



AMERICAN TAPESTRY ALLIANCE

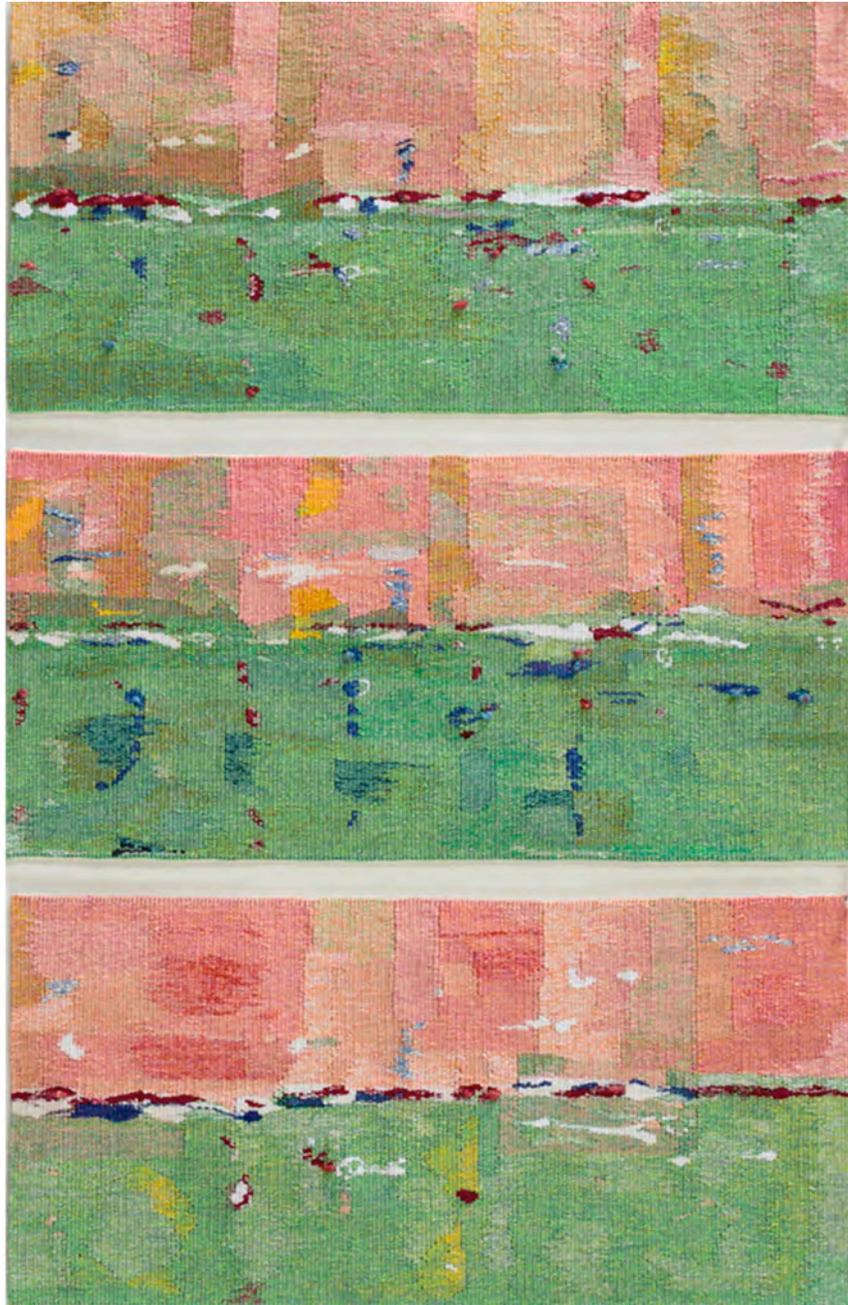
# TAPESTRYTOPICS

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF TAPESTRY ART TODAY

[WWW.AMERICANTAPESTRYALLIANCE.ORG](http://WWW.AMERICANTAPESTRYALLIANCE.ORG)

Fall 2012 Vol. 38 No. 3

**GOING INTERNATIONAL**



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## Going International

Anne Jackson, Theme Coordinator

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**Cover Image:** Cresside Collette, *A Trio of New Horizons*, 2011, 100 x 65 cm, wool, cotton, synthetics. Photo Credit: Tim Gresham

## Theme Editor's Introduction

by Anne Jackson

When Mary Lane invited me to be the guest Theme Editor for this issue of *Tapestry Topics*, "Going International," I was very pleased to accept. During the years of my membership of ATA, I have become aware that, despite



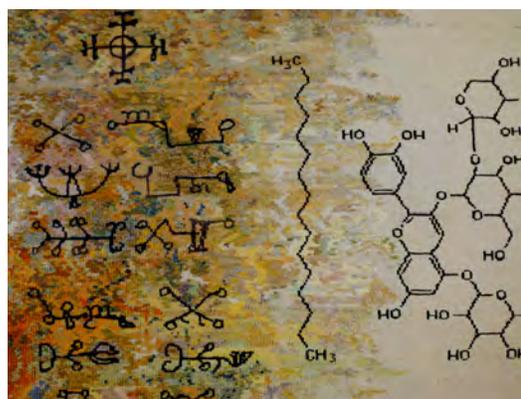
the "American" descriptor in the name, it is a worldwide organisation, at least in terms of membership.

Accordingly, I have tried to present a worldwide range of tapestry artists, writing of their own work, and also providing perspectives from various countries and continents. I know

there are many areas of the world not represented. The artists featured in this issue are personal contacts I have been privileged to make through my own practice, either meeting in "the real world" or via the internet. There are hosts of others out there. I often reflect that the worldwide network of tapestry weavers originally envisioned by the creators of ITNET has truly come to pass. I am thankful to them, to ATA, and to all the contributors to this issue of *Tapestry Topics*.

**Anne Jackson (Devon, UK)** was born in the USA, but moved to university in the UK, where she has lived ever since. She trained in woven tapestry at Middlesex University as a post-graduate. She exhibits in the UK and Europe, the USA and Australia. Her practice also includes critical writing and curating.

[www.annejackson.co.uk](http://www.annejackson.co.uk)



*The Alchemists*, detail

## Co-Directors Letter, Fall 2012

**Fall greetings to the tapestry world!** The theme of this issue of Tapestry Topics, Going International, is so appropriate, since almost 20% of our members do not live in the USA. The diversity of thought, artistic background, education, and point of view that this international component offers our organization is immense, and truly a great cultural asset. We extend a sincere thank you to our members far and wide for your continued interest and significant support of ATA. You provide great depth and texture to our membership and make us very proud!

Among the highlights of the summer was the inspiring slate of ATA events held at the Long Beach Convention Center in conjunction with Convergence 2012. Leading off the week was ATA's official presence in the Convergence Vendors Hall. ATA's beloved Membership Chair, Diane Wolf, resided over booth #203, meeting and greeting the greater weaving community, warmly inviting them into the folds of the world of tapestry. Friday night's ATA reception, Pacific Breezes, held in the Promenade Cafe of the Convention Center, was an exceptional networking opportunity, as was Pacific Forum, our Biennial Educational Forum and Digi Slam. Pacific Forum was well attended and offered a fantastic opportunity for connecting and great visual sharing. There is nothing quite like a tapestry weavers' slide jam for showcasing the creativity and extreme talent within our membership and, of course, there was nothing like being able to see the actual tapestries in the superbly mounted Pacific Portals exhibit of unjuried small format tapestries. The absolute wonder volunteer team of Merna Strauch, Nicki Bair and Karen Leckart made this possible at the Long Beach Library July 7 – August 30.

The week of ATA Convergence events culminated with the mother of all Membership Retreats, providing the rare opportunity to work with two of the greatest contemporary Master Weavers, Archie Brennan and Jean Pierre Larochette. Reports from these technically provoking and aesthetically inspiring workshops will be posted in the Winter issue of Tapestry Topics.

A reminder to all that applications are due September 1 for the first round of scholarships provided by the ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study, funded by generous member donations to this year's Valentines Day Appeal. Please reference the ATA website for application and specific details.

We hope to see many of you at the biennial conference of the Textile Society of America which will take place in Washington DC, September 19th -21st. After that, we look forward to the October 19th opening of ATA's anchor biennial exhibition, ATB 9, at the legendary Dairy Barn in Athens, OH, running through December 16. A huge hats off to our exhibition teams for their success in securing a second venue for ATB 9, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, IN, Jan 12-Feb 23, 2013. The dynamic venue search team is currently working on venues for STI 3. Members can view the show, curated by Hesse McGraw, Exhibition Curator of the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, NE, at the TACTile Arts Center in Denver, CO June 14-August 3, 2013.

As the summer events wind down and the days begin to shorten and cool we make the annual pilgrimage from our yards and gardens, returning again to our looms. May this be a season of rebirth for you and your creative endeavors. And who knows? This may just be the year to weave the magic carpet....

Mary & Michael



## Going International - a matter of necessity and inclination, but a satisfying choice

by Thomas Cronenberg

As practitioners of a solitary medium somewhat outside the art mainstream, tapestry artists naturally seek strength in numbers: whether they phone up a local weaver for a chat from time to time, join a guild or set up an informal tapestry group in their town, studio complex, or university department. Anyone who has had their painter/sculptor/printmaker friends question their dedication to a “slow,” “archaic,” “overly crafty” medium (their words), and been advised to look into more conventional, quicker-to-make or more commercial work looks for like-minded people.



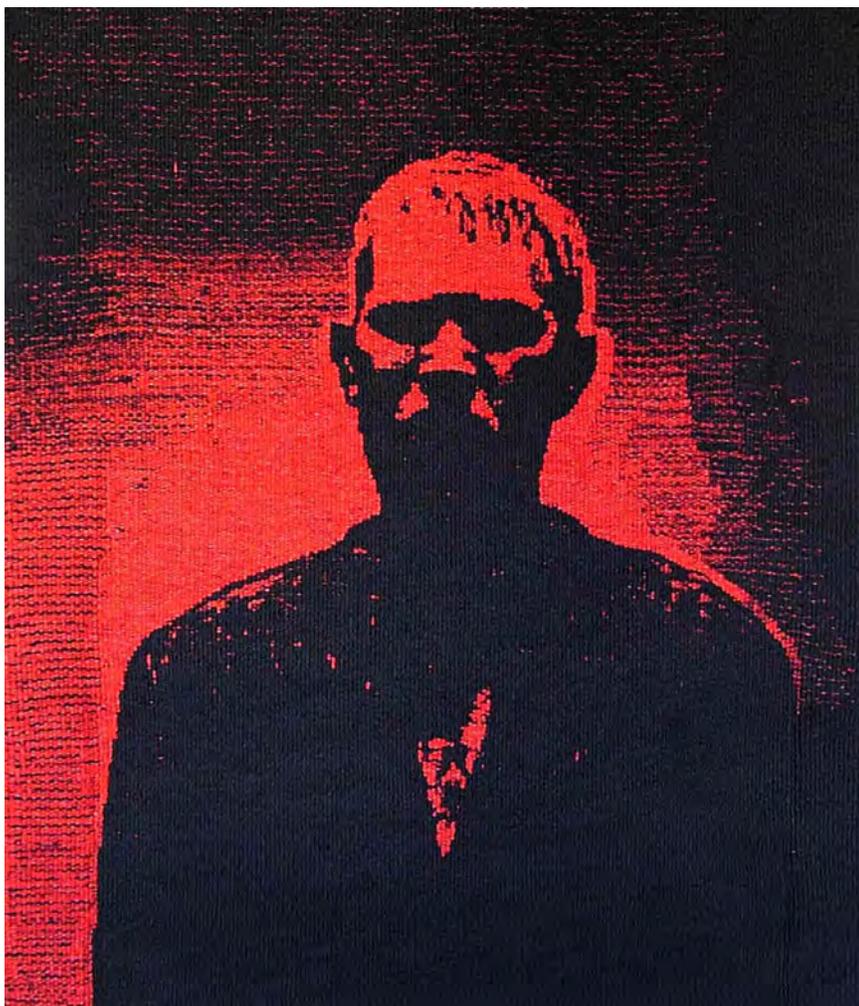
*Patchwork Identity, Identity Patchwork*  
1999, 2 panels, each 30 x 50 cm, linen warp, wool weft. Photo credit: Christian Bruch

Tapestry networks, formal and informal, offer companionship; a place to get advice; answers to technical questions; and exposure to other people’s work, obsessions, and viewpoints. Being involved in international shows broadens horizons. E-mail, Skype and budget airfares mean that a tapestry weaver like me in Hamburg is just as likely to have a best tapestry buddy in Edinburgh as in northern Germany. He is likely to chat online with artists around the world, and run into people at foreign exhibitions whom he hasn’t actually met in person, but already knows through Facebook.

