

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

W W W. A M E R I C A N T A P E S T R Y A L L I A N C E . O R G

Winter 2015 Vol 41 No. 4



# Small Format 2

# **Co-Directors' Letter, Winter 2015**

Armed with the best of Halloween intentions and with the holidays looming ahead, we hope you've stolen some time to find yourself behind your loom. The Winter Issue of Tapestry Topics, the second of two dedicated to small format tapestry, comes to us compliments of guest editor Kathe Todd-Hooker. Thank you, Kathe, for your ongoing generosity to the tapestry community and for doing double duty as Theme Coordinator.

Your ATB 11 submissions are now in the capable hands of our prestigious juror Janet Koplos. As contributing editor to Art in America, Ms. Koplos' selections for this important tapestry exhibition are shaped by a career in the international art world as a visionary and acclaimed critic. Designing and weaving new work for each American Tapestry Biennial is a rite of passage in and of itself. Congratulations to everyone who took up the personal challenge and completed pieces in time for the submission deadline. May the force be with you.

Speaking of rites of passage, ATA took part in the Partner Pavilion at SOFA Chicago, the legendary four-day Art/ Craft international exhibition, held at Navy Pier in early November. Thank you to ATA members Anna Kocherovsky, Lialia Kuchma, Christine Laffer and Judith Musick for meeting and greeting the public art world at our information booth and for talking tapestry on the exhibition floor, along with Mary Zicafoose and Michael Rohde.

The final bit of good news is that there still is time to complete your entry to ATA's popular Unjuried Small Format show, Tapestry Unlimited: 11th international, unjuried, small format tapestry exhibition, to be exhibited at the Milwaukee Public Library during next summer's Convergence in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Your entry form, which is your intent to enter, is due January 31st. Your tapestry is not due until March 31, 2016. An entry form is at the back of the newsletter. Online entry is available on our website. Thank you to Exhibition Chair, Janna Maria Vallee; catalog designer, Lindsey Marshall; registrar, Fran Williamson; Ruth Manning; and Susan Rubendall.

Once again ATA will join Convergence by sponsoring a Speakers Session on Saturday, August 6, 2016. The Members Retreat "TAPESTRY ON TAP!", with two superb teachers, Susan Iverson and Aino Kajaniemi begins that evening with a banquet dinner. The Members Retreat registration form is at the back of the newsletter. Online registration is available on our website.

Best wishes for a warm and productive winter, Mary & Michael





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Contact ATA
Director of Member Services
Michael Rohde mrohdeata@me.com
Director of Resources
Mary Zicafoose mzicafoose@gmail.com
Treasurer
Rosalee Skrenes rosaleeskrenes@tds.net
Assistant Treasurer
Marcia Ellis mellis@sonic.net
Membership Chair
Patricia Dunston
membership@americantapestryalliance.org Education Committee Chair
Terry Olsen
education@americantapestryalliance.org
Distance Learning
Terri Stewart tksweaver@verizon.net
Helping Hands
Traudi Bestler bestler@aol.com
Exhibition Chair
Margo Macdonald margomac53@comcast.net
American Tapestry Biennial 11, Co-Chairs
Elaine Duncan elaine@elaineduncan.com
Terri Bryson 2brysons@gmail.com
Tapestry Unlimited: 11th international, unjuried
small format tapestry exhibition, Exhibition
Chair
Janna Maria Vallee janna@vancouveryarn.com
Small Tapestry International 4, Exhibition Chair
Pamela Done Pamela@donefamily.org
Catalog Distribution
Lois Hartwig Ihartwig65@frontier.com
Awards Chair
Kimberly Brandel
ataaward@americantapestryalliance.org
Promotions Chair
Meggy Wagner promotions@americantapestryalliance.org
Volunteer Coordinator
Joan Griffin
volunteer@americantapestryalliance.org
Web Editor
Mandy Pedigo
webeditor@americantapestryalliance.org
TEx@ATA Gallery
Sarah Swett
Laura Hodgdon
webgallery@americantapestryalliance.org
Artist Pages
Sarah Warren
artistpages@americantapestryalliance.org
Tapestry Topics
Leslie Munro
newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org
Executive Administrator
Executive Administrator Mary Lane adminassist@americantapestryalliance.org

# **Theme Editor's Introduction**

#### by Kathe Todd-Hooker

In this second issue dedicated to small format tapestry, many of the authors, or artists featured, weave small format tapestry as a deliberate choice. Some of us have been weaving for multiple decades; some are newer to the medium. All of us are a part of the growing number of small format tapestry weavers who are influenced by the Internet and the on-line, international tapestry communities of small format/small scale weavers. I hope that these articles will add to the understanding of what small format tapestry is, present some history of the small format movement, both modern and historical, and provide a look at a few weavers' journeys. Because of the enthusiastic response to this theme the articles were divided into two issues of Tapestry Topics. The first issue appeared in the Spring of 2015.

Small format tapestry weavers have always existed alongside large format tapestry weavers. Small format tapestry is often discriminated against because of its size - not always a square meter; the materials used - not always wool; and the sett - not always 10 epi. Not long ago, and sometimes even now, small format work was not eligible for tapestry exhibits. It is often not accorded the same respect as large format tapestry by curators. Small work is usually hung in the worst places in an exhibit - in corners and on pillars - or salon style - not at the proper eye level, stacked several high between large format pieces.

Times have, and are, changing. The number of small format tapestry weavers is getting larger every day with the advent of smaller areas to display tapestry, the internet, the DIY-ers, the designer/weaver phenomenon, the availability of small high quality looms and the demise of large workshops and their large looms.

So, what is the difference between small format and large format? Technically, nothing other than size. Size, as in all things, is subjective to whomever is creating the rules.



**Kathe Todd-Hooker** A tapestry weaver since 1979, blogger, tapestry list mistress, instructor, sometimes historian, and owner of Between & Etc. (formerly Fine Fiber Press and Studio) who writes about tapestry technique, journaling, symbolism, and Russian Old Believers. She has degrees from the Oregon School of Arts and Crafts/ Marylhurst (BA) in Craft Design and from Oregon State University (Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies) in Craft Design; History; Clothing, Textiles, and related Arts; and Economics. She is the author of several books: Tapestry, Lines in Tapestry, Tapestry 101, So Warped, and Shaped.



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## Small Format?

#### by Susan Maffei

#### Small Format????

So we begin with a question. What do we mean by small format? Is it miniature, or is that different from small format, or are they interchangeable? If we look in the dictionary we find miniature is referred to in the first two definitions only in reference to painting and letters. In the last reference "in miniature" is used for something more general, a copy or model on a very small scale. If we look at tiny historical Andean tunics (Fig 5) from the Inca era they are without question miniatures, as they replicate "in miniature" their full size cousins. But is it also small format?

Format is defined in Webster's as the "shape, size, paper, type, binding or general makeup of a book, magazine, etc." Does "etc." include tapestry? It could. So does it seem then that small format is not necessarily miniature, but miniature can also be small format? Let's chew on that for a while.

Is tapestry basically a mural art? There has always been a relationship in a visual sense between miniature and mural. Each encompasses your vision by either surrounding one or



Fig 1 First Masterpiece of Chinese Painting: "The Admonitions Scroll," c. 9.5 in x 9.5 in, Shane McCausland. The British Museum Press, 2003.



**Fig 1a** "Scroll Wrapper, Song Dynasty," 14.375 in x 12.5 in, When Silk was Gold, James C.Y Watt & Anne E. Wardell. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, 1997.

by drawing one into a small space. Small format can be another matter when the scale of the mark making as related to the size of the work does not necessarily draw you in and encompass. Then it has a tendency to become something else, perhaps more a fragment or sample (as related to mural) or a reproduction of an image. Is that the influence of the popular major arts of our time, painting and/or photography? Shall we think on that for a while?

So what is small? It does seem that there is a precedent occurring that states that small format in tapestry is under 100 square inches or under 12 in x 12 in or 8 in x 8 in, as defined by many of the opportunities to exhibit in ATA and other organizations both here and abroad. Very few opportunities use the "miniature" term. At the moment I can only think of one in Anger, France, which defines miniature as less than 4 in x 4 in. Of course this is translated from French, and perhaps small format does not exist as a term there. One of the most promising factors, however, of this emerging trend of small work is

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Fig 2 "Album Leaf from Northern Song Dynasty," 8.875 in x 12.75 in, *When Silk was Gold*, James C.Y Watt & Anne E. Wardell. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, 1997.

Fig 3 "Silk Covered Box from Quing Dynasty," approx. 5.5 in x 3 in, Weaving China's Past – The Amy S. Clague Collection of Chinese Textiles, Claudia Brown. Phoenix Art Museum, 2000.



the number of people that tapestry is drawing into the field and the great output of work and creative expression, especially in the non-juried shows. In today's world media must expand to exist.

It is interesting to think back on history and explore the uses of small tapestries down through the ages. There has been a lot said about the changing issues of woven tapestry today, but if we consider how tapestry came into being in an old world sense we see that there have always been different and perhaps more functional roles in addition to mural tapestry in the medieval European models. It is also interesting to think of the old saying that craft



follows fine art, but in ancient times in northern Europe it seems that in fact painting followed tapestry in popularity to allow portability (as opposed to fresco). In more current times painting actually has followed this decorative art in size and some might argue in its decorative value. Does that mean that painting will soon return to a smaller form (said with tongue in cheek)? That also raises the issue of the decorative arts as a fine art, another subject for another time.

Both Andean and Asian historical works have greatly influenced my work in tapestry along with my training in high warp Gobelins; Asian perhaps more in form, and Andean in use of pattern and abstraction. So let us look at a few of those early small works in tapestry.

