



Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

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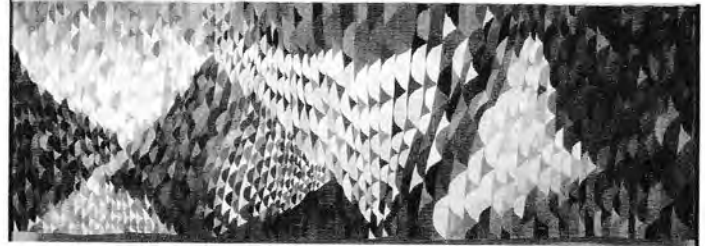
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Silvia Heyden, "Passacaglia" 6 x 16', 1978

On the 90th anniversary of the Bauhaus movement:

How the Bauhaus tradition has continued to inspire me for over 50 years of tapestry weaving By Silvia Heyden

The two questions I am asked most frequently about my tapestry weaving are: 1) How long does it take you to weave a tapestry, and 2) what inspires you? The answer to the first question of course varies greatly, and my answer to the second question usually surprises people because I do not aim to weave a landscape, person or object, but rather let the loom dictate "weaverly" forms and compositions. This question of what inspires me goes to the very core of my beliefs about the essence of tapestry weaving and takes me back to my roots in the *Bauhaus* tradition.

I am dismayed to see how frequently the *Bauhaus* principles are misrepresented and would therefore like to offer my personal interpretation of the key elements as they relate to my work. It is important to understand the *Bauhaus* movement in its historical context as a reaction against the pervading German culture of the

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Gropius

(Excerpts, 1928, quoted by Sigrid Weltge, Textile Art from the Bauhaus, Chronicle Books, 1993)

We aimed at realizing standards of excellence, not at creating novelties.

Style cannot be detached from meaning.

... not based on an optical imitation of reality, but on simplification, abstraction and structure.

bourgeoisie of the 1920s. The founders sought to simplify life, get back to basics, and focus on what makes life worth living. They were idealistic and dreamed of a world in which art and life were joined seamlessly. Art was to give life meaning by focusing on the substance and eliminating the unessential. Reacting to the world of 19th century Germany around them, they held that beauty, truth, and excellence should not be the reserved privilege of the elite. They were not ascetics, as often criticized, but rather intent on stripping down the art they saw around them to the basic fundamentals. They searched for the essence of form and color as expressed in the different media, clay, textile, paint, wood, metal, etc. Art students were required to demonstrate an understanding of their chosen medium before launching into the creative process and working on interdisciplinary projects, as shown in my own experience at the School of Arts and Crafts in Zurich during the 1940s.

I was very fortunate to attend this school in the early 1940s when Johannes Itten, a *Bauhaus* founder, was director. He required all art students to complete a year's worth of classes exploring the essence of the materials we worked with before allowing us to start our official art education. We learned to apply the elements of good composition to all our projects, watching for negative versus positive space, color values, and the impact that the size and forms of our motifs had as we changed proportions for dynamic balance. After fulfilling this prerequisite, I chose to work with textiles, primarily fabric printing, but was also encouraged to experiment with art forms ranging from ceramics, bookbinding, to jewelry. One integrated project I remember well involved all aspects of design for a hospital. We textile students focused on the interior design, specifically of curtains. We challenged ourselves to find patterns that met our color and form criteria, whether the curtains were open or closed. We benefited immensely from such interdisciplinary projects and also had fun working together as in the case of our competition for hat designs. One time I remember discovering some unique material for making hats. Our teacher encouraged us to create a fashionable hat collection and even managed to smuggle us into an exclusive fashion show in Zurich. We boldly modeled our hats to the applause of the audience before being kicked off the catwalk by the fashion show organizers.

For our diploma project, we were required to choose a motif from nature and apply its design to a number of art forms. This is a quintessential *Bauhaus* way of seeing the world around us because it forced us to observe how we had to change the motif to adapt to the chosen art medium, all while keeping it intact and staying true to the fundamentals of color and form. I learned how to apply my motif to a ceramic bowl, embroidery for a dress, silkscreen fabric for another



Sylvia Heyden, Bauhaus ceramic bowl, undated

dress and last but not least, a floor rug. I had to build my own weaving frame and in the process discovered my life's passion, weaving. As I worked on this loom, the similarities between this instrument with strings and my violin surprised me. I had been playing the violin from an early age and had dreamed of becoming a violin builder, but in the 1940's Swiss girls were not allowed to be apprentices. I was now fascinated by the analogies I could draw between moving my bow across the violin strings to create music and the threads I could insert in my weft on the loom to create a rug. Musical themes, rhythms, and harmony continue to influence my weaving to this day.

When Johannes Itten, himself a pianist, discovered that a fellow student of mine played the cello while I played the violin over lunch, he enthusiastically explained to us that for him, music was an integral part of our art education. Ever since then, I have played the violin and woven every day. Itten presented me with the prestigious *Award of the City of Zurich* in part because of my emphasis on music. If he were alive today, he might well be surprised to see how far I have gone with this interplay of tapestry weaving and music in my tapestry called "Passacaglia," a 6 x 16' commission. As I listened to Bach's "Passacaglia" and saw how he improvised on the basic theme, I realized that music is a process in time, with repetition and variation. Similarly, I could repeat and vary my own motifs of half-rounds and triangles on the loom.

The accompanying image of "Passacaglia" shows the result of this improvisation, as influ-

enced by the music. I felt so liberated when I made this discovery that I continued the second part of the commission with another improvisation based on Bach's violin solo, "Chaconne," also a 6 x 16' piece.

Ironically for me, the founders of the *Bauhaus* had very little appreciation for tapestry weaving because they only thought of the Gobelin tapestries depicting court and battle scenes. These weavers had to imitate paintings, thereby losing the woven quality. Had the *Bauhaus* founders taken a close look at the earlier Gothic tapestries displayed in the Historical Museum of Basel, they might have become as excited as I was, even as an emerging young weaver. The weavers of these older tapestries managed to apply *Bauhaus* style motifs to balance their technique with their subject. These tapestries offer magnificent testimony to the beauty of merging medium and design. For me, these early tapestries are proof of the *Bauhaus* principle that weavers must let their medium, the loom, dictate their design. It would be very interesting to see what the reaction of the *Bauhaus* founders would be to my modern interpretation of their principles in my tapestries.

A good example of this is my development of so-called *eccentric* weaving. I spent many years at the loom exploring diagonal weft, simply because horizontal lines were too static for me. I wove literally hundreds of tapestries with all kinds of diag-



Silvia Heyden, "Plumage" 36 x 48", 1994

onals in different directions so as to keep the tension of the fabric in balance. My piece titled "Drumroll" shows how eccentric weave determined the structure of my tapestry - it was never just an ornament for me. Later I discovered that I could weave eccentric style in horizontal bands in two directions. The undulating selvage that I then saw when I took the piece off the loom led me to discover what I call feathered weave. This unique new weaving element opened up a whole new world to me, again confirming the validity of the *Bauhaus* tenet of staying true to the medium. "Plumage" demonstrates what I discovered.

To this day, I read and reread Paul Klee's diary, always finding new insights. Klee taught at the *Bauhaus* for many years. Artist weavers such as Anni Albers especially appreciated him because he was open to textile arts and was also a very good violinist. For me, the last sentence in the excerpt at right is especially meaningful because I build up my tapestries one weft thread at a time, based on *Bauhaus* principles and experimenting with "weaverly" forms the way my "loomish" eyes see them.

Paul Klee, excerpts from his Diary, quoted by Will Grohmann, Paul Klee. Norwalk CT: The Easton Press, 1967.

The layman is always looking for similarities, the painter for understanding laws. The layman is always looking for similarities because he starts at the end, the finished product, not at the point of creation.

What is really essential, really productive is the process - after all BECOMING is superior to BEING.

The point of departure is the small thing, the purely formal motion. From tiny elements that are repeated, more is achieved than by a sudden burst of poetic imagination.

Greetings from the Co-Directors

By Becky Stevens and Mary Zicafoose

This issue of *Tapestry Topics* is brimming with tips and tactics supplied by our members. We hope you find that perfect piece of information you need as you plan and weave in the coming months. We would like to thank those members who contributed their tried and true tips. Also thank you to our new volunteer editor Julie Barnes assisted by Christopher Allworth for producing this educational issue. We look forward to the seamless continuation of this wonderful membership service, spoken with a new voice.

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Be sure to take note of the ATA Award winners. The summer conferences and other exhibitions provided splendid award winning tapestries.

On the ATA website (americantapestryalliance.org), be sure to see the stunning web exhibition: Jean Pierre Larochette & Yael Lurie: a study in national treasures, curated by Susan Martin Maffei. Also, the latest edition of the Educational Article series has been posted and offers technical and inspirational insights into artists' blogs. While you are there, notice the ATA website's new banners (at the top of the pages) with images from tapestries in ATB7. There are also new drop-down menus on the main bar to make the site easier to navigate. Thank you website team!

By now your ATB8 entry should be in the hands of exhibition chair Michael Rohde or on the way. There is no doubt that respected juror Rebecca A.T. Stevens will find it a challenge to choose from the wealth of fine tapestry work being submitted. It is usually our practice to open the ATB exhibitions at HGA's Convergence. Quite unexpectedly, Albuquerque, New Mexico has proven to be a challenge for placing exhibitions.

There is no venue available for ATB8 during the summer 2010 Convergence. We have encountered space limitations, scheduled remodeling, and conflicts with gallery missions to promote only Southwestern art and artists. Other organizations, including HGA, are facing the same limitations.

Instead, ATB8 will open during the fall at the 2010 Textile Society of America (TSA) symposium *Textiles and Settlement: From Plains Space to Cyber Space* in Lincoln, Nebraska. We encourage you to consider attending the stimulating TSA conference and visit the more than 20 textile related exhibitions in the region at that time. Nebraska is planning a very compelling conference, and ATB8 will open in a beautiful university gallery space. After Nebraska, ATB8 will travel to an East Coast venue. Visit TSA's website for information (www.textilesociety.org/events_conferences.htm).