In my case, “going international” is in my blood: I grew up outside Chicago with my German parents and my brothers, moved to Germany to go to college in 1982 and settled there, with the occasional short-term assignment in the U.S. and graduate school in the UK.

I learned to weave as a boy in the suburbs but got bored with scarves and placemats. I took up tapestry, largely self-taught, during rainy summers in southern Germany. I was inspired by Gobelin tapestries, Navajo weaving and the embroidery kits my mother and aunt stitched. My learning materials were international, too. My two favorite German tapestry books featured Swedish techniques (Margrit-Latrin Lange, *Gobelin-Weben*, Frech Verlag, Stuttgart, 1979) and Dutch expertise (Paula Dietz, *Gobelinweben: Geschichte–Technik–Methode*, Verlag Paul Haupt, Bern und Stuttgart, 1980). Carol K. Russell’s tapestry book, *The Tapestry Handbook*, (A&C Black Publishers, London, 1990) was important later, when I came back to tapestry.

I looked abroad for information and inspiration partially out of necessity. There is a fair amount of historical tapestry in Germany, but contemporary tapestry artists are few and far between, and tapestry shows rare. I did discover the work of Gabrielle Grosse (Armin Guess, Hrsg., *Gabriele Grosse Tapisserien: Werkverzeichnis 1961-1981*, Verlag Harenberg, Dortmund, 1982) and Peter Horn (<http://www.horn-tapestry-studio.homepage.t-online.de/Web-Site/HOME.html>) to name two German artists, early on. My journalism work took me all over Germany, and I managed to see a lot of textile art.



*Tommy Deutsch*  
2005, 120 x 100 cm, linen. Photo credit: Sami Yahya

suggested I train with tapestry weaver Rosemarie Romann-Moeller in Hamburg. Rosemarie, who had a lively intellect and an irreverent attitude, was a perfect match. She figured out where students were in their development and nudged them imperceptibly in the right direction. She became my mentor and close friend. Rosemarie encouraged me to apply for the tapestry course at West Dean College (UK). The program run by Pat Taylor opened my eyes to a lot of contemporary art and helped me focus on what I wanted to say - and how to develop ideas visually and take them into tapestry, by sketching on paper and on the loom or frame. Also, the scale of my work changed from tiny to sizeable. My largest tapestry (*Fernweh*, 2011) is 185 x 248 cm; earlier works had been barely the size of notebook paper.

Specialist journals became a lifeline. I read *Textile Forum* and *Textilkunst* (Germany) avidly; treasured my old copies of *Interweave* and *Handwoven*; subscribed to *International Tapestry Journal* and Sweden's *Vävmagasinet*; and scoured *CRAFTS* magazine (UK) or HGA's *Shuttle Spindle and Dyepot* for anything tapestry-related.

Online, the *ITNET* exhibitions organized by Helga Berry were eye-opening as they pointed out current tapestries, some by German artists whose work I saw in exhibitions before meeting them, which led me to an informal northern German tapestry group and an irregular exhibition cycle many years later.

For more than a decade, I was mostly an observer, but the desire to make tapestry meandered back into my life. While I enjoyed the intellectual input of journalism and the "do-it-now" nature of news, I found I was missing something creative. I wanted to make things, express my own opinions, tell my own stories. At a press conference, my attention drifted to shadows cast on the floor by light streaming through old-fashioned lattice windows. I missed out on several minutes of the briefing, and went out to buy art books that very afternoon.

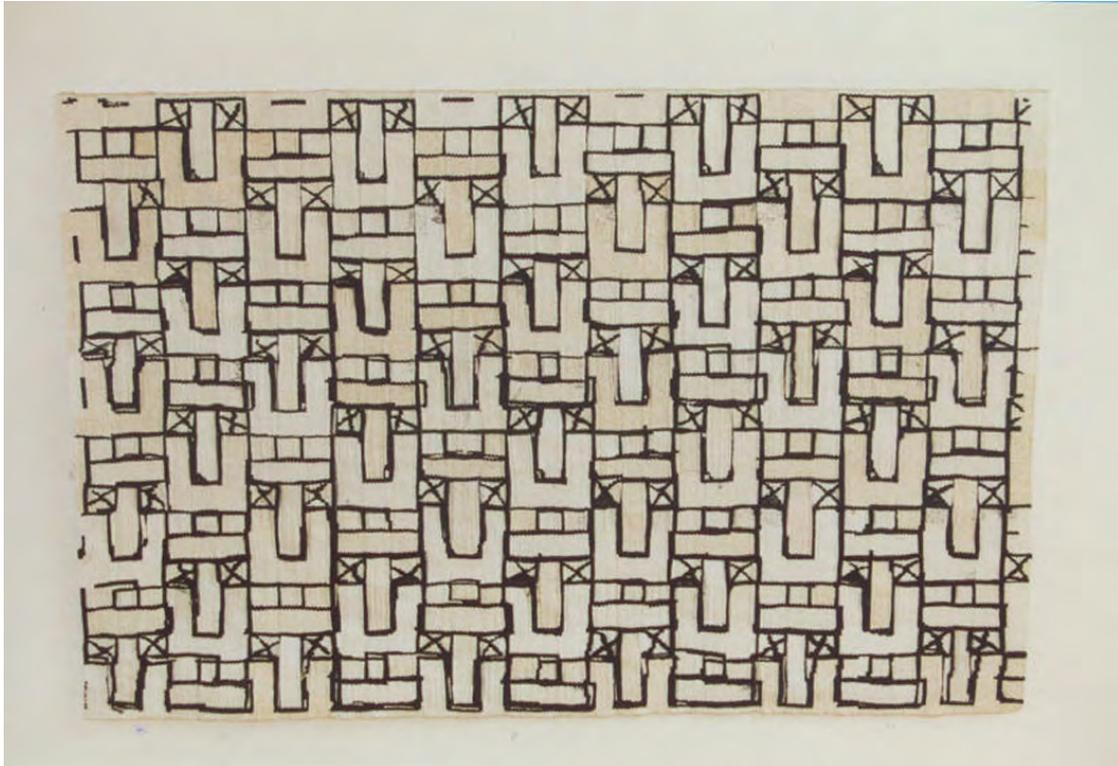
An instructor at an adult education center

Mirroring my multicultural, German, American and gay experiences, one strand of my work centers on identity and memory. *Patchwork Identity* (1999, 12 panels, each 30 x 50 cm) and the *TOMMY* series (2002-2005, 3-4 panels 120x 100 cm) centered on this, while the *Heimweh* Series (Missing home) including *Fernweh* deals with belonging, homesickness and longing.

Back in Hamburg, my experiences with museums and galleries were not encouraging. "Tapestry has no social relevance in Germany, Herr Cronenberg," one museum director lectured me, warning me that some weavers "go to pieces" over tapestry's lack of visibility. An art professor, interviewing me for a teaching position, said, "You obviously didn't grow up here. This level of engagement with tapestry is unheard of in someone your age!" She went on to explain that tapestry was considered deeply reactionary in contemporary Germany, as it was tainted by Nazi associations. (Monumental tapestries from this era have largely disappeared from view.) The professor was impressed with my work and hired me; but my course was cancelled due to insufficient enrollment.

Writing news by day and weaving by night, I trawled art and crafts galleries, portfolio in hand. Art galleries said the work was "too craft-based." A craft gallery owner said, "This is art. It's out of place." Her clients wanted "nice crafty things for the home." I applied to an association of artist-makers, aced the selection process, but their invitation was withdrawn when I mentioned my day job. And on it went. Tapestry seemed to exist in a vacuum.

Informal networks and personal connections in Germany, the UK and the US proved more successful. I took part in a number of themed shows with painters, sculptors and photographers in northern German towns. I also started applying for international juried exhibitions including *ATB* and the small format shows at the Musée Jean Lurçat in Angers/France. The submission deadlines brought structure and time goals to my work, which helped me get through biggish tapestries. I also learned about working to theme. Two of my favourite small pieces, *Moonwalk Footprint I & II* (1998, 12 x 12 cm) came about this way.



*Stoff meines (Deutschen) Lebens*  
2000, 120 x 177 cm, cotton warp, linen, cotton, rayon, and silk weft

I also worked towards the Simon Jersey Tapestry Award competition (for UK students and graduates in tapestry, now defunct) and won a prize for *Stoff meines (deutschen) Lebens [Fabric of my (German) Life]* in 2000. The next year, I finished *Heimweh (Missing home)*, 2001, 344 x 100 cm) in record time after being out eight weeks with a broken arm, only to find that the competition had been cancelled.

That was disappointing, but I had better luck elsewhere: I showed at a tapestry Open House run by Ananda Armstrong-King as part of the Brighton Festival for three years running, in a bid to keep up my UK connections. A curator from Orleans House in Richmond/London saw my work at the Open House, and I was offered a show at their affiliated Riverside Gallery, my first solo exhibition.

My international approach was paying off; things were getting moving. I was accepted for *ATB 4* with *Stoff meines (deutschen) Lebens* in 2004. That same year, I was invited to represent Germany at the *International Triennial of Tapestry* in Lodz, Poland, where the TOMMY series debuted. The TOMMYs were also shown at *Kárpit 2* in Budapest, while the final TOMMY panel, *TOMMY deutsch* was chosen for the first *ARTAPESTRY*. The two shows opened within days of each other in November 2005. A mix of local and international involvement has worked very well, though it took time to get the ball rolling.

