



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

## **... to establish a professional networking system**

**by Stanley Bulbach, Ph.D.**

An organization's Mission Statement is its guiding North Star. Its Mission Statement is also its binding commitment to its membership, to its field, to its community, to the public, and to the future. The Mission Statement of the American Tapestry Alliance is proudly posted on its publicly accessible website. It focuses on ATA's goals as a non-profit educational organization. These goals are extremely important for tapestry today:

- to promote an awareness of and appreciation for woven tapestries designed and woven by individual artists;
- to establish, perpetuate and recognize superior quality tapestries by artists world-wide;
- to coordinate exhibitions of tapestries to establish a professional networking system for tapestry designers and weavers throughout the world;
- to encourage use of tapestries by corporate, liturgical and private collectors and
- to educate the public about the history and techniques involved in tapestry making.

These are bold ambitions for our reserved community of tapestry makers. They call for our field's interaction with the larger world beyond the comfort zone of our traditionally smaller informal circles. They require our field to rethink its traditional paradigm that never encourages business, self-promotion, or challenging discourse.

That larger outside world is increasingly formidable. Most of us remember earlier times and the popular saying, "Build a better mouse-trap and the world will beat a path to your door." Well, our field builds better mousetraps. We have been aspiring to have the art world see our work, judge it appropriately, and include it. But since the early 1980s, the dominant market and cultural forces have been those of the new "Market Based Economy."

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## Upcoming Themes

### **Teachers & Lessons**

Deadline: January 15, 2012

Theme Editor: Micala Sidore, [micala@hawleystreet.com](mailto:micala@hawleystreet.com)

### **Surface**

Deadline: April 1, 2012

Theme Editor: Sharon Crary, [crarys@att.net](mailto:crarys@att.net)

### **Going International**

Deadline: July 15, 2012

### **Resources**

Deadline: October 1, 2012

*For more information about these themes, please see page 32.*

Would you like to be a Theme Editor for *Tapestry Topics*? Contact: [info@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:info@americantapestryalliance.org)

## Important Dates

**September 13 - October 30, 2011 Small Tapestry International 2: Passages;** Cultural Center at Glen Allen; Glen Allen, VA

**October 31, 2011 ATB9;** Entry postmark date.  
NOTE: THIS IS A CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS ATBs.

**December** Watch for registration forms for the 2012 ATA Member's Retreat

**January 15, 2012** Submissions due for the Spring Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Teaching & Learning*

**January 15, 2012 Pacific Portals:** Entry Form due

**March 15, 2012 Pacific Portals:** Tapestries due

**April 1, 2012** Submissions due for the Summer Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Surface*

**July 15, 2012** Submissions due for the Fall Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Going International*

**July 20, 2012** *Pacific Breezes*; Networking Evening; Convergence, Long Beach, CA

**July 21, 2012** *Pacific Forum*; 2012 Speakers Forum; Convergence, Long Beach, CA

**July 21-24, 2012** *Currents, Waves & Rising Tides*; 2012 Members Retreat; Orange, CA

**October 1, 2012** Submissions due for the Winter Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: *Resources*

## Co-Directors Letter, Fall 2011

The coming of Autumn seems to always summon a wave of ripeness and rebirth; children and grandchildren return to school, gardens yield the last of their precious bounty, and nature unabashedly revels in itself before the still of the first frost. With the many distractions of the summer behind us we return to comforting cool weather routines--different foods, repatriating with our old favorite sweaters, preparing the yard for winter, and reconnecting with the creative, picking up the thread of our work in tapestry.

The ATA volunteer team welcomes the fall after a very busy summer focused on retooling and rebuilding two major foundational pieces of our organizational infrastructure. This has taken form graphically in a new logo and "look" for all ATA promotional pieces, as well as a completely new, reconstructed, current and user friendly ATA website.

The new look, or rebrand, of our old logo was not an easy task. The ATA board spent months visually soul searching for an updated and current look for those three familiar and important letters: ATA. We chose this new visual direction, or identity, based on your feedback taken from last year's membership survey. You told us that ATA symbolized strength, tradition as well as innovation, and that it was a thread linking the membership to both the glorious days of tapestries past

as well as the uncharted and infinite possibilities of the future of our medium. As easy as all that is to say, when you condense it down, what do words like strength, tradition and innovation look like? Seattle graphic designer Heather DeLong assisted us in creating what we hope you find to be a powerful visual description of our organization, one that will assist us in moving solidly and professionally into the future.

The overwhelming but necessary task of the website reconstruction was made possible by your great generosity. This year's Valentines Day Appeal was a personal ask to the ATA membership to assist in covering the cost of rebuilding our systemically outdated website. You answered the call and gave and gave again, and a new web site was conceived and born under the sharp eye and constant attention of our web re-build team, ATA administrative assistant, Mary Lane, and volunteer board members Elaine Duncan and Diane Wolfe. Olympia based web designers, Say This, Say That, provided the skills and expertise necessary for this extensive, ambitious, and time consuming project. Let's all raise a glass in a celebratory toast heralding our new ATA website!

Since the arrival of the summer issue of Tapestry Topics in your email box, the American Tapestry Biennial 8 (ATB8) exhibition has ended, it's final venue being the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Ma. Small Tapestry International 2 (STI 2) went up and came down, meeting rave reviews at Weaving Southwest in Taos, NM, Handforth Gallery in Tacoma and The Cultural Center at Glen Allen, VA. Bravo to all who exhibited, and

especially to all our members who worked to make this exhibit happen. Our exhibits do not happen by elves or magic, but because members volunteer to lend a hand, doing some small or large part of the job. STI2 was admirably handled by Margo MacDonald, with a team to make it happen. Please consider helping next time we ask. Our exhibits won't happen without you.

It is now time to send your application to the ATB 9 exhibition. The postmark entry deadline is October 31st. Our juror is the esteemed Lee Talbot, Assistant Curator of Eastern Hemisphere Textile Collections at the Textile Museum, Washington, DC. We hope to open this exhibition at a venue in conjunction with Convergence 2012 in Long Beach, CA and then travel it to Washington DC, in conjunction with the 2012 Textile Society of America Conference, "Textiles & Politics," with our third stop and final venue being the legendary home of the Quilt National exhibitions, the Dairy Barn Arts Center in Athens, Ohio.

In closing, we have many thanks to extend. First, a warm thank you to long time NYC ATA member Stanley Bulbach for taking the reins as Theme Editor for this issue of Tapestry Topics dedicated to professional issues in our field. Secondly, to those of you who have stepped forward as new ATA volunteers, generously offering your time and skill sets to make this member driven organization thrive. And finally, to all of our membership who not only donate their services organizationally, but also so importantly, contribute from behind their looms, to further the discovery and woven voice of the whimsical, the amazing, the beautiful, the uncharted, and the technically profound in the field of tapestry. Weave on....

Happy Autumn from your Co-directors,

Mary Zicafoose, Co-Director of Resources

Michael Rohde, Co-Director of Membership



Glenn Adamson,  
photo credit: Sipke Visser

### **Many New Things to Read** by Glenn Adamson, Head of Graduate Studies, Research Department, V&A Museum

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in scholarly and critical discourse about craft. I have been lucky enough to be directly involved with much of this activity - notably through my work as a co-editor of the Journal of Modern Craft - but it's a very diverse range of activity, including anthropologists, historians of science and technology, art, and design. All of these disciplines have realized that skilled hands are central to their work and have begun to formulate new ways of approaching the subject. One odd result of this broad-minded turn in academia has been that the established studio disciplines (of which tapestry is one) may feel that less attention is being paid to them, rather than more. Craft historians of my generation, no matter what their disciplinary background, are as likely to be interested in machine tools or tourist goods as in traditional studio crafts. The good news is that there

are many, many new things to read in this subject area, lots of them quite good (first and foremost for those interested in fiber art, Elissa Auther's work; but I have also tried to pull together some of the best historic and recent writing in my anthology, the *Craft Reader*). Those interested in writing the theory, criticism and history of a particular discipline like tapestry therefore have a lot of models to follow, even if the field itself doesn't seem to be the center of the discussion as it was ca. 1970. So yes, vibrant exchange of ideas is - as always - very important. But don't forget to read what is happening first; there is no reason to reinvent the wheel, as happens all too often in discussions of craft.

## Commentary

by **Elissa Auther, Ph.D, Associate Professor of Contemporary Art, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs**  
**Co-Director, Feminism & Co.: Art, Sex, Politics, MCA Denver**

There are a number of issues that impact the visibility and legitimacy of fiber in the contemporary art world. Probably the most obvious is the historical bias against the medium of fiber—and craft generally—as of lesser value than practices and processes labeled “fine art.” Craft’s second-class status is a sore point for many in the fiber arts, and to acknowledge the stereotypes contributing to fiber’s subordination to art with a capital “A” is often experienced as distressing, demoralizing, and divisive. To me, this is a sign of a field that still harbors a sense of shame about its position within the aesthetic hierarchy. This is also evident in exhibitions and critical writing predicated on “proving” fiber’s fine art status. Such projects are reactions rooted in an internalized art world value system that dismisses fiber as irrelevant to contemporary art.