Even though ATB8 will not open at Convergence 2010, ATA will have a presence in Albuquerque. A forum titled *Unraveling the Creative Strand* with speakers James Koehler and Lynne Curran will be held in conjunction with the ATA members' meeting on Sunday. On Saturday we will have a social event called *Tapestry Networking: An Enchanted Evening* were members and anyone interested in tapestry can get to know each other.

Immediately following Convergence, ATA will sponsor an educational retreat, *Tapestry Enchantment*, with James Koehler and Lynne Curran in nearby Santa Fe (information elsewhere in this newsletter). A venue for the small format exhibition, *Enchanted Pathways*, is pending in Albuquerque.

We encourage you to join us in Albuquerque. It is a magical part of the United States. There are many opportunities to view art and Southwestern textiles in the area as well as the natural beauty of the New Mexico land (<http://www.nmfiberarts.org>).

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ellen Ramsey for her many contributions to ATA. Ellen has served as a board member and a key volunteer. Membership, newsletter distribution, and fundraising are some of the duties Ellen has taken on with great enthusiasm and dedication. She has turned those duties over to others and will hopefully spend more time creating fine tapestries. We will miss Ellen's sage advice and spirited volunteerism.

Welcome to Diane Wolf, Ann Arndt, and Myla Collier in membership and Nancy Crampton in newsletter distribution. As our volunteer coordinator, Joan Griffin, says, "It takes a village to run ATA!"

The First Time is Always Tricky

By Julie Barnes

Well, maybe tricky isn't the word, but I have a much deeper respect for Linda Rees and her work with *Tapestry Topics*. I am grateful for the wonderful support I have received from the newsletter team and the many other members who have provided me with many helpful hints ~ or tips and tactics!

When thinking about what is to come in 2010, I have a few ideas and would appreciate your input or participation. Thoughts for 2010 issue themes are *Teaching the next Generation* of tapestry artists and professionals and Weaving with *Handspun Yarns*. If you have an interest in becoming a theme coordinator or submitting an article, please contact me (ATA_julie@msn.com).

Convergence 2010 Events

Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico

Tapestry Enchantment

ATA's 2010 Educational Retreat

Notorious for beguiling artists of all media, the *Land of Enchantment* will captivate you when you join acclaimed tapestry artists Lynne Curran and James Koehler in Santa Fe, New Mexico for ATA's 2010 Educational Retreat! Immerse yourself in three days of enchanting weaving and summon your creative spirit as you experiment with new tapestry techniques; and delve into explorations of color, texture, and design.

If you are unfamiliar with the work of Lynne Curran or James Koehler, these websites will be a good introduction:

Curran: www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1395_lawty/wordpress/?p=101

www.artlinkcentral.org/aotrgallery06/LynneCurran.html

www.jameskoehler.com

www.americantapestryalliance.org/AP/ArtistBio/KoehlerJ.html

The retreat, which is open to all skill levels, will take place at St. John's College in Santa Fe. After Convergence, the participants can check in during the evening of Sunday, July 25. The retreat will end Wednesday, July 28, 2010. Both private and shared rooms are available and all meals are included. Enrollment is limited. A registration form is in this issue. They will also be available at the ATA website (www.americantapestryalliance.org) in December 2009.

Information: Contact Marcy Fraker at magnolia.tapestry@gmail.com, 256-239-9890 (days), or 256-927-7796 (evenings).

Unraveling the Creative Strand

ATA's 2010 Membership Meeting & Forum

Join us for the American Tapestry Alliance's Biennial Membership Meeting and Educational Forum. Held in conjunction with HGA's Convergence on Sunday July 25, 2010 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Convention Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico (room to be announced), this meeting is open to the public. Find out what's new in ATA. Be inspired by Lynne Curran and James Koehler who share insights into their tapestries and their careers as they present the meeting's programs.

In "The Hidden Heart," Lynne Curran will discuss the elements she believes necessary for a successful tapestry. She will tell the story of her tapestries using her own work and methods, interests, and historical context.

In "Developing a Career as a Tapestry Artist," James Koehler will trace the path that led from his initial interest in tapestry weaving through the pitfalls and successes that led to his dedicated focus and fulfilling career as a tapestry artist.

A Digi Slam of contemporary tapestry will follow Curran and Koehler's talks. To participate in the Digi Slam, please submit the following by May 15, 2010:

1) Up to five digital images of your tapestries. Label each digital image file with your last name followed by the name of the tapestry, e.g. Smith Morning Mist.jpg. Digital image specifications: jpegs saved at 300 dpi and exactly 1000 pixels on the longest side. Save the image with high, or maximum image quality.

2) A Word document (or pdf), with the file name as your last name, e.g. Smith.doc, and containing the following information:

- Your name, address, phone number and e-mail.
- An annotated list for the submitted images listing the title of the work, the dimensions, date and materials.
- A one-paragraph bio.
- Up to two paragraphs about your work.

Burn the image files and the Word document onto a universal CD and mail to Mary Lane, 703 Foote Street NW, Olympia, WA 98502 by May 15, 2010.

The slide show is not juried, but is limited - first come, first served. The only commentary will come from the text you provide with your images.

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Convergence 2010 Events, continued

Enchanted Pathways

Unjuried Small Format Show

Enchanted Pathways is a small format open-entry exhibition sponsored by the American Tapestry Alliance in conjunction with 2010's Convergence in New Mexico. Entry form and fee deadline is January 15, 2010. Tapestries must not exceed 10" by 10" by 1" deep. For more information and prospectus visit www.americantapestryalliance.org or contact Letitia Roller, 27 Estambre Road, Santa Fe, NM 87508 (rollerletitia@gmail.com).

Tapestry Networking: An Enchanted Evening

Interested in tapestry weaving? Join this American Tapestry Alliance sponsored gathering to meet new and old friends and colleagues. Learn about regional tapestry groups, enjoy a slide show of tapestries, peruse our publications, and (best of all!) talk tapestry on Saturday, July 24, 2010 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., Albuquerque Convention Center (room to be announced). The cost of the event will cover appetizers. A no-host bar will be available. For reservations and more information, contact Diane Kennedy, P.O. Box 601, Santa Fe, NM 87504.

Tips & Tactics

By Christopher Allworth

As theme coordinator of this issue of *Tapestry Topics*, I aimed to think broadly and canvass widely for contributions that spoke to the theme *Tips & Tactics*. I put my mind to that of a reader in the early, thoughtful stages of tapestry making as well as the reader who after considerable experience might appreciate tips of a more philosophical nature, having presumably conquered all the mechanical hurdles of creating tapestries!

The contributions here form a fascinating and vibrant collage of tapestry practice that I hope will arrest the eye and capture the heart and hand as we all go forward in this endearing artistic expression of ours.

Editor's note: Because of the sheer number of contributed articles, we are focusing this issue on the practical aspects of *Tips & Tactics*. The summer 2010 issue of *Tapestry Topics* will feature additional submissions ~ the more thoughtful and philosophical approach to the subject as Christopher described above.

I CAN'T DRAW!

By Terri Stewart

I hear this often from beginner weavers. My answer is you don't have to be able to draw to make a successful cartoon. There are many ways to get around this such as using tracing paper, vellum, clear overhead projector sheets, copiers, blueprint shops, even finding someone to do the drawing for you.

How do you scale the elements in the image? One easy way is to use a clear sheet that comes marked with 1/2" or 1" squares. This can be found at some art supply stores, wherever drafting supplies are sold, or you can make your own. By keeping things in proportion or scale, your design will not end up lop-sided unless you intended it to be that way. Also ask your friends and family how the design looks to them and if anything needs to be made larger, smaller, added, deleted, or moved to another place on the cartoon. Feedback is important!

How do I come up with a design? By doing the suggestion in the next paragraph, you can begin to collect ideas and start the analyzing process.

What appeals to *you*? When you see an image or a tangible item (does not matter what it is), figure out what about it made you stop and look. Was it the design, subject matter, color(s), or something unexpected? By knowing yourself a little better, you will be able to formulate ideas that you will feel passionate about weaving. Designing work for a series (and you can have several) is one way to build a body of work that shows well as a collection and will often fit various exhibit themes as individual pieces. An easy way to start is by looking at family photo albums which may include trips, special events, various places you have lived, or something special from your childhood.

I also get questions on how to choose a color palette. My answer to this is the same for getting ideas on what to weave. Start a collection of images from magazines, photos, brochures, postcards, cloth swatches, newspapers, junk mail, whatever the source may be. You don't have to like everything in that image as long as the colors or some element in it appeals to you. There are also great books on color theory and design, and you can take a basic watercolor class which will help teach you how to mix and use colors to your best advantage.

Should you color your cartoon or keep it black and white? I do a little of both. For many of my smaller pieces I will fully color the cartoon (markers, crayon, color pencils, paint). For the larger ones will stay black and white but I'll create a smaller colored version for reference. Sometimes I only color in a portion of the cartoon to make sure the correct color ends up where it should if the design is a little confusing in that area. There is no right or wrong answer here: only the one that makes it easier for you to weave the image.

Adaptations

By Barbara Burns

About four years ago I was kayaking in Connecticut. I dug my paddle in hard to get up some speed because I was about to cross a busy thoroughfare. I felt something pop in my shoulder which I ignored. I gave up kayaking because of the shoulder discomfort, but of course I didn't give up weaving.

Generally, weaving didn't cause much pain until my serious mistake. While weaving a tapestry to submit to ATB7, I didn't take the time to adjust my position in relation to the tapestry. This meant I was stressing my shoulder by having my arms held too high. I do know better, but I was in a hurry to make the deadline. I submitted two pieces and wouldn't you know it, the tapestry chosen was not the one I had worked so hard to finish in time to submit.

My shoulder continued to get worse due to all the physical work I do. When I got tired of the pain, I went



Barbara Burns using adapted sling with exercise band suspension.

to an orthopedist who diagnosed a torn rotator cuff. After trying physical therapy and an injection of cortisone, I decided to have surgery. But before the surgery, I had another deadline. I needed to finish my Henry Hudson tapestry. My shoulder was so bad I could barely raise my arm from my side. I had to find a way to support my arm so I could weave.