I have seen lots of eye-opening textile art at the *Lodz* tapestry triennials over the years; still probably the single best place in Europe for an overview of current textile art around globe, always worth the trip. Alongside the art, the friendships and personal connections that have come out of my tapestry travels have been crucial. I am so glad that I decided to go to Budapest for *Kárpit 2* in 2005. Apart from experiencing one of the best and most effectively curated tapestry shows ever, the city has become one of my favourite places, and I have worked closely with colleagues/friends I met there ever since.

I have been on the Steering Committee of European Tapestry Forum (ETF), which organizes the *ARTAPESTRY* shows (since 2003). Seeing how many different forms tapestry can take and meeting so many colleagues has been an inspiration, as has my more recent work on *American Tapestry Biennial 9*. ATA always served as a model of sorts for ETF, and I am pleased to be giving something back to ATA, which has done a lot for weavers not based in the United States.

Currently my life focuses on tapestry: making it, publicizing it; organizing; and of course writing, another great love. All these activities complement each other. Taking my quest for tapestry international really helped build the foundations for my involvement in the tapestry and textile art scene. All told, this focus on tapestry has been extremely satisfying and has greatly enriched my life.



**Thomas Cronenberg (Germany)** learned to weave as a boy. After training and working as a journalist, he went back to college to study tapestry and now splits his time between weaving, organizing and journalism.

[www.tapart.de](http://www.tapart.de); [thomascronenberg.wordpress.com/the-tapestries/](http://thomascronenberg.wordpress.com/the-tapestries/)

## An Interview with Joan Baxter, Tapestry Weaver Extraordinaire

by Edith O’Nuallain



*Winter River*

80 x 100 cms, cotton, wool, cotton cloth strips, lurex, twigs. Photo credit: the Artist

**Edith:** Can you tell us a little bit about your background, including artistic tendencies within your own family?

*Joan:* I grew up in Musselburgh, on the eastern edge of Edinburgh, close to the sea. My dad was a landscape painter and art teacher, and his father was a talented amateur caricaturist...so a direct inheritance. Art was a very normal activity in our family, not encouraged or discouraged, just there.

**You studied art in Edinburgh College of Art. What attracted you to tapestry weaving?**

When I encountered it in my first year at art school, I knew immediately that this was what I wanted to specialise in. For me it had the perfect combination of opposites - conceptual freedom within the constraints of a demanding technique. Archie Brennan was my teacher.

**After studying in Edinburgh you moved to Poland to study tapestry weaving at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. How did that experience affect you?**

Poland was still very much behind the 'Iron Curtain' in the 1970s. The Polish artists seemed to 'live' their art rather than just make it in their studio. All aspects of the arts were supported and highly subsidised by the communist system, and this meant that everyone could go to exhibitions and performances. Ordinary people valued and were knowledgeable about the arts, and this was a hugely refreshing revelation. Poland introduced me to much more experimental work, especially work that crossed boundaries between theatre and visual art. I experimented with different forms and new

materials which eventually led me back to tapestry with a renewed passion for the classical form, much to my tutor's surprise and disgust.

**Tell us a little about the tapestry world in Edinburgh in the '70's and '80's. How did it compare with work in Europe and the United States?**

The 1970's in Edinburgh was a tremendously exciting time to be studying tapestry. It was the only art college in the UK with a dedicated tapestry department. Tapestry was seen as only incidentally textile, more closely relating to painting than to cloth. We felt we were the bough wave of the British tapestry movement, and three of the biggest names in British tapestry made up the staff in our department, Archie Brennan, Sax Shaw and Maureen Hodge. Fiona Mathison also taught there after she finished at the Royal College of Art.

We had a strong connection to the Dovecot studios; Archie was the director and Sax had been director before him. I was able to weave at the Dovecot in my summer holidays. Most importantly for us as students, our tutors exhibited not just in Scotland - as most of the painting tutors did - but all over the world. We were exposed to new 'fibre art' from Eastern Europe mostly brought over by Richard Demarco. I particularly remember exhibitions of fantastic textiles by Jagoda Buic and Magdalena Abakanowicz.



*Full Tide*

2004, 100 x 212 cms, wool, cotton, silk. Photo credit: the Artist

I feel that we have affinities with a swathe of tapestry artists from the north of Europe...Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Work made in more southern areas of Europe, including England, has a different feel entirely. I feel particularly close to Scandinavian weavers - I think it's partly to do with our preoccupation with landscape and light. It's hard to comment on North American work as it is so diverse coming as it does out of so many different traditions.

**You worked at both the West Dean Tapestry Studio and later at the Victorian Tapestry Studio in Melbourne, Australia. Can you tell us a little about the type of work you were engaged in both of these studios?**

The skills I learned working in both studios equipped me with all the things I would need to work independently. Not only did I gain a thorough technical grounding, I learned all sorts of interpretive skills and a very refined use of colour. Since we were a very small team at West Dean and usually without a studio boss, we shared the day-to-day running of the studio, managing commissions, dealing directly with artists and training weavers. In the Victorian

Tapestry Studio I was able to observe the workings of a much larger and more commercially run operation, whilst feeling myself somewhat underused as 'just a weaver' - even though it's one of the few times in my life where I have been properly paid for my skills. My time at West Dean was the best possible apprenticeship an aspiring tapestry weaver could ever have.

### How did the weaving you produced in these big studio operations affect your own personal weaving?

While working full time in studios I found it almost impossible to do much of my own personal work. I have never been a miniaturist and larger tapestries were simply too slow if you could only spend a couple of hours a day weaving - the ideas went ahead of the progress of the work, and I found it too difficult to constantly switch my attention from studio work to my own. I suppose I was completely absorbed in the weaving I was doing in the studio and that was enough for a number of years.



*Edith O'Nuallain (Ireland) lives on the east coast of Ireland, snuggled between the mountains and the sea, where she embraces the Buddhist philosophy of engaging life, and tapestry weaving, with beginner's mind. Sometimes though it must be said that she tires just a little of her everlasting samplers, but hopes that one day she will succeed in putting part of what she has learned into the creation of an actual 'real' woven tapestry.*

## Tapestry in Australia - An overview

by Cresside Collette



*My Toolset*  
Joy Smith, 2010, 43 x 55 x 3.5cm, wool & cotton.  
Photo Credit: Doug Willis

The development of the medium in this country stems directly from Edinburgh roots. The establishment of the craft at the Victorian Tapestry Workshop (VTW) under the guidance of Archie Brennan and Belinda Ramson in 1976 provided the foundation for proliferation of tapestry weaving as an art form, and the enduring practitioners here have had direct experience of working at the VTW (now Australian Tapestry Workshop). Sara Lindsay and I were foundation weavers there, and Joy Smith and Tim Gresham were both production weavers for many years. Valerie Kirk made her debut at the Workshop when still a student at Edinburgh College of Art, and is now head of Textiles at the Australian National University in Canberra. These beginnings set a very high standard of professional practice that has been maintained over the years.

Tapestry artists working here today tackle themes in their work that reflect those of the art world at large during the last two decades - Identity, Gender and the Environment. Valerie Kirk's current work casts back to her origins, as does mine. Growing up in a different country and being transplanted to a new one inevitably bears examination.

She writes:

"In a wider sense Australia's history and culture is made up of many examples of people and things brought together without a good likeness or fit. In this new body of work I am thinking both about the meeting of cultures expressed in the weaving of mis-matched stripes and the diverse influences which have an impact in my life at this time."



*Stripes (top), Plants and Checks (bottom) detail*  
Valerie Kirk, 2011, cotton, linen, wool



*Cargo detail*  
Sara Lindsay, 2009, 11 parts - overall size approx. 100 x 360 cm, mixed media construction - cotton, rayon, silk, wool, paper, cinnamon, china tea cinnamon ticking

Sara Lindsay has represented her English family's time in Sri Lanka during the 1920s and 30s through interpretations of precious family objects - the fragile "cargo" of a migratory existence. Joy Smith's clever new pieces use imagery of hard, masculine working tools transformed by a softly feminised medium, wittily bowing to gendered concerns. Tim Gresham converts landscape into exquisitely evolving rhythmical patterns that create a delicate balance of tension and harmony using masterly technical process.

In my own tapestries I aim to evoke a poetry of place, using the landscapes of the two countries that have formed me to examine the dichotomies of their climate and culture. Visits over the past four years to the place of my childhood, Sri Lanka, have inspired and reinforced my use of imagery - from the lush tropics to the dry, unforgiving spaces of Australia. Working from monotypes that evoke the colour sensations of both places and exploring their shifts of registration, I represent landscape in fluid form - saturated colour separated by a dissolving line that alludes to both the physical and metaphorical horizons that resettlement brings.



*Twenty four Evocations of the Wet/Dry Landscape*  
 Cresside Collette, 2011, 90 x 90 cm, wool, cotton, synthetic fibre. Photo Credit: Tim Gresham



It is impossible not to mention the recent demise of the teaching of tapestry at universities in Melbourne, denying a new generation of artists access to these wonderful skills. A studio based course still runs in Canberra at ANU and a correspondence course through South West Tafe (Technical and Further Education) Institute in Victoria. I feel fortunate indeed to have ridden the most exciting wave of interest in tapestry from its rising swell in the 1970s to its crest in the last four decades.

**Cresside Collette (Australia)** has been an artist, writer and teacher and has been a tapestry weaver for thirty six years.

## The Global Network

by Debbie Herd

When I began as a new tapestry student in the Diploma of Arts 'Tapestry' at South West Institute of TAFE (SWIT) in 1992, published books on tapestry, international exhibition catalogues including International Tapestry Network (ITNET) were rare and sought-after reading material. The future phenomenal impact of the internet and social networking on the world of tapestry would have been at that time incomprehensible. Eleven years later I joined the online tapestry discussion group now known as 'tapestry2005@yahoogroups.com' and suddenly I found myself communicating with artists whose work I had long admired from those rare source articles on tapestry weavers. In 2003 I participated in the 'Exchange,' a small parcel sent around the world by 'snail mail,' full of interesting pictures, ideas, samples, yarns, stories and the personal experiences that each participant chose to share with other tapestry artists. It took a long time to reach Australia, and I sent it on to its last stop in England. The following year, due to dynamic discussion on the tapestry email list the idea of the *FindingHome@tapestry.ca/au* Exhibition was conceived. Social networking through the internet was beginning to take momentum.



*Ripple in Aqua*  
Tim Gresham, 2011, 30 cm x30 cm



*Winter Branches*  
Valerie Kirk, 2011, 30 cm x 30 cm

In February 2007, due to frustrations with handing in my progress reports to my lecturers, I created my blog. At that time there were only two other tapestry weavers that I could locate who were writing blogs; now five and a half years later there are so many it is difficult trying to keep up with reading them all. The 'Tapestry' group on Facebook as I am writing this has 362 members and growing into the fastest way of sharing and alerting other tapestry artists of exhibitions and exhibition opportunities that we maybe have ever seen.

After many years of disenchantment that Australia has no official forum for tapestry, in January this year I created the Australian Tapestry Network group on Facebook hoping that it would provide tapestry artists with a forum to share what is happening in tapestry in Australia along with overseas exhibition opportunities. I could never see any other type of forum working here as we are low in numbers and someone would need to administer any official type of forum, charge a joining fee to cover costs and provide a newsletter alerting members of tapestry related news. Although it may have been popular in the short term, I could never see this lasting long term. So a free interactive networking site like Facebook was the perfect solution. Also due to the fact that there are people who do not want to join Facebook, I created a public page <https://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Australian-Tapestry-Network/290653767657341> that anyone can access as a way to share events, exhibitions, workshops and exhibition opportunities in Australia with all who would care to read it.