Elissa Auther, Ph.D

If I were to advise a younger artist entering the field, I would stress the importance of not only acknowledging stereotypes about fiber and craft—including, for instance, its associations to decoration, domesticity, femininity, or the quotidian—but also learning how to mobilize them. By mobilizing the myriad negative associations to fiber, I am suggesting a type of practice that reclaims them rather than runs away from these associations out of apprehension about their reception. For young, emerging artists working in fiber, many of whom are oriented toward the contemporary art world, this also means devising ways to contextualize these concerns, making them relevant to the debates and trends circulating in the larger art world.

For those who might be resistant to this approach to “owning” fiber or craft, or facing up to its second-class status as a strategy for advancement, think about your reaction in relation to the following questions: Are you interested in protecting your discipline or in advancing your practice? When do you find yourself assuming one position and not the other (and vice-versa) and how do they connect to the desire to hold on to something—history or tradition (a rear-guard position) or to investigate how one’s work holds up within a broader dialogue about art and visual culture (the avant-garde position)?

## Rachel Betts Wilmott, 2001 ATA International Student Award Recipient



Rachel Betts Wilmott, "Dancing Bears"

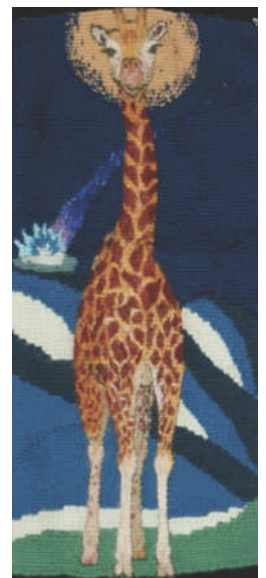
ATA is pleased to announce that Rachel Betts-Wilmott of Alberta, Canada, is the International Student Award recipient for 2011. Rachel had been a fan of tapestries well before she transferred to the Alberta College of Art + Design and took an introductory tapestry course with Jane Kidd. Since that time, she writes, "I have spent hundreds of hours at a loom, and countless more away from it working at integrating the several media in which I'm interested into a cohesive practice. Still dedicated to making beautiful things through process-based media, I am more interested in how an object evokes, and sometimes demands, an emotional response from the viewer. Combining printmaking, ceramics, fibre work and experiential installations has become the focus of my final year at ACAD, and will continue to be a large part of my practice."



Rachel Betts Wilmott.  
"Altar of the Long Necked Animals: Goose," 17" x 8"

From Rachel's artist statement: "Throughout my work in tapestry, as well as through print media, ceramics and through mixed media installations, I am interested in the role of the viewer. Interested in creating work that gradually makes the viewer more aware of viewing. Using the internet as a constant source of inspiration and source imagery, my work plays with what is cute, instant and ephemeral, and how it can unfold into a deeper, layered piece, while maintaining the subconscious recognition of that original nugget of humour.

In my tapestry work, I've started with a humorous idea – bears dancing, for instance, or a series of animals with long necks – and using the delicate but strong detail that tapestry allows, have developed pieces that engage the viewer through the minutiae, but then challenge them with the gaze of the subject. Through the act of looking, the viewer is redefining their own role within the piece."



Rachel Betts Wilmott  
"Altar of the Long Necked Animals: Giraffe," 17 x 8"

## . . . to establish a professional networking system

*Continued from page 1*

This modern marketplace of goods and ideas is based upon mass marketing, intense competition, branding, and the paramount priority of profitability over quality, design and functionality. But our field does not teach or encourage speaking out. In the ATA we even have to listen to yelling about calling members artists. Clearly our field is greatly disadvantaged in this new, more competitive world.

In today's marketplace of goods and ideas, whatever is not profitable is deemed not significant; and vice versa. Since fiber art and its community does not participate in the current marketplace in any way as dynamically as the communities working in ceramics, glass, metal, etc., fiber is the economic welfare case of the contemporary craft art field. The entire operational emphasis is dependent upon donations, contributions, and volunteerism. Thus fiber work is deemed by experts and validators to be less significant than other fields in the craft arts. And that becomes part of a vicious cycle: lack of market value, hence lack of significance, hence lack of market value, ad infinitum.

For example, the center of the U.S. art world is New York City and artists strive for coverage in its "newspaper of record," the *New York Times*. Except for rare exceptions, the *Times* only covers art sold in commercial art galleries or art being featured in museums charging admissions and buying advertising. What's recorded in the *New York Times* primarily reflects commercially promoted sales inventory and work selected by museums as most attractive for paying tourists. Hence another vicious cycle where lack of purported validation and lack of commercial interest are tightly linked.

Although a number of scholarly books have been published about the morphing of the museum world from education into the tourism, entertainment, and social network industries, this remains somewhat

unknown to most fiberists. Also few know that the art market here in New York City is one of our largest financial markets, even though it is totally unregulated, unaccountable, and extremely secretive. In the past year alone, two *Times* writers were so concerned about all this as to write in the *Times* itself that the newspaper's art coverage should be shifted from the Arts Section to the Business Section.

In the ATA Mission Statement, one goal has stood out as key to the achievement of all the others: "to coordinate exhibitions of tapestries to establish a professional networking system for tapestry designers and weavers throughout the world."

ATA works hard to produce exhibitions. But these exhibitions are not merely the social gatherings of hobbyists that most guild type exhibitions are. The Mission Statement has clearly described the ATA exhibitions as intended "to establish a professional networking system". It is extremely important to appreciate this qualification, because, among other things, if ATA members make appropriate use of it, this unique network can help resolve many of the problems and pitfalls that traditionally dog the field of contemporary tapestry.

Networks are of little help unless effective information is being communicated across them. So when "a professional networking system" is established by the ATA for its membership, what professional information is the membership communicating across it? What is the ATA leadership encouraging to be communicated? By definition this must include a dialogue regarding professional issues crucial to our field.

For example, let's start with the spectacular tapestry work that ATA members share on the ATA website, in the ATA Newsletter, and in ATA exhibitions.

Obviously, I am not alone in feeling that this body of tapestry work is awesome and constitutes a significant art movement in our own time.

But does anyone one outside the ATA feel that same way? Do professionals outside the ATA agree with us? Every tapestry maker I know claims to be interested in having an opportunity to sell their work if the price is right. So where do we talk about those issues among ourselves, with our audiences, and to our markets?

The ATA website is large and complex. But if members locate the Links page and then scroll way down, they will discover the short list of galleries that the ATA deems interested in tapestry work. That is a list of five galleries.

But there are dozens of art galleries and art experts in North America claiming to follow contemporary craft art including fiber. So what is the reason for the lack of art gallery interest listed on the ATA website? Is this due to ATA not looking? Or is this due to art galleries and experts creating a misleading public impression that they are interested in all areas of the craft arts, when in truth they don't want to get near fiber? Where do we discuss this glaring discrepancy in the broad light of day?

Consider SOFA, the commercial Sculpture Objects & Functional Art fair that has annual events all around the country. SOFA publicly claims that its vendors present the best available contemporary craft artwork to SOFA's public and market.

This past year at SOFA in New York City, of the approximately 50 vendors claiming to represent the best in contemporary craft art, only about seven of them acknowledge on their websites having anything to do with any kind of fiber work at all. A number of that minority have even documented elsewhere that they no longer look at fiber despite what they post on their websites. So where in ATA's professional network are members discussing the misleading image SOFA NYC shares with the public about our field?

Branding is one of the most powerful forces in promoting ideas and selling goods, something the ATA recognizes in its Annual Report 2009-2010: "Re-branding ATA. Re-branding involves examining the way we communicate our mission and goals."

Unfortunately, our field has been very broadly and strongly branded as merely a hobby. This branding as a hobby is not only imposed from without, but also from major forces within the fiber field itself.

Over the past third of a century our field of work has been shown and promoted to the public as significant and serious by *Fiberarts Magazine*. Then in 2004 *Fiberarts Magazine* was bought by Interweave Press. Decades ago Interweave Press had been one of the most important and supportive publishing houses in the contemporary fiber renaissance. But by 2004 Interweave Press had rebranded itself. It was no longer covering a wide spectrum of the fiber field's makers. Instead it focused on the value and profitability of its advertising to:

Women of the Boomer Generation -- a vast group are moving into the years of self-fulfillment with more disposable income than ever. These women are also part of the great craft revival of the 1960s and 1970s and are eager to reconnect to the craft. (Marilyn Murphy, president of Interweave Press, from the 2004 website of the "Spinning and Weaving Association", a marketing group of Interweave Press).