One of my looms is a five foot Varpauu: a vertical loom with two shafts. Instead of using the shafts for a shed, I use leashes tied to one of the shafts. This means the shafts stay stationary. I was able to raise my hand by holding my elbow at my side and bending from my elbow. I also had the ability to push my forearm down without pain.

I needed a range of motion to be able to raise my arm and grab the leashes and then reach down to use the bobbin. I used a large rubber exercise band from physical therapy and my arm sling to create a support for my arm. I tied the band in a loop around the side of the shaft which is cantilevered six inches out from the loom. (I could have put a hook in the ceiling with a longer band instead.) I hung the sling from the bottom of the loop in the band. Since I was able to push down without pain, the sling was tied high. In the sling, I could bend my arm at the elbow to pull on the leashes and then push my forearm down, stretching the band to work at the fell line. This allowed me to work comfortably for relatively long periods of time as long as I took lots of breaks.

I completed the tapestry and had the surgery in January 2009 which was a great success with very little pain. What I learned from this was to take the time and effort to be sure that I always work in a comfortable position. I remember to keep my elbows as close to my sides as possible and my hands below my heart as much as possible. It was also a lesson in getting to a doctor sooner than later.

Tiny Tip By Christopher Allworth

Discarded credit cards can become impromptu threading hooks, push sticks or any other little shaped tool. Just cut them to shape with a sturdy pair of scissors. A little push stick shape can help poke ends behind the tie-rod while re-tying warp knots under tension. One brand of cholesterol pill's packaging contains an oblong plastic information card that is perfect!

The Almost Everyday Tips and Tactics

By Joyce Hayes

When I first began tapestry weaving I thought there were set rules - one way to do things. Now, years later, I have come to my senses and realize that weaving is problem solving. And along the way, I have come up with solutions and techniques that work well for me.

For example, when I first learned tapestry, many weavers were using a cotton seine twine warp, and I assumed that I should too. But this created many problems for me. Since my weft is cotton-sewing thread, which does not have any stretch, the cotton seine twine in the warp was too elastic, and no matter how carefully I laid in the weft there was extensive ribbing. With this stretch issue in mind, I tried a fine Swedish linen that had no stretch, and much to my delight the ribbing disappeared. When I used the linen warp along with Archie Brennan's copper loom design featuring the adjustable threaded rod, all of my problems with warp tension disappeared. I finally had a nice even warp that never failed.

I enjoy tapestry because it allows me to experiment with color. I love playing with subtle shifts in color as they move across the tapestry, and working with threads is uniquely suited to this. My weft bundles usually have three threads and to shift value or hue I take away one thread and add another. Last year I began dyeing my own threads, and this has opened up even more possibilities. I now have a larger pallet of colors with greater nuance. It is like watercolor painting on threads instead of paper. I can envision a color then make it a reality without relying on commercially dyed threads.

My most reliable designing tools revolve around everyday habits like walking and drawing. Walking frees my mind so that new ideas can come to the surface, while drawing helps me develop these ideas and take them further, deeper. If all else fails, I take a nap and this usually helps the clutter fall away and allows the patterns and systems of design to become clear.

And, finally, one of the best pieces of advice that I ever received was from my first teacher, Mary Lane. She said, "Good weaving is paying attention."

Tiny Tip By Joan Griffin

When a section of the tapestry is woven but just doesn't seem right, I take a digital photo of the section in question. I then load it into Photoshop (you can use any image editing program) and pull it up on the computer screen. When I look at a design on a different medium, I see issues that I might not notice on the actual weaving itself. This also lets me make corrections on the digital image in Photoshop without ripping out the tapestry right away and trying something different.

If I use the clone tool to copy a color from another area of the tapestry, I can then paint with what looks like a woven section even though it is just on the computer. I can edit the image by removing already woven areas. By making edits I can correct and immediately see what it looks like before I actually start unweaving and reweaving the tapestry. I find this is very helpful with a problem area that I thought was going to look wonderful but does not.

Trying out several different approaches on the computer first really saves time. It allows me to decide what the fix is and then go back to the loom.

ATA Offers a Helping Hand

By Joyce Hayes

Whether you are a beginner or an experienced tapestry weaver, being able to ask questions is essential. There are so many times when only another person interested in what floats your boat can be receptive to your questions or new ideas.

With this in mind, ATA has started a new mentoring program called Helping Hands, which is for tapestry weavers who want to learn the basics or to refresh their skills. As coordinator of Helping Hands, I connect a mentee with an experienced weaver, and for six months they correspond via e-mail answering questions and working on technical problems.

Edith O. Nuallain, who was mentored by Jan Austin, enjoyed her experience with Helping Hands. When asked if the way she thought about tapestry has changed because of the program, she answered:

"Definitely yes! Under Jan's tutelage and warm encouragement I have discovered that tapestry feeds my heart and soul in a way that no other craft I have

ever tried does. There is something very special about tapestry weaving. Is it the colors? Or the process? Or is it the slow, meditative qualities, so counter-cultural to the modern way of life? When I sit down to weave, I exist in another dimension, one in which time is neither to be gained nor lost. Tapestry has grown into an addiction for me now. If I miss a day weaving, I am certain to weave the next day. I simply must. And some day I hope to grow into a good tapestry weaver."

Jan found the collaboration rewarding as well, explaining that as a mentor "I try to get my students to be realistic. Sometimes the designs they want to weave are bound to cause frustration and disappointment. I'm all for taking chances, but in the beginning, it's important to have success, so you can learn how it works."

And when asked for her favorite tips and tactics, Jan responded, "I have two items of advice for beginning students: (1) Keep a tight tension so your warps don't wander, and (2) Use wefts that are the same or similar in weight."

For more information about the Helping Hands program, visit the ATA website at <http://www.americantapestryalliance.org/> and look under Education. If you would like to participate in the Helping Hands program, as a mentor or mentee, please contact me (joyce.hayes@comcast.net).

Tiny Tip **By Susan Rubendall**

When completing small tapestries, it can be difficult to open a shed wide enough to admit even a small bobbin. Nylon netting shuttles are very helpful for the final inches. They hold as much yarn as small bobbins but will slip through a narrow shed without dragging the yarn on the warp threads. The shuttles are available in wood as well as nylon. I have not tried the wood, but I like the nylon because the prong that the yarn is wrapped around is flexible - making it easy to wind and to unwind. I found the netting shuttles online in sizes from 5 to 10 inches. The widths vary, so check several vendors to find what will work best for you.

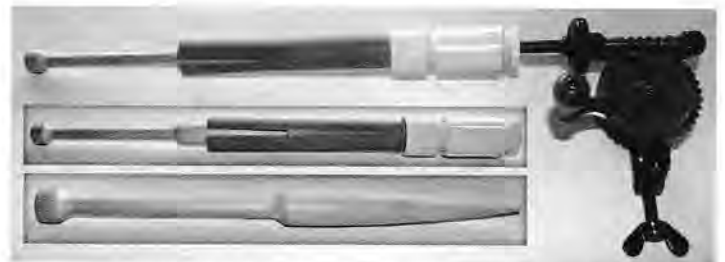
Ingenuity

By Wes Brubacher

Editor: Tapestry weaver Bobbi Chamberlain has had a wonderful assistant and design engineer in her husband Wes Brubacher. Below are three items that Wes has created and/or adapted for Bobbi to use as she weaves.

Timer: Here's what I did to help Bobbi keep track of the time she puts in on a weaving, whether it be design, cartoon development or actual weaving. I went to W.S. Granger - here in the western U.S. - and got a 120 volt AC "machinery run timer" that I mounted in a small enclosure - 3" H x 4" W x 1-3/4" D. The timer has a toggle switch incorporated in the wiring. When she starts her activity she simply turns on the switch and then turns it off when she stops. Since this is a continuous accumulation timer up to 99999.99 hours or minutes - depending on the type purchased - all you have to do is write down the beginning and ending times for a weaving, do the math and you'll have the total elapsed time.

Bobbi finds it helpful to track the hours so she can get an idea of how long it will take to finish a piece based on how long it has taken so far and what percentage of the piece remains. That way if a show is coming up that she wants to enter, she can figure about how many hours a week it will take and determine if it's reasonable to get it done in time.



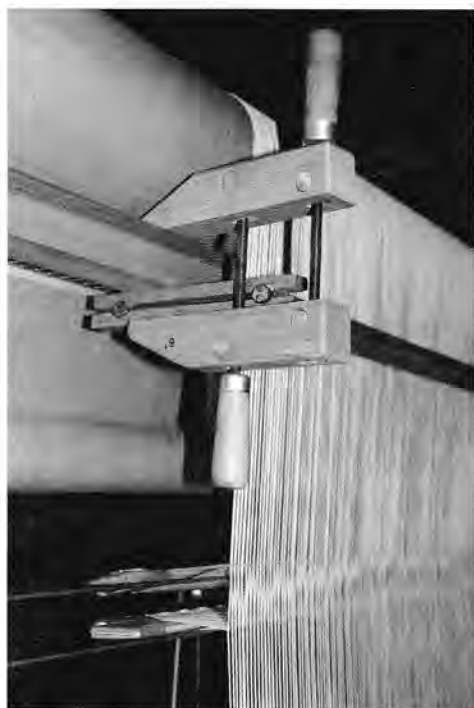
Brubacher's cleverly retrofitted bobbin winder

Bobbin winder adapter: A second device holds her 8-1/4" length (~210mm) x 9/16" diameter (~15mm) Gobelin bobbins on a Swedish-made "And.Mattson.Mora" winder for winding on the yarn. The winder has a shaft which measures .320 (~8mm) diameter at the inner end and .270" (~7mm) diameter at the outer end. Referring to the accompanying picture of the bobbin holder and from right to left there is a 1/2" pipe plug, 1/2" threaded coupler and a 1/2" male adapter - all PVC sprinkler system parts -and a 6" piece of schedule 40 PVC conduit which could also be 1/2" schedule 40 sprinkler pipe. The plug has a hole drilled in the center slightly smaller than the inner end of the winder

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shaft. The bobbin holder is kept from flopping around by a modified 1/4" or 3/8" PVC pipe plug inserted and glued into the male adapter threaded end and drilled out slightly larger than the outer end of the winder. The piece of PVC pipe has a slit 2-1/8" long cut with a 10" table saw blade.

