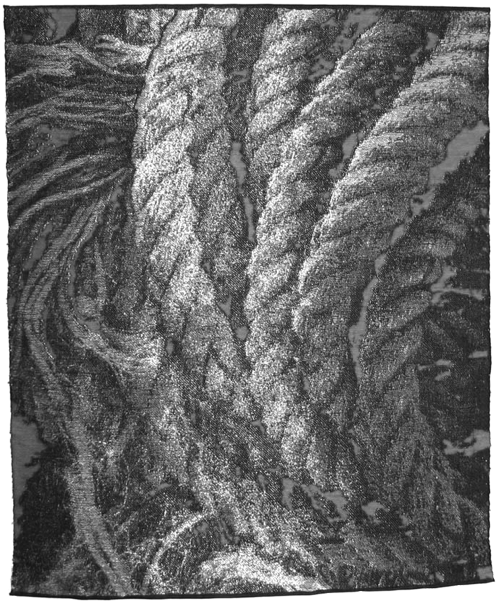
I share the studio and the jacquard loom with another weaver, Hanna Haapasalo. Our loom, The Thread Controller TC-1, from Digital Weaving Norway, is a small version of the looms used in industrial textile applications, and was developed for use in schools and personal studios. DWN is the leading jacquard loom manufacturer for artists' use. The initial cost is high but after that you pay only for your materials and the electricity.

We bought the loom over a year ago and at its first anniversary exhibited the fruits of our endeavors in the Crafthouse Gallery on Granville Island. We wanted to share the possibilities of the new technology in hand

continued...

weaving with the public and to expose cutting edge works in fiber.

Because of my background in tapestry, I continue creating works with a strong feel of the hand and texture. I am trying to make pieces where the stiffness and body of traditional tapestry is united with an image done with a continuous weft. The ever inspiring imagery of birch trees with black and white trunks lends itself well to experimenting with the new loom. As a point of departure I made the first piece closely similar to the tapestries I used to weave on a shaft loom. Then using the possibilities of the digital media I let the imagery grow, yet making sure that I maintained a hand-woven touch. In my series Northern Elements I used colors in the background and a pattern of lichen. The mostly black and white focal point in the middle is an image of a caribou herd.



Kaija Rautiainen, "Golden Ropes," 38"x 28" warp cotton, weft linen & copper wire handwoven jacquard tapestry

A commission of two rope image tapestries has evolved into a large series on this theme. They could be interpreted as ropes, threads or fiber. The warp is black cotton and my weft is several strands of fine copper wire and linen. In my earlier tapestries I used about five strands of fine linen 16/1 together on a bobbin to make the right hue. I continue working the same way but replacing some linen with copper wire, which makes the weave push and pull. The three dimensional surface reflects light and plays with the contrasts of subdued linen and shiny copper.

When I start a new project, I begin with a drawing or a photograph of an image which I scan into the computer and manipulate in Photoshop. I reduce the number of colors in the picture to the number of weave structures I am going to use. By using Photoshop, I allocate a weave structure to the picture. For instance in a B/W image, when using a black warp and a white weft, my darkest tone is a warp faced satin and my lightest tone is a weft faced satin. The grays in between occur by changing warp/weft ratio. Then I transfer this file onto my computer assisted jacquard loom. The loom opens a shed according to the instructions on the file, and I weave with shuttles which go from selvage to selvage. The interlacing of the wefts with the warp defined by the weave structures forms the image. Sometimes I add a supplementary weft by hand to bring out a special feature. The satin weaves I use emphasize the smoothness, stiffness and shine of linen threads.

On the digital jacquard loom I am now more focused on designing and sampling than earlier. I make decisions on all aspects of the work before starting to weave the actual piece. Thus planning and designing become the most important part of the process and differ from traditional tapestry where problems are solved at the time of weaving. I must say that I find it sometimes annoying not to be able to make corrections immediately on the loom instead of having to go onto the computer and make changes in the file. The digital file has to be loom-ready before I start weaving. After all these decisions and preparations are made, it is fascinating to get immersed into the rhythm of weaving and follow the image emerging line after line.