An important example of an early use of small tapestry in China is a protective outer-wrapper (Fig 1) preserved from a Song Dynasty (c.960-1279) mounting of the "Admonitions" scroll, a masterpiece

**Fig 4** "Fan with Dragon Yuan Dynasty," 10.25 in x 10125 in, Weaving China's Past – The Amy S. Clague Collection of Chinese Textiles, Claudia Brown. Phoenix Art Museum, 2000.

of Chinese painting dating back to the fifth or sixth century, now housed in the British Museum. Kesi or tapestry weaving became a luxury item in this period and we see this tradition continued through the following Ming and Qing periods for covers for both hand scrolls and accordion style sutras (scriptural narratives). The former were basically square, around twelve to thirteen inches (Fig 1a), and the latter similar in width but much longer, up to forty inches or so. Some other examples of Kesi weaving in small formats include banners and album leaves (Fig 2). There are also containers (Fig 3) for many household items and tapestry for the making of fans (Fig 4). Woven scrolls that provided some form of narrative have more kin to tapestry mural art, although on a scale that medieval weavers might consider "in miniature." We can only speculate whether they all were produced by workshops; probably more likely then not, when we think of the social structures and organization of the great cultures of early China.

In early Andean cultures, the most prominent "smalls" are the miniature representations of the large tunics, mantles, and other clothing of the elite (Fig 5) that were sacrificed to



**Fig 5** "Inca miniature tunic," 10.75 in x 8 in, The Colonial Andes, Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830, Elena Phipps, Johanna Hecht and Christina Esteras Martin. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale Univ. Press, 2004.

the gods. There also exist small multi-selvedge tapestries woven in animal forms of birds and fish (Fig 6), not in miniature but close to actual animal size. There are some small pillows suggested for ceremonial use and small bags (Fig 7) used to carry coca leaves for chewing, most woven in tapestry in the Wari and Inca periods from the fifth to sixteenth century. Because they were first and foremost a textile society they were not afraid to use this medium to produce dimensional items such as gloves, boots, hats and sculptural depictions. Their abstractions have much in relationship to our modern aesthetics and their use of pattern is so related to the repeats of the actual weaving that it cannot be separated. Their knowledge and use of fiber is breath taking at such an early time. It is said that every citizen of this ancient time and place knew the all the existing fiber techniques with one exception (card weaving) and they all participated in textile manufacture.

So now that we have raised some thoughts, let's take a look at why working small has now become so popular. Is it perhaps because since the mid to late twentieth century the grass roots artist/weaver has come into popular view, versus the dwindling number of workshops that mostly produce large copies or, some would say, interpretations of the work of famous painters? Or is it the need for many of us to have a hands-on creative outlet in this non-hands-

Fig 6 "Pachacamac-Rimac Culture Fish," 10 in x 22 in, *Animal Myth and Magic: Images from Pre-Columbian Textiles*, Vanessa Drake Moraga. Ololo Press, 2005.



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**Fig 7** "Wari-Nasca Coca Leaf Bag," 10 in x 14 in, Animal Myth and Magic: Images from Pre-Columbian Textiles, Vanessa Drake Moraga. Ololo Press, 2005.

on era? Of course large mural tapestries are still being woven, but mostly in state workshops in the European tradition with designer and weavers being separate entities. And it is good to note that some of the artist/weavers here have trained or worked in such workshops, much to their advantage. But certainly in the Americas (with presently no existing workshops) the individual in most cases is either self-trained or learned techniques in short workshop classes. We are now living in what is referred to as the immediate gratification era and tapestry is very slow, so working small allows a production that can answer lots of questions and develop skills necessary to move forward in this guicker need-to-express era.

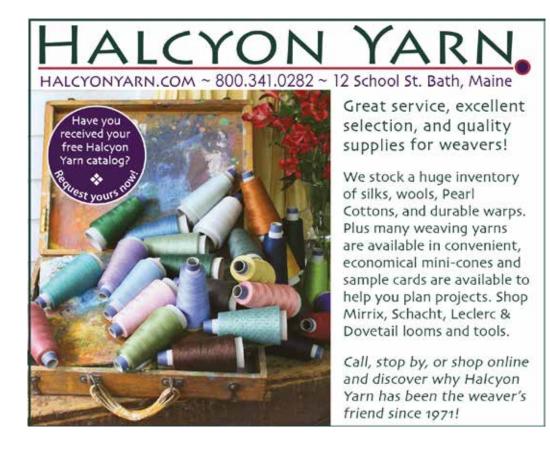
It is also worth noting that many fine artists have blurred the boundaries of their chosen fields, and fiber along with many other facets has infiltrated their medium. (Fiber has been there all along, really, with canvas underlying most paintings—which also probably grows out of tapestry history.) Strict adherence to the use of only one medium in a work has softened in our field as well, to advantage. (And in this case we are following the fine arts mantra).

One last observation: The change in the world of fine art where many well-known artists are now using workshops or apprentices to do much of the work required in production is interesting as the switch was happening much at the same time period as the number of tapestry workshops were dwindling and the individual artist/weaver appeared. A big factor in each has to do with time issues in a world in a hurry—and not to forget, the business of art.

Any conclusions are in the eye of the beholder.



Susan Martin Maffei is an internationally known tapestry artist whose background includes art studies at The Art Students League in NYC, tapestry training at Les Gobelins in Paris, apprenticeship and studio work at the Scheuer Tapestry Studio, NYC, and conservation of antique textiles at Artweave Gallery, NYC. She has been weaving professionally since 1985. She has taught, lectured, and exhibited in the U.S. and abroad and has work in both public and private collections.



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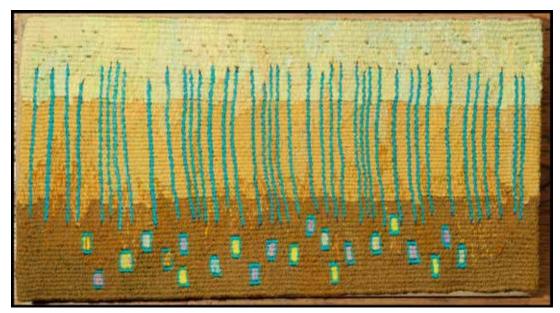
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# An Interview with Scottish Artist Clare Coyle

#### by Mary Lane

I recently had the opportunity to interview Clare Coyle about her tapestries, many of which are woven at a small scale. Clare lives in Cairneyhill, Fife, Scotland. Her work combines a distinctive style of mark making with subtle color gradations. The imagery evokes landscape and ancient runes and is imbued with an atmospheric quality that invites contemplation and close scrutiny.



**Clare Coyle**, "Planted Oghams," 5 in x 8.5 in, 14 epi, 2013/14. Photo: Linda Matthew.

Mary Lane (ML): Do you work both large and small scale?

Clare Coyle (CC): Currently I am working primarily in a small scale. This is more because of time limitations; being an artist and tapestry weaver is not my primary source of income. I try to work on my art three days a week. Because I am mainly working in small format, I have a number of very small portable looms and find these great when traveling. Some of my recent work uses beach-combed materials and free weaving. It is easy to work away at these in the evenings with a good "daylight" lamp. I have a number of tapestries running concurrently on different looms, including a reasonably large piece that I started last year.

#### ML: What is the warp sett of your small scale work?

CC: I work mostly at 14 or 16 to the inch, though I have used more warps to the inch on some small pieces. Sometimes it depends on the type of warp I am using. I came across a very fine linen used in bookbinding. It has a slightly flattened surface and I have used it in some of my small driftwood pieces using only 3 or 4 warps. It gives a very flat surface to the weave.

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**Clare Coyle**, "Golden Amber," 3.5 in x 3.75 in, framed 10 in x 10 in, 18 epi, 2011. Photo: Linda Matthew.

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ML: What medium do you use for designing?

CC: I have a very eclectic style of designing, using found paper that I can recycle, layering things up with colour in stages. I like using inks and water colour, but also like using resist techniques using oil pastels and varnish. I tend not to throw unsuccessful pieces away as often there are elements in the mark making process that I like and that I can reuse somewhere else. I like to have a variety of different sized sketchbooks and different papers. My sketchbooks are mostly messy and experimental, with some collages using previous bits of paper and designs. I have printed with potatoes, making repetitive marks and have also used the patterns in the fragments of ancient pottery from archaeological drawings.

ML: Do you know in advance whether a particular idea/design you are working on is going to be large or small scale?

CC: Mostly I do. If I like a particular image I'll decide what size I want to make it. It might be the same size as the design, or up to two to three times larger. Ironically, my most recent large tapestry,

"Coastal Edge," came from an inch square drawing in a small sketchbook. I also will work without a finished design if I don't feel I have the definitive design I want. Sometimes I have a series of drawings on the same subject and I like elements of two or three of them, but when I try to capture all of the elements in one design it doesn't work. So

I go with an overall design or a size/shape in my head and work it out as I go along. I can do this mainly because I have the confidence in the type of mark making I want to use in the tapestry. I think that this is easier to do on a small scale than a larger scale; when you see something not working, it is easier to rectify. I do tend to work with a line cartoon on larger pieces.

ML: What is it about particular designs that make them suitable for small scale tapestries?

CC: For me, it is the degree of detail that I can achieve at a small scale. I also find that if I am working with a combination of different designs for a tapestry, there is more flexibility to be intuitive and holistic about it. Some days I weave instinctively and go with the flow and other days I struggle to make the right marks, or get the right tone or depth of colour. I believe that because tapestry weavers invest so much time in producing their work that they have strong emotional connections to the content and methods of making, so it is important to feel you have made the right kind of marks and woven it with integrity.



Clare Coyle, "Golden Amber," detail, Photo: Linda Matthew.

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Clare Coyle, "Marking Time," 2.25 in x 4.25 in, 23 epi, 2011. Photo: Linda Matthew.