Reed for Shannock loom: The third device is simply an adaptation of a 10-dent floor loom reed to her Shannock vertical tapestry loom which is equipped with a 4-dent raddle. This greatly facilitates keeping the warp straight between the upper beam and the lower beam. The standard raddle was turned over and remounted with the raddle pegs turned toward the back of the loom. A pair of oak adapters was made for each end of the reed to be held in place by 6" wood furniture clamps. The oak adapters were made by cutting two pieces of oak 1" H x 3/4" W x 6" L. The hole centers were



Reed modification by Wes Brubacher

determined by the reed "rail" diameter measurement, centered on the 1" side of the oak blocks and drilled with a Forstner bit. The diameter of the holes for the rails should be no more than 1/32" larger than the reed rails. The blocks were then sawed in half through the holes. This gave the two pieces for each end which hold the rails of the reed without putting pressure on the "fins" of the reed. Additional cutting of the surface of the blocks at the fins of the reed may be necessary in order that the blocks clear the fins. Very little pressure is needed by the clamps to hold the reed in place but both rails should be supported. Note that the reed is mounted below the raddle. There is a loss of weaving width of about 1" on each side of the reed.

Tiny Tip **By Barbara Burns**

When I am working on a tapestry, I like to get back and look at it from a bit of a distance. Depending on where I am working, the distance can be limited. What I sometimes do is use either a reducing glass/distance viewer* or a pair of binoculars which works the opposite of a magnifier. With the binoculars I turn them around and look through one lens from the back. I've also used a mirror to give me some distance and turn things around. All these give me another perspective on my work which helps to show me what works or does not work.

*A reducing glass can be purchased from an art or quilting supply store.

Tiny Tip **By Bill Saunders**

1. To know precisely how long a weaving takes, wire a clock into your lighting circuit: when you're weaving, clock is ticking; when you turn out lights, clock stops. Just remember to count the number of 24 hour cycles.
2. On my loom it is possible to wedge a stiff piece of artists' board (with cartoon glued to it) between the warp and the lower beam with the loom already having been warped to the width of the cartoon (or one or two warps wider). Stapling the artists' board to the warp keeps its two edges exactly in line with the edge of the firmly affixed cartoon.

With my tapestries measuring about 30 x 40", the cartoon and board are cut across horizontally into pieces eight inches in height. As the weaving reaches to the top of one board, the board is removed and replaced by the next. Additional stapling is not needed unless the weaving begins to draw in.

On average for a cartoon measuring 30 or 40 vertical inches, I staple an edge 10 times. The procedure never damages a warp and when the staples are removed with the tapestry still on the loom, both edges are perfectly straight and they remain so.

3. To enlarge a cartoon without effort, take it to a blueprint shop. They can make it any size.
4. Listening to audiobooks reduces the possibility of boredom with the weaving process. Visit the local public library to check out audiobooks.

Tips for Using a Linen Warp

By Susan Iverson

Linen makes a wonderful tapestry warp. It is strong and smooth and has a wonderful hand. I have been using linen for over thirty years and have never had a serious problem with it. Over the years, I have talked to weavers who have had problems with linen, and some of my students have also had problems, primarily with tension.

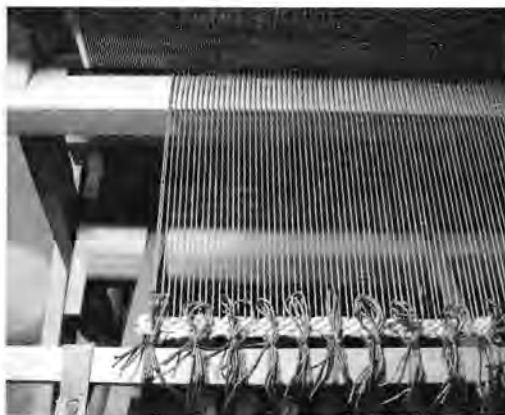
Linen can seem to have a mind of its own. I think that some weavers who have problems with their first experience using linen get discouraged and use cotton, which tends to be more easily controlled. I will attempt to share a few tips on how I work with linen.

Color

Linen has a beautiful natural color ranging from a light silvery gray to a medium tan. It is important to wash the warp before weaving. Some linen is very clean and some is not. I find that the Webs linen always needs to be washed twice and the Henry's Attic linen generally just needs a light rinse. I dye 90% of my warps, so the washing is just part of that process. Most of my tapestries have a fair amount of mid to dark values in the weft yarns. I do not want the light color of the warp to show through when the tapestry is bent - either at the hems or in the dimensional areas when I use pulled warp. If a bit of warp does show and it has been dyed a medium gray—it will just read as a shadow. I use Procion MX dye, following the normal directions for immersion dyeing. I do add an extra step: after the final rinse, I simmer the linen on the stove for 30 minutes and then rinse again.

Tension - on a floor loom

I will admit to the occasional warp tension problem—generally just a couple of loose warps that I can fix by sliding something between them and the back beam. If there is a single warp that is loose, you can tie a loop of linen around it and hang something from it that is heavy enough to match the tension of the rest of the warp. My students often have tension problems, and I attribute this to inconsistent practices throughout the warping process. I always stress consistency and doing each step as carefully as possible.



The half bow knot holds linen well and is easy to untie for tensioning.

We all know that how well one step in the warping process is done will affect the following steps. One frequent problem is not tying the knots, which attach the warp to bar on the warp beam, in a tight and smooth way. The loose knots will then slip and tighten up when tension is put on the warp, and the warp tension will then become uneven. Another tension

problem happens when the warp is tied onto the bar on the cloth beam. Linen really doesn't like to stay tied—square knots will work but they are so hard to untie. I use a half bow and have found that it stays tight and is very easy to untie when you are doing the original tensioning. I know that many people tie the warp in small bundles using an overhand knot and then lash them to the bar. I do that occasionally with some other types of weaving, but not with a tapestry warp. If the warp is very long, three yards or more on a floor

loom, there can be some special problems.

I have found that these five things are the best way to keep the tension even throughout the weaving:

1. Wind about a yard onto the warp beam using corrugated, rolled cardboard between the layers of warp.
2. Let the warp wind around itself for 1 1/2 turns of the beam - this will add some friction for the next step.
3. From the back of the loom, carefully pull on small sections (one or two inches) of the warp, working from one side to the other - pulling up from the warp beam toward the back beam.
4. Pull the warp firmly from the front of the loom - combing with your fingers several times across the width of the warp to pull any loose warps to the front.
5. Continue winding your warp, repeating steps 1-4 every yard or so.

(This does assume that you are dressing a floor loom from front to back - Deborah Chandler's [Learning to Weave](#) is a very good reference book for dressing a loom.)

Tension can also be affected by the number of warps in each bundle that is tied to the bar on the cloth beam. I recommend that the two outside bundles have four or five warp threads in them - tied so that the out-

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Pull on small sections of warp to fine tune the tension on a long warp.

side warp is perpendicular to the reed. The inside bundles can have more warps in them (up to the number of your epi). Tie them so that the center of each bundle is perpendicular to the reed. Then weave—making sure that the warp does not get deflected by the weaving process. Of course, this is hard to do if you have a lot of eccentric wefts.

Finishing

Everyone has to come up with a way to stabilize their warps that will work well with the warp sett and with the way the tapestry will be hemmed or hung. Over the years I have used a lot of different finishes and still refer back to Peter Collingwood's The Techniques of Rug Weaving. I don't think that there are really any differences between finishing linen or cotton except that linen has more body than cotton and again does not like to stay knotted. I currently use a *Half Damascus Variation* from the Collingwood



The back of the tapestry using a Half Damascus Variation finish.

book – Figure 382(d) on page 486. The diagram shows the simple right to left movement of the warps. When I get within an inch or so of the left side, I stop working from right to left. I then pick up the last warp on the left and work from left to right. When there are just two warps threads remaining, I tie them in a square knot. With a needle, I insert them through a warp loop, created by this technique, so that they lie flat along with the other warps. I then tack the linen ends down to the tapestry with a running stitch about a ¼" above the knots and cut off the excess warp. This technique is worked from the back of the tapestry. You can leave it as is if you want to see the narrow warp edge or hem the tapestry.

A Simple Solution to Making a Frame Loom Stand

By Tommye McClure Scanlin

Last year before a workshop I racked my brain for a simple and inexpensive solution for supporting the copper pipe frame looms I've made based on Archie Brennan's design. I take up to fourteen of these looms to classes for students to use. When I teach workshops, I've found that having the loom on a tabletop, rather than in the lap, is more comfortable for some people. Archie Brennan has an ingenious floor stand for the copper pipe looms in his loom plans. But when I travel with all these little looms, the floor stands aren't feasible. So, I started thinking about plumbing pipe components in PVC and how I might devise a loom support of some kind.



Loom (based on Archie Brennan's design) with stand designed by Tommye McClure Scanlin

I spent a bit of time wandering through the plumbing parts of the local hardware store. After several minutes of digging through various bins, I found a combination of tee and 12" pipe length would work, one for each side of the loom. Before putting the loom together and warping it, slip a tee on each side of the bottom of the loom. Then I screw a 12" length of PVC pipe into each tee. The pipes then extend behind the loom and serve as a stand. Put a plastic cap on each end and hold the legs together in a triangle with a rubber band so they don't slip to the side and cause the loom to fall over. When you warp the loom, take the threaded pipes off so they won't be in your way. They also may either be taken off when traveling or take the rubber band off and let the legs fold in flat.

I also use the rubber shelf-liner material as a mat on which to place the loom. That helps to keep it from slipping.

Teaching Tips

By Donna Loraine Contractor

Editor: Donna Contractor shared these tips and tactics that have a focus on classroom and studio teaching.

For Teachers

1. I have found that continually restricting the choices that new weavers have to make gives them more time to concentrate on the learning of basic skills. For example, I give three simple already drawn designs and three 3-color combinations for the students to pick from. One student completed an 11" square tapestry in just five classes! (This usually takes 6 six-hour classes)
2. The designs I provide isolate what I consider to be the three elementary tapestry design/technique elements: *stair steps*, *diagonals*, and with these two techniques taught first, they can then tackle *curves*.
3. All students must learn to warp! I now have a mandatory warping class that follows Cay Garrett's **Warping All By Yourself** to the letter. I don't know why her methods work so well, but every time I use them there are very few readjustments needed to get a good weaving tension.