I like that, with the jacquard loom, I can unite the image with the structure and use warp as one of the design elements; this is what I miss in the traditional tapestry. I feel that I have come a full circle now, combining my knowledge of weave structures with my experience of image weaving to create these digitally woven "tapestries." I approach jacquard weaving to create textiles that stand on their own without the digital component being obvious. At the same time, I want to give my work a look that could not have been created without a computer.

The new loom has given a boost to my creativity and using a computer in designing is a wonderful challenge. I am exploring the mix of the digital and the manual to find the right kind of working process that will suit me. Having access to a loom is crucial to my work. If I had to send my designs away for weaving, results would look uninteresting to me due to a lack of opportunity to experiment and create the right kind of texture and structure.

A big advantage that the computer assisted jacquard loom brings is the speed of weaving. I am now able to make several pieces in a year, and I can have a good inventory. Consequently, I have enough textiles to send to galleries and exhibitions.

I am also glad that I am able to keep my jacquard tapestries reasonably priced and within the reach of ordinary people, because I believe that everybody should be able to enjoy textiles in their homes. I find that the general public has a huge curiosity to know more about "what I am making," and the feed back from them as well as from my peers has been very encouraging.

It's Time to Celebrate 25 Years! April 27-29, 2007 in San Jose, California

Friday April 27th. The GFR Center for Tapestry Studies presents the 9th Annual Gloria F. Ross Lecture:

"Tapestry in America," by Dr. Alice Zrebiec,
Reception 5:30 pm and Lecture 7:00 pm.
Lecture Cost: Free and open to the public
San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles
520 1st Street, San Jose, California.
www.sjquiltmuseum.org

Parking available at 640 First St, Delia's Parking, self-serve - $3.00 per day.

Dr. Alice Zrebiec, former curator of textiles in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is an independent curator and consultant residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Dr. Zrebiec's research shows how American tapestries, first based on French models, evolved from large ateliers established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She highlights the creative efforts that developed in the 20th century—the collaborative workshops, as well as the painters and sculptors who worked with weavers and intermediaries. Her talk culminates with an engaging discussion of the singular artist/weavers who have emerged in the 20th and 21st centuries to create brilliant handwoven tapestry.

Saturday April 28th. *ATA's Silver Anniversary Celebration*

San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles,

9:00 a.m., Regional groups networking session.

10:00 a.m., Speakers Program featuring Jean Pierre Larochette, Melissa Leventon, and Barbara Heller.

12:00 p.m., "Celebrating 25 Years of Contemporary Tapestry," a panel discussion with Jim Brown, Marti Fleischer, Judy Schuster, Christine Laffer, Joan Griffin, and Barbara Heller.

Cost: $15, includes museum admission. For information and reservations, contact Barbara Arrighi, 6116 Sunset Crest Way, San Diego, CA 92121, (858) 550-8163, barbara.michael@mindspring.com. Please reserve by March 20, 2007.

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., Luncheon at the Agenda Restaurant, 399 S. First St., San Jose.

Cost: $36.00. Reservations to Barbara Arrighi (see above) by March 20, 2007. Vegetarian menu available.

3:00 - 5:00 p.m. Reception for the opening of the American Tapestry Biennial 6 at the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles. Cost: $6.50 museum admission if not attending the morning symposium.

4:30 p.m. Raffle drawing for *Nova Scotia Morning*, by Barbara Heller.
Tickets cost $25 each. Bonus chances for ticket donations of $100 or more. **Participants need not be present to win.** Mail your raffle donations to Barbara Richards, ATA Treasurer, 2160 Devil's Gulch Road, Estes Park, CO 80517 by April 15, 2007. Credit card payments also accepted. (970) 577-9728 Tickets also available at the door. For more information about the raffle, contact Ellen Ramsey at ew.ramsey@comcast.net, (206) 440-8903. All raffle participants receive a commemorative ATA silver bobbin pin as our thank you.