If the ATA can only identify and list five art galleries in the entirety of North America interested in tapestry, and if only 14% of SOFA New York vendors can find fiber art to feature and sell, then just how profitable a cash cow could fiber as a hobby be?

The answer is, profitable enough for Interweave Press to be bought for approximately \$10 Million according to *Folio* (June 6, 2005) by Aspire Media, a company formed to collect and invest in hobbyists publications. Aspire's board included investors from the Mequoda Group, LLC, Bristol, RI, Frontenac



Company, Chicago, IL and Catalyst Investors, NY, NY.

So our fiber media has had considerable outside encouragement to promote us publicly as primarily a hobby for retired Boomers with comfortable disposable incomes.

But by targeting the hobbyist market, Interweave discovered that “[H]owever, the support for Fiberarts has not been strong enough over the past several years to keep it in circulation.” And this past June Interweave terminated *Fiberarts Magazine*, our principal print advocate in the public arena. Keep in mind that over this same general time period, the Renaissance Tapestry Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City attracted twice as many visitors as their most optimistic projections, and the museum’s retrospective of Alexander McQueen’s fashion this year was extended twice and expected to become one of the museum’s 10 most popular exhibitions.

When our field is publicly branded in a way that devalues our work and even cuts off coverage of it altogether, where are we encouraged to discuss this effectively in the ATA’s professional networking system?

Our field is losing fiber publications, educational programs, prized suppliers and equipment makers, teaching and writing opportunities, students, marketing opportunities, etc. Most ATA members I know are keenly concerned about how they are viewed by the public and their potential market. ATA members are particularly concerned about scholarly and professional “validation”. But our field does not even enjoy the benefits of proper scholarly research or professional courtesy.

In the process of coordinating this theme, I reached out to colleagues teaching in college art departments for statements. Unfortunately only Prof. Elissa Auther and Dr. Glenn Adamson contributed to this project. Our college art departments don’t even have boilerplate text available addressing students’ needs

to participate in dialogue on professional issues affecting what they will be striving to do after graduation. One of the very important questions raised by Prof. Auther’s book *String Felt Thread* (reviewed in *Tapestry Topics*, Spring, 2011), is how the work of individual fiberists can ever be validated, if our field itself is not considered valid by art authorities including those in academia.

Can it be that the public image presented by Interweave Press is indeed correct, that we are primarily a field only for retired Boomer hobbyists with comfortable disposable incomes?

Two years ago, the ATA circulated a questionnaire among its membership. 25% of the membership responded! Statistically that is an unusually large response. So ATA members are unusually interested, active and concerned.

We learn that fewer than 7% of the respondents claimed to be hobbyists. Then how did ATA members identify themselves? Well, 11% of the respondents identified themselves as Professional Tapestry Artists.

Other respondents identified themselves as Artist, Scholar, and Educator. When those options are combined, it resulted in 30% of the identifications being related to professional interests of some kind. That is more than four times the number of hobbyist identifications.

Good scholarship and good research requires open challenging dialogue. Effective advocacy requires “speaking to” issues. Successful market development and marketing require dialogue about good planning. Almost everything important to the future of tapestry requires an enhanced dialogue and communication regarding professional issues.

This ATA Newsletter’s theme is about professional issues, a rare supportive constructive opportunity for tapestry makers to engage in dialogue about professional issues that bear greatly upon their ability to work, to exhibit, to teach and study, and to pass on our field to younger generations.

The ATA membership response here is small. Not all responses agree, but they are all ardent and raise points worthy of careful consideration. Should we be optimistic and consider this to be just a beginning? Or should we worry that our field has been conditioned over past decades to be quiet and to let others outside our field dictate its course and control its future?

What do you think? If you are member of the younger incoming generations, I would be particularly interested in hearing what you have to say about the relative absence of an engaging professional dialogue. Where is your voice? After all, this is the field we who are the older generations will be passing on to you.



Stanley Bulbach with "Times Square," a flying carpet

## Weaving for Profit and Pleasure

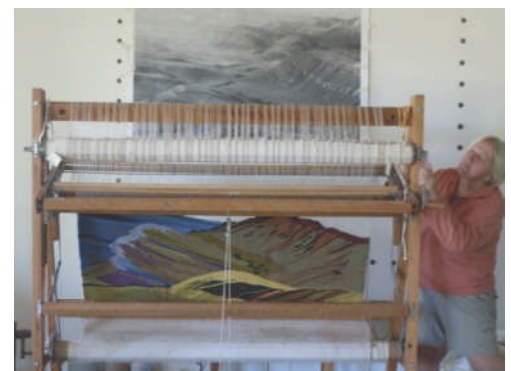
by Doris Florig

I weave all the time. I weave from the time I wake up in the morning till the time I go to bed. Financially, it doesn't make sense but I can't stop. For a while I was satisfied to think that at least I was making enough money to pay for the habit. But, now I feel a need to do more than just cover the cost of my materials, equipment and other weaving expenses. Now, I feel like I have to start putting a lot more time and thought into how to make this habit profitable.

I have had many one-person shows but I am at a point where I have no interest in putting the time and money into exhibiting and not realizing a profit. I just can't justify the time and expense to exhibit, when the sales from the show end up only covering my travel expense and shipping costs. So, now it is time to talk to other fiber artists in the same situation and see what we can learn from each other. After all, I can't quit weaving, so there has to be a solution.

I am asking anyone with similar concerns to email:

[2dmagic@gmail.com](mailto:2dmagic@gmail.com)



Doris Florig with "Red Canyon, Wind River"

## A question of validation...

by Rebecca Mezoff



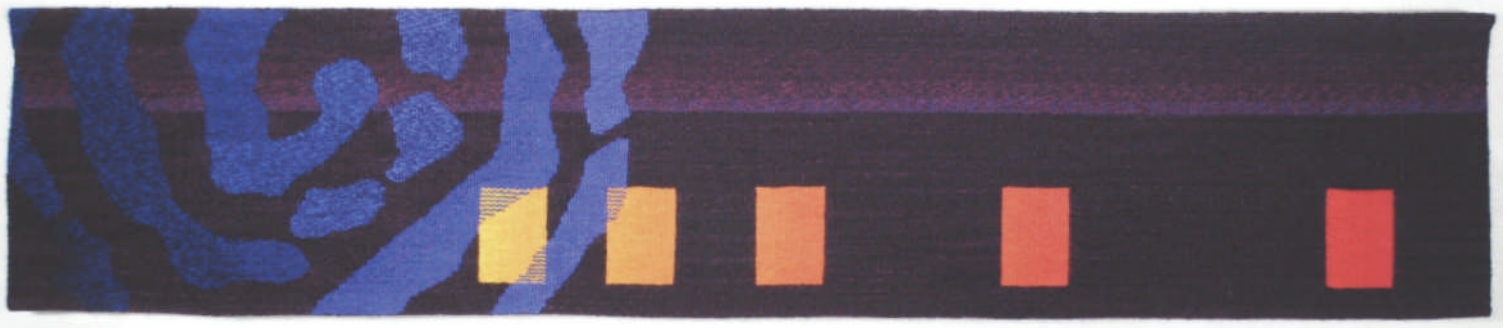
Rebecca Mezoff with "Emergence I"

What makes you an artist? Discussion of professionalism and what constitutes art vs. craft is something that I think is rare in the field of tapestry, and in some places is even discouraged. I believe this kind of dialogue is important among makers of tapestry if tapestry is going to be regarded as an art form in its own right. The field of art is a large monster that often feels intimidating to me and this leads me to questions of my own worth as an artist and musings about my own cobbled-together art education.

I am a tapestry artist who is attempting to make a significant portion of my income through art, but I am lacking a BFA, an MFA, or another pile of letters relating directly to making tapestry. When I went to college, I was interested in art, but the messages I received growing up and from the world in general were that art wasn't a stable or acceptable professional career choice, so something else would have to do. I could make art as a hobby. Years later and somewhat

disenchanted with the medical career I found myself in, I started weaving tapestry. I love it. I should do this. But I don't have an art degree. I have a masters degree in a medical profession (occupational therapy), which used to be craft-based, but now is solidly medical. In this country (USA) anyway, many of the messages we receive growing up indicate that to be a professional anything and to be "successful" you have to have a degree. So not having a BFA or an MFA psychologically hinders me at times when I am thinking about "being an artist". When I finish a new tapestry or sell a couple in the gallery, I don't feel that an art degree is needed. When I am in the midst of a dry spell and inspiration is far away, when I am working too much as an OT, and nothing is selling, then I question myself and look for validation... and inevitably start considering art school. Perhaps this is also a longing, as I am getting closer to the end of my 30s, for more knowledge and a new means of inspiration.