For New Weavers

1. Don't try mixing different weight wefts until you have refined your technique. When you have a problem, you will not know if the culprit is the weft or your technique.
2. Persevere! If you have designed and woven thoughtfully but are not satisfied with the product, use the experience and the same design right away. Apply what you have learned and use it as a color theory exercise. Change the colors and think about the possibility of a whole new look from the same design with just a different color scheme. How much better woven will it be!

For All Levels

1. Ideas run dry? Read or just flip through a bunch of art books, design books, color theory books without any thought of actual designs. Drink, eat yummy things, get cozy, and relax! Soon, thereafter, find a printed local gallery guide with art you can cut out. Assemble an "INSPIRATION BOARD" on cardboard, foam core, or bulletin board. Make a collage, use some of those design principles you were just looking at, and have fun. Wait a while, then go back and look. What do you see? Chances are something will pop out: a similarity in the images, a color scheme, a certain subject, or a design principle.
2. Use pleasing formats - by this, I mean, the shape of your work. Check out the work of Gustav Fechner and his survey of format proportion.

Donna Contractor lists these books as some of her favorites:

Logic & Design in Art, Science and Mathematics, by Krome Barratt

Geometry of Design: Studies in Proportion and Composition, by Kimberly Elam

Interaction of Color, by Josef Albers

Theory and Use of Color, by Luigina De Grandis

The Power of Limits: Proportional Harmonies in Nature, Art, and Architecture, by Gyorgy Doczi

Capturing the Essence of the Silvia Heyden Experience

By Lyn Hart

Simplicity of form. Purity of color. Minimal motifs woven in repetitive patterns. These basic concepts, which echo the disciplined tenets of the *Bauhaus*, have been masterfully worked into vibrant and complex designs on Silvia Heyden's loom for decades. Now finally feeling ready to pass her knowledge on to other weavers – "I had to learn all of this myself before I could share it with anyone else" – Heyden taught a workshop entitled "*Tapestry: Art Form of its Own*" in Mendocino, California at the Mendocino Art Center in July. After she greeted us by stating, "Tapestry is something old I want to make new again," fourteen students attempted to absorb in five days what it has taken Silvia a lifetime to understand and what she continues to explore.

Mendocino, a small town perched on the coastal headlands of the Pacific that is nestled against the lush redwood forest, proved to be the perfect location for such an absorbing workshop. No commercial signs, chain restaurants, or stores exist there. Many of the buildings and homes were constructed in the 1800s and are in near perfect condition. The temperatures hover in the 50s and 60s, rarely varying more than 10 degrees. The plant life is lush and large, and the tiny town is filled with artists, art galleries, and deliciously eclectic dining choices. The Mendocino Art Center, located near enough to the coast so that we could hear the ocean's murmur during the still night hours, is a jumble of weather-worn dark wood buildings and lavishly planted gardens studded with sculptures composed from driftwood, metal, rock, found objects, and ceramics. The hub of the Center is the gallery and administration building. It is flanked on one side by a two story building containing student housing (where I roomed with Ann Keuper and Susan Lawson) and the Mendocino Theatre Company; on the other side are the art studios arranged in courtyard style – weaving, pottery, sculpture, art. Our apartment in the student housing had a small kitchen, so we were able to have a simple breakfast, take a walk along the headlands to breathe in the pungent saltiness of the Pacific, yet still have time to shower and stroll along the path through the gardens to arrive in class on time.



Heyden discusses weaving technique she used in "Eno from Above" displayed at Flockworks Studio Gallery.

The structure of Heyden's workshop was every bit as unique as her weaving style. No neat little folders containing handouts, no PowerPoint slide show, no words written on a board, no hand holding. No diversions or delays with instruction on basic techniques. Each day began with a brief lecture followed by exercises that generated critical thinking about design, color, and value concepts. We worked with Color-Aid paper, challenged by Silvia's edict, "You may only choose three hues to work with...limitations in use of color create stronger compositions!" We arranged strips in different combinations to observe the effects of hue and value and then cut the strips into small squares to design mosaics where no color was adjacent to itself – "The quantity can be the most important tool, rather than the mixing of color!" We went outside to observe a gigantic passion flower hedge in bloom, again challenged with "No drawing, no note taking, no picking the flowers or leaves to bring back...just use your observation skills!" We then returned to the classroom to recreate a "weaveable" composition of our perceptions of the shapes and colors we had seen from Color-Aid paper. It became apparent that the focus of these design exercises was the first step in learning not to exactly copy and replicate a subject in tapestry, as many weavers do, but how to create a design that captures the essence of the subject and the artist's own interpretation, yet at the same time is weaveable. We were usually at our looms and weaving before lunch, restricted to weaving with only three colors and one or two of Silvia's motifs: bands, triangles, or half rounds. Silvia moved about the room, giving observations and suggestions prompted by what she saw on our looms. Over the course of the five days, I was able to weave a small composition of half rounds demonstrating ambiguity of ground and form, and started a sampler exploring her feathered weave technique which I finished after returning home.

The workshop days were punctuated with Silvia's recollections of life events during the erection of the Berlin Wall, her impressions of Johannes Itten, her experiences as a *Bauhaus* student, the connections between her violin playing and her weaving, and her particular views on tapestry weaving. We were treated to a viewing of the partially completed documentary that is currently being made about her, which included scenes of her at the loom, walking along her cherished Eno River, and speaking about her observations of the river over time and through the seasons. Her reflections on nature struck me with great significance as that same aesthetic has been a strong force in my own weaving. A "field trip" day first took us to the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden where we strolled about the grounds scrutinizing the verdant and diverse plant life, trying to take it all in with our newly acquired "weaverly" perspectives. Then a short journey to the nearby town of Fort Bragg to the charming bungalow of Dutch tapestry weaver Maria Solaris. The visit was a feast for the eyes as well as the taste buds; Maria lavished us with tea, sparkling juices in champagne glasses, petit fours, cupcakes, and cookies while we wandered through her small home, enjoying her wonderful tapestries and eclectic collection of items from her native Holland. The day was finished off with a tour of the nearby Pacific Textile Arts two-story Victorian headquarters where we enjoyed seeing some of the members' work on display, their ever-expanding collection of looms, and their impressive library.

Yet another highlight of our Mendocino experience was the opportunity to view a number of Heyden's works in person. Both the Mendocino Art Center's gallery and the local Flockworks Studio gallery were exhibiting her tapestries, and on the two separate gallery visits we crowded around Silvia like a group of chicks as she gave impromptu talks about each of her works. We were treated to her musings on techniques and colors she used, and what her inspirations had been for the subject of each, her responses to our questions generating several detailed and thoughtful discussions.

I am usually never at a loss for words, either spoken or written, but describing this experience has proven to be quite difficult for me. The personal philosophies regarding the creation and weaving of contemporary tapestry that Heyden so willingly shared with us are for her, after living a life immersed in them, second nature. As I listened, took notes, and wove during the workshop, there was the feeling of, Yes! This resonates with me, it is what I have been

searching for, I feel it. Yet, when I attempted to articulate my impressions, what I wanted to say slipped by like the flowing current of Silvia's "Eno," its swirls and nuances visible to the eye, but disappearing immediately if one tried to capture it and hold it still to observe it. As I was reading through my notes, trying to imagine how I would write this, Heyden's words leapt off the page at me... "Improvisation in tapestry is the goal and it can be difficult." At best, the words I have written in my attempt to describe these experiences have been an improvisation barely approximating the memories and thoughts in my mind, but I do hope they have captured the essence.

Mendocino Art Center: www.mendocinoartcenter.org

Pacific Textile Arts: www.pacifictextilearts.org

To view a slideshow of photos taken during the workshop, visit this post on Lyn's blog: www.desertsongstudio.com/2009/07/ecstasy-inertia.html

FACE IT: A one-person exhibition of contemporary handwoven tapestry by Deann Rubin

By Marilyn Emerson Holtzer

The contemporary tapestry scene in St. Louis, Missouri has been greatly enriched by the recent return of Deann Rubin to her native environs. During an 18-year absence she lived and worked in the San Francisco, Boston, and Dallas areas. Rubin grew up in University City, a suburb of St. Louis, and after completing her BFA in Design at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, lived here for several years while working as a graphic artist and designer. For part of that time she served as a full-time apprentice to master craftsperson and tapestry weaver, Muriel Nezhnie. Rubin's tapestries have been widely exhibited, both nationally and internationally, and her work has appeared in many professional publications. She has won awards and honors for her tapestries and graphic designs, and has served as artist-in-residence, juror, lecturer, editor, and curator. During the month of September 2009, fourteen of her exquisitely conceived and executed tapestries were on view in her one-person exhibit, "FACE IT," at THE GALLERY at the University City Public Library. "FACE IT" is part of "Innovations in Textiles 8," a biennial collaboration of several arts organizations and galleries throughout the St. Louis area to exhibit contemporary fiber arts by artists of national and international reputation.

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Deann Rubin, "Birkah" 6.75 x 21.25", 2009, cotton, wool, silk, other. Photo by Michael H. Rubin.

"FACE IT" is a smashing exhibit of contemporary tapestry ranging from the seemingly straightforward ("Sweet Shoppe") to the enigmatic ("Caught in their Net"). Some are whimsical and some serious, but all include human (or near-human) imagery showing one or more faces or partial faces and most include repetitive or semi-repetitive elements. The tapestries range in size from 18 square inches ("Child's Play") to more than 3000 square inches ("Alleged"). The larger ones hang free, while smaller ones are mounted on cloth-covered frames. Rubin's tapestries are executed in a semi-traditional manner, wherein she retains the plain-weave structure and the slits characteristic of traditional French Gobelin tapestry, but she uses a wide variety of yarns, particularly for the weft. She sometimes allows the warp to show through the weft, imparting chromatic and textural variation and enrichment to her pieces.