Sunday April 29th: Artist Studio Tours, depart 9:00 a.m. from the Ramada at 455 South Second Street, returning by 5:00 p.m. Visiting the studios of Christine Laffer, Jan Moore, Jean Pierre Larochette, & Tricia Goldberg. Transportation Fee, $30.00 Reservation by March 20, 2007 to Tricia Goldberg, 1833 Addison St., Berkeley, CA 94703. email triciagold@sbcglobal.net or phone 510-705-8829. For more information visit www.americantapestryalliance.org.

continued...

Hotel Information

The GFR Center for Tapestry Studies is holding a block of 10-15 rooms at the Hotel Montgomery (http://www.jdvhospitality.com/hotels/hotel/295) in downtown San Jose., for Friday, April 27 through Monday, April 30, 2007. The hotel is easy walking distance to the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles and many other attractions. We have a special group rate of $109 for each room with one King bed. Reservations may be made by calling the Group Reservation Department at (866) 823-0530 and referencing "The GFR Center." Reservations are limited and must be made prior to 3/30/2007.

The Ramada Inn is also located near SJMQ&T. Rooms with two beds are available for $84.00. 408-298-3500

Joan Griffin, "Black Seeded Simpson," 11" x 20", 2005
See article page 16.

Thank You to our Generous Circle Members!

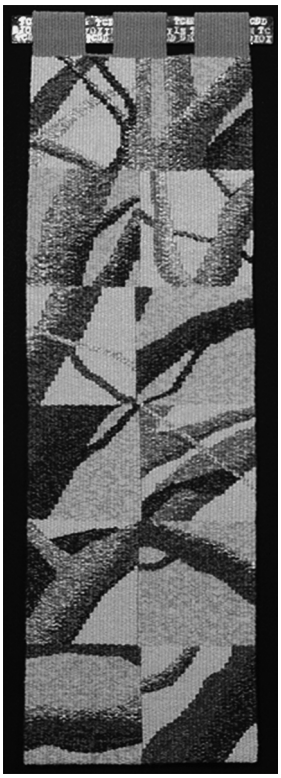
Our sincere thanks to members who joined or renewed at Circle level between October 1 and December 31, 2006. We are very grateful for your additional support of ATA.

Studio Circle: Judy Albaugh, Barbara Arrighi, Anji Bartholf, Grete Bodogaard, Myla Collier, Donna Loraine Contractor, Deborah Corsini, Deb Erikson, Bette Ferguson, Anne Heinemann, David Johnson, Jane Kidd, Terry Olson, Shelley Socolofsky, Betsy Snope, Terri Stewart, Beverly Walker, Pat Williams, Mary Zicafoose

Curator's Circle: Alex Friedman

Collector's Circle: Barbara Burns

ATA Award at TWS exhibit



Tommye McClure Scanlin, "Legacy of Operation Ranch Hand: Tree Fragments," 30" x 12"

The ATA Award presented at Tapestry Weavers South's "Southern Yarns" Exhibition proudly goes to Tommye McClure Scanlin for her "Legacy of Operation Ranch Hand: Tree Fragments". Selection by Stephen Aimone, author of DESIGN: A Lively Guide to Design Basics for Artists and Craftspeople.

Tommye is Professor Emeritus at the North Georgia College and State University. She has exhibited both nationally and internationally, winning many awards over the years and has been included in various fiber publications. In addition to teaching tapestry at workshops and schools, she is still teaching part-time at North Georgia College. Tommye is an active member of TWS and of ATA and a juried member of Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild since '79 who generously shares her expertise.