In the world that has brought us so much information I am also observing that there is a trend showing that the short character writing and short comment interaction through Facebook is becoming far more popular than reading and writing blogs, as the need to spend productive time weaving is greater than the sometimes time-wasting seduction of the internet.

There has been much disappointment worldwide in recent years over the demise of tapestry related education in formal educational institutions. With online groups such as Facebook, email discussion groups, online exhibitions and so many artists writing thought provoking blogs we have never before been so well informed. Tapestry will continue to grow in a way never before seen in what has become the Global Network of tapestry NOW.



*Blue Envelope Library Betty Composition*  
Mardi Nowak, 2011, 29 cm x 27 cm



**Debbie Herd (Australia)** lives in the Grampians Region, Victoria, Australia. Graduating from the Diploma of Art 'Tapestry' South West Institute of Tafe Warrnambool in 2009. An lifelong interest in food and a career as a chef, Debbie continues to weave tapestries, mainly around the theme of still life. A member of 'Entwined' a group of graduates from the Warrnambool Diploma she is currently working towards both a solo and group exhibition.

## Web of Europe

by Ibolya Hegyi

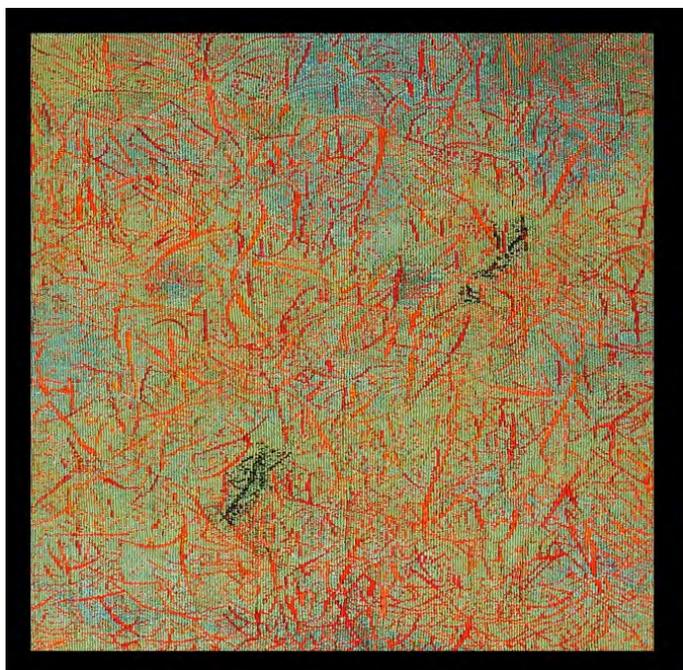
In 1951 Noémi Ferenczy founded the tapestry department at Budapest's Hungarian Academy of Applied Arts (now the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, or MOME). Later, alumni of the same department included those graduating in 'tapestry design' in the 1970s and 1980s. One member of this particular generation was Ildikó Dobrányi, president of the Hungarian Association of Tapestry Artists from 1996 until her death in 2007. During the ten years and more that she held this position, Hungarian tapestry art was able to feature on the international artistic stage, on account of its two *Kárpát* ('Tapestry') exhibitions held at the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts. These international shows appointed independent juries which judged entries blind, thus ensuring equal treatment for those artists participating.

In order to continue the endeavours begun by Ildikó, the Ildikó Dobrányi Foundation was set up in the spring of 2009 and with the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Brussels invited entries for a competition entitled *Web of Europe*, the undisguised intention of which was to draw attention on a pan-European scale to the art of woven tapestry.



*Creation*

Noémi Ferenczy, 1913, 223 x 219 cm,  
Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest



*Grass*

Ildikó Dobrányi, 1995, 100 cm x 100 cm, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest. Photo Credit: László Vály

The basis for the *Web of Europe* project was the eighteenth-century Brussels tapestry *Mercury Entrusting the Infant Bacchus to the Nymphs*, kept at the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest and known from the *Kárpát2* ('Tapestry2') exhibition also. Twenty-seven sections cut from a virtual image of this tapestry were interpreted and re-woven by twenty-seven tapestry artists. The artists taking part were Maria Almanza (Belgium), Wanda Balogh (Hungary), Anet Brusgaard (Denmark), Nora Chalmet (France), Paola Cicuttini (Belgium), Gabriela Cristu Sgarbura (Romania), Muriel Crochet (France), Thomas Cronenberg (Germany), Adél Czeglédi (Hungary), Wlodek Czygan (Poland), Emese Csókás (Hungary), Ariadna Donner (Finland), Emo□ke (France), Martine Ghuys (Belgium), Peter Horn (Germany), Anne Jackson (Great Britain), Feliksas Jakubauskas (Lithuania), Aino Kajaniemi (Finland), Ieva Krumina (Latvia), Maria Kirkova (Bulgaria), Federica Luzzi (Italy), Andrea Milde (Spain), Susan Mowatt (Great Britain), Judit Nagy (Hungary), Sarah Perret (France), Renata Rozsivalova (Czech Republic), and Gizella Solti (Hungary).

Made to mark Hungary's presidency of the European Union in 2011, the tapestry ensemble – which as a fitting end to the accompanying events passed into the collection of Budapest's Museum of Applied Arts – was displayed at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels in the spring of 2011 and at the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest in the autumn of the same year. More participating artists were present at the opening of the exhibition in Budapest than attended the première in Brussels. Earlier on, too, they had already shown curiosity regarding the fruits of their co-operation and the work of colleagues. Clearly, they had things to talk about. And although opportunities for keeping in touch professionally already exist, those taking part probably saw a benefit in personal, offline meetings and in direct exchanges of views.

During the evolving of my artistic programme, I endeavoured to find a 'royal road' beyond a mere stretching of the possibilities afforded by the traditional technique, one which for this hallowed genre represented the integration of the thinking of the experimental textile period. I was interested principally in what could be built on in tapestry, and in what would end in a cul-de-sac merely. In this sense, I regard a great part of my oeuvre as going beyond borders, as, for example, my tapestry "Weather Report / H2O," which was woven from wool, silk, flax, and metallic thread. This endeavour to capture emanations and currents, namely a fleeting moment, a metamorphosis playing out in the atmosphere above us. Because I was also very interested in the history and the theoretical background of the genre, in 2003 I enrolled in the doctoral school at the MOME, receiving my PhD there in 2008. Since then, my artistic work has been augmented by organisational work in the curatorium of the Ildikó Dobrányi Foundation. This has been a great joy for me, because it involves keeping in touch with colleagues in the field.



*Weather Report / H2O*  
Ibolya Hegyi, 2005, 400 cm x 50 cm



*Mercury Hands over the Infant Bacchus to the Nymphs*  
Brussels, c. 1700. 442x309cm, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest.  
The designers were Lodewijk van Schoor (figures) and Lucas Achtschellinck (background).



*Web of Europe*

Jointly woven by twenty-seven European artists. 2011, 442 cm x 309 cm, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest



***Ibolya Hegyi (Hungary)***

Read more about the Web of Europe project here: [http://www.webofeurope.eu/main/01main\\_conc1\\_eng.html](http://www.webofeurope.eu/main/01main_conc1_eng.html)

### **Small Tapestry International 3: Outside the Line**

**Enter now!** Now entering its third iteration, this small format show has been a wonderful opportunity for tapestry weavers to respond to a theme and to push the boundaries of their work. The deadline for submissions is October 31, 2012. Please note that this is a receipt date, not a postmark date, but no worries, if you are working to the last minute you can submit your entry online.

Read more about the show: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/small-tapestry-international/small-tapestry-international-3-outside-the-line/>

Use our new online entry form: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/exhibitions/small-tapestry-international/small-tapestry-international-3-outside-the-line/small-tapestry-international-3-online-entry-form/>

Download an entry form for mailing here: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/STI3-Entry-Form.pdf>

Questions? Contact show Chair, Terry Olson: [STI3Chair@gmail.com](mailto:STI3Chair@gmail.com)

## Following a Thread

by Fiona Rutherford

Yarn is, for me, the invisible narrative link with my personal and creative life. Much of my work is woven in strips. I like to bring together seemingly unconnected elements, because what we are often looking at in life is only part of a bigger picture. It is the edge or fragment of something else.

I am reflecting on my own life and also on the human history held in cloth. I am fascinated by fragments, stitches, and the worn selvages that form the narrative of someone's life. Japanese Boro textiles are beautiful examples of this.

But the vivid colour that brings life and energy to my tapestries is what I want people to connect with most. I use colour as a positive, playful energy. That is why my most recent tapestries using only the colour blue saw a marked change in my work.

In 2011 I was invited to create a new body of work inspired by the colour blue to exhibit with Flow Gallery at *Collect* the International Art Fair at Saatchi Galleries in London. To create the 'blue' tapestries I had to put aside my vibrant colour palate and find a quieter voice that told a new story. It was a challenge.

I only worked with 4 shades of blue cotton and linen yarns and the warp sett of 12 epi, finer than I normally weave with. I wanted to create a feeling of delicacy like paper or porcelain. The colour blue has associations with melancholy and loss, but this is not what I was looking for. The tapestries are about vulnerability and uncertainty but never without hope. They balance darkness and light, separation and connection.

It was winter when I started weaving. The white frozen landscape outside suggested fragility and strength at the same time and a stripping away of everything. These were the most minimal tapestries I had made, and they contained memories of Japan.

I first came to Japan in 2001 on a research trip, and I have returned again at every opportunity over the past decade. My creative work changed after that first visit, and Japan has continued to be a source of quiet inspiration for me.

So I was thrilled when I was invited to return to Kyoto in May this year to show my work at Ori-rhythm II in an exhibition of international and young, emerging Japanese tapestry artists. Keiko Kawashima of Gallery Gallery, Kyoto, was the main organizer of this event, and five of the international artists including myself attended the opening at Kyoto Art Center. It was inspiring to see the range of interpretations in contemporary tapestry, but in particular to see how the Japanese tapestry artists had embraced a traditional Western art form with such energy and dedication. I hope we can see some of these tapestries in the UK in the near future.