**Clare Coyle**, "3 Stones Drift," 12 in x 12 in framed, 10 epi, 2014, Photo: Linda Matthew.

ML: What are the qualities that you think are unique to small scale work?

CC: The qualities that I strive to achieve in my work are a jewel like quality of colour, depth and movement, and a well-balanced composition. I find that many of my designs do not lend themselves to textured and hairier yarns. I like the finer quality of yarns such as silks, cottons, and fine worsted wools. Because there is a focus on mark making in my designs, I want to be able to achieve fine lines, shapes and colour, whilst at the same time having depth in subtle colour changes and mixes.

ML: How does the quality of the woven mark differ between your large and small scale work?

CC: On a larger scale, marks have to be stronger and better defined, though I think there is greater flexibility in colour mixing on a larger scale. When working larger I often continue to use the finer yarns, plying them in mixes. This can create very subtle colour changes, with more tone and depth. I think in both large and small scale I work in a more painterly way, rather than a highly technical way.

ML: How do you finish and present your small scale tapestries?

CC: This varies. I have both framed and unframed pieces that are small scale. I often mount a tapestry onto a piece of wood to present it like a miniature painting/canvas. I measure the tapestry precisely and then colour match a piece of cloth, usually cotton or linen, to cover the block of wood. I sew the tapestry onto this right to the edge of the block. Thereafter I decide whether I want to frame it either within a box frame with glass or a simple wooden surround without the glass. Some of the driftwood pieces have a sculptural, three dimensional quality to them so they may stand alone or may be simply framed in box frames with or without glass. If I use a glazed frame, it is usually recessed sufficiently enough for the tapestry not to be touching the glass. I feel that flattens the tapestry and takes away from the textural quality of the weaving.



**Mary Lane** is an artist and an art historian. She works for the American Tapestry Alliance as their Executive Administrator.

# **Tapestry Woven Decorations on Coptic Textiles**

#### by Ulrikka Mokdad

In recent years, scholars from different academic fields have shown an increasing interest in the study of archaeological textiles. Among the textile remnants are the so-called "Coptic" textiles of the first millennium CE. A large number of fragments and many well-preserved textiles such as tunics, shawls, and other garments have survived to this day due to the dry desert climate and the resulting arid soil conditions of Egypt. In the first millennium CE, like today, textiles were used for many purposes, including garments and furnishing textiles such as bed spreads, wall hangings, and cushions.

Most of the textiles have been found in graves. The tapestry woven parts were cut off the fabrics or garments in order to be sold to European and American collectors throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. The fragmentation of these finds is known to have occurred during the many illegal excavations undertaken in Egypt during this period. A result of the desecration of these important finds is that most of the original textiles are actually



Coptic fragment, flying needle on purple: Shawl fragment, Patricia Harris Gallery of Textiles & Costume, Royal Ontario Museum

missing and only the decorative parts still remain. In the 20th century, museums all over the world bought or received such textiles as gifts from the descendants of the original collectors.

There was a scheme for the decorative parts of Coptic textiles. All ornamentation was symmetrical. A typical tunic conformed to this scheme. On each side of the tunic, between the shoulder and the neck opening, a narrow or wide band was in-woven in tapestry technique or woven separately and applied to the cloth. These bands could run either to the waist or all the way down to the border. On Roman tunics these so-called clavi were originally un-patterned and woven in purple-dyed wool. The width of the purple stripe was a symbol of status used by the Romans to distinguish between different classes in society. On Coptic tunics dating from the Byzantine and early Islamic periods, the clavi do not seem to have had any formal distinguishing function, but were merely decorative.

On the shoulders large, round ornaments (orbiculi) or squares (tabulae) were in-woven. On the front, above the bottom edge, there could be smaller ornaments matching those on the shoulders. The sleeves were embellished with sleeve-bands (manicae). Some tunics also had decorative bands sewn on around the neck opening. Since the tapestry technique provides a more durable cloth than plain tabby, the clavi and other decorative elements could be cut off a worn-out tunic and applied to either a brand new one or one made out of recycled pieces of cloth.

Although tapestry was the most common technique used for decoration, there were also weft-loop weaves, woolen taquetes and silk samitums. A Coptic cloth was most often made up of two different kinds of weaving; the decorative clavi, orbiculi, tabulae and manicae were woven into the tabby fabric by combining tabby weave with tapestry. This was possible by beating the tapestry wefts so closely together that the warp threads were completely covered. The tabby cloths most often had very high thread counts. In order to achieve the closely beaten wefts, the weaver had to change the sheds in the tapestry-woven areas of the cloth. Instead of passing the tapestry

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wefts between sheds made up of single warp threads, the weaver would pass the weft through sheds made up by double or treble warp threads. This is why Coptic textiles such as tabulae and orbiculi exhibited in museums often seem to have small remnants of linen tabby fabric framing them—what you see is actually the original cloth these decorations were woven into.

Woven tapestry is a surface fabric with a simple or complicated design. The technique is unique because, instead of running across the warp, the wefts are woven between the stretched warp threads only as far as each colour is required. This creates the characteristic planes of unbroken colour.

One of the most common techniques displayed on tunics is that of the flying needle, also known as Flying thread brocading. On the tapestry-woven decorations of Late Antiquity Coptic tunics, the flying needle forms subtle patterns often made in light-coloured wool or unbleached linen threads on dark purple backgrounds.

The thread performing the flying needle was wrapped around a single warp thread from time to time to keep it in place. It was used to "draw" geometric patterns floating upon the tapestry-woven parts of the textile and to outline the dark silhouettes of figurative motifs in the bi-coloured tapestry ornaments. Thus the flying needle technique formed patterns on the woven surface, which were only visible on one side of the fabric. The use of this particular tapestry technique, where the bobbin with the flying needle weft "jumps" vertically on top of the cloth, tells us that these textiles must have been woven face up.

Hatching was another important tapestry technique. Hatching, which means blending two colours into each other, thereby creating more shades, was a popular variant for the background, above all in two-coloured ornamental pieces. Hatching could also be used to add shadows around figures in order to create the illusion of three-dimensional naturalistic motifs.

When reading older publications dealing with Coptic textiles, one realizes how much the view on the textiles in question has changed. Previously the aim of research was to arrange, classify and interpret the Egyptian grave finds by means of art-historical methods, such as iconography, in order to establish a reliable chronology. This was partly due to the unverifiable specifications on provenance for most Coptic textiles, and partly due to the preoccupation with style prevalent among art-historians. Not much attention was paid to the fact that most of the "Coptic tapestries" were not produced to be artworks, but were merely decorations on garments. Traditionally the most beautifully woven fragments featuring bright colours were displayed in museum collections almost as fine art pieces. Unfortunately this way of displaying the textiles did not exactly promote the view of them as cultural artifacts representing several interdependent cultures in Egypt of the Late Antique period.



**Ulrikka Mokdad** is a 43-year-old tapestry weaver who lives and weaves in Copenhagen, Denmark. She has recently received an MA in art history from the University of Copenhagen after finishing her thesis on dating and provenance determination of Coptic textiles.



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# **One Weaver's 40 years Journey of Making Small Scale Tapestries**

#### by Liv Pedersen

Tradition and familiarity with yarn was in my blood early on. Those were probably the main reasons for me later on to embark upon a lifestyle of making small tapestries. In postwar Denmark materials were scarce. One of my mother's jobs was to knit clothing for us kids while unraveling our father's sweaters. She also darned many socks. From leftover yarn we kids created many wonderful items. In elementary school we were only kept for three hours. Many afternoons we spent at each other's homes knitting trolls and their clothes from the patterns in magazines similar to Good Housekeeping. We had no TV. My father was a 3rd generation bricklayer. At technical school he had learned to paint watercolor landscapes. He also repaired everything around the house including our worn shoes.



Prosperity happened and many of us eventually entered high school and had a chance to go to university. But yarn had spun its net around me,

Liv Pederson, "Bicycling with Kids," 11 in x 14 in, 9 epi, 1991.

and I was never happy without a craft project to complete. By that point several embroidered tablecloths and pillow covers were behind me, as well as a crocheted graduation dress. I studied literature and later changed to social work, spending six months of practicum in Portland, Oregon. The culture shock there prepared me for later immigration to Western Canada, when my husband showed up on the scene.

Boy, what a slow learner.... When the Alberta College of Art and Design was within my reach, painting was my choice, and in the four year process of earning an art degree I learned about design, composition, color, and sensitivity. I also had the chance to visit the weaving department as often as I chose. Doug Motter was then the department head and most helpful in letting me try out all the looms. The experience of spinning and dyeing with natural plants was already behind me. A turning point happened one summer while sitting at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam browsing through a magazine and happening upon an article about someone weaving on the Dutch plank loom. The year was 1977 and it was my first real encounter with small scale tapestries. This stuck with me and got me into acquiring some wooden planks, nails, and blunt needles. I hardly touched a paintbrush again.

Our two children are born fifteen months apart. We moved to Amsterdam and lived there for eighteen months, and then in Hamilton, Ontario, for another eighteen months. We then established ourselves back in Calgary. It was perseverance and determination that made me produce small tapestries about our life at that time, a miracle. It was possible with the small plank loom. I wove at the dining table in the kitchen when the kids slept. The loom and yarn went on top of the refrigerator when it was time to eat. The loom only had one set of heddles. Circumstance was the main reason for weaving small. Soon the limitations of small scale weaving presented themselves. How could

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**Above Left**: Liv Pederson, "Ulf," image, 7 in x 5 in, 11 epi, 2010, In the collection of The City Museum of Gdynia, Poland.