In order to practice as an occupational therapist I am required to have at least a masters degree, pass various national and state exams, complete large amounts of continuing education every year, and maintain several licenses. In order to call myself an artist, I only have to make art. Is this true? Certainly not everyone who has an MFA is really an artist. Maybe it really does come down to the "What is art?" question and a real inability to answer that in any concise way. Perhaps that is as it should be. Art is what it needs to be for each of us. Some of us are in the *"I just want to make pretty things"* camp and some of us are in the *"I want to change the world"* camp. Sometimes those two camps are one and the same—and is that the difference between craft and art?



Rebecca Mezoff, "Emergence III"

I believe that as tapestry artists there are intellectually significant questions that need to be asked and I don't see many people asking them. How can we start these dialogues? I think our need for validation is part of the human condition. In general we all need support and positive regard. However I do find that the issue of professionalism in regard to tapestry art specifically is something fiber artists don't talk about much. In the absence of these kinds of discussions, the need for validation is even stronger.



Rebecca Mezoff, "Emergence II"

In the end, validation has to come from inside myself. I hope that if in my work I search for what is essential and valuable for me, the work will reflect some inner truth, which will hold value. The act of making that thing that is valuable for me, I hope, is the only validation I really need. If this is not true first, then art school will not make any difference at all.



Rebecca Mezoff  
"Emergence IV"

## Defining technique, professionalism and the struggle for inclusion

by Maria Kovacs

The definition of professional is: conforming to technical or ethical standards of a profession. The definition of professionalism is: possessing aims or qualities that characterize a profession, following a profession for gain. The professional is always learning, applying skill to promote an idea, going beyond initial inspiration to add meaning, and/or for monetary gain. Briefly, this means *knowing how to weave* and *focusing on the why*, the meaning within the creation. In addition, professionalism means being inclusive in thought, if not in practice; going beyond the definition of tapestry as a technique into the realm of art by pursuing ATA's tag line "honoring tradition, inspiring innovation." Tapestry is a well-defined process and skill set, however, the general notion of tapestry may, and usually does, mean something else to others. This something else as it relates to the discussion in art is what needs to be included in a tapestry dialog to promote professionalism.

Art schools emphasize the *why do*, the purpose of the work. What are you making and why should the viewer care? The amateur/beginner learns the *how to*, the technical aspects and skills. The professional focuses on the *whys*, the meaning of the creative process. As Howard Risatti points out in [A Theory of Craft](#), Aristotle grouped knowledge into three categories:

- *Theoria* theory – technical knowledge
- *Praxis*/practical – how to knowledge that comes from doing
- *Poietikos*/making – producing, creating”  
(Risatti, 162)

Risatti offers a clear way to categorize our making and theorize that using all three practices of knowledge may equate to professionalism.

Aristotle's classical ideals remind us that the divisions of technical, practical knowledge, and creativity are the components that help define art making. Risatti goes on to say,

”linking together of mind and body, of *theoria* and *praxis* in the manipulation of the physical material of nature is a transformative process the essence of which is a creative, poetic act, one that lies at the heart of craftsmanship in its highest sense. It is a poetic act that entails creation of a human world directly out of the raw substance of nature itself. It enables transformation of our direct sensuous experience of nature into a world of culture.”  
(Risatti, 170)

As Risatti suggests, creativity, the joining of technical and practical knowledge makes the process of art making into art, or weaving technique into something more meaningful. The *why* of the making, creativity, is more important than the *how* or the technique used in the making of the artwork. Without going into aesthetics, what is the artist trying to convey to the viewer? Many tapestry weavers are artists. For example, James Kohler was a master weaver. He moved from weaver to professional using his knowledge and focus of classical proportion, Fibonacci sequence, of course color theory, and *praxis*, the *how to* knowledge. One can also admire Barbara Heller's technical ability, tapestry technique, but one is primarily drawn into the meaning behind the imagery in her work, particularly *The Cover-Up Series*. So the suggestion here is that the weaver goes beyond the technical definitions of tapestry to embrace a deeper meaning.

The higher goal of professionalism involves clearly defining the intent behind the work and imparting this meaning to the viewer. An artist's statement clarifies intentions and enriches the work for the viewer. However, the proliferation of blogs, tweets, and websites, while informative, can also overwhelm and perhaps detract from the work.

To clarify the distinction between skilled technique and art, Risatti suggests: “material is not the defining characteristic of craft or fine art...[it is] not the material out of which an object is made that determines whether or not it is craft or fine art, but how that material is used, to what purpose or end it is being configured.” (Risatti, 68)

Tapestry artists need to bounce ideas off one another – have a dialogue about where we envision tapestry in the art world. The focus on defining tapestry technique to preserve a tradition is laudable. Technique is vital in executing the work effectively, but the technique is not the primary focus – the work is. Sheila Hicks, a weaver and artist of many years disassociates herself from weaving, as do many art critics. Is that because fiber work is perceived as outdated by the art world and relegated to being crafty in the most pejorative sense? In a New York Times article “A Career Woven From Life” by Leslie Camhi, March 31, 2011, Hicks is quoted as saying,

” I showed something I had just made in Chile, out of linen, with clusters of long, free-hanging cords suspended from the ceiling,” Ms. Hicks recalled. “At the opening a television crew arrived, led by a certain Madame Cuttoli, a patron of tapestry and a fabulous character. She walked up to me and said in French, ‘Mademoiselle, I hear you are exhibiting a tapestry.’ I replied, ‘Yes, Madame, here it is.’ And she said, ‘I do not see a tapestry.’ ”

“It became a running joke,” Ms. Hicks added. “What is tapestry and what is not? And what should we squelch before it goes too far? I was moving around between different techniques — of stitching, wrapping, braiding, weaving, twining — exploring all these different thread languages. And tapestry was one of them, but traditionally the prestigious one. So my work was equated with a kind of graffiti.” “For some,” Ms. Hicks continued, “I was persona non grata, and for others I was the heroic pirate. But the architects were coming. I was getting the work.” ([Sheila-Hicks](#) for an example of Ms. Hick’s work.) Embracing other work, even though it is not tapestry, is part and parcel of the artistic dialog. The

technique is important, however it is the meaning and the dialog in the work that attracts and engages the viewer. When so defined, is *artist/craftsperson* professional showing professionalism?

A willingness to discuss other fiber artists in our dialog as artists who use tapestry is important to our professionalism. The fact that the Peter Collingwood’s are rug weavers who sometimes utilize a “tapestry technique” but often do not are still worthy of discussion. As is Helena Hernmarck who uses a free rosepath technique to create her tapestries. (Just recently, ATA included Hernmarck on their kudos webpage, congratulations to ATA.) A discussion of computer-generated textiles is certainly worthy of dialog, most especially the artist Lia Cook who uses jacquard technology in her “tapestries”. Do tapestry artists use aspects of jacquard in their work? Susan Iverson does in “Sorting Chaos” and Wlodzimierz Cygan employs added warp threads. (<http://2.bp.blogspot.com> for an example of Mr. Cygan’s work, and [susaniversonart.com/jacquard.html](http://susaniversonart.com/jacquard.html) for an example of Ms. Iverson’s work) The technical distinctions that we make are not important outside our field. For example, the June 2011 *Art News* Critic’s Pick is Jakkai Siributr. “Jakkai Siributr is known as a fiber artist because he weaves and embroiders his satirical allegories into large tapestries.” Siributr’s work is not actually tapestry, but that distinction is not important. I rejoice that the contemporary art world features his work prominently, opening doors for us all.

We all have much to learn by accepting and supporting broader definitions of art. ATA’s and Gloria F. Ross Center for Tapestry Studies definition of tapestry is familiar and quite similar. However, the GFR Center’s “what is tapestry explanation” is perhaps more reflective of what the rest of the world thinks: “Tapestry is a great mural art. We look back to its high point in the Middle Ages and marvel at the power of those great suites. But why is this? Great tapestries tell stories. They record the past and project the future.” Sue Walker, “Threads of Life,” 2001 **“Today, tapestry remains a rich art form, with varied imagery, textures, and shapes.**

**Contemporary designs range from bold abstraction to convincing realism** (my emphasis). ([http://tapestrycenter.org/?page\\_id=23](http://tapestrycenter.org/?page_id=23)) While preserving the tradition of a skill/profession is exemplarily, tapestry artists must also be realistic and consider what most of the world thinks tapestry includes and have an open dialog about an inclusive observation of tapestry within not only the fiber world but also the art world.

Professionalism might involve upholding a traditional view of tapestry and using it as a means to portray a concept to the viewer – any artist’s goal. With this in mind, using the definition to limit or exclude work that in the view of traditionalists strays from the

cause should be taken into consideration. Can we preserve and embrace contemporary goals? Should we be more accepting of other work delighting in the fact that fiber artwork is being accepted into the mainstream art world? What about tapestry weavers who combine tapestry with other work to create new forms? Additionally, the demise of *FiberArts* magazine deserves mention. While it is regrettable that we no longer have a magazine to champion tapestry, this may be the proverbial “kick in the pants” needed to promote writing about tapestry in art publications and thereby increase our medium’s acceptance. Does professionalism mean fostering discussion of our art form with more inclusive definitions?