Left: *Tangled up in blue*, 2011, 149 cm x 13 cm, cotton, linen, sewing thread. Photo Credit: David Lawson

Right: *White light*, 2011, 140 cm x 10 cm, cotton, linen, sewing thread. Photo Credit: David Lawson

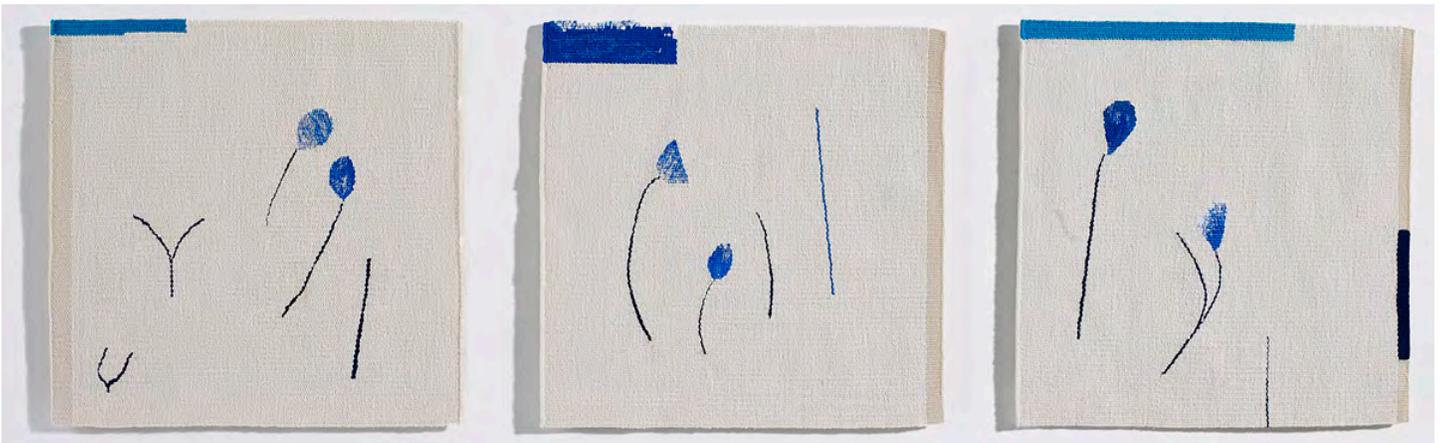
The blue tapestries were inspired by Japan, and they in turn led me back to Japan. This connection is what tapestry is all about for me. The threads are always creating a new direction and a new story.

The catalogue for Ori-rhythm II will be available in September. For more information please contact Keiko Kawashima, Director of KICTAC: [g-g@fiberart-jp.com](mailto:g-g@fiberart-jp.com).



*Across the wide night*

2011, 20 cm x 97 cm, cotton, linen, wool, silk. Photo Credit: David Lawson



*Haiku 123*

2010, 34 cm x 34 cm, cotton, linen, silk, sewing thread. Photo Credit: David Lawson



**Fiona Rutherford (England)** is a tapestry weaver and designer who works from her home based studio in the north east of England. As well as exhibiting and undertaking commissions she enjoys the energy of teaching workshops and residencies. Her work is held in national public collections across the UK.

## Tapestry on the Contemporary Art Scene in Norway

by Ann Naustdal

The history of Norwegian tapestry goes back to the 17th century. New Norwegian tapestry however begins with Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970). She represented a liaison between the old and the new tradition. Her production of monumental tapestries made her one of the foremost Norwegian tapestry artists, an icon and inspiration for today's tapestry weavers.

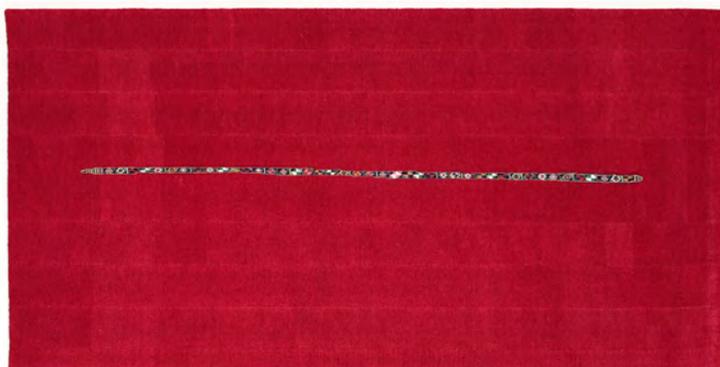
From the 1950s to the 80s there was a great resurgence for tapestry art in Norway. A number of tapestry weavers positioned themselves on the contemporary art scene, and tapestry achieved status as fine art. Textile art as well as the individual artist had an artistic breakthrough during this period. Several tapestry weavers have represented Norway in major exhibitions at home and abroad, and tapestry is well represented in commissions for public buildings. Tapestry has undergone a change from being a form of expression for a few artists to become an art form with many practitioners. Strong traditions combined with international influences have encouraged growth and development.

Since the 90s we have seen a period of waning interest in textile art. Today, however, we are aware of a change. We see a new focus on materiality, a closeness to material, the tactile. There are fashions and trends in art, cycles that create distance in history. A new generation is often needed in order to see this, see art with new eyes. We now find young artists using textiles again; they are preoccupied with materiality, with a textile image. Textile art is slowly reappearing in galleries, mostly young artists using textiles in new ways, but also tapestries and other pictorial textiles like prints, collages, embroideries. The Norwegian Textile Artists, NTK, started Soft Gallery in 2006, a gallery highlighting textile art in today's art arena.

## The Story of Five of My Tapestries

by Ann Naustdal

In Norway tapestry weaving became established in the 17th century as a craft and a form of expression. Many beautiful and individual tapestries were woven using hand-spun and plant-dyed wool. The motifs used were taken from printed graphics and passed on from one generation to the next; these evolved over time as improvisation was common and ornamentation essential. The tapestries had an abstract character. It was primarily women who wove tapestries; often they had learnt these skills from their mothers. The northern villages in the valleys around Gudbrandsdal were the centre for tapestry weaving at that time ([www.absolutetapestry.com/en/](http://www.absolutetapestry.com/en/)). The quality and the way they treated illustrative themes in these historic tapestries were an early source of inspiration for me.

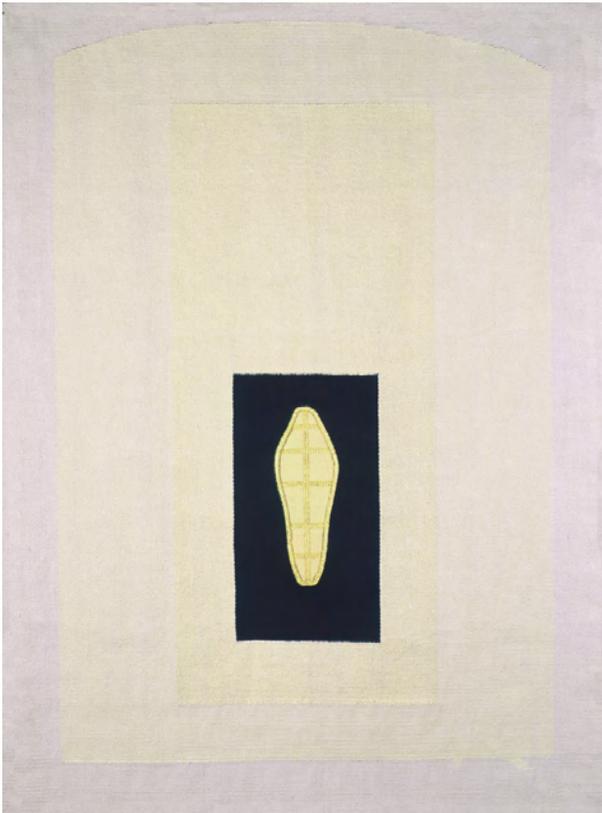


*Resonance I*  
150 cm x 300 cm, linen, grey hair, gold leaf.  
Photo Credit: Kim Müller



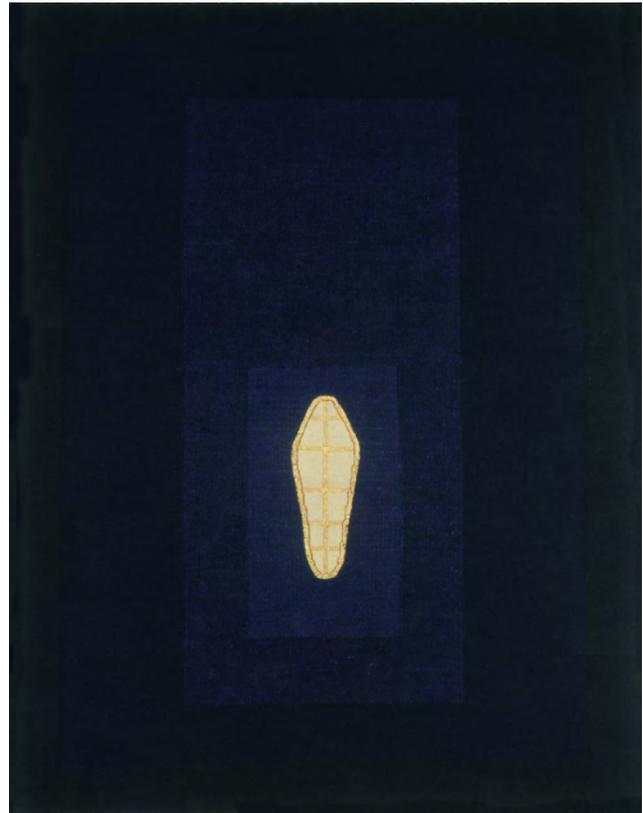
*Resonance I, detail*  
Photo Credit: Kim Müller

As a contemporary artist I have enjoyed watching the interplay of cultural traditions across the world. In relation to textiles, this is especially interesting because no other material is as close to us. The telling of a story, the transcribing of a subject and the combining of color and ornamentation on a piece of cloth take place very early in the history of man. Moreover, textiles carry with them traces of the past and the cultures in which they have been made. We know that the Copts in Egypt wove and that the Andean Indian cultures of Ancient Peru produced accomplished weavings. We can still enjoy many examples of their art.



*In Stillness*

172 cm x 129 cm, linen, silk, gold leaf, white mohair  
Photo Credit: Kim Müller



*In Darkness*

172 cm x 129 cm, linen, silk, gold leaf, grey hair  
Photo Credit: Kim Müller

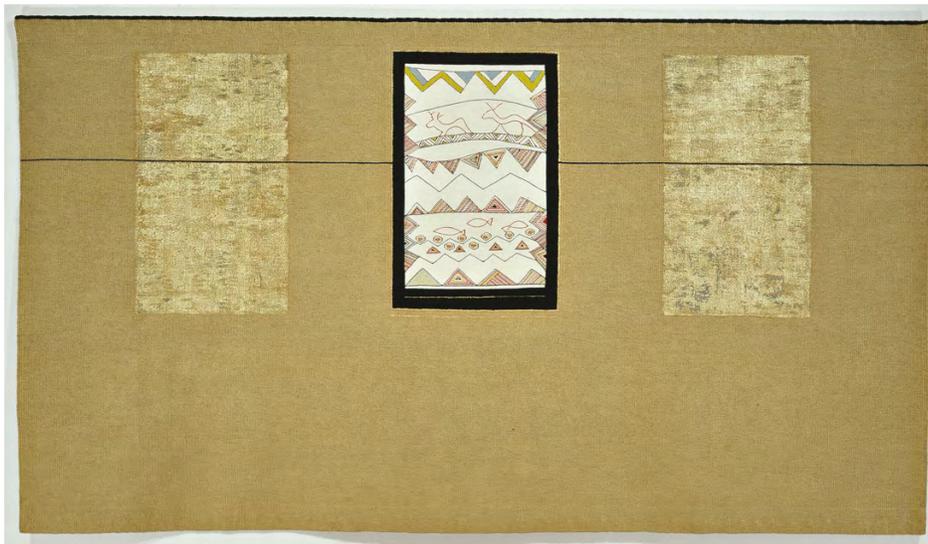
My search for stories in textiles has taken me to numerous collections in many countries. Tapestries and fragments of textiles seen in museums provide me with associations, and particular pieces retain an influence on me and my work. They become visual stories; they have a strong sense of prehistory and a timeless quality of survival. I observe a simplicity and a similarity in ornamentation in ancient textiles from very different countries and cultures, a resonance with symbols I have seen many times woven by people using thread as a form of expression.