**Above Right: Liv Pederson**, "Max," 13 in x 13 in, 11 epi, 2012, In the collection of Cambridge Galleries, Ontario.

**Left**: **Liv Pederson**, "Bearded Troll," image, 12 in x 10 in, 11 epi, 2011.

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the tapestries get bigger (read: more impressive)? The times asked for that. Telling stories about life in our Dutch apartment building was my first attempt. I wove ten panels and placed them in a certain order, room for room as seen from the façade in rows of three by three, with a top attic. There was a sports shop on the ground floor, and we were at the 2nd floor – not quite accurately.

In Hamilton I repeated the pattern of narrating our neighborhood, placing five houses side by side with all the activities of the housewives and kids outside on the pavement. It was a great success. My neighbors were not gallery goers, but they all came down to Hamilton Artists Inc. for my first solo show to look at themselves.

In time I acquired a larger plank loom and eventually managed to weave sizes  $40 \times 60$  cm. For the longest time my favorite was  $36 \times 56$  cm, which I often combined in panels, either vertically or horizontally, for example in an image

of our LRT train full of cowboys and cowgirls going to The Calgary Stampede, or The Trans Canada Highway between Banff and Calgary. However, most often it would be depictions in sets of four panels placed on top of one another, two by two: a map with NW, NE, SE, and SW areas of leisure activities; a four course meal; and other activities around a table. Along with these there were experiments on a Salish loom, which fell into my hands early on. This allowed me to explore larger spaces, textured yarns, twining, and knotting. At the same time, I worked full time outside the home – for twenty-six years.

In 2009 my husband accepted a three-month visiting residency in Copenhagen. I brought a small plank loom along. My first attempts with shaped tapestries started here. I wanted to weave faces of people and creatures. If the loom was turned upside down



Liv Pederson, "Off The Road," 14 in x 14 in, 9 epi, 2000.



Liv Pederson, "Moon Faces,"left 10 in x 9 in, right 11.5 in x 7 in, 11 epi, 2011.

one could forget about preconceived ideas while filling in the details on the loosely drawn cartoon. To a certain extent it was inspirational to have seen how Bjørn Nørgaard handled the historical persons in the Gobelins, which he had designed for Danish Queen Margrethe's 50th birthday. Later, back at home, people and critics became interested in my new work. They had not seen anything like it before, and I was included in a prestigious local group exhibition.

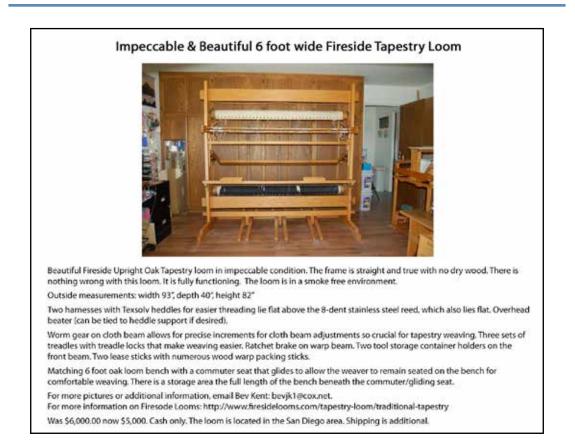
The presentation of small tapestries has always been debatable. Tapestry is not so common in my area, and I didn't associate with other weavers. However, I belong to

a local cooperatively run gallery and the craft council. Perhaps more importantly, I had become a member of a reputable art organization, which mostly consisted of painters of influence. They required me to frame my work for exhibitions, so I started sewing the tapestries onto a fabric background before stretching it onto foam core. In the past sometimes I had taken the weaving off the loom, sometimes left it on with nails and all. But one never knows. Later my shaped faces grew a bit larger and sold without frames to a fibrearts collection in Eastern Canada. Recently I sewed several shaped faces onto a blanket-style backing and shipped it off to China, where it was accepted into the 8th International Fiber Arts Biennial, "From Lausanne to Beijing."

When shipping weavings overseas it certainly is an advantage to be able to roll up small work. I've had success with the Baltic Mini Textile Triennial in Poland. Also recently there have been open email calls for entry from Canberra, Australia, and from Ontario to participate in group projects. ATA's "Untitled/Unjuried" is another example. This has given me a sense of contributing to education and spreading the word of how fun and satisfying it is to weave small tapestries.



**Liv Pedersen** was born in Denmark, where she obtained a degree in social work. In 1973 she immigrated to Canada together with her husband. She studied at the Alberta College of Art and Design from 1974 to 1978 and has a diploma in painting. Liv worked for 26 years as support staff for The Catholic School Board in Calgary. Photo: Colleen Peake.



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# **Small Format Tapestries: Size Matters**

#### by Cheri White

What is a Small Format Tapestry? It is a unique form as different from large format tapestry as a short story is from a novel.

The American Tapestry Alliance defines small format size as not exceeding 100 square inches, with no one dimension being longer than 20 inches. Warp sett is determined by the complexity of the images. Long time small format weaver Kathe Todd-Hunter weaves at a warp set of 20-22 ends per inch, which is also the size of the finest Mirrix coil. At sett 20-22, the weft bundle consists of approximately 4-6 strands of sewing thread or floss or 2-4 strands of fine yarn.

If the weaver is creating small images, she will likely work very close to the loom, making an upright loom preferable. Weaving tools must be appropriate for the warp sett. Fine Fiber Studio sells 4" bobbins and a small metal comb with 10 teeth per inch. My beater is a 1 inch, fine toothed beater used by Persian carpet makers. These are also available at Fine Fiber. Other tools are found objects such as a short awl and long nosed tweezers.



Cheri White, "And the Devil's in the Gluten," 10in x 6.5in, 20 epi, 2014. Photo: Cheri White.

A small format tapestry is not a large tapestry shrunk down to comply with size requirements. It is not a fragment of a larger work. It is a coherent, unified whole contained within perceived boundaries, a finished work right-sized for our smaller homes and strip mall galleries.

The size of the tapestry influences the scale of images in the piece. Simply put, the images in a small format tapestry must be large enough to see clearly at a viewing distance of 20 inches. These small tapestries draw the viewer closer in until every stitch, the handedness of the soumak, the method used to blend colors, even the contents of the weft bundles may be seen and analyzed. Any fault in the maker's technique is also clearly visible. Small format weavers must master their craft to perfection.

A small format tapestry is approximately the same size as an iPad or the page of a book, a size ideally suited for narrative content. The tapestry, book-sized and only a few inches from the viewer's face, draws on the watcher's expectations and memories of reading, of hearing a story told just to them.

Large tapestries push the spectator back until the entire work can be seen at the same moment. Small tapestries draw the viewer close into an intimate bond between maker and observer. Sarah Swett's "Casting Off" (Book of Tapestries) is a bound collection of small tapestries that can be displayed laying on a table. The work can then be picked up and the pages turned by the viewer. This series of small

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tapestries are at once intimate, tactile, and interactive. Single small tapestries can also be displayed on table top easels or on a lowered plate rail available to the viewer.

Small format tapestries are approachable and knowable both their structure and content. They have come down off the corporate castle walls and museums walls. The size of a small format tapestry makes it personal art, modern art.



**Cheri White**: Three years ago I retired. We moved to Oregon where I first saw and immediately loved small format tapestries. Despite having no weaving background, I was determined to create these small, finely detailed weavings. It took study and practice to reach the place where I now have more joy than frustration and the love affair continues.



# **Small Format Tapestries**

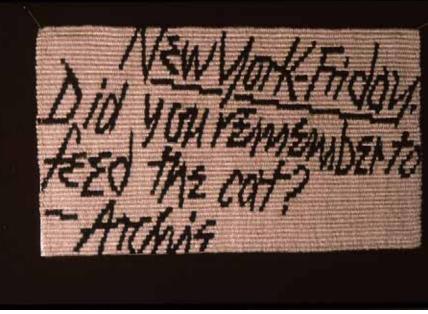
#### by Archie Brennan

In many western mainland European countries, a 'small' tapestry, even today, is one that is smaller than mural size, around 3 or 4 meters square—say 30 square feet— in area.



I see from my records that I have woven 85 tapestry postcards – all 6 in x 4 in. I mailed them around the world unwrapped, simply with a card stitched to the back, stamped and addressed and mailed, perhaps with a woven scrawled message or an image. Every card has arrived intact.

Archie Brennan, "This is a Very Small Tapestry," 4 in x6 in, 10 epi.



**Archie Brennan**, "Postcard . . . Feed the Cat?," 4 in x 6 in, 12 epi.

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Archie Brennan, "Miniature," 1 in x 1 in, tapestry face.

Archie Brennan, "Hi / Hi," 2 in x 2 in, 11 epi.





Archie Brennan, "Blond Girl,"



Archie Brennan, "White Bird, Grey Ground," 5 in x 2.5 in, 12 epi.

As I write this I can see, pinned to the wall behind my desk, some really small format tapestries, 18 in all, and I have woven many more, and dispersed them far and wide. The smallest is less than one inch square. It is a female face in two colors, approximately diamond in shape, woven at 18 epi. I have to admit that the warp is black and is cut freely spread as her hair. I have woven a number of such tapestries similarly sized, at times with 'blond' warp or 'red' warp as hair. There are also on this wall many tiny birds and animals around 2 in x 2 in square, single woven words, and more. I even wove some two dozen white birds on a blue ground about 2 by 3 inches in size and mailed them from Papua New Guinea in an envelope as Christmas cards. At this size they only took a couple of days weaving, once I got started.

#### Archie Brennan, "Atlantic Crossing?," 3 in x 6 in, 12 epi.



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I also wove two closely similar profile faces (3.5 in x 1.5 in), in four colors, one above the other, in Jean Pierre Larochette and Yael Lurie's studio. I think Nancy Hoskins owns them. I learned so much, as every comparable shed or slightly 'pulled' warp altered, refined, reconsidered, and enriched the facial expression.

I have also woven 3 packages, each 4 in x 4 in x 2 in with "paper," "string," and woven names and addresses They were mailed to London, Hawaii, and Japan.