## Focus: Louise Halsey

by Linda Rees

Louise Halsey, whose boldly colorful and active images of houses have been featured in ATA’s online Artist Pages, also creates dolls that have dynamic patterned clothing and shaped tapestry faces. The tapestry medium seems like an incongruous choice for making small garments since tapestry is less flexible than many other types of weaving, but her results are effective. “Celosia,” is an example that was exhibited in the *Figuratively Fiber* exhibit at the Textile Center in Minneapolis, MN, (and in the Spring 2011 *Tapestry Topics* Kudos). The scale of the patterns and the balance of color work well.

Louise's husband collaborated with her on one of the dolls, “Rosa,” making a cast bronze structure to simulate the wrapped reed bodies of the original Peruvian examples. The metal wrapping is attractive, the hands are expressive and the color and bulk of the form works well. Dolls like “Rosa” and “Celosia” are relatively large, approximately 25" tall. The garments and faces are woven on a 4-harness Cranbrook floor loom. The two sides of the dress are woven as separate flat panels. The sleeves are also woven as flat pieces and later folded. The warp ends are sewn into the weaving so the cloth appears to have clean selvages on all 4 sides.

It seemed worth seeking out Halsey’s reasons for this challenging application of tapestry. Louise states: “I prefer to use a tapestry weave, because strong, clear color is so important to me. I like a weft-faced surface where I can see the relationships between one color and the next. The intersection of warp and weft in other kinds of weaving often frustrated my sense of color. I also like simple geometric designs. . . [It is] the work that allows me to create a narrative in a way other types of weaving do not. My weaving is as much a meditation as it is an expressive outlet.”



Louise Halsey  
“Rosa”



Louise Halsey  
"El Doble"

Halsey's first doll was designed as a self-portrait for her final project in a class Glen Kaufman taught on the Textiles of Pre-Colombian Peru at the University of Georgia. Louise describes her initial response to weaving: "I felt as if I had done this before in another time. My identity seemed to be that of an indigenous pre-Colombian weaver. I also responded to learning that in these cultures weaving was the second most time consuming activity after food gathering and preparation. I tried to imagine what being so integral to the life of one's culture might be like."

While the Peruvians wove a lot of tapestry, their dolls often had other types of weaving for the clothes. Most of the preserved items the ancient Peruvians made were for burial. Dolls were often part of a scene depicting daily life and life passages, such as childbirth. Louise liked the idea of capturing daily events but she wanted her creations to be seen during her lifetime. She concludes: "I know these ancient cultures had slaves, beheaded people, did human sacrifice, etc, etc. Nevertheless their weavings speak to me of a wisdom, level of care and the spiritual life visible in their textiles. I

love their use of color, odd creatures and respect the amazing craft that was creative, inventive and diverse in terms of techniques."

I am glad to have pursued learning a bit more about an artist who adapts the strengths of an ancient tradition for quite contemporary items such as the architectural wall hangings and the dimensional figures that have a personal identity. It is interesting to discover tapestry artists whose aesthetic ties are essentially based in the western hemisphere. Louise is one.



Louise Halsey  
"El Sonoliento"



Louise Halsey  
"El Viejo"



## Online Forums & Educational Articles

by **Becky Stevens**

This issue's theme of professionalism made me think about how the textile field has changed over the many years I have been involved. The innovative artists who began using fiber not only as their medium but their message over forty years ago are now being celebrated with retrospective exhibitions of their ground breaking explorations. Academia moved the study of textiles from home economic departments to art departments. Fiber as a means of personal expression was embraced by male as well as female artists, and also became part of the feminist dialogue addressing gender bias in relation to non craft objects created from materials associated with women's traditional domestic arts.

The new generation of textile artists has their own set of values, unencumbered by our generation's battle for position in the art world. They see tapestry in the galleries; they make tapestries. Their friends will become curators, gallery directors and critical writers. They will secure their own place in the art world. Encouraging the next generation to forge their own path, is an important role for the American Tapestry Alliance.

With fewer academic institutions offering tapestry

instruction now than in years past and the demise of one of the popular fiber publications, *FiberArts*, it is even more important for organizations like ATA to provide information and forums for discussion. As chair of the Education Committee I would like to remind members of two of ATA's resources that are committed to this end: Online Forums and Online Educational Articles.

Linda Rees, former editor of *Tapestry Topics* is the new chair of the Online Forums. Online Forums allow ATA members to participate in discussions on focused topics. Contact Linda: [lerees@comcast.net](mailto:lerees@comcast.net)  
Lyn Hart, a committed ATA volunteer, is the new chair of Educational Articles. Contact Lyn if you would like to write an educational article for the website, or if you have a suggestion for a topic you would like to see addressed. Contact Lyn: [desertsonghart@msn.com](mailto:desertsonghart@msn.com)

Students and hobbyists, as well as masters, can add to a dialog that questions and informs us of issues impacting our practice in the textile/tapestry field. Please use ATA's educational tools to promote investigation and discussion of issues in the field of tapestry.

### Princeton Weavers Guild Donation

This spring ATA received a generous donation from the Princeton Weavers Guild. After years of serving weavers in the Princeton, New Jersey area, the guild has disbanded. The guild chose a number of recipients for their remaining funds, and ATA is honored to be included in that group.

The donation will be used to help fund the catalog for ATB 9. ATA's catalogs create a permanent record of the vibrant and diverse medium of contemporary tapestry. As part of ATA's effort to promote an awareness of, and appreciation for, contemporary tapestry, our exhibition catalogs are donated to libraries, art schools, curators, scholars, and collectors. On behalf of the entire ATA membership, the Board of Directors would like to extend many thanks to the Princeton Weavers Guild for their support of contemporary tapestry.

## Exhibition Review: *Oregon Weavers – The Tradition Continues*

by Linda Rees

*Oregon Weavers – The Tradition Continues* was exhibited at the Corvallis Art Center in June, 2011. It featured four Oregon artists who are also active weaving instructors: Rosalie Neilson, Dee Ford Potter, Shelley Socolofsky and Kathe Todd-Hooker. The artist/instructors' work was accompanied by several examples of their students' work. The show was curated by Pat Spark, who taught fiber arts at Oregon State University in Corvallis for 16 years before co-founding Fine Fiber Press and Studio with Todd-Hooker.

Two of the instructors, Socolofsky and Neilson, teach at the Oregon College of Art and Craft and they included work of students who were enrolled in OCAC's art degree programs. Potter has had extensive experience teaching in the high schools and through independent workshops. Todd-Hooker is predominantly a workshop or seminar instructor. Artist statements and other materials related to the intent of the show were displayed in notebooks in the gallery. The consistently high quality of the work presented and the thoughtful hanging of the show unified the exhibit and made it exciting to view. It was gratifying to see the steady flow of small groups of people coming through the Corvallis Art Center gallery on both occasions I visited the exhibit.



Gallery view of *Oregon Weavers – The Tradition Continues*  
Corvallis Art Center



Lois Hartwig, "Ancient Agave"

I will not linger on the stunningly beautiful rep weave examples created by Neilson and her students or the delicate huck weave items of Potter's students, but rather focus on the tapestries. Shelley Socolofsky exhibited "Incantations" (see TT fall 2006) and "Fantana Morgana" (TT winter 2008). The majority of her students' pieces were in fiber techniques other than tapestry. Two that stand out are "Squares Inside of Squares," a wee little plain weave square mounted on papyrus and "Wall #4 Pink", a large translucent fabric woven with Japanese linen paper thread, pine paper thread and silk. Soft peach and pink floated in subtly variegated wave patterns.



Shelley Quinner, "Cat Mesa"

Four students of Kathe Todd-Hooker exhibited in the show. Peter Rocci has spent an extended time weaving in Kathe's studio. His tapestry in the show, "An Offering to the Way" was also part of ATA's *Connections: Small Tapestry International 1* exhibit. The subject matter chosen by the three other students reflects the landscape of their home territory, the Southwest. Lois Hartwig's "Ancient Agave," presents a single plant set in sand against a muted blue sky. The far-reaching blades of the century plant, a quintessential Arizona cactus, create a convincing sense of depth. Shelley Quinner's "Cat Mesa" is a dynamic little tapestry with abstracted chevron patterns bordering the central view expanding towards the mesa. While her edges reveal the classic dilemma facing a tapestry weaver who moves from many yarn changes to weaving across the entire width of the fabric, her design sense makes up for the slight draw-in. Both Shelley and Lois prospered from a workshop with Todd-Hooker in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2010.