In the tapestries *Resonance I* and *Resonance II*, small triangular shapes often seen as ornamentation in woven textiles from different cultures fill a central shape, an opening, to suggest the resonance of cross cultural ornamentation. The opening is gilded. The tapestry *Lost Images* suggests a wall on which there is a woven tapestry as well as the marks left by one; memories changed into images. The tapestries *In Darkness* and *In Silence* are meditative thoughts on the theme of elaborately wrapped mummies.



*Resonance II* (left), detail (above)  
285 cm x 40 cm, linen, gold leaf, grey hair. Photo Credit: Kim Müller

My tapestries develop slowly through a seeing, drawing, dyeing and weaving process. The media become part of the message, and things happen when the material and the visual come together. I work intuitively; I improvise as I go along although a small scale drawing of the tapestry is always my starting point. Tapestry has for me a unique, contemplative and silent language. It is time consuming and toilsome. It is also amongst the oldest artistic techniques we know.



*Lost Images*  
150 cm x 262 cm, linen, white mohair, gold leaf. Photo Credit: Kim Müller

## Reflections on Weaving

by Ariadna Donner

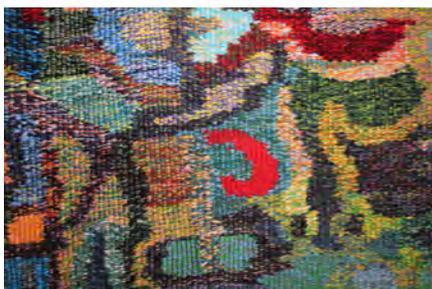


*Muistiin Kudottu/Woven Notes [Because I could not hold your hands. . . O. Mandelstam],*  
1997, 220 cm x 200 cm, wool. Photo Credit: Ilkka Hietala.

Experience which deviates from the daily pattern may suddenly lead our thoughts in a totally new direction. This may happen when I have to move to a new environment, when a new child is born or when a close person passes away. These impulses are external. And they tend to arrive unexpectedly.

Writing and weaving seem to have much in common. The black notebook serves as a diary. It is a container of scattered observations, newspaper cuttings, small sketches, photographs, paper objects; the cover of an exotic cigarette box, a map, a concert program or a receipt that may become vital resources in the creative process. That's how I associate seemingly unrelated fragments of daily experience and thought.

I also have a dialogue relation to poetry and novels. Mandelstam, Chekhov, Makine and Brodsky are part of my own cultural heritage. The poets Edith Södergran, Bo Carpelan and Gösta Ågren are from the geographical environment where I grew up. Auster, Sebald, Pamuk and Pratt seem to be part of the immaterial luggage that I have collected while moving around from one place to another. This time it was Henry Miller who gave the momentum. Was it sheer chance or a juncture to some hidden geometry of life?



*Pitka Punainen Vuosi/The Long Red Year*  
2001-2002, 270 cm x 235 cm, wool, cotton, linen, silk



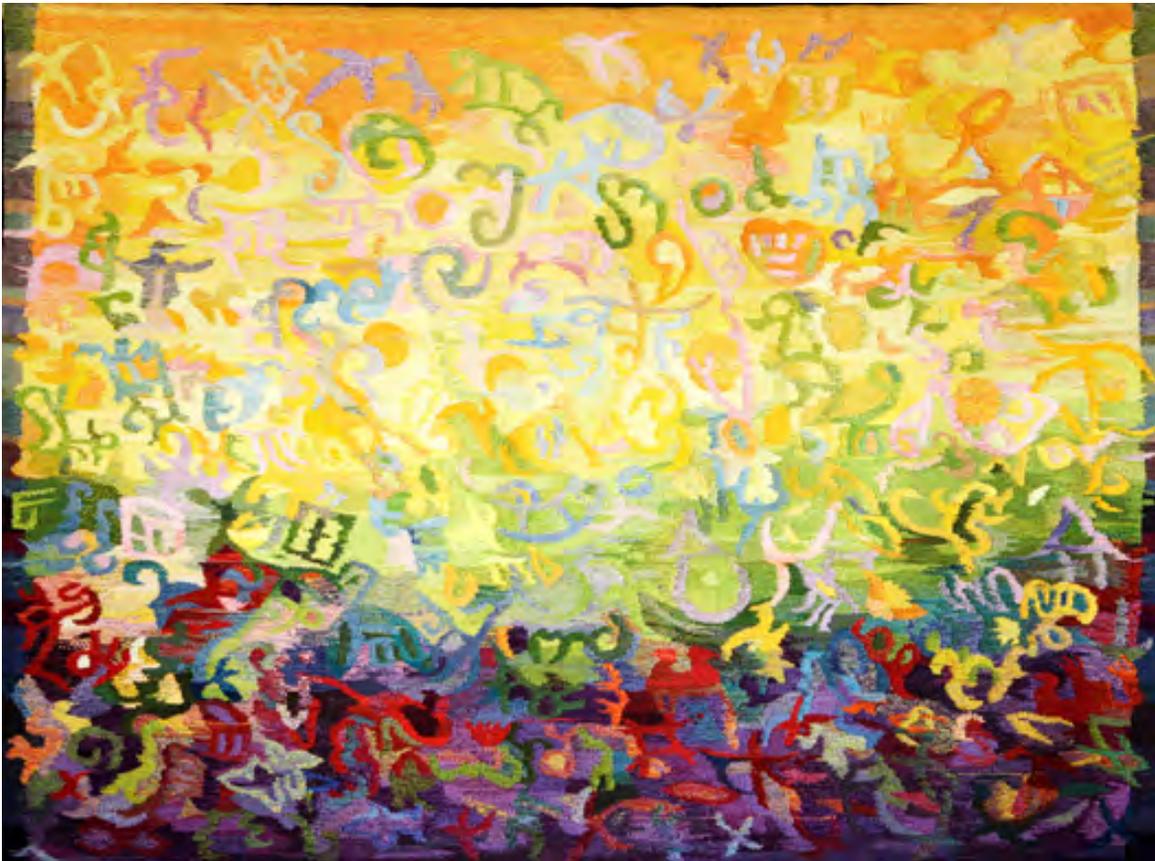
*Kuhmoniemen Paivakirja, 2001 Kuhmoniemi Diary, 2001*  
2001, 250 cm x 185 cm, wool, cotton, linen

"Writing, like life itself, is a voyage of discovery. The adventure is a metaphysical one: it is a way of approaching life indirectly, of acquiring a total rather than a partial view of the universe. The writer lives between the upper and lower worlds: he takes the path in order to eventually become that path himself." (Miller)

In reorganizing cosmos, I always have to begin on earth before I try reaching heaven. We first have to organize the earthly warp, before we can delve into the heavenly weft. Hard to explain the reason, but this is how every new exploration seems to start.

During work, the annual cycle pulsates as an iron stream following its own inevitable logic. The change is as slow as the work, and many bypassing details become woven into memory. The four seasons of Finland vary from the vibrantly flourishing colors of the summer to the clean, archaic forms of our winter. The darkness of the cold season continues during daytime. Although earth may seem dead, the nightly heaven is full of life and the gentle shadows slowly embrace the landscape from all sides. When the orbiting globe has reached the other extreme, it is again summertime and the landscape is full of light. And so are the bedrooms of sleepless weavers.

"I have no beginning and no ending, actually. Just as life begins at any moment, through an act of realization, so the work. But each beginning, whether of book, page, paragraph, sentence or phrase, marks a vital connection, and it is in the vitality, the durability, the timelessness and changelessness of the thoughts and events that I plunge anew each time."  
(Miller)



*Seiso in Rannalla / By the Waterfront* (An interpretation of a poem by Bo Carpelain)  
2011, 180 cm x 240 cm, wool, cotton, linen. Photo Credit: Ilkka Hietala.

Composition is the grammar that structures the story that I'm telling. The artist develops her own language. In addition to a number of recurring symbols, the vocabulary of a work may consist of poetic text fragments and signs of eastern writing systems. Color and pattern form ornaments of the surface layer. Being the source of all kinds of associations, they seem to pose their never-ending rhetorical questions to the artist and observer.

When the work is eventually completed, I'm full of energy to begin the next project, which long ago started to emerge in my mind. There is a higher level of continuity which may be hard to perceive: the ongoing tapestry is flowing into the next work, which develops and completes the story that the preceding work was telling.

"Like the spider I return again and again to the task, conscious that the web I am spinning is made of my own substance, that it will never fail me, never run dry." (Miller)

I'm weaving from the reverse side. The texture becomes a mirror of everyday experience. The upright, *haut-lisse* loom is more than two meters wide. There is something minimalistic in this creation process which advances only a centimeter each day, sometimes two. As life is full of offshoots and surprises, so is the textile. That is why tying together all aspects of the whole is so slow. Are we consuming our never ending passion and limited physical strength in trying to defy the forces of nature? Every weaver knows about the everlasting patience and worn joints. And so does the outsider, who is able to read the grim message of our hands.

"My charts and plans are the slenderest sort of guides: I scrap them at will, I invent, distort, deform, lie, inflate, exaggerate, confound and confuse as the mood seizes me. I obey only my own instincts and intuitions. I know nothing in advance. Often I put down things which I do not understand myself, secure in the knowledge that later they will become clear and meaningful to me." (Miller)

Our audience would like to learn about premeditated design. Unfortunately there is none. My sole plan consists of black sketchy lines on white paper. It is the loose thoughts which evolve in my mind that are most essential. Detail, form and composition find their explicit expressions during the ongoing work. Choices of form, color and mixture of yarns are matters which flow through my hands. They reflect and extend my thoughts. In a way I'm exploring a world that I couldn't yet see.



*Surunauha/Ribbon of Sorrow* [work in progress]  
width 210 cm, wool, cotton, linen, silk

This spring my mother passed away. Disrupted life forced me to construct something new. During the past weeks I've been weaving her into the ongoing tapestry. As I was sorting out her belongings I found old letters and volumes of the Finnish literature magazine *Parnasso*. I took some issues from the 60s to have something to read in the train back home.

One of the magazines contained an essay on the essence of the author's work. Henry Miller's paper was called 'Reflections on Writing.' The article surprised me by unraveling a connection between the author's abundant thoughts and my own weaving. I made my first acquaintance with Miller's text when I was 18 years old. In this prolonged dialogue over past decades, his words had now become clear and meaningful to me. No wonder that I sometimes experience tapestry as a visual paraphrase of written text.

All quotes are from: Henry Miller: 'Mietteitä kirjailijantyöstä', *Parnasso* 4/1963 s. 151-156. Translated from 'Wisdom of the Heart', *New Directions* 1941.