Archie Brennan, "Back View," 6 in x 3 in.



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Archie Brennan, "White Bird," 2.75 in x 2.75 in, 12 epi.

The whole point about weaving these small format pieces was to answer the perennial question, "I wonder what will happen if I try this?"



Archie Brennan, "Bird II," 6 in x 6 in.

**Archie Brennan** served a 7-year apprenticeship in tapestry from 1947 then graduated from Edinburgh Art College. There, he established a department of tapestry in the 1950s and the 60s and was also director of Dovecot Studios. He now travels world wide, teaching and lecturing with Susan Martin Maffei. He has just completed personal tapestry #502 (60" x 40"), in addition to many miniature works. The National Museum of Scotland is currently preparing a major retrospective exhibition of his tapestries.

# A World Within: Discoveries and Explorations in Small Format Tapestry

#### by Susan Middleton

Small Tapestries are...

- simple or complex
- created alone or with others
- made in the studio, the open air, or any where
- a story, an impression or an illusion
- made quickly or over a long time
- to experiment or interpret
- to learn to teach
- an intimate view or read from a distance

Small tapestries provide weavers in the 21st century with many wonderful ways of exploring ideas and techniques. Versatile and transportable, these little gems can be created and enjoyed in the small intimate spaces of contemporary

**Susan E. Middleton**, "Journey of a Rose," (in progress), 7.75 in x 8 in, 10 epi, 2014.





Susan E. Middleton, "Journey of a Rose," 7.75 in x 8 in, 10 epi, 2014.

life. The small tapestry format is an art form that can be transported and worked on anywhere. As an outlet for ideas, like a sketchbook, it can be a response to immediate experiences and inner states of being.

Making small tapestries provides rich experiences that accumulate quickly over time. The making of each piece can further develop an understanding of the complex process of tapestry weaving. Between 2013 and 2014, a series of explorations in small tapestry grew into improvisations as the year progressed. These tapestries were a response to my need to grow as a tapestry weaver. They became a creative outlet where ideas and techniques could grow together. As the year progressed, my focus shifted from interpreting predesigned cartoons to improvising with the immediate threads that I was working with. The interaction of these threads created the ideas expressed and the emotions experienced. Using



Susan E. Middleton, "Waiting," 7.5 in x 7.5 in, 10 epi, 2014

a small format also encouraged explorations in the unique language of tapestry and increased an understanding about the range of expression possible in small format designs.

"Persephone's Dream" is based on a chalk drawing of a pomegranate. Both reading a cartoon and reading and interpreting shapes were the main focus of these explorations. Working with a range of red tones was a challenge and I learned much about reading multiple shapes. This approach reads the imagery in a similar way to a painting. "Waiting" interpreted a section from a watercolour where subtle shifts in colour were the focus.

Shifting approaches between using a cartoon and improvising can create unexpected results. While working in small format, new discoveries can be made about tapestry weaving and design; they are also made about an inner life that I am trying to explore in my work. "Reflections" and "Journey of a Rose" were improvised using the approach of premixing bobbins of

colour and then allowing the piece to evolve during the course of weaving. Creating tapestry improvisations has allowed me to "listen to the threads" and to also listen to my inner world and discover the point where the act of creation and the language that I am using to create becomes one. I look forward to each new improvisation where I can discover more tapestry vocabulary and techniques.

One of the advantages of working small is that it requires a minimal risk and fewer materials, just a few colours (or more complex as desired), and thus a quicker set up. Because of the small format; I became more willing to allow the threads to lead me and this made me more aware of what I was actually weaving as the pieces unfolded. Working without a drawing or cartoon does not mean that the work is random. It is a process of visualizing and paying attention to the thread and bobbins as they interact within the whole piece. It is about being open to possibilities. The colours seem to have a life and mind of their own sometimes. Working in this way required a willingness to let go of control over the outcome. To let the work evolve.

Moving between the two approaches of using a cartoon and improvisation also



Susan E. Middleton, "Persephone's Dream," (in progress), 9.25 in x 8.5 in, 12 epi, 2013.

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opens the possibilities to different thought processes. A conversation with another person is an improvisation in speech that comes naturally to most of us and is something that we do almost without thinking; similar to a conversation, improvising with colour and threads in tapestry weaving also engages the weaver in thinking, processing, and responding to the development of the piece as it progresses.

Improvisation is different from interpreting a cartoon where the weaver chooses the threads, colours, and techniques to be used based on a drawing; the interpretation of the cartoon resulting in a convergence of ideas and technical skill, colour mixing, and shape interpretation to recreate the overall effect expressed in the drawing.

Improvisation can evolve in the following way (as seen in the pieces "Waiting", and "Journey of a Rose"). After the size of the tapestry and epi (ends per inch) are predetermined and set up on the loom. A colour palette is selected without any reference to prepared imagery, threads are mixed, and



Susan E. Middleton, "Reflections," 7.75 in x 7.5 in, 10 epi, 2014.

the prepared bobbins are placed along the warp threads. The weaving proceeds without any drawing, cartoon, or preconception. As the colours begin to interact and the piece unfolds, an immediate response is required which shapes the work and ideas as they continue to unfold. Using this technique, I have noticed a shift in focus from being concerned about the product or outcome when interpreting my drawings to that of the process of designing and creating and problem solving as the pieces evolve, while improvising.

Both of these approaches are used by tapestry weavers, regardless of the size of the tapestry, and sometimes both approaches can be used even in the same piece. The manageable size of the small format was an invitation to take more risks in my weaving that resulted in weaving tapestries that are completely improvised.

As the characteristics of tapestry continue to be defined and redefined in the 21st century by the weavers of tapestry and the marketplace, discussions about what tapestry is and is not will also continue. Small tapestries will continue to have a place in this discussion because their small size invites creativity in small, manageable increments. Small format tapestry does not have to replace the joy and satisfaction of weaving a large tapestry; the commanding space and scale, the sweep of colour, the stages of cartoon design, and the colour mixing of large tapestries continue to capture the imaginations of contemporary tapestry weavers who use both formats. However, not everyone has access to the resources, space, and time that are required for the creation of large tapestries. Working in small format makes it possible to continue to discover, develop, and express ideas anywhere and any time. Tapestries are being created in the smallest spaces and even in the great outdoors.

Important questions have emerged from these experiences. How and when does this convergence of ideas and technique take place? With large pieces the investment of time, materials and skill is very high. The tapestry takes a long time to create. It requires a more complex setup of materials and larger looms. The risk can be high to begin a large piece without a design and lengthy preparation. This lengthy preparation can sometimes impede creativity and bog the artist down, as only one of many possibilities are executed over a long investment of time.

Weaving small tapestries provides immediate rewards and a lower risk factor. The experience of creating small tapestries has informed my larger work as it progresses; it also provides relief, a change of pace, and a creative outlet. The tapestries exist in their own right and do not have to be studies for larger pieces (although larger pieces may grow out of their existence).

These small pieces have startled and surprised me. The immediate nature of working in this way, and perhaps finding the balance between one's ability to weave tapestry and a focus on the threads, reveals more of the inner world that I am trying to explore. The results are small tapestries that invite miniature and manageable views of this inner world.



**Susan Middleton** lives in Toronto. She weaves tapestries in an old church where her studio is located. Her love of Medieval history and literature has taken her on many adventures into the unknown. Her most recent adventure began five years ago, when she wove her first tapestry. In 2011 she completed advanced tapestry studies in Oudenaarde, Belguim at the Vlaamse Ardennen (VASSA) weaving studio, located in the historic House of Lalaing. To see more of her work, visit http://www.chezrouleau.com

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# Small is Beautiful

#### by Courtney Ann Shaw

As I approached the grocery store (Giant for those who are interested), I saw the smaller carts, and thought to myself—SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL.

As we age (and I am now 68), I like smaller things more and more. They can be easier to handle, more precise, more flexible, and less expensive. I like smaller chairs and utensils in my house, lighter glassware (especially pitchers filled with water), and smaller rugs and furniture—pieces that for the most part I can handle myself.

And this is also true of tapestries, or with any fiber, be it cross-stitch, embroidery or what have you. It is even true with spinning, when you can carry around a portable wheel. Spinning can be almost as convenient as knitting, given the right equipment. When I think of the breakthrough into small works I always think of the fascinating tapestries of Mary Dieterich. Even Archie Brennan makes small and fun objects. They are easier to carry or ship after being bought as well.

I wrote my dissertation on the history of tapestry weaving since the 1930s in the United States. At that time, in 1990, I was very much the traditionalist, having read a gazillion pages on the importance of monumentality, clarity, and meaning in tapestry. Lurçat advocated "the scale of prearranged colors," and Le Corbusier described the monumentality of tapestry in an essay titled "Woven Murals." I have a huge eighteenth century French tapestry in my living room (which has to rolled on the bottom) and a Mary Lynn O'Shea in my dining room that hangs nicely on the wall, but I also have smaller Coptic, Peruvian, and Louise Wheatley tapestries elsewhere in my house. I am also an avid dollhouse maker and interior designer. Obviously everything in them is small format, even the little quilts, tapestries, and pictures within them. I collect toys, especially Fisher-Price, and we know how important the Little People and Sweet Streets series are—the former might go into the Toy Hall of Fame. There are even smaller cars, like the Fiat, Mini Cooper and, of course, the Smart car, all coming from more compact European nations to accommodate lifestyle changes.

I must say, then, that I have changed my mind over the years because people live in apartments, or buildings broken into units. Housing is often small, using less of the fabulous decorative arts of the past—the beautiful china and glass (which I repair) and silver, sterling or plate. It seems that the next generations want everything to go into the dishwasher, down the drain, or out with the trash. Lots of individuals are into "cute," and small, and clever. Environmental concerns are huge. The new environmental designs create a small home with total foldout utility.