Lyn Hart attended Kathe's workshop at the 2009 Intermountain Weavers Conference in Durango, Colorado. In "Canyon Night," she renders backlit trees exquisitely well, but Lyn was disappointed with how the sky turned out. She decided to take Kathe's color workshop to learn more about color blending. Lyn's next tapestry, "Saguaro," was woven while she participated in an extended study program with Sylvia Heyden. Obviously she got what she needed from the color workshop because one could not ask for better control of color than Lyn displays

in "Saguaro." A photo does not capture the realistic perception of depth between the cactus' ribs. The work of all of these relatively new weavers shows that even a brief amount of instruction, acquired at just the right time, is profitable and leads to exciting work.

While I am very familiar with Kathe Todd-Hooker's work, I had not seen such a large collection displayed together since her exhibit in Denver during 2004 *Convergence*. This show includes 6 landscapes that are approximately 6" x 10" in a horizontal orientation and combine a relatively dark blue foreground with a colorful evening or morning sky. The artist refers to these as color studies. My favorite was "Variation on a Theme: Asa's Rocks." It has a more elaborate foreground than is



Lyn Hart, "Saguaro"

typical for this series and a convincing sense of depth from the large bolder-scattered water in the foreground to the sunset and dark layer of clouds further back. Another appealing piece, one of two vertically oriented color studies, “Dog Lolo Pass”, captures mountain peaks glowing under a bright yellow sun.

A wall perpendicular to the color studies displays 12 tapestries in Todd-Hooker’s more well known style that typically includes a convoluted rose or peony, background writing fragments and many intricate symbols, especially puzzle pieces. The decision to stagger the group of varying sizes and proportions was an effective presentation. I stood at mid-range, at a distance of about 15’ to see the work as a collection. In general I was less drawn to the four or five pieces that had dominating red flowers.



Kathe Todd-Hooker, “So Puzzled”

Studying each individual work in this series reveals Kathe’s exceptional virtuosity in rendering realistic detail. As I moved back and forth along the wall I became aware of layers, like the visual sensation created by continual announcements and posters tacked to public spaces. I was fascinated by a sense of irony; in this compilation of things so carefully depicted, so much is concealed, or withheld. In contrast, a few pieces had a more open feel, with fewer elements combined into one composition. I wondered if they were new work or interspersed in the timeline.

My first impression of “So Puzzled” was that it looks more like it is about puzzles than most of her weavings incorporating puzzle pieces. Outlines separate the relatively solid background from the erratically shaped fragments of images or letters that suggest jigsaw pieces. What I thought at first glance was an intensely red abstract flower was actually a tropical bird that had perhaps been let out of a cage to land on the viewer. I enjoyed scrutinizing details in this more accessible format, especially the gesturing stick figures that seemed to portray the title.

“Too Little Too Late” is a visually cohesive image. The puzzle lines and the sharply fluctuating sine waves create a vertically linear aspect. The jagged red sine wave peaks seem to be trying to eradicate a few of Kathe’s signature symbols. The prominence of the acid green biohazard symbols and the orange cast to the reds create a fresh shift in palette when viewing the entire group.

“Again Between” reflects aspects of the color study series. Coral and salmon colored streaks against a backdrop of a variegated blue sky flow out of the landscape’s horizon. Three rich red flowers float forward accompanied by feathers. But the element that captures my heart is the layer of black shapes, or blank areas waiting to be filled in, that appear to be dancing figures. They exist visually between the backdrop and the flowers. The animation and intensity of the shapes is increased by the color effects. It is a very successful blend of multiple elements.

## A Special Thanks to an ATA Angel: Tommye Scanlin

by Mary Zicafoose and Michael F. Rohde

As most of our members know, ATA runs on the goodwill of its members. Some members donate their time to: serve on committees; arrange the many aspects of our exhibitions; and help with educational activities such as our workshops and Helping Hands mentorships. Other members donate financial resources to support ATA's programming. As with any non-profit, we cannot run on dues alone. We depend on additional support from membership upgrades and our annual fundraising appeal that we launch on Valentine's Day.

This year we dedicated the Valentine's Day Appeal to upgrading our website. The website has grown over the years; and while it looks great on the surface, it has been in need of a major redo. Christine Laffer has done a heroic job for many years serving as our volunteer webmistress, and we have much for which to thank her (Yay, Christine!). Our new website will be easier to maintain, update, and navigate. This will also allow Christine a chance to retire. The new software will allow a team to manage the website.

This year we set a higher Annual Appeal goal. ATA members came out in record force and contributed generously – several donated more than once. Although we raised a significant amount, in the final days we resigned ourselves to falling a little short of our goal.

Then, a miracle happened. An angel appeared: Tommye McClure Scanlin.

Tommye has been a loyal, hard working, and dedicated supporter of ATA for years, in addition to being an excellent tapestry weaver and teacher. She asked the Board if we would consider a challenge grant. She promised to donate an additional \$500 of her own money, *if* that amount would be matched by other members in the last few days of the appeal.

Many of you stepped forward in response to Tommye's very, very generous challenge, and we reached our goal. This would never have happened without the foresight of her gift to ATA. Thank you, Tommye from all of us! We will think of you every time we surf the new website.



An Angel! Tommye McClure Scanlin at her loom

## To Apply or Not to Apply

by Pamela J Davis



Pamela J Davis, "A Passage Back Through London"

Several years ago I decided to do what others suggested: "...get serious about my art..." I wrote a grant. In my prior life (before I became an artist) I was asked to write grants. Perhaps what my instructors said about writing arts grant was true: 1) it is an opportunity to think about one's artistic focus; 2) the experience of writing about creativity and establishing measurable outcomes hones focus; 3) the chance to get objective feedback from more experienced artists provides growth.

I became obsessed, which is my typical way of approaching a new challenge. I attended every training meeting I could find from the granter. I searched the Internet. I read books. I talked to various people. I determined my goals, created an outline, got feedback, and made sure that the first sentence in the first paragraph clearly stated why my art needed this grant. I wrote and rewrote and rewrote. The moment of going public with my thoughts arrived. I mailed my grant.

Then the waiting process began. I checked the mail everyday with a mantra in my head. "What these particular judges decide about my art isn't indicative of my value as a human being. The outcome isn't important. It is the process of writing a grant that is valuable." The other voice in my head said "*YOU FOOL!* Who do you think you are by suggesting that you should get money from the state to support your art? You aren't a starving artist and haven't struggled as a starving artist since birth." Perhaps I should call and claim I won the lottery. I could tell them that my life has completely changed and please throw away my grant application.

Making it even more stressful was that the review process was open to the public because this grant's funding was from the Minnesota State Arts Board in St. Paul. The objective voice in my head said, "What a tremendous opportunity to sit through the review process." The grant submission review is a two-day process. Even though my grant wouldn't be reviewed until the second day, I was certain the experience would be more valuable if I sat through the review of all the grants no matter how many days it took.

Waking at 3:00 a.m. for the 9:00 a.m. scheduled review; I decided I would take a bus into St. Paul to show solidarity with the public transportation system, given that I was asking for money from the state. Smugly and honorably I joined the fraternity of mass transportation. I waited for the bus for an hour. I had apparently read the bus schedule wrong. I arrived at the Minnesota State Arts Board office 90 minutes early.

Eventually the Arts Board offices opened. I noticed a sign-in book outside the review room doorway. Interesting? If I signed in will the panelists see my name and think I am overly anxious and desperate, since my grant probably wouldn't be reviewed until the next day? Was this a bad thing? Would they think I signed purposefully so they could see my

name to show I am interested? I finally scribbled my name not committing to either suggestion. Trying to be invisible...or not...I crawled to the back of the room into the section reserved for applicants.

In the back of courtroom, in the spectator section reserved for the applicants, were copies of all the grant applicants. The artists who had submitted grants could follow along with the proceedings. *Oh dear!* I had to go to the bathroom. I drank way too much coffee since I woke at 3:00 a.m. Will it look like I am trying to draw attention to myself by standing, hoping they will notice, look up my name from the guest registry and be impressed that I am hanging around all day? Or will I draw attention to myself, get my name looked up in the registry, and the panel will think I am purposefully drawing attention to myself and they'll think poorly of me?

On the second day, exhausted after sitting through 33 grant reviews the day before, my name was announced for review. The lights went off. Appearing on three massive screens in the front of the room were slides of my tapestries. My heart stopped. Time stopped. The universe stopped spinning. I couldn't breath. How could I possibly have imagined I had the right to submit a grant? Heeellppppp!

The lights went back on. The nine panelists were instructed to discuss the application and the artist's work to see if they met the grant's stated criteria. Basically, the review panel evaluated the quality of the art and if the applicant had clearly stated how he/she met the criteria of the grant. Since this grant was for visual artists, the panel members had varied art backgrounds. I heard a voice from one of the panelists. She was a fiber artist. She was overwhelmed with the slides, the quality, color, and designs in the tapestries! The next panelist stated, "This is one of those **WOW** moments! The work is unbelievable!" The panel approved my grant. "Next grant," stated the programmer from the Minnesota State Arts Board. The review process continued.