**Adriana Donner (Finnish)**

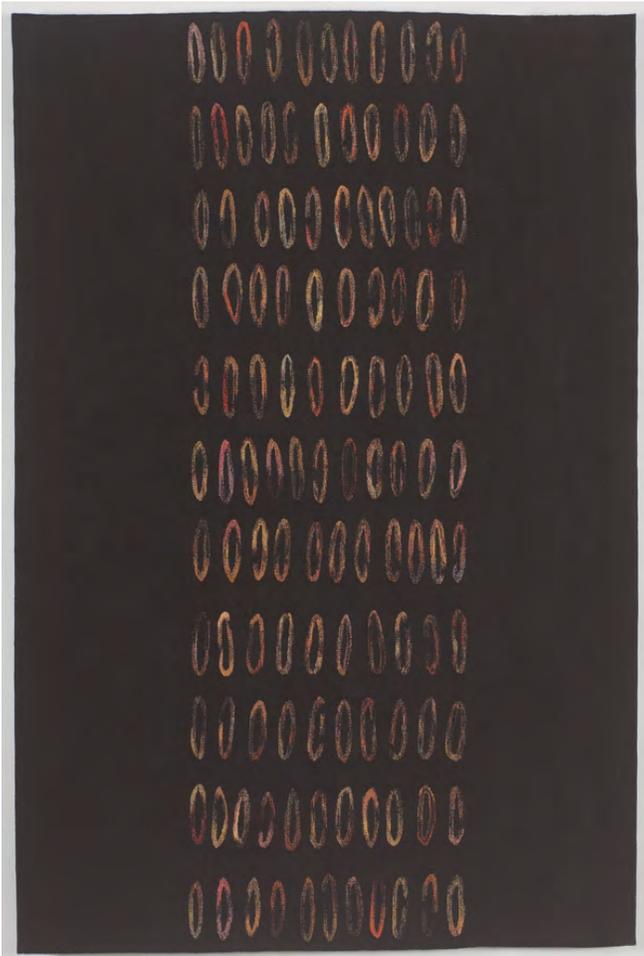


## To Be or Not to Be Art

by Anet Brusgaard

Generally speaking, tapestry is a hanging with added layers of decorated meaning: stories, political comments, colors, lines, texture or ornamentation, because you want to express something particular. There is a tradition for this, and the history of tapestry has a lot to say, especially about the interplay between the tapestry as an art-form and as decoration. There are quite a lot of tapestries which have communicated throughout time, and the woven art-form has been given its own space in the history of art, precisely due to this peculiar phenomenon.

Each time I enter a room decorated with monumental woven tapestries, old as well as contemporary, I am seized by a curious formal feeling and fascination. The old historic tapestries are overwhelming in their beauty and patina, sublimely worked using techniques that have been perfected through centuries of working on the loom and which to this day remain the basis for weaving tapestry. I have been fortunate enough to experience and learn this traditional craft, so rich with all its rituals, during my studies in Aubusson, which for centuries has been one of the most important centres in France for the manufacture of tapestries.



*Répétition*

2005, 200 cm x 132 cm, cotton. Photo Credit: Erik Brahl

A characteristic feature of my approach is my consistent way of working up a monochrome surface with added decoration-design. My tapestries are quite black - a firm surface with a traditional woven, structured covering/armour, with a minimal expression.

In *Tapestry Topics* Summer 2007 (Celebrating 25 Years) I showed my work *Répétition*, a tapestry with a minimal design. The motif in this work is, as the title indicates, a sign, a simple sign, an "oval circle", with different graphic, ornamental fragments, repeating and changing the expression all over the surface of the tapestry. I used a technique I have perfected through a series of three "renaissance" tapestries, with motifs of flowers and foliage in gold, silver and silk.

My recent tapestries *Tatouage I* and *Tatouage II* are also designed over a simple sign, a "spot" and the theme is body-art from the continent of Africa. The human being has always had the impulse to decorate the body with either body painting, tattoos, jewelry or textiles. The African scarifications – tattooing made with spots or lines, are incredibly fascinating and specially well known in the region of Kuba. These fascinating spots are used in my latest two works – these simple signs in a varying colour-mix, adapting themselves in a string of pearls and drawing up the contours, creating a minimalistic tapestry expression.

It is a dramatic métier to create and weave a tapestry, a task of "almost unbearable" responsibility.



*Arabesque*  
200 cm x 240 cm, 2004, cotton/wool, gold, silver  
Photo Credit: Erik Brahl



*Arabesque, detail*  
Photo Credit: Erik Brahl

For me it is a passion and a privilege to make tapestry, and every time when I begin to prepare a new work and mount my loom, it feels suitably dramatic and risky, because the result is important evidence about images and ability. The art of tapestry is very much present for me; every day I am occupied in activities concerning tapestry matters. Tapestry-weaving is an art form that insists upon attention. It deserves much more exposure; it shines and touches the spectators. The critics should celebrate our *métier* in all its exuberant diversity.

For centuries tapestries have swept in and out of history. From a cursory glance at contemporary tapestry-art in Denmark, I can say that tapestries seem to be quietly on their way back to the wall.



**Anet Brusgaard (Denmark)** lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark. She trained at the *École d'Art Décoratif*, Copenhagen and the *École Nationale d'Art Décoratif d'Aubusson*, France. She is one of the founders of European Tapestry Forum. She exhibits widely across Europe, and in the US and Australia.

## Catalogs

Don't miss the opportunity to be inspired by the wonderfully creative work of the artists in "American Tapestry Biennial 9" and "Pacific Portals." Thanks so much to catalog designers Nicki Bair (Pacific Portals) and Cornelia Theimer Gardella (ATB 9).

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## A Personal Path

By Maximo Laura



*Inner Cosmos*

2010, 122 cm x 217 cm, Alpaca wool, cotton, mixed fibers.  
Photo Credit: Humberto Valdivia H.



*Looking Balance of the Life*

2010, 176 x 320 cm, Alpaca wool, cotton, mixed fibers  
Photo Credit: Humberto Valdivia H.

I consider the tapestry as a project and its elaboration as complex, slow and specialized; for that I work in a workshop with a team. It is an activity I encountered in my childhood. I had the good fortune as a child to have access to collections of books that displayed the grand masters of the world of painting, and this inspired me to draw and paint reproducing their works. From these drawings and paintings I learned of an ability within me that I liked greatly, and which later, in my father's workshop, manifested itself in exploration, investigation, and creation of new things. After having attended an exposition of art by the Argentine textile artist Kela Cremaschi, who lived in Lima in the 1980s, I decided to pursue design, painting, and art of other kinds to use in the creation of my tapestries.



*Ofrenda a la Mamapacha*

2011, 21 x 29 cm, Alpaca wool, cotton, mixed fibers  
Photo Credit: Humberto Valdivia H.



*Sacred Night*

2011, 181 x 244 cm, Alpaca wool, cotton, mixed fibers  
Photo Credit: Humberto Valdivia H.

From that time to the present I have dedicated myself completely to weaving, principally in tapestry form. I have experimented with color, technique and design, teaching and promoting my country to the world. In all this time, the focus of priority was changing, and there have been times when the research of techniques, exploration of color, depth of theme, promotional trips, teaching of youth, etc. were the forefront of that priority.

There is a development of permanent experimentation, and a search of poetic, lyrical, and dramatic language using the design, color, technique and my own style. Actually, one can well notice in my work the influence of Peruvian culture. The theme is varied and formats are ever evolving in depth and size. The works in the form of mural and miniature are two examples of projects that give me great satisfaction. Through them, I am able to develop profound themes, intricate and essential to the soul and the thoughts of man.

The work begins with a linear design, from either a sketch or as a continuation of another design, giving rise to a series of designs on a theme. These drawings are then painted as a projection to the full size of the tapestry; therefore, in the painting it is necessary to consider what will be woven, and to keep in mind the limitations of the weaving. It is prepared as a cartoon, with the characterizations of measure, interpretations of color, technique and finishing. The materials are then selected, the colors blended to correspond to the painting. It then goes to the loom with all of the aforementioned materials principally applying the Laura technique. After cutting the tapestry from the loom, the tapestry is finished and hung as a work of art.



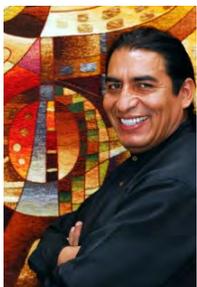
*Spiritual Paths*

2010, 180 x 268 cm, Alpaca wool, cotton, mixed fibers  
Photo Credit: Humberto Valdivia H.

But it is the mural that perpetually attracts my attention, as well as the development of sculptural and constructive artworks. At the center of my immediate desires is the completion of a constructive sculpture textile artwork in big format. I think that the emphasis will be in the technical aspects.

My philosophy is to work honestly with the best and greatest of feeling, emotion, spirituality and energy and to serve as a voice to this age and time, its territory and thought, as a form of testimony. My inventive imagination coupled with skills in drawing and painting gave me an avenue towards the personal realization of weaving and this inspired within me a passion for fibre art.

Nowadays, Peruvian textile art continues developing a vast, exquisite and original millenary tradition with many clusters of contemporary artisans in almost all of highland Peru, and individual textile artists whose talent and abilities are known in the global marketplace, produce artworks that are colorful, vibrant and varied. I am very lucky to have taken this path with weaving.



**Maximo Laura (Peru)**

## An Autonomous Process

by Marie-Thumette Brichard



*Rythme, 3*  
2006, 15 cm x 165 cm, wool

At the end of studies in Psychology at the University of Rennes, Brittany, France, I felt the need to practice a job more concrete, artistic and manual. I opened my first studio in 1973 on the Island of Groix. I was at this time very attracted by contemporary tapestry as shown in the Lausanne Biennales, where I went several times. I admired (and have always admired) Magdalena Abakanowicz, Sheila Hicks, Pierre Daquin, and Thomas Gleb. In this spirit I was weaving tapestries in relief, three-dimensional, but gradually it became imperative for me to acquire a more classical technique. So I had training courses in the studio of Pierre Daquin in low loom weaving (*basse lisse*), and then in Kerazan (partnership with the Gobelin Factory) in high loom weaving (*haut lisse*), mainly with Dominique Delplace who was a weaver in the research studio of the Gobelin Factory. This meeting was decisive for me, about my weaving choices. At the same time I decided to study in the high school of arts in Lorient, because I think that drawing and painting are inextricable parts of tapestry weaving.

I have chosen to weave on a high loom (vertical) because I find it gives me better visibility, and so more freedom. The classical technique of weaving on the wrong side and looking at my work in a mirror, placed in front of the loom, gives me a similar sense of distance to the one of the painter in front of his easel. My loom is the typical Gobelin loom, 2.50 metres high and 2.60 metres wide. I can weave large tapestries, which is what I prefer; on average they are about 1.20 metres wide by 2 metres high.

The long time it takes to weave a tapestry, and the fact that I can't see it completely during weaving, require me to spend a long and important time to prepare it. For each tapestry I make a precise cartoon (it may be paint, engraving, collage..) that I copy exactly and enlarge to the size of the finished tapestry. I choose the wools and weave samples. Then, when I have drawn the most important lines on the warp, I am free again and the tapestry becomes a re-interpretation of the cartoon, linked with the special conditions, sometimes unexpected, of the technique and the materials. I can spend one

day undoing and weaving again all the work I have done the day before. A tapestry is for me an autonomous work, in which form, colour, technique and material are joined up.