"Alleged" (32.5 x 95") comprises five side-by-side panels, each containing the stylized head of a man in a Fedora. It is the largest piece in the exhibit and also the most sinister. The faces are portrayed in shades of tan and the features are delineated in black. The faces in the three central panels appear to be identical, but are superimposed on different backgrounds. All three heads face toward the viewer, almost as if they were in a lineup, with their eyes partially obscured by their hat brims. The heads in the end panels are smaller; the one on the left is tilted slightly downward and looks a little sad, and the one on the right faces slightly toward the center. The solid black backgrounds of the left, center, and right panels cause the faces within to recede. The black and white rectangles in the background of second panel, and the black and red rectangles in the fourth cause the superimposed faces to move toward the viewer. Although the faces are stern and serious, and the Fedoras evoke a gangster image, the viewer does not sense imminent great danger, but only a vaguely Bogartian air of menace.

"Sweet Shoppe" (49 x 54") depicts, rather realistically, two small children at a candy store in the 1950s eating ice cream from paper cups. Unlike many other works based on similar themes, "Sweet Shoppe" is far from trite or saccha-

rine, rather causing the viewer to pause and wonder whether the little girl is trying to make the sweet experience last as long as possible or what the little boy has seen across the room that has taken his attention away from his treat and perhaps startled him. Gumball machines and advertisements characteristic of the period are superimposed on a background of black, gray and white tiling, and serve to complete and add interest to the composition.

At the other end of the thematic spectrum are several tapestries from Rubin's new "Play Girl" series. These portray, rather abstractly, partial faces, usually the eyes, eyebrows, and part of the nose and forehead, often from behind a mask or net. This series began with a piece titled "Play Girl" that is presently traveling with the American Tapestry Association (ATA) exhibit "Connections: Small Tapestry International." Rubin drew upon her artistic training, her prior experience, and her resourcefulness to achieve strong visual and emotional impact while meeting the size requirement for the ATA exhibit. Her design started with a sketch of a "dumb blond" depicted on the cover of a TV Guide. As she sketched, she became intrigued with the face itself, finding each side unique, and she began to realize that the "dumb blond" was not really dumb. In order to portray the woman's inner nature, Rubin reduced her sketch to its essential elements. She eliminated all but a lateral cross-section of the upper half of the woman's head and rendered the features in dark and light values. She wove the piece sideways and used a horizontal format to emphasize the eyes which fix the viewer in their gaze.

Although "Play Girl" is not on exhibit here, several other pieces from that series are. All are woven sideways, and when presented in horizontal format are 6.75" high x 21.25" wide. In these, Rubin expands the "not-so-dumb blond" theme as she experiments with the effect of the environment on the viewer's emotional reaction to the play-girl face. In "Caught in their Net," a net-like structure defined by thin red lines extends across the entire piece in the foreground. The face is portrayed in green tones and varying textures, the hair in yellow tones and varying textures, and the defining features and background in black. The subtle differences in color

and texture liven the face and give dimensionality to the piece. Nevertheless, the red net restricts the girl to the middle- or back-ground, forever preventing her from coming to the foreground. In whose net is she caught? Is it her own, a veil, perhaps, or has it been imposed by someone else? Will she become entangled and immobilized if she takes a step forward?

In "Birkah," only the play-girl eyes and eyebrows are visible as she stares out, or perhaps pleads, from behind a small, veiled slot in a pale blue garment that otherwise completely encompasses her. The veil is represented by thin blue lines sub-dividing her only contact with the outside world into small squares. Are these bars that imprison her, or do they protect her? Is the veiled garment any more or less restrictive to the girl held within it than the red net is to the play girl trapped behind or caught under it? At least the birkah-clad girl can move forward freely as long as her garment moves with her. The roles of women in two starkly different societies are thought-provokingly compared here.

"Ripped from the Headlines" shows three play-girl faces, the central one larger than the others. Part of each face is brightly colored and stands out from the black, gray, and white newsprint-like background, but part of each seems to dissolve into the background. The faces become even more abbreviated. The hair is no longer easily perceptible, and an eye seems to disappear here and a forehead there. Rubin uses a freer weaving style than usual, pulling some weft ends to the front of the weaving. Partway through the weaving she added extra warp threads and wove narrow strips at each edge (top and bottom of the piece) which are separated slightly from the central woven section in the presentation, causing the faces to appear to have been literally ripped from the headlines.

"Camouflage/Moth Mother" shows a moth with outspread wings. At first glance one might think that it lacks human imagery. However, the eyes are those same play-girl eyes still defined by black features, but now embedded in piercing blue sockets, and they penetrate the viewer's soul. The viewer cannot help but stare back and wonder whether the moth is part human or the human part moth. Or, perhaps, is its outspread wings just part of a mask veiling a human face?

Although only a few representative tapestries from "FACE IT" are individually reviewed here, all of them are outstanding, and all evoked strong emotional response from this viewer. Rubin's work is not only artistically, technically, and intellectually first class, it is beautiful, moving, and often times downright haunting.

DISTILLED MATTER: Conte, Oil, Enamel, Thread

By Lyn Hart

Within the intimate confines of the Louis Carlos Bernal Gallery, located on the West campus of Tucson's Pima Community College, director David Andrés curated a small but intriguing exhibit juxtaposing cultures and mediums simultaneously. **DISTILLED MATTER: Conte, Oil, Enamel, Thread** included the large, frenetic paintings and drawings of German Matthias Düwel, copper jewelry featuring jewel like insects delicately rendered in enamel created by Asian Charity Hall, and the simple, yet enigmatic small format tapestries woven by Australian Kay Lawrence. My visit occurred on the day the artists gave gallery talks about their exhibited works. This review focuses on Lawrence's tapestries.

Her small, almost monochromatic tapestries were displayed in three sets: *Spill*, twelve tapestries of funnels and sieves; *Rust*, three tapestries of old metal implements from an abandoned gold mining town; *Lineage*, five tapestries of folded tea towels. In discussing the design and weaving of these works, Lawrence identified two foci: an objective focus of translation from the original medium in which she had first represented the objects to woven tapestry while maintaining and representing the essence of the original medium - the smudged lines of charcoal, the bleeding of watercolors into paper, the quality of old woven cloth, including stains and holes from wear - and a subjective focus of taking simple, ordinary, everyday items representing activities such as cooking, eating, and drinking, which link peoples across both culture and time, to create a celebration of the small, ephemeral moments in life and give them significance by portraying them in tapestry.

Lineage is an ongoing series inspired by a set of 31 old tea towels she discovered and could not bear to discard when she and another family member were sorting through a recently deceased uncle's belongings. Lawrence said she was sure she recognized many of the towels as having belonged to her grandmother and aunt and has memories of shared family meals when

continued...

the towels were used during the meal preparations; the timeworn towels symbolize simple items that serve as reminders of her familial connections and commonalities. To weave them, Lawrence sketches a rough outline of each folded towel to use as a shape cartoon and pins the towel, still folded, to the wall where she can see it as she weaves. Each takes about a week to weave; she represents the towels as they are, including stains, holes from wear, the woven striped or plaid design, and even the shadow cast by the towel on the wall.

The three tapestries in *Rust* depict heavily oxidized and tarnished metal eating utensils Lawrence found when visiting the site of an old abandoned gold mining town: a cup, plate, and jug. She originally rendered interpretations of the three items in watercolor which she then translated into tapestry, successfully capturing the quality of watercolor on paper in the woven structure. For Lawrence, these items are emblems of eating and drinking that exist throughout time and place; their decay and return to the earth parallel the similar ongoing deterioration of the old mining town.

In *Spill*, the 12 very small tapestries portray the charcoal drawings Lawrence did of funnels and sieves, capturing the smudgy, earthy nature of that medium. These implements signify human characteristics to Lawrence; the forms and shapes of humans, funnels, and sieves display a stable sense of self, yet they are all unstable because of "leakage." These items also hold a certain fascination for Lawrence because of their appearance in mythological history as determinants of human character; for instance, a sign of true chastity was proven when a woman could gather water in a sieve without it leaking out, and inverted funnels represented unfaithfulness or bad scruples.

Lawrence weaves on what she describes as the metal scaffold loom which she constructed from Archie Brennan's design. Usually weaving at 6 epi for the texture that sett creates, she uses cotton warp and prefers linen as weft for its sheen and texture, using wool minimally. The tapestries in *Rust* were woven at a finer sett to capture the detail of the watercolors she was working from, and she used wool for the shadows cast by the rusted utensils because it absorbs rather than reflects light.

Kay Lawrence, former Professor and Head of the South Australian School of Art at the University of South Australia, is presently collaborating with National Library of Australia to develop an oral history project to conduct whole-of-life interviews with 20 of the almost 500 women who were involved in stitching the Parliament House Embroidery between 1984 and 1988. Her extensive career in fiber arts has encompassed major tapestry commissions, private commissions, public installations, collaborative works, and writing about contemporary Australian textiles.

Read more about Kay Lawrence and her work in the educational article written by Lawrence on ATA's website in the Educational Article Series: www.americantapestryalliance.org/Education/Ed_Ar/IC/ICLawrence.html

Louis Carlos Bernal Gallery website: www.pima.edu/performingarts/bernalgallery

Kay Lawrence's web page at the University of South Australia:

www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/staff/Homepage.asp?Name=kay.lawrence



Kay Lawrence with two tapestries from Lineage Tea Towel series



Kay Lawrence, *Rust* series, each 18 x 15", 2001, cotton, wool, linen

Ellen Ramsey: Many Thanks!

By Mary Lane

I met Ellen Ramsey in 1998. Ellen enrolled in a tapestry weaving class that I was offering at the Weaving Works in Seattle. When the class was over, she and a few of the other participants in the class wanted to learn more about tapestry weaving. They approached me about teaching a weekly class. The classes met for over two years. During that time I came to know Ellen as a hardworking and talented artist/weaver whose approach to the medium involved detailed and meticulous technique and a studied approach to design. Ellen was always ready for a technical challenge, "I want to weave the steam that rises from a cup of coffee." Over birthday dinners and gallery visits, I discovered Ellen's wry wit and fun loving side. I also discovered the one area in which Ellen is not knowledgeable: cooking.