My hands were clenched around the chair seat. My jaws were locked shut. I panicked. Air, I needed air. As soon as the lights went off for the next review, I flew out the door. I floated down the elevator shaft. I make a dash for the car. My sweaty palms desperately fumbled for the phone in my bag. I kept pushing all the wrong buttons on the phone. Finally, my husband answered. I was literally screaming into the phone. Once he determined I wasn't dying, he shared my excitement. I called my two closest girlfriends and sounded like I had downed four espressos along with eating 10 chocolate covered coffee beans. For the next two weeks I called or wrote every family member (even my distant cousin I haven't seen in 15 years, who reminded me I had called her last week). And yes, she was still happy for me, yet worried that I hadn't slept for two weeks.

For some months, I applauded the review process, the value of writing objectively about one's art, and the opportunity to actually sit through a review process. Two years passed, and normalcy had returned to my life. I decided it was time to write another grant for the visual arts to the same arts board.

I parked my car in the parking lot of the Minnesota State Arts Board Office 15 minutes before review time. My name was called for review. The lights went off. My slides were projected on three large screens. The lights went back on. The panelists were asked to share their thoughts. The first panelist spoke explaining she was a fiber artist. "Obviously the quality is good, but the designs don't appeal to me." Another panelist reinforced the dismal review claiming that "the colors don't work." Another panelist said, "This is one of those examples when a traditional craft is ruined in the contemporary designs." "Next grant," stated the programmer from the Minnesota State Arts Board to continue the review process.

My hands were clenched around the chair seat. My jaws were locked shut. Air, I needed air. Humiliated I crawled out from the back of the room, ran to my

car, and cried myself dry. Three months later...I awoke one morning with a strange sense of freedom; a freedom of expression awakened by a new insight into the art world. The value of my work was not dependent upon the opinion of others. Whether my work was traditional or not; whether it was contemporary or not; whether it was craft or art; nobody knew the answers. It simply didn't make any difference. My art will be whatever it is. Tapestry weaving found me; I didn't find tapestry weaving. I am compelled to weave in whatever method I desire. How can anyone else possibly judge the uniqueness within each artist?

The awarding of grants, the messy process of establishing criteria toward which to evaluate the grants, and the impossible task of determining the quality of one's creative process is neither valuable nor valueless. It is what it is. And in Minnesota, we have an unbelievable opportunity to share tax money dedicated by our state constitution for the arts. We are the only state in the country that has dedicated money by the state constitution.

The process isn't pretty. I have learned, several years later, and several grant applications later, to do the best I can within the time I allocate and to keep my expectations in check. As one who believes in the value of art, I have the responsibility to support the art programs we have in Minnesota. Who knows, maybe I will be awarded a grant again one day. The most important part is not which artists get funded nor that the process is flawed. The significance of the process is that our need as artists is defined by how many of us apply.

A couple of weeks ago I had the fortunate opportunity to give back to the Minnesota State Arts Board when I was asked to join a panel to review applications for the Folk and Traditional Arts FY2011 Grant Program. The amount of time and money that Minnesota contributes to the arts is remarkable. It still isn't enough compared to the need, yet we are making progress. The process is messy, yet we can support the arts by throwing caution to the wind and apply for art grants, exhibitions, mentoring or residency programs. Just do it.

## Currents, Waves and Rising Tides

### Study With The Masters

Whether your ideas come with the force of crashing waves or percolate in an undercurrent of gentle motion, discover the expertise that Master Weavers **Archie Brennan** and **Jean Pierre Larochette** will impart during ATA's 2012 Member's Retreat. A confluence of ideas and inspiration will offer participants a rare opportunity to learn from and interact with each of these esteemed instructors. Don't miss this opportunity to gather with old friends, meet new friends, and immerse yourself in an ocean of tapestry, creativity and fun.

ATA's Educational Retreat will be held July 21<sup>st</sup> – July 24<sup>th</sup>, following HGA's Convergence 2012 in Long Beach, CA. The retreat will start Saturday evening at Chapman University with full room and board options. Registration forms will be available online in December 2011 at: [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org).

For information, contact Becky Stevens: [stevensreb@gmail.com](mailto:stevensreb@gmail.com)



## Pacific Portals

by Nicki Bair

I always look forward to Convergence, because it gives our Seaside Tapestry Group an opportunity to work on a group project for ATA's unjuried small format tapestry exhibit. Our group has participated in four of the past exhibits. Back in March of this year, three of us in our group, Merna Strauch, Karen Leckart and I volunteered to chair the upcoming exhibit as a way to say thanks to ATA for sponsoring this unique show. We have always found it to be a fun way to energize and challenge our members to take their tapestry techniques to new levels.



Nicki Bair, "Bridge in the Rain #3"  
from *Enchanted Pathways* 2010, Santa Fe

Our committee has found a wonderful venue for the 9<sup>th</sup> biennial unjuried small tapestry exhibit. It will be hung in the Long Beach Public Library, Main Branch, from July 7 - August 30, 2012. We are excited about this venue since it is within close walking distance of the Convention Center where Convergence 2012 will be held. It will also afford the general public a wonderful opportunity to view and learn about small format tapestry.

We titled the exhibit *Pacific Portals* in reference to Long Beach's seaport, which is one of the busiest ports on the Pacific Rim. We hope *Pacific Portals* will stimulate the imagination and creativity of tapestry artists, both experienced and new, to create a small format tapestry (no bigger than 10 by 10 inches) for inclusion in the exhibit. As usual, we will accept both individual and group entries. Entry forms and fees are due January 15, 2012 with tapestries sent to us by March 15<sup>th</sup>. Your

entry fee includes a copy of the full color catalog and return shipping. The prospectus with complete details is at: [www.americantapestryalliance.org](http://www.americantapestryalliance.org).

Karen, Merna and I look forward to photographing your tapestry for the catalog, hanging your piece at the Long Beach Library and seeing you there. If you have any questions, contact us at [mstrauch23@gmail.com](mailto:mstrauch23@gmail.com).

*Pacific Portals* - be inspired!



Karen Leckart, "California Inclined"  
from *Woven Gems* 2008 Tampa



Merna Strauch "California Dreaming"

## Call for Entries *Pacific Portals*

### Call for Entries

***Pacific Portals*** is open to all artists working with hand woven tapestry. Tapestry is defined as hand woven, weft-faced fabric with discontinuous wefts. The size of the tapestry may not exceed 10" x 10" x 1" deep (25cm x 25cm x 2.5cm). **Artists may submit only one piece.** Group challenges and mentoring projects are encouraged. **Work must be original, executed by the entrant, of recent completion and not shown in a prior ATA show.** *Pacific Portals* will hang at Long Beach Public Library, Main Library, during July of 2012. Your tapestry must be available for the duration of the exhibit. The entry form is due January 15, 2012. The tapestry is due March 15, 2012.

### Conditions

#### Shipping

Each artist (or group) is responsible for the cost of shipping and insurance to the exhibition committee. Return shipping & insurance is covered in the entry fee. Padded envelopes are acceptable for single tapestries. Group Challenge members may ship their tapestries in one strong reusable container.

#### Liability

This show is often hung in non-traditional gallery spaces, such as building lobbies. Because of this, insurance during the run of the show cannot be guaranteed. ATA will do everything in its power to insure the safety of your tapestry. All tapestries will be secured to display boards with wires to prevent theft. However, liability insurance during the show is the responsibility of the artist.

#### Presentation of the Work

All tapestries must be ready to install with hanging devices as described on page 3. Works not conforming to the definition of tapestry, or not prepared for hanging as described, will be returned to the artist. The entry fee will be retained.

#### Publicity

Submission of artwork constitutes permission for ATA to reproduce images of the submitted tapestries for publicity and promotional purposes including the internet.

### Catalog

ATA will produce a catalog for the show and every participant will receive a copy. Tapestries will be photographed upon arrival and those photos will be used for the catalog. Catalogs will be sent to the participants when the tapestries are returned at the end of the show.

### Questions?

Contact Merna Strauch: [mstrauch23@gmail.com](mailto:mstrauch23@gmail.com); 310.454.8322

### Conditions

### Catalog

## Entry Form (please print clearly)

Entrant

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (country code, area code, number) \_\_\_\_\_

Entry

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions (h x w x d in inches) \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance Value \_\_\_\_\_

Materials \_\_\_\_\_

This tapestry is part of the Group Challenge entitled: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Fees

**Entry Fees** \$40.00 (US Dollars) The entry fee includes a catalog and the cost of return shipping, handling & insurance. **Payment by PayPal is preferred.** You may also pay by check or credit card. Make check payable to ATA.