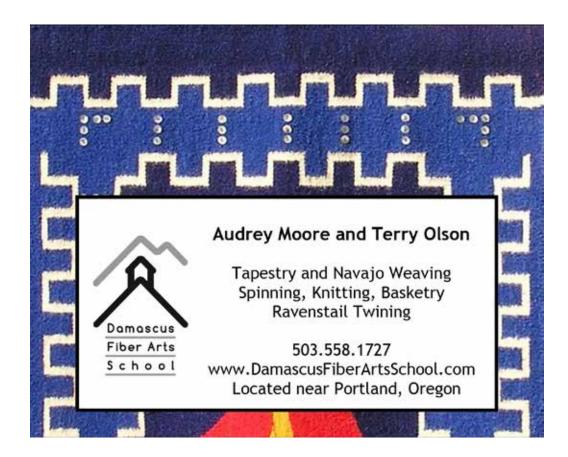
There is substantial recycling of materials in weaving, even including plastic bags, paper, and other synthetic products. Even the tapestry tools have changed to metals (stronger and more resilient). Weaving incorporates new fibers and lots of embellishments. Can they go into the washing machine!?

Timeliness and easiness (lightness) and space are preeminent in this future shock era. The subtleties of tapestry shading techniques are still as precise and take a long time but being smaller generally take less time. Many more people can enjoy them because more fit into a space and, of course, we have the Internet for outreach! They are generally less expensive for many reasons. They last longer generally because they are more colorfast, and if made with synthetic yarn, are stronger. Size generally effects cost, so smaller is less expensive.

Still, large colorful or subtle tapestries in the proper planned spaces, like those by Henry Moore, are exciting and create a curiosity on the part of the viewer—how much did that cost to make! How long did it take to weave? How did they do it, how did they hang it, how long will it last, where will it go, and what will ultimately become of it? When there are big shows at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and elsewhere there are ooohs and ahhhhs for all those reasons. They are an education unto themselves.

But large tapestries take up much space in creating, have a limited clientele, require lots of explanation, and can be very difficult to sell, often enough leaving artists to turn to other media to supplement their incomes or to survive.

**Courtney Ann Shaw** lives and writes in Annapolis, MD. She completed her Ph.D., "The Rise of the Artist/Weaver: Tapestry weaving in the United States from 1930– 1990," at the University of Maryland in 1992. Please visit <u>courtneyannshaw.com</u> to learn more about her books.



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# Follow that Line! An ATA Workshop with Sarah Swett

#### by Line Dufour and Cheryl Riniker

"Over, under, over, under.... a thrill for a lifetime." - Sarah Swett

#### Line Dufour

Last summer, my project "Fate, Destiny and Self Determination: an International Tapestry Installation" was hosted by the Doyle and Margaret Hartman Gallery situated at Regis University in Denver. I signed up for Sarah Swett's tapestry workshop, organized by Barb Brophy on behalf of ATA and held at The Recycled Lamb, owned by Cheryl Nachtrieb and located nearby in Golden, Colorado.

As a teacher, Sarah is animated, effusive, and vibrant. Waves of quiet, then waves of animated conversation ebbed and flowed throughout the four days. Sarah gave students feedback and support and addressed all the topics we presented to her. Her self-awareness, mindfulness and responsiveness created a stimulating environment for learning.

Sarah talked about her own instructors: Archie Brennan, Susan Martin Maffei, Mary Lane, Jean Pierre Larochette, and Yael Lurie. From these learning experiences, and from relentless tapestry weaving, Sarah distilled her own approach, based on what works best for her. Sarah works spontaneously, continuously making intuitive decisions as she weaves her tapestries. She often works from a black and white drawing the size of her tapestry and the colour choices reveal themselves as she weaves. Her weaving is not formulaic, nor does she become complacent by relying upon a prescribed image where all is predetermined. She emphasizes that her weaving practice is about being in the moment. Along with that, the struggles, or what she calls her 'micro dramas' play out as she weaves - an assortment of tensions created by constant decision making. In this way, she remains connected to her

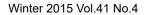
inspiration, which in turn makes her tapestries inspiring. Her message to aspiring tapestry weavers is to "trust your intuition." What makes Sarah's work especially distinctive is her fertile imagination and the joy and sense of humour that emanates from all she creates. Sarah's blog, (http://www.afieldguidetoneedlework. com/), documents her work and her process. Like Sarah, it is delightful, witty and intelligent.

I enjoyed being with other tapestry weavers who respect tapestry as much as I do. It is an opportunity that does not occur often, and in my case, it was a first. Rebecca Mezoff, an accomplished tapestry weaver who studied with James Koehler; Nancy Wohlenberg, who taught me how to do a better slip knot; Cheryl Riniker, who introduced me to the Weaving Southwest's 2 ply Churro warp; Mary Colton, who shared her tapestries with us; Carol Green, author of several books on textile/ fiber artists; and Summer Larson, a newer weaver. It was interesting to see the variety of tapestry looms and



Sarah Swett demonstrating how to laugh. Photo: Line Dufour

### A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY





Sarah Swett demonstrating a weaving technique. Photo: Rebecca Mezoff.

tools used by participants and to get a sense of how they worked. Most students used Mirrix looms, some of which were outfitted with a motor so that the shed could change effortlessly.

Taking Sarah's workshop was energizing and stimulating. It left me raring to get going on my next tapestry series, and better able to technically address the issues that will arise. New friendships have been formed, based on our passion and enthusiasm for tapestry. The moments and memories of the workshop continue to be effervescent.

Line Dufour teaches weaving at the Toronto Weaving School and weaves tapestry using traditional and non traditional approaches. http://www.tapestryline.com/

#### **Cheryl Riniker**

This is the second workshop I have taken with Sarah Swett, and it was just as much fun as the first. Sarah inspires you with her own work, but she also inspires you to push yourself to try new things and to rely on the fact that we all have the ability to solve our own weaving challenges.

One of the advantages of taking a workshop is trying new materials. Sarah talks about how weaving a tapestry creates a fabric, unlike painting, which starts with a canvas. The choice of both weft and warp affect this fabric. We used a wool warp, which produced a softer hand than the cotton seine twine I normally use. What I liked about using a wool warp is that the weft seems to stay where it is beaten.

We used Faro as the weft material. Faro is a singles weft which is good for blending in weft bundles. For her own tapestries Sarah spins



Draw Every Day. Photo: Rebecca Mezoff.

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her weft (a single yarn with z-twist) and uses natural dyes (indigo, cochineal, madder, weld, and lichen) to create her color palette. She also spins her warp (spun s and plied z). This affects the hand of the tapestry because the twist is working together and it also helps lock the warp and weft together.

We wove without a cartoon. This is a very freeing, but also scary exercise. We practiced responding to what was woven previously, looking at the tapestry and deciding what needed to happen next, trusting our intuition, or as Sarah put it, "listening to the weaving." Because the focus of the weaving was curved lines, this required paying attention to the hills and valleys (highs and lows) and using what Archie Brennan calls "stolen passes" to make a smoother curve.

Sarah also shared how she weaves letters, which requires a minimum of 5 warp threads. She finds that using a serif font helps lock the letters in place. There are other considerations as well, including whether the letter starts over a hill or valley thread. For example, the letter "a" needs to have the bottom middle thread on a valley. Sarah demonstrated 4-selvedge weaving, which I think we all would all enjoy learning.

As if the opportunity to weave tapestry for three and half days with a group of incredibly interesting weavers was not enough, we also visited the Denver Art Museum to see the Creative Crossroads: Art of Tapestry exhibit. The curators discussed the pieces in the exhibit. We learned that the oldest tapestry was actually in better shape because some of the differences in how the yarns were treated in the tapestries. Several of the weavers in the class knew James Koehler and Irvin Trujillo, two of the participating artists, and shared stories about them. Rebecca Mezoff has a good summary of the exhibit in her blog: http://rebeccamezoff.blogspot.com/2015/08/ creative-crossroads-art-of-tapestry-at.html.

We visited Line Dufour's Fate, Destiny, & Self Determination exhibit that opened at Regis University in Denver just after the class ended. The exhibit consists of three parts. The left side was woven by Line. The right side was woven by a number of weavers working on the same warp. The rest of the exhibit includes individual pieces submitted by weavers from all over the world, including Sarah Swett's contribution.



Line Dufour has been building a weaving community for the last 25 years through her teaching of weaving at the Toronto Weaving School as well as through community weaving projects. You can learn more about her work at www.tapestryline.com



**Cheryl Riniker** lives in Colorado Springs where she weaves and spins as much as she can, often with a cat on her lap. She teaches beginning tapestry techniques and mentors in the ATA mentoring program.

# **ARTAPESTRY 4**

by Lise Frølund

ARTAPESTRY 4 - last stop, Denmark.

Denmark was the last stop for the exhibition ARTAPESTRY 4. Before that it was shown in Finland, Austria, and Germany. As the name suggests, the exhibition is the fourth in a series which, since 2005, have been sponsored by European Tapestry Forum (www.tapestry.dk) and shown all over Europe.



Aino Kajaniemi, "I Stretch," 73 cm x 154 cm. Photo: Aino Kajaniemi.

Silkeborg is situated in the middle of Jutland, Denmark. Here the old health resort, Silkeborg Spa, was given new life as Silkeborg Spa Art Centre, www.silkeborgbad.dk. The beautiful and unique buildings from 1883 contain very large, as well as quite small, rooms. Consequently, the feeling of space and the light effects differ widely from room to room, making it possible to accentuate each wall-hanging. Silkeborg Spa Art Centre frames beautifully the tapestries of the thirty-one textile artists.