In 2003, I was invited to become a board member of ATA. I was, at the time, serving on the board of a different arts nonprofit and said that I would consider serving on the ATA board when my current term expired. I mentioned that Ellen Ramsey might be willing to get involved. Ellen agreed, and that was the beginning of her wide reaching and long-term commitment to ATA's programming.

Ellen served three, two-year terms as an ATA Board Member. When she stepped off the board, she retained all of her commitments as a Key Volunteer. Although the longest lists of her tasks fell within the Membership and Fundraising Committees, Ellen's generous spirit of volunteerism seemed to find a place in just about every nook and cranny of ATA's programming and structure. Ellen was responsible for the creative idea behind our wonderfully friendly Membership Brochure. She single handedly ran the Valentine's Day Appeal. She marketed and sold catalogs, all the while maintaining the membership database, sending out renewal reminders and new member welcome packets, producing the Membership Directory, arranging for the printing and distribution of Tapestry Topics (oh yes, she used to fold

and staple them herself), arranging for the printing of postcards, and working on fundraising. Did we need someplace to store boxes of catalogs? Of course Ellen had room in her garage. Her husband didn't mind parking on the street.

Ellen's voice on the board email list was invaluable. She was able to see the long term implications of proposals, she could sum up a complex conversation in concise terms, and her insights were intelligent and to the point. Ellen's dedication to ATA was an inspiration to all of us. I have always felt a special pride that it was I who had suggested that this marvel of efficiency and selfless dedication be asked to join the ATA board. Last spring Ellen announced that she wanted to turn her jobs over to someone else. It took six people to replace her. We will all miss Ellen's dependably astute and well-researched input and her ability to resolve a topic of discussion as deftly as a sharp knife cuts through a tomato (Not that Ellen would know about that!).

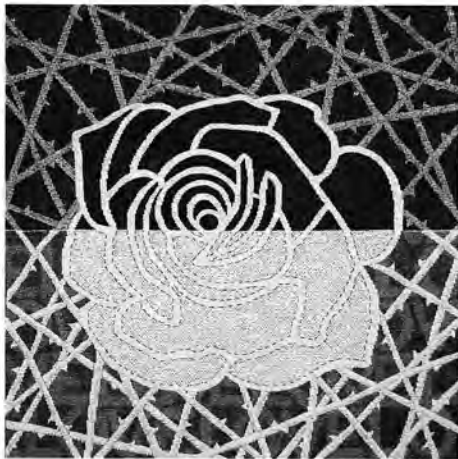
Alongside her work for ATA, Ellen has continued to mature as a talented weaver and creative artist. Her tapestry, "Rift," was accepted into American Tapestry Biennial 6. "Rift" is an example of Ellen's technical skill and her thoughtful approach to design. The image includes multiple layers of text and images that are accurately rendered. The carefully calibrated and subtle shading creates convincing recessional planes. The seemingly innocent floral motif sits amid a thorny bramble, obscuring the mixed emotions of the underlying text.

"Rumination I" and "Rumination II" are a diptych in which organic forms are cropped to the point of abstraction and rendered in black and white. The two tapestries involve a positive/negative shift in value, and hearken



Ellen Ramsey
Volunteer extraordinaire

continued...



Ellen Ramsey, "Rift"

back to the opposed emotions sequestered behind the brambles in "Rift." The flowing lines and shapes that expand and contract suggest the wandering and shifting path of a ruminating mind as it carefully examines and ponders its subject. The extreme cropping of the design implies the existence of a larger field in which the mind plays, and from which any statement, or in this case, image, is but a snapshot, one perspective from one moment in time recorded in the static grid of the weave.

Recently Ellen has been attending classes and workshops at the Pratt Institute in Seattle. She has started working in other artistic media, in addition to tapestry. Current projects involve the alteration of an existing book and learning how Photoshop can be used to manipulate drawings and designs. We all look forward to seeing what comes off Ellen's loom now that she has more time to devote to weaving. In the most sincere sense of the words, I say, for all us ~ Thank you, Ellen!

ATA Award of Excellence: Kathe Todd-Hooker

By Merna Strauch

The winner of the ATA Award of Excellence at the recent Intermountain Weavers' Conference (IWC) in Durango, Colorado, was Kathe Todd-Hooker from Albany, Oregon. She received the award for her work titled "So Sought After," a small tapestry woven with sewing thread. One of a series of complex decorative pieces, "So Sought After" is 10 x 14.5". As beautiful as the works are in print and on the internet, it is breathtaking to see the real tapestry.

Kathe says when she designs tapestry, color and/or stories are based on questions dictated by symbols of her past. She goes on to say:

"My sunsets and landscapes are statements of a moment of time ... Most are based on photos that I have taken or have been taken by family members. I can spend an hour taking photos every 30 seconds to a minute in sequence until I find the right sunset to weave. In the last year or so they have crossed over into the backgrounds for my more complex pieces.

On the other hand, the images that I use in my other tapestries are about questions, myths and emotion. I use the images and symbols that I grew up with that are based in three different cultures that I have belonged to, live in, or am ethnically, and the past. I grew up and was educated in a culture that highly valued symbolism, iconic



Kathe Todd-Hooker, "So Sought After"
10 x 14.5", 2009, dual duty craft thread warp,
embroidery floss, Sulky metallics, linen
embroidery floss, cotton darning threads,
sewing thread, rayon embroidery floss

images and their use. My tapestries are extremely personal, and I often prefer to see the work viewed as decorative by others. Decorative work is often viewed as lacking in meaning by mainstream culture. Both of my grandmothers did beautiful handwork and decorative textiles to beautify their surroundings for remembrance and edification.

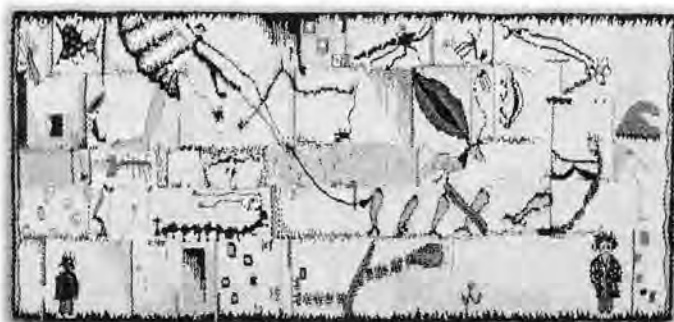
Labels often lend a certain amount of privacy and cryptic layers to the meanings of the symbols. So, it is what it is. Long ago I realized the conceits attached to the words, decorative, art and craft and have chosen not to be involved in those particular discussions or labels of my work. The other side of the coin is that I enjoy hearing the meanings that others attach to my work. Sometimes it is quite interesting it amuses the inner ikotomi that sometime lives within my inner places."

Kathe's work has been accepted in many recent exhibits. It's a treat to see her work and follow her blog (kathetodddhooker.blogspot.com). She provides all of us an invaluable service as founder and still current Tapestry List Mom.

ATA Award of Excellence: Patricia Williams

By Merna Strauch

Pat Williams' "Bugs on Parade" paraded right into the winner's circle to take the ATA Award of Excellence at the recent Tapestry Weavers South (TWS) exhibit in Anderson, South Carolina. "Bugs on Parade" is woven in the same humorous vein as many of Pat's tapestries. It is 18 x 38" and woven with silk, wool, and novelty weft yarns.



Pat Williams, "Bugs on Parade" 18 x 38.5", 2009, seine twine warp, silk, wool, novelty weft yarns

Retired from teaching high school art, Pat designs and weaves almost every day. Tapestry, for her, is "deeply compelling in its complexity of texture, depth of color, and ability to convey intentions." Pat says, "The slowness of tapestry weaving is especially compelling to me because it is in direct contrast to our instant-everything culture. I relish the slow and lovely involvement of this process. There will be no splashing the yarns onto the warp to make instant art. Besides the actual weaving, there is usually a great deal of design time for me. Since it takes so much time to complete a piece, I use a cartoon for some kind of insurance that I'll like it when it's done."

Apparently never idle, Pat keeps a sketchbook with her to draw during wait times. She frequently makes up weird bugs and "Bugs on Parade" is a bug collage from those pages. The "Little Man" is a commentary on bugs as co-animals. It came together because she wanted to try a more abstract free-form design, experiment with six epi, and just play. She says, "It was woven on my original Hagan tapestry frame loom as relief from the much larger tapestry I was weaving on my Fireside. I'd never before worked with so much beige and off-white, but having recently seen some paintings by Andrew Wyeth, I found the calmness of neutrals compelling. Each "section" of "Bugs on Parade" was a small piece in itself, but I did try to sweep across with some connecting elements. I had a cartoon with approximate bugs to weave and where they would go, but wanted to be able to modify the shapes to fit the restrictions of six ends per inch."

Treat yourself to more of Pat's work on her website (web.mac.com/patwilli1). Click on her link "Teaching Tapestry" and view *The Loom is a Stringed Instrument: you too can learn how to play it* ~ you can even watch her weave.

Kudos

Compiled by Merna Strauch

Send items to mstrauch@mac.com

Lyn Hart was awarded a three-week artist residency at the Grand Canyon's North Rim in 2010. One of the requirements for selected artists is to create and donate a piece of work of their choice to the Park that relates to their experience within a year of the residency. The Canyon's Artist-in-Residence committee has specially requested that Lyn weave a tapestry of a full-size condor with the Grand Canyon as the backdrop for exhibit in the North Rim Visitors Center.



Lyn Hart, "Canyon Night"

Four vessels by **Michael Rohde** will be part of the traveling show "Vessels," on view at the Walter E. Terhune Gallery in Toledo, Ohio (September 28 - October 31) and at Angels Gate Cultural Center in San Pedro, California (January 17 - March 8, 2010). The San Pedro venue will host a reception on January 17 from 2-4 p.m.

Elaine Deyo, Jan Landrum, Janita Loder, Linda Rees, and **Deann Rubin** are included in "The Figure in the Carpet: Tapestry's Woven Thoughts," presented by the St. Louis Tapestry Artists at the St. Louis Artists' Guild from September 20, 2009 - November 6, 2009. The pieces are in response to a short story by Henry James, and the exhibition is in conjunction with "Innovations in Textiles 2009."