**PayPal:** Use the "Send money" tab on the PayPal website ([www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)) and send your payment to [americantapestryalliance@gmail.com](mailto:americantapestryalliance@gmail.com) with a note saying: **Pacific Portals**

Check: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card: MC \_\_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_\_ Amount of charge: \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

3 digit Security Code \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Artist's Agreement &amp; Deadline

**Artist's Agreement**

I understand that my submission constitutes my permission for ATA to photograph the work for publicity purposes. I also agree that ATA and the show venue will allow the public to photograph the work and that my tapestry is not for sale.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Artist's Signature\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Entry Form Deadline (intent to participate) Your entry form must be postmarked by January 15, 2012. Mail your entry form to: Pacific Portals / c/o Merna Strauch / 1383 Avenida de Cortez / Pacific Palisades, CA 90272 / USA**

## Mounting Instructions

1. Stitch two strips of cloth tape (1" twill tape works well) to the back of the tapestry as shown below.
2. The tape strips should end 1" from the edges of the tapestry.
3. Leave the ends of the tapes open so that a wire can be threaded under the tapes by the Exhibit Committee.
4. Fill in the identification label below to show artist's name and title of work. Attach the ID label to the back of the tapestry with a safety pin or tiny stitches at the corners.

BACK (reverse side of tapestry) :

Cloth tape sewn to back of tapestry  
 ← Open at both ends →

**Cut this label out and attach it to the back of your tapestry**

Artist's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Work \_\_\_\_\_

Challenge Group (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Cloth tape sewn to back of tapestry  
 ← Open at both ends →

Mounting Instructions

## Checklist

1. Tapestry prepared for hanging as described above.
2. Label form attached to back of tapestry.
3. International Entries: Customs Documents attached to tapestry mailing envelope in a
4. smaller envelope and included inside mailing envelope or box with tapestry.
5. Your tapestry must be received by March 15, 2012. Send your tapestry to:

***Pacific Portals*** / c/o Merna Strauch  
 1383 Avenida de Cortez  
 Pacific Palisades, CA 90272  
 USA

Checklist

## Online Education Articles

by Lyn Hart

An innovation originally created and edited by Mary Lane, Online Education Articles, provides ATA members opportunities to offer and receive information and perspectives on a wide range of technical, artistic, and theoretical topics relating to tapestry. It also indulges us with yet another venue for seeing the work of our fellow artists. Thank you, Mary, for conceptualizing this wonderful resource and managing it for ATA. I am excited to take on the role as ATA's Online Educational Articles editor. I have some pretty big shoes (or should that be warps?) to fill!

While I have plenty of ideas of my own, I would also like to have exposure to members' ideas about

what they need and want for use in developing future themes. Learning what other weavers are curious about or wish to explore will help provide a richer wellspring for future articles. Even if you do not personally wish to write about a topic, there are ATA members who do enjoy writing. You may also suggest non-ATA members to approach for writing as well. Generally, there will be three articles published each year, either by solo authors or as a group exploration. Authors will have about a six-month lead time for writing. If you have a burning desire to explore a topic relating to tapestry, please feel free to contact me to discuss your idea! [desertsonghart@gmail.com](mailto:desertsonghart@gmail.com).

## Join the ATA Board of Directors

### Stimulating! Rewarding! Appreciated!

Meld minds with creative artists from around the world! Be a mover and shaker in THE premiere, international contemporary tapestry organization! Gain experience in arts administration!

Join the ATA Board of Directors. ATA's Board of Directors is made up of 10 committee chairs. Each board member oversees a specific area of ATA's programming and works with a team to carry out the tasks. The board communicates via an email list. We welcome applications from people around the world.

ATA currently has the following board positions open:

**Exhibition Committee Chair:** The Exhibitions Committee consists of the following subcommittees: American Tapestry Biennial, Small

Tapestry International, Online Web Exhibitions and the Unjuried Small Format show. The chair of this committee should have experience in organizing exhibitions. The chair oversees the work of the subcommittees, keeping track of timelines and helping with venue search.

**Awards Committee Chair:** The Awards Committee consists of the following subcommittees: Award for Excellence, the ATA International Student award, and the new ATA Scholarship Program. The board chair would oversee the sub committees and be in charge of Scholarships.

Join a fabulous group of committed tapestry weavers. ATA needs your enthusiasm and expertise! Apply today! Contact Elaine Duncan for more information ([elaine@elaineduncan.com](mailto:elaine@elaineduncan.com)).

## Kudos

### Compiled by Merna Strauch

The Kudos column is evolving! Current exhibitions, with images, are now spotlighted in a monthly eKudos, sent electronically to all ATA members with email. Submit items for eKudos to: [mstrauch@mac.com](mailto:mstrauch@mac.com)

Fantastic Fibers, <http://fantasticfibers.theyeiser.org>, an international competitive exhibition with cash awards, is hosted annually at the Yeiser Arts Center in Paducah, Kentucky. In 2011, 58 works were selected from the 432 submitted, including **Barbara Burns'** "Leigh", **Alex Friedman's** "Bound" and "Flow 4", and **Kathe Todd-Hooker's** "Between Again".



Lois Hartwig – Happy!

**Lois Hartwig** won both first and second place in the fiber arts division of the Spring Fine Arts Show in Lake Havasu, Arizona in 2011.

**Ulrika Leander** won three ADEX awards this year. ADEX stands for Awards for Design Excellence and is the largest and most prestigious awards program for product design of furniture, fixtures and finishes marketed to the design trade. Design Journal sponsors the awards. Ulrika's awards were Platinum: "Reflections on a Musical Experience", Gold: "Frames of Reference", and Silver: "Water Spirits".

In May, **Ixchel Suarez** celebrated the cutting off of a large-scale tapestry woven at the Joshua Creek Heritage Art Centre, Ontario, Canada. "Memories of a Birch Tree", 4.5m x 2.5m will be traveling to Mexico to participate in the Sixth International Biennial of Textile Art in 2012.

**Joy Smith** and Gerda van Hamond exhibited their tapestries in "Yarra Reflections" in April at the Hawthorn Studio and Gallery in East Victoria, Australia.



Anne Jackson, "Witchcraft Series"

**Elizabeth J. Buckley's** tapestry: "Dialogues Through the Veil" recently won two awards: Special Merit and Viewer's Choice at the Fiber Arts Fiesta, Las Aranas Spinners and Weavers Guild juried show, May 26 -28, 2011, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

And ... a look ahead:

**Anne Jackson** recently had the two latest tapestries from her 'Witchcraft Series' accepted for European Tapestry Forum's exhibition ARTAPESTRY3, which will tour Europe, including venues in Denmark and France, from 2012-2014.



Ixchel Suarez

## Tapestry Topics Information

### Themes & Deadlines ~

**Teachers & Lessons**                      **Deadline: January 15, 2012**

What teacher(s) have had particular consequence for your work as a tapestry weaver? Why? How? What lessons do you remember as being particularly significant in terms of your practice of making, designing, weaving? What lessons do you wish that you had learned much sooner? Send you queries to Micala Sidore, Theme Editor: [Micala@HawleyStreet.com](mailto:Micala@HawleyStreet.com)

**Surface**    **Deadline: April 1, 2012**

Do you stretch the definition of tapestry by enriching your work with surface techniques and/or embellishment? Share your motivations, techniques and your work. Send you queries to Sharon Cray, Theme Editor: [crays@att.net](mailto:crays@att.net)

**Going International**                      **Deadline: July 15, 2012**

We would love to include more news from outside the United States. Let us know what's happening where you live. Share your work.

**Resources**    **Deadline: October 1, 2012**

What are your favorite magazines, blogs, websites? What about your favorite source materials, and sources for materials?

### Specifications ~

Electronic images must be accompanied by the following information: Size, date completed, and photo credits.

Articles should be under 1000 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.

**Submissions** ~ Send to the Theme Editor for the issue. Other articles can be sent to: Mary Lane/ 703 Foote Street NW/ Olympia/ WA 98502, USA [marylane53@mac.com](mailto:marylane53@mac.com)

**Newsletter Committee** ~ Asst. Editor/Proofreader: Mary Colton, Layout: Mary Lane, Kudos: Merna Strauch, Web Posting: Mary Lane. Thanks to Linda Rees for proofreading the Fall Issue.

## Join ATA!

1 year    2 years

Individual	\$35	\$65
Studio Circle	\$60	\$110
Curator's Circle	\$125	\$225
Collector's Circle	\$250	\$450
Student*	\$25	\$45

\*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Alternate phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities

Send payment to:  
**ATA Membership**  
**c/o Diane Wolf**  
**18611 N. 132nd Ave.**  
**Sun City West, AZ 85375**  
**(480) 200-1034**

Credit card: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Visa/Mastercard number & exp. date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 digit code                      Card holder's signature

PayPal: Use the "Send Money" tab on the PayPal website. Send your payment to: [americantapestryalliance@gmail.com](mailto:americantapestryalliance@gmail.com) with a note that says "Membership."

Check or money order: Payable to ATA.