ARTAPESTRY 4 includes work from no less than twelve European countries and, at the well-attended opening in Denmark in September 2015, about half of the artists were present. The artists travelled considerable distance, partly to be part of the public opening, but also for the opportunity to meet colleagues and see one another's work, for textiles never have and never will be photogenic. The catalogue and website are helpful in providing a survey, but the photographs do not do justice to the actual works. If you really want to appreciate the exhibition, it must be

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Sarah Brennan, "Broken White Band with New Blue," 115 cm x 115 cm, 2010, Wools, cotton and cottolin. Photo: Shannon Tofts.





Ann Naustdal, "Straws and Scrubs," 135 cm x 145 cm. Photo: Kim Müller.

in person. The travel undertaken by the artists also bears witness to the great work done by European Tapestry Forum in making these exhibitions possible.

The weavings in the exhibition are quite varied, but they are all large. Some are very intricate, like the classical Flemish tapestries of hard-spun wool and flax, others are made up of thin and thick yarns loosely interlaced. Scottish artist Susan Mowatt wove a number of thin striped strips which are placed directly on the wall with space in between, so that the wall and the bands comprise the actual work. Some hangings contain a profusion of colours, some only few, and Hungarian Marika Scaraz' bridge-shaped weaving is exclusively in black. Many works are flat-woven, others have complicated structures, and one is rya. What they all have in common are a skilled hand and a well-considered motif. They are works you would like to live with.

Any visitor at any exhibition who takes his/her time to look closely will have favourites, albeit with all the subjectivity inevitable in a personal choice. And I have my mine. Norwegian Ann Naustdal studied in Scotland, and now in the middle of the Norwegian capital, Oslo, she sits at an upright loom where she can see the entire weaving in progress. Her golden brown "Straws and Scrubs" measures 145 cm x 135 cm and has been divided into three equally large cross sections. The two bottom ones have their own structures that convey the feeling of dry straw, leaves, and grass, whereas the top one is a woven image of many dry straws with white caps (Norwegian cotton grass) on a black background. This highly stylized form gives me the feeling of actually being outside, in late summer, smelling the dry grass and feeling it prickling the soles of my feet.

Another favourite is Scottish Sara Brennan's "Broken White Band with New Blue." She weaves with thin woolen yarn in black, white, and blue. The black section at the bottom of the weaving, and the blue at the top, intermingle with the white band in the middle section like clouds, smoke or steam. The colours seem to evaporate into the thin white air. A third favourite is Finnish Aino Kajaniemi's weavings "I Stretch" and "I Bend." They are both delicate and humorous. A fourth favourite would be... and a fifth... well, I could go on.

There has been a tendency to consider art tapestry as an art form that mainly belongs to the past. But here in Scandinavia it seems to be prospering again. Young art students are fascinated by the physical material and the craftsmanship. We now see students of both sexes who take a keen interest in the loom... which, I suppose, we all find very gratifying.



**Lise Frølund** has had her own workshop since 1979. After a couple of years with digital shaft shifting (in 1988), she got access to a handloom with digital jacquard. In 2004 the Norwegian TC-1 digital jacquard was installed in her old handloom, and since then the majority of her weavings have been carried out on this loom. For further information

see: <u>www.lisefrolund.dk</u>

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# **ATA News**

#### Convergence

Mark your calendars and join us in Milwaukee, Wisconsin during Convergence 2016. **Tapestry Unlimited: 11th international, unjuried small format tapestry exhibition**, will hang at the Milwaukee Public Library, July 26 – August 11, 2016. Enter the show online or with the entry form at the back of this newsletter. ATA will be sponsoring our biennial **Members Meeting and Speakers Session** on Saturday, August 6th, 10:00am – 1:00pm. Featured speakers are Susan Iverson and Aino Kajaniemi. The speakers will be followed by the ever popular Digislam. Enter the Digislam here. **TAPESTRY ON TAP!**, ATA's 2016 Members Retreat, takes place at Marquette University in Milwaukee from August 7 – 10, 2016. Check your email for online registration and the back of this newsletter for a registration form. Read more about the retreat.

#### Join the ATA Board of Directors

ATA is looking for new Board members to serve as Treasurer, Awards Committee Chair and Co-Director of Resources. The Treasurer must be familiar with accounting practices, Quickbooks online and non profit reporting. ATA's two Co-Directors lead the Board and work with Committee Chairs to insure that ATA's programming is carried out in a professional manner. The Awards Chair administers ATA's awards.

On the job training available. To read more about serving as a Board member, click here. Or email Mary Zicafoose: mzicafoose@gmail.com

#### In Memoriam

Ed Kandel, an ATA member since 2005, passed away in September. Marjorie Fine of the Seaside Weavers said, "Ed was a member of our local weaving guild for many years. We remember him with fondness."



Important Dates			
November 22, 2015	STI 4: Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation closes at Biggs Museum of Art.		
January 16, 2016	STI 4: Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation opens at Artspace.		
February 1, 2016	ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study applications due.		
March 5, 2016	STI 4: Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation closes at Artspace.		
April 15, 2016	ATA International Student Award applications due.		
July 2, 2016	American Tapestry Biennial 11 opens at South Bend Museum of Art.		
July 26 – August 11	Tapestry Unlimited: 11th international, unjuried small format tapestry exhibition, Milwaukee Public Library, Central Branch.		
July 30 – August 6	HGA's Convergence 2016, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.		
August 6, 2016	ATA's Speakers Session, Milwaukee Convention Center.		
August 7 – 10, 2016	<b>TAPESTRY ON TAP!</b> ATA's 2016 Members Retreat, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA.		
September 25, 2016	American Tapestry Biennial 11 closes at South Bend Museum of Art.		
January 21, 2017	American Tapestry Biennial 11 opens at San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles.		
April 16, 2017	American Tapestry Biennial 11 closes at San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles.		
August 15, 2017	Small Tapestry International 5 opens at the University of North Texas.		
September 30, 2017	Small Tapestry International 5 closes at the University of North Texas.		



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# **Tapestry Topics Themes & Deadlines**

#### Social Media

#### Deadline: January 15, 2016

Social media was constructed to allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. It provides a highly interactive platform through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify. Not only has it precipitated substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals, but it has profoundly impacted our practice as tapestry weavers. Social media has connected us together virtually, has diminished the sense of isolation endemic in our practice and has been instrumental in being able to connect to other tapestry artists all over the world.

Real connection with others, however, comes in the physicality of doing, in materiality, in actions, interactions, processes and events shared by an assortment of individuals and groups. Weaving is an appropriate metaphor for engagement and activity with others. Both can be described as a means of producing a coherent united whole or collaboration through the combining and interlacement of various elements. Tapestry weaving is a slow, labourious and manual practice, a contrast to the speed at which social media weaves word threads of connection to others.

- Have you used social media to connect to other tapestry weavers? Has this enriched you and your practice? If so, how?
- Have you resisted the social media currents? If so why? Is this deliberate or circumstantial?
- Has it helped you feel less isolated as a tapestry weaver? Aided in your development and education?
- Has it transformed or impacted on your tapestry images and techniques?
- Has it broadened your tapestry world?

Submit your article to Theme Coordinator, Line Dufour, tapestryline@sympatico.ca

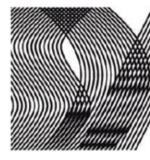
### Imagery & Weaving: Why Tapestry?

#### Deadline: April 1, 2016

Tapestry weaving is a wonderful and rewarding process. It allows us to hold colors in our hands, to choose fibers that absorb and reflect light in different ways, to manipulate the materials with our fingers and to engage in the imagery in an intimate manner. And yet, tapestry has limits imposed by the structure of warp and weft. I am curious about why we choose tapestry and how that choice affects our imagery, and I invite you to share your thoughts in this issue of Tapestry Topics.

- What makes a perfect marriage of image and technique? Whose work do you admire for that reason?
- How can imagery originally conceived in another medium be successfully translated into tapestry?
- Consider your own work. You have a wonderful image in your head. What makes you choose tapestry as your medium rather than drawing or painting? Is some imagery more suited to weaving than to other techniques? Are some images not at all suited to weaving? Are you trying to reproduce a composition created in another medium or are to trying to create an image that could only exist as a weaving?

Submit your article to Theme Coordinator, Nancy Nordquist, nnordq@aol.com



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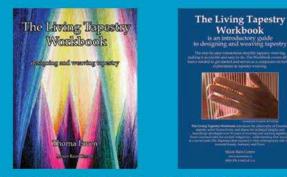
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# **Tapestry Topics Committee**

Editor: Leslie Munro Copy Editor: Robbie LaFleur Layout: Robin Coombes Proofreader: Katzy Luhring Web preparation: Mary Lane Mailing: Ruth Manning

# The Living Tapestry Workbook

an introductory guide to designing and weaving tapestry Step-by-step instructions simplify tapestry weaving, making it accessible and easy to do



The Living Tapestry Workbook introduces the philosophy of Canadian tapestry artist Thoma Ewen, Artistic Director of Moon Rain Centre, and shares her technical insights and knowledge developed over 40 years of designing, weaving and teaching tapestry. The Workbook communicates the ancient indigenous wisdom that weaving is a sacred path and illustrates how tapestry's vital contemporary role is to transmit beauty, harmony and Peace.

Now in its 4th printing, The Living Tapestry Workbook can be ordered directly from Moon Rain Centre at http://www.moonrain.ca/TapestryWorkBook.html

www.moonrain.ca email: info@moonrain.ca tel: 819 457 9711

# Tapestry Unlimited 11<sup>th</sup> international, unjuried small format tapestry exhibition

# Enter online!

**Tapestry Unlimited** is open to all weavers. We invite entries which work within more traditional definitions of tapestry, but also entries that expand upon the core principles of the medium as they explore new techniques and processes. Multimedia work is welcome. Tapestry Unlimited will hang at the Milwaukee Public Library, July 26 – August 11, 2016. The entry form (intent to participate) is due January 31, 2016. The tapestry, and an image of the tapestry is due March 31, 2016.