Stephen Aimone states: "Legacy of Operation, Ranch Hand: Tree Fragments" is eloquent on many levels. Compositionally, the tapestry is masterful-balanced and resolved in a way that is not completely discernable, but keeps the viewer engaged. It is full of visual tension . . . beautifully countered by relationships that unify: a warm-cold complementary color contrast of blue and orange, and a uniformity that results from the textural quality of the weaving. . . . The work is constructed on an underlying grid composed of two rows of squares stacked vertically. This kind of structure, and the geometry of the square, might be interpreted as a metaphor for an idealized, predictable order that we all crave in life. In contrast, Scanlin's tree fragments are completely organic, one of a kind. These speak poetically of the individual-imperfect, having evolved into being, very much alive, flowing in response to their environment and to one another . . . Textual references, stenciled on the wooden bar at the top furnish the narrative clues. And the background in Scanlin's gridded squares alternate between blue and orange, establishing a dialogue between cool/healthy and hot/inflamed.

Kudos

Martha Christian has ten tapestries on display at the Donelson Corporate Centre in Nashville, TN. January 15 - March 31.

Thomas Cronenberg is one of the featured contemporary fiber artists in the exhibit "/Red" at the Textile Museum in Washington DC, exhibiting "Tommy USA," one of his Identity series. The exhibit will be on view Februray 2-July 8, 2007.

Karen Crislip Upcoming exhibit "Antiques as Inspiration," in Estes Park all of September , 2007

Monique Chmielewska Lehman received Honorable Mention at the "4th International Fiber Art Biennale from Lausanne to Beijing" Suzhou in October/November 2006. Michael Rohde also had a piece in the exhibit.

Sales! **Joan Griffin** sold three tapestries to a gallery owner in Utah and a tapestry was purchased by the Augusta Medical Center in Fisherville, VA, all in January!

Shelley Socolofsky sold two tapestries from the exhibit "Matters at Hand: Contemporary Craft Narrative Tapestry" at Craft Alliance, in St. Luois, MO, January 12 - March 4, also in January!

Elinor Steele completed a commission for a new birthing center at Porter Hospital, Middlebury, VT in November, 2006. The 42" x 62" tapestry is titled "Helping Hands."

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*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

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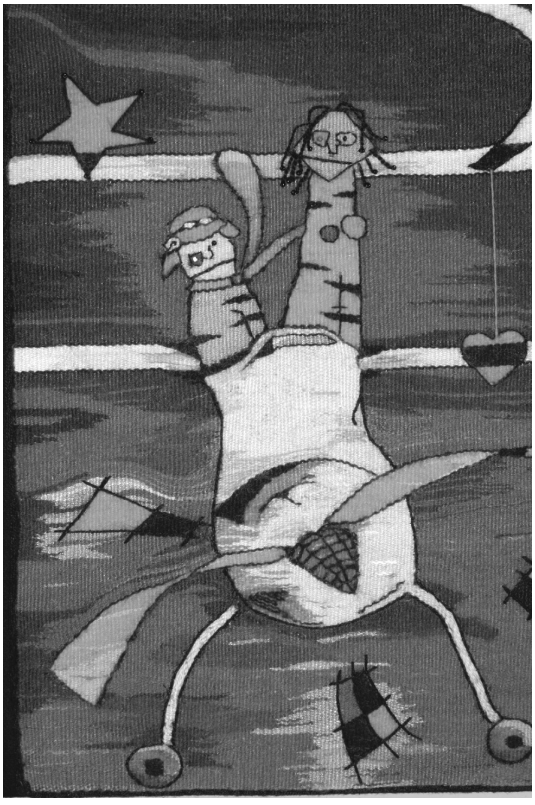

Eva Cassel, "Cassels in the Sky"
See article page 16.

Guidelines for submitting articles to *Tapestry Topics*:

Next Deadline: April 1: **ATA Then and Now**; July 15: **Diminishing Distances**; October 1: **In a Wider Circle**; January 15, 2008

Send all items to: Linda Rees: lerees@comcast.net
--Or--
1507 Elkay Drive
Eugene, OR 97404 Phone: 541-338-8284

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

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

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

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

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