"**James Koehler**: Contemporary Tapestry," was on view September 18 - October 31 at Transitions Gallery in Denver, Colorado. James has work in permanent collections of the Denver Art Museum, Smithsonian Renwick Gallery, and U.S. Embassies in several countries.

"Fiber Artistry: Journey of the Imagination" was sponsored by the Chattahoochee Handweavers' Guild at the Hudgens Center for the Arts in Duluth, Georgia from September 15 - October 24. Artists include **Joan Griffin**, Murial B. Henry, **Connie Lippert**, **Linda Weghorst**, and **Tommye Scanlin**. More exhibit information can be found at the Chattahoochee Handweavers Guild website (www.chgweb.com).

Odette Brabec, **David Johnson**, and **Mary Zicafoose** had work in "Fiber Focus 2009" juried by Alice Zrebiec at Art St. Louis Gallery in St. Louis, Missouri from September 14 - October 15. The regional gallery features work of the nine states bordering Missouri. David's tapestry "Edge No. 7" received the Merit award for Three Dimensional work.

The Tapestry Weavers South exhibit through October 16 at the Anderson Arts Center in Anderson, South Carolina (see the last issue of TT) produced some winners. Several awards were given out by juror/art critic Cecile Martin including the ATA Award/Best in Show to **Pat Williams** for "Bugs on Parade" and the HGA Award to **Susan Iverson** for "Dream Sequence."



Susan Iverson, "Dream Sequence"

Intermountain Weavers Conference recently sponsored "Fiber Celebrated 2009," an international juried fiber art exhibition, July 29 - September 20, 2009 at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado. Tapestry was well represented. **Kathe Todd-Hooker's** "So Sought After" won the ATA Award for Excellence, and **Kathy Spoering's** "September" took an Excellence in Weaving. **Lyn Hart's** "Canyon Night" was awarded People's Choice. **Rebecca Mezoff's** "Contemplative Garden" was featured on the exhibit postcard and won Best Use of Color. Rebecca also took People's Choice 2nd place in the non-juried "Intermountain Creations." Also exhibiting were **Jan Austin, Sheila Burke,** and **Donna Contractor.**

Correction

In *Tapestry Topics* Fall 2009, Pamela Topham's tapestry "Meadow Music 1, Sagaponack" was spelled incorrectly. As Pamela informed us, Sagaponack is a very small village in the township of Southampton, eastern end of Long Island, New York. It has gone from potato farming to mega-mansions in the last 15 years and is a frequent subject of her tapestries. We apologize for our error but were pleased to learn more about the subject of Pamela's work.

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

*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

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Tapestry Topics

Guidelines for submitting articles to *Tapestry Topics*:

Deadlines ~

January 15, 2010: **Proportion** will be facilitated by Patricia Williams
(patwilli@gmail.com).

April 1, 2010: Taking a philosophical approach to **Tips & Tactics**.

July 15, 2010: **Teaching the next Generation** of tapestry artists and
professionals. *tentative*

October 1, 2010: **Exploring Color**. *tentative*

January 15, 2011: Weaving with **Handspun Yarns**. *tentative*

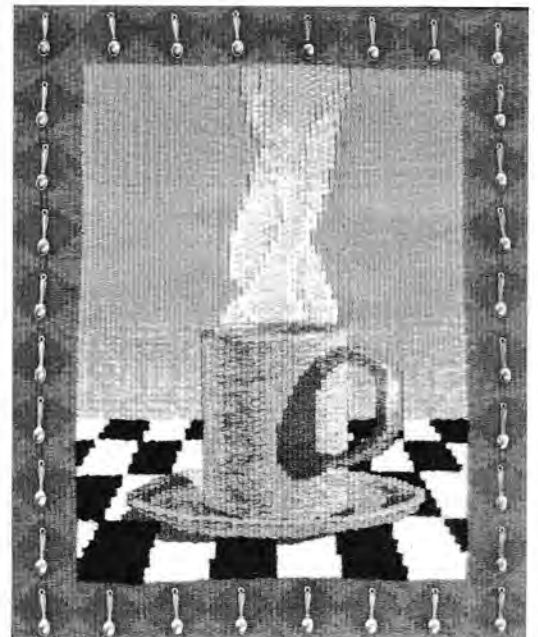
Send all items to: Juliet Barnes: ATA_julie@msn.com
2485 Heights Drive
Ferndale, WA 98248 Phone: 360-380-9203

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

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

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

Newsletter committee: Proofreader: Mary Colton, Layout: Elinor Steele,
Kudos: Merna Strauch, Distribution: Nancy Crampton, Online excerpts:
Lyn Hart, Web posting: Kathy Marcel & Christine Laffer



Ellen Ramsey, "Coffee Cup"

visit our website:
www.americantapestryalliance.org

Tapestry Enchantment

ATA's 2010 Educational Retreat

Notorious for beguiling artists of all mediums, the Land of Enchantment will captivate you as well when you join acclaimed tapestry artists Lynne Curran and James Koehler in Santa Fe for ATA's 2010 Education Retreat! Three days of tapestry weaving magic will unfold as you experiment with new tapestry techniques, delve into mesmerizing explorations of color, texture, and design, and conjure your creative muse. Energize your inspiration and stay enchanted with tapestry in these workshops for all skill levels!

The retreat will take place Monday, July 26 through Wednesday, July 28, 2010 at St. John's College in Santa Fe. Check in at St. John's begins late Sunday afternoon. Both private and shared rooms are available and include all meals.

Hand and Heart

Lynne Curran



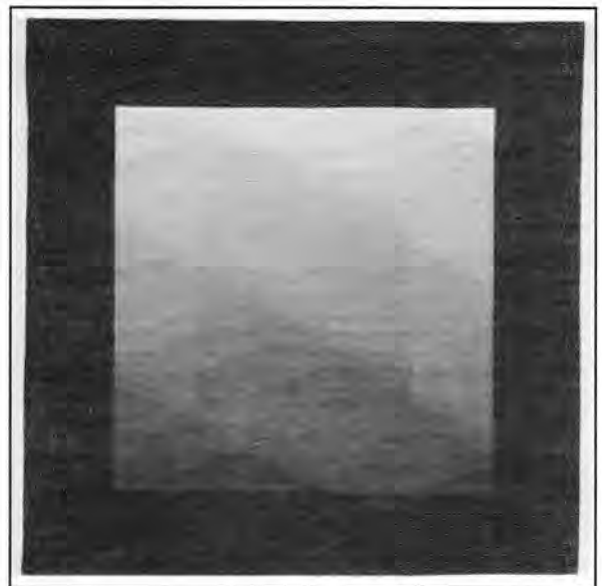
David. Lynne Curran

Tapestry is made by a combination of technique and beautiful materials. But before that, comes the pleasure of discovering the unique design hidden inside you. This comes when the Hand meets the Heart. During this workshop, participants will learn techniques for shape and line control, subtle colour changes, textural and three-dimensional effects and the eccentric weave used in Coptic weaving. Tips for avoiding or rescuing (!) classic mistakes will be shared. The projects will be framed within a discussion of appropriate design, presentation and original ideas. One on one critiques of existing work and tapestry designs will be offered to those interested.

Layers of Meaning

James Koehler

The strength of an image is a key component in the success of a tapestry. In this workshop we will explore design tools and tapestry techniques that will enhance the image by adding layers of meaning. These include the use of symbolism, form perception, and form generation, as well as the use of color, particularly the emotional and psychological effects of color. Tapestry techniques that allow the weaver/artist to layer component parts of the image and achieve interpenetration, overlap and transparency will be explored. Participants will develop cartoons on paper and weave samples on their portable looms.



Harmonic Oscillation XL, James Koehler

Lynne Curran was born in the north of England in 1954 and studied at Edinburgh College of Art. She was Artist in Residence for 'Northern Arts' and later in New Zealand and Canberra, courtesy of The British Council. Lynne has exhibited widely and her work is held in private collections, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, The Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield and Glasgow Museum of Modern Art. Recently Lynne set up studio in a medieval house in the mountains outside Florence. From here she runs summer courses and makes regular trips to Japan.

James Koehler is an internationally recognized tapestry artist, whose work can be found in museum, corporate and private collections, including the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. He began weaving in 1977 and has taught since the mid-1980s. James is influenced by the extraordinary landscape and unique cultures of New Mexico and by an aesthetic of simplicity, purity and portraying only what is essential. The source of his design inspiration is often found in meditation.

Registration

Enrollment is limited. Complete the registration form and mail, along with your payment, to Marcy Fraker, 476 County Road 334, Piedmont, AL 36272. Early bird registration must be received by April 15, 2010. Registration closes May 31, 2010. Retreat fees for non-ATA members include a one-year membership to ATA. Full refunds, less a \$50.00 administrative fee are granted until May 31, 2010. No refunds will be granted after that date. Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$25.00 fee. For extra copies of this form, visit www.americantapestryalliance.org Questions? Contact Marcy Fraker; magnolia.tapestry@gmail.com; 256.239.9890 (days), 256.927.7796 (evenings).

Registration Form

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

_____ Email: _____

*Teacher preference (number in order): _____ either instructor _____ Curran _____ Koehler

Roommate's name: _____

	Registration Fee	Su pm-Th am Room & board	Su pm – Wed am Room & board	Total
ATA member, Early Bird, single room	\$265.00	\$325.00	\$245.00	
ATA member, Early Bird, double room	\$265.00	\$285.00	\$215.00	
Non ATA member, Early Bird, single room	\$300.00	\$325.00	\$245.00	
Non ATA member, Early Bird, double room	\$300.00	\$285.00	\$215.00	
ATA member, late registration, single room	\$300.00	\$325.00	\$245.00	
ATA member, late registration, double room	\$300.00	\$285.00	\$215.00	
Non ATA member, late registration, single	\$335.00	\$325.00	\$245.00	
Non ATA member, late registration, double	\$335.00	\$285.00	\$215.00	

Payment: Check enclosed _____ Credit Card (MC or VISA) # _____

Expiration Date _____ Cardholder's Signature _____

*Teacher preferences will be assigned according to date of registration.