## **Details**

## the tapestry

- The tapestry may not exceed 10" x 10" x 1" deep (25cm x 25cm x 2.5cm).
- Participants may submit only one piece.
- Group entries are encouraged.
- Work must be original, executed by the entrant and not shown in a prior ATA show.
- All entries must be ready to install with hanging devices as described on page 3.
- Your tapestry must be available for the duration of the exhibit.

## shipping

- Each artist (or group) is responsible for the cost of shipping to the Exhibition Committee.
- Return shipping (no 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 box.

#### the catalog

- All participants will receive a catalog.
- Artists will provide an image of their tapestry for the catalog.
- Catalogs will be sent to the participants along with their tapestry at the end of the show.

#### liability

• This show is often hung in non-traditional gallery spaces. 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 wired to display boards to prevent theft. However, liability insurance during the show is the responsibility of the artist.

#### publicity

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

#### deadlines

- The entry form (intent to participate) is due January 31, 2016.
- The tapestry, and an image of the tapestry is due March 31, 2016.

## **Questions?**

Contact Exhibition Chair, Janna Maria Vallee: janna@vancouveryarn.com

1

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## Enter online!

## Or apply by mail with this form (please print clearly)

Name	Email
Address	
City	_ State/Province Country
Postal Code Phone (country code,	area code, number)
This tapestry is part of the Group Challenge entitle	ed:
Group Name:	

#### 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.

Signature

#### Entry Form Deadline (intent to participate)

Your entry form must be received by January 31, 2016. Mail to:

Tapestry Unlimited c/o Fran Williamson 2505 South Boxwood Lane Spokane, WA 99223 USA

2

Date

Do not send your tapestry to the above address. See page 3 for directions on shipping your tapestry.

#### **Entry Fee and Payment**

\$40.00 (US Dollars) The entry fee includes a catalog & the cost of return shipping (no insurance). **Payment by PayPal is preferred**.

PayPal: Use the "Send money" tab on the PayPal website (<u>www.paypal.com</u>) and send your payment to americantapestryalliance@gmail.com with a note saying: Untitled/Unjuried.

Check or Credit Card: You may also pay by check or credit card. Make check payable to American Tapestry Alliance. Please spell out the entire name. Do not use ATA. Canadians, please write "U.S. Currency" on your check. Entry fees are non refundable. If you are unable to send a tapestry for the show, your entry fee will not be refunded, but you will receive a catalog.

Credit Card:	MC	Visa	Amount of charge:	
Card #				Exp Date
3 digit Security	/ Code	Signature		

9/25/15

## Mounting Instructions

1. Stitch two strips of 1" wide cloth tape (twill tape works well) to the back of the tapestry on the top and bottom so that the tape forms two open ended channels - as shown below.

2. The tape strips should end 1" from the edges of the tapestry.

3. Leave the ends of the tape channels open so that a wire can be threaded through.

4. Fill in the identification label below. Cut it out and attach to the back of the tapestry with a safety pin or tiny stitches at the corners.

<b>↑</b> Тор <b>↑</b> С	ut out this label and attach it to the back of your ta	pestry <b>†</b> Top <b>f</b>
Artist's Nar	ne	
Title of Wo	rk	
Challenge C	Group (if applicable)	
Challenge C	Group (if applicable)	

#### Checklist

- 1. Tapestry prepared for hanging as described above.
- 2. Label filled out and attached to back of tapestry.

International Entries: Customs Documents attached to tapestry mailing envelope in a resealable plastic bag and taped to the outside of the shipping envelope.

#### 4. Your tapestry and an image of the tapestry must be received by March 31, 2016.

- 5. Please read the following carefully:
  - Image submitted to be uncropped ie.1/2 inch of the background must be visible.
  - Image submitted to feature a neutral background, preferably white.
  - Image submitted to be 300 dpi and not exceed 3" on the longest side.
  - Submit your file as a JPG.
  - Title your file with your last name followed by the name of the tapestry, e.g. Doe\_Misty\_Morning.jpg

If you are unsure how to achieve these requests, please ask for help from a knowledgeable friend.
Email your image to Susan Rubendall, <u>susanrubendall@aol.com</u>, or upload it here:

http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/small-format-non-juried-exhibition/tapestry-unlimitedimage-upload/.

7. Send your tapestry to:	Tapestry Unlimited, c/o Ruth Manning		
	4133 Meyer Avenue		
	Madison, WI 53711		
	USA		

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# TAPESTRY ON TAP!

#### ATA's 2016 Members Retreat August 7-10, 2016

Running dry on inspiration? Quench your thirst when you belly up to the bar loom for a tasty micro brewed four-day tapestry retreat in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Master tapestry brewers Aino Kajaniemi and Susan Iverson will fill your empty mug with solid building blocks of creativity in the Cream City on the shore of sparkling Lake Michigan. Bring your enthusiasm... cheesehead hats optional!

ATA's Members Retreat will take place over four days, from August 7-10, 2016 at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI, USA, following HGA's Convergence. Check in at Marquette is on the afternoon on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Single and double rooms are available and include all meals.



"The Surface," 4'9" x 6' x 10," wool on linen warp

Pulled warp is a versatile technique that allows the weaver to create both simple and complex forms and shapes. The tapestry may be flat or become 3D. The workshop will include: visual presentations, an explanation of the technique and its variations, demonstrations, work time and discussions. Through woven samples and paper models participants will learn the basics of this technique and understand its potential.

The idea of pushing ideas and developing a concept into a series will be integrated into the workshop. Through a series of exercises and critiques/conversations each participant will have the opportunity to expand their work. The participant may choose to develop ideas with pulled warp, but that is not necessary. The creative aspect of exploring the technique will help each person think of new ideas and/or think about their current ideas/source material in a new way.

If you have taken one of Susan's classes previously, you may pursue new applications of this technique and receive help with problem solving in this workshop.

## Aino Kajaniemi Flexible Lines



"Irti" (Off), 2012, 30 x 40 cm

This workshop will focus on weaving practice, but will also be supplemented by discussions on developing themes and stories in one's work. In my art and my weaving technique the most important thing is the line. You will learn ways to achieve variety in woven lines by experimenting with different yarns, yarn weights and woven techniques. The goal is to achieve intricate detail, natural, organic lines, and a lively and more three dimensional surface. This sensitivity to line creates tapestries that are delicate and emotive, sensitive and human.

We will look at actual tapestries and slide shows of tapestries in order to understand techniques and design related concepts. I will also demonstrate my techniques on a small tapestry. We will discuss together problems that appear in everyone's weaving practice. We can learn through our own experience, but also by discussing and looking at each other's work. Susan Iverson, lives in rural Virginia near the small town of Montpelier. She had a long career as a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She earned a MFA from Tyler School of Art, Temple University in Philadelphia, BA and BFA from Colorado State University in Ft. Collins. Her work is exhibited widely throughout the United States and is included in many collections including the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC.

Aino Kajaniemi lives in Jyväskylä, Finland. She graduated from the University of Arts and Design in Helsinki. Her tapestries tell stories of human life. The symbolism of small, concrete things form a metaphor for something greater. She depict human growth and life's complexity and emotions: longing, fear, joy, shame, sorrow, the difficulty of communication and co-existence. Her work has been exhibited around the world and she has received numerous awards.

Registration Enrollment is limited. Register Online! Or complete the registration form below and mail to Marcia Ellis, 5565 Idlewood Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, USA. Early bird registration must be received by March 1, 2016. Retreat fees for non-ATA members include a one-year membership to ATA. Full refunds, less a \$75.00 administrative fee are granted until May 31, 2016. No refunds will be granted after that date. ATA is not responsible for any credit card processing fees, or currency transfer fees that you might incur as a result of registering, or dropping out of the workshop. Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$25.00 fee. For extra copies of this form, visit www.americantapestryalliance.org Questions? Contact Terry Olson: tapis.terry@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Click here to Register Online! or mail in this Registration Form

Name:

Address:

\_\_\_\_Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_ Phone:

Emergency Contact (Name and phone): \_\_\_\_

Teacher preference\* (number in order, 1-3): Iverson\_\_\_\_\_ Kajaniemi\_\_\_\_\_ no instructor preference\_

	Registration	Room & board.	Room & board.	Materials	Materials	Total
	Fee	4 nights (Sa dinner – Wed lunch)	5 nights (Sa dinner – Thurs breakfast)	Fee (Susan Iverson students)	Fee (Aino Kajaniemi students)	- otai
ATA member, Early Bird, single	\$425.00	\$447.00	\$521.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
ATA member, Early Bird, double**	\$425.00	\$375.00	\$431.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
Non ATA member, Early Bird, single	\$460.00	\$447.00	\$521.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
Non ATA member, Early Bird, double**	\$460.00	\$375.00	\$431.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
ATA member, late registration, single	\$460.00	\$447.00	\$521.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
ATA member, late registration, double**	\$460.00	\$375.00	\$431.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
Non ATA member, late registration, single	\$495.00	\$447.00	\$521.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	
Non ATA member, late registration, double**	\$495.00	\$375.00	\$431.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	

\*\* You must arrange for your own roommate. Roommate's name, if you chose the double room option.

(in US dollars and made out to American Tapestry Alliance. Please spell out the entire name. Payment: Check enclosed Do not use ATA. Canadians, please write "U.S. Currency" on your check.)

Credit Card # (MC or VISA) \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_

Exp Date: Cardholder's Signature

PayPal: (Log on to paypal.com. Send payment to americantapestryalliance@gmail.com & mention "2016 retreat")

Mail registration form to: Marcia Ellis / 5565 Idlewood Road / Santa Rosa, CA 95404 / USA