*Algues 4*  
2012, 165 cm x 125 cm, wool

At first I was spinning and dyeing my wool by myself, but now I prefer to spend this time in weaving. I use a wool warp. For the weft sometimes I add silk or cotton but I mainly use wool. I attach a great importance to the quality of the wool and to the colours. It's essential that the wool catches the light.

I was born, and have always lived, near the sea in Brittany, France, and it is in this maritime environment that I find inspiration. Sky, sea, rocks, seaweed, the light so specific to the island, that is what I try to translate in my tapestries - and always the blue, infinite and immaterial colour.

In France at the present time tapestry is rather neglected. We aren't so many tapestry weavers. It's difficult to find galleries which have an interest in tapestry art. From time to time I have solo shows, but more commonly I take part in group shows. Fortunately, a movement coming from the North is gathering weavers from across Europe. This movement is very important because it contributes to the reintroduction of tapestry, by organizing beautiful exhibitions in several museums in Europe. Also and particularly, it encourages the meeting of weavers of different countries, united by the same passion for their art. I think it is very important and rewarding to know and have exchanges with other weavers. So I am a member of "aujourd'hui la tapisserie" in Aubusson, European Tapestry Forum, American Tapestry Alliance, British Tapestry Group, and World Textile Art Organisation.

Today when everything must be done in a great hurry, tapestry may seem to be anachronistic. For me tapestry is an obvious fact, a slow, solitary work, out of time, where creation feeds on technical constraints and the tactile pleasure of weaving, touching the material, intertwining the threads, the rhythm of the spindle sounding like music ...



*Glaucophanes et Prasinities 5*  
2010, 175 cm x 175 cm



**Marie-Thumette Brichard (France)**

## ATA Awards deadlines

### ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study

Need help taking advantage of a great educational opportunity? ATA is proud to announce our new scholarship program for ATA members. The deadline for submissions is September 1. Read about the application procedure here: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/awards/rata-scholarship-for-tapestry-study/>.

### Emerge Grants

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, ATA is now able to subsidize a limited number of memberships for new and emerging, young tapestry artists. Read more about the grants and the application procedure: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/awards/emerge-membership-grants-for-new-emerging-artists/> Please help us spread the word about this opportunity.

## Olga Negnevitsky

by Tamar Shadur



*Silence*

Olga Negnevitsky, 1990, 36 cm x 49 cm

Russian born Olga Negnevitsky is not only one of the few tapestry weavers in Israel today, she also has a very impressive resume as a textile restorer and conservator for museums and private collections. It is amazing that Olga finds the time to work on her own artistic expressions in tapestry and teach tapestry workshops. As Israel's chief textile conservator, she is now busy working for four museums, including restoration of 3rd-9th Century Coptic textiles at the Maritime Museum in Haifa, where she also teaches intern students for their MA degree in Conservation at Haifa University.

Olga's weaving inspirations are drawn from nature, the seasons, landscapes, architectural motifs, and abstractions. "I paint with threads", she says, and for her, "the process of weaving is like music," a solitary, intimate activity she does to relax as she listens to music. She gets so involved in the weaving that sometimes she forgets to eat and drink. In the last few months Olga has been

working on a 70 x 30 cm tapestry called *The Places I Love*. She has participated in many group exhibitions of tapestries.

Before becoming involved in conservation, Olga earned an artistic weaving diploma from the Moscow Technical College (1981), a diploma of Decorative and Applied Arts (1980) from the Moscow Art University, and a diploma in Italy where she studied conservation of organic materials. She studied textile conservation in Moscow and Italy and has received numerous fellowships and certifications. Olga has vast experience in textile and glass conservation and restoration, and major exhibition preparation. She conserved archaeological textiles for the Israel Antiquities Authority, carpets and embroideries for the Islamic Museum in Jerusalem, and Judaic textiles and costumes for major museums in Israel.



*Snowstorm*

Olga Negnevitsky, 1990, 36 cm x 49 cm



*Still Life*

Olga Negnevitsky, 2005, 27 cm x 27 cm

The weavers among us may be delighted to know that in 1986 Olga participated in the restoration of the 18th century Goblin tapestry, "August", which was exhibited in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow as part of the exhibition

“Russia-France: The Age of Enlightenment”. In 1995-1997 Olga had a major role in the preparation of four 6000 year old linen textiles for the traveling exhibition “Cave of the Warrior: A Chalcolithic Burial” exhibited, among major museums, at the Museum of Natural History in New York. For the renowned exhibition “The Dead Sea Scrolls” which was shown in the US and Europe in 1993-1994, she invented and taught the technique of sewing the Dead Sea Scrolls between two transparent textiles. More recently, Olga was the chief conservator of Peruvian Textiles at the Consulate of Peru in Israel.

These commissions were followed by Olga’s lectures and presentations in conferences around the world, features in numerous articles and publications, and more prestigious conservation commissions in Israeli museums.



***Tamar Shadur** of Florence, MA is currently weaving on her low-warp loom the final stretch of the Holocaust Memorial mural-size tapestry designed by her late mother, Yehudit Shadur, a renowned Jewish papercut artist. This elaborate, colorful design is inspired by the painted wooden synagogues of Poland that were destroyed by the Nazis. A member of ATA and TWiNE, Tamar also gives tapestry workshops.*

## Shipping Tapestries Outside the U.S.

by Terri Stewart

When I first began this research, I thought it would be a fairly simple task to look up general customs rules for the EU and Canada. I couldn’t have been more wrong. Despite months of reading codes, rules, taxes and other import regulations, I still do not have all the answers, but I have narrowed it down. All import rules for shipping to other countries vary per country, and those may change from year to year as terrorism, stolen goods, and other issues continue to rock our world.

I have discovered that sending packages out of the U.S. is most cost effective using the U.S. Postal System (USPS). Fed-Ex, UPS, and DHL also provide services, but the cost of doing business with them is *considerably* higher. Unless you have no choice, try to avoid using those brokerage companies and stick with the local Post Office, using their CP-72 form, filling out all sections as completely as possible.

Two things I want to stress are: **1)** The Currency Exchange Rate, from dollars to other currencies, changes daily. What it costs to ship work today may not be the same as to get it back or to ship out again (say, for multiple exhibits). Size, weight, distance, value, and shipping codes all determine what you pay on your end. **2)** Shipping personal goods (clothing, cameras, etc) is NOT the same as shipping artwork. Different declaration forms, codes and fees will apply.

Shipping to Canada is pretty straightforward. A fee of \$8.50 (currently) is added to any package sent through Customs. Each province will then add surcharges, duties and taxes on top of it all, depending on what applies. You have no control over this, and the buyer should be made aware of that before they agree to purchase your product. Amounts will vary from province to province. Go to the following site to review the two-page rules about shipping goods across the Canadian border: <http://canadaonline.about.com/cs/customs/a/shopshipcanada.htm>

Shipping to the UK and EU in general is a hot mess, but I did figure out this much: From the Royal Mail Pages: “Works of art Tariff Headings 97-01 to 97-03; Tapestries under tariff heading #5805 and wall textiles made by hand from original designs provided by artists, provided that there are not more than eight copies of each.” Use CPC code 4000200.

Go to the following sites for more: <http://www.royalmail.com> (Receiving Mail from Abroad) <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/customs/post/internet.htm> (Buying from abroad on the internet – what to look out for). Those

pages have the best information on shipping to the UK. Most airports and major train stations have a Customs Office on location, and they should be able to help guide you along with any questions you may have.

To help calculate what it may cost to ship an item via the USPS, go to this site:

<http://ircalc.usps.com/CustomsFormsCalculator.aspx> This site will help you not only figure out cost, but what boxes or envelopes (such as International Priority Mail) are accepted into whatever country you are shipping to. It is not universal!

Another good rule-of-thumb is to document with pictures the item(s) you are shipping. This should be inside the package as well as outside the package with any other customs information that is secured there. This will save the Customs office the problem of ripping into your package to determine what is inside if not documented properly, and also helps them if they need to contact you about what was shipped, since you can verbally describe the picture they are looking at, and this may prevent your item from being returned to you or not being released from Customs, perhaps for weeks or months.

While I was writing this article, Anne Jackson and Mike Wallace both pointed out the importance of including as much information as possible, with copies on the inside and outside of your package. This should include any relevant documentation that an organization may send you, e.g. whether the exhibition is educational, sometimes with work "Not for Sale," or primarily for selling work, how long the work is expected to be out of your country, the addresses and contacts for all known venues, and the relevant invoice or delivery note. (The ATBs send out a very useful letter to all international exhibitors to be included for US Customs.) When shipping a sold item, always enclose an invoice, and include that in the outside packet/pouch used for the Customs agents. This also helps avoid charges that Customs agents may apply to your package and keep it from arriving to its destination until those fees are paid. Good thinking!

**Terri Stewart** Tapestry weaving began for me in 1993 by following a self-teaching video. I now teach locally and nationally. I have memberships with weaving groups across the country and in the U.K. Most of my commissioned pieces are in private collections, with one [educational piece](#) woven for the John & Mabel Ringling Museum in Sarasota FL. My work has appeared in national and international exhibits, winning several awards, including First Place in HGA's Small Expressions 2008.

## Shipping Internationally

by **Katzy Luhring**

We Lunatics at Lunatic Fringe Yarns have the pleasure of sending our yarns around the world, and over the years, we have found a few tricks to make the process of international shipping significantly easier. The first thing you should do is choose a carrier. The US Postal Service, UPS, Fed EX and DHL all have websites that allow you to calculate the approximate cost of shipping a package. You need to know the approximate weight and size of the box that will be shipped, as well as the recipient's address.

We have found that the US Mail Priority International system works well throughout the world, taking care to use Priority Mail, not just parcel post. Although Priority Mail is significantly more expensive than parcel post, it takes significantly less time to reach the recipient. More importantly, it allows for package tracking, which is a real blessing. If your package has not arrived, you can look for it online. Generally, the US Postal system takes the package out of the country, moves it through customs both internally and then in the receiving country, and then delivers the package to the receiving country's postal system. At that point, the recipient of the package will be responsible for any additional fees that are accrued in the receiving country. The post offices tend to contact the recipient directly rather than working with a custom agent as Fed Ex, UPS or DHL do. If you send the package by one of the other carriers, there are often additional delivery fees, in addition to the customs fees and tariffs that you will not see up front, which the recipient will be responsible for before they take possession of the package. No matter who you use to ship your package, make sure you include a phone number for the recipient so the local services can contact him/her in a timely manner.

When you ship an item, half the battle is filling out the paperwork correctly. In the United States, we are fortunate that items shipped to Canada or Mexico should go duty free because of NAFTA. However, you have to make sure that the customs forms are filled out correctly so that customs recognizes the item was made in the US. Make sure to include the country of origin on the Postal Service form PS Form 2976 (or 2976A if the item is valued over \$400). Additionally, you need to know about HS Tariff numbers. These are a set of internationally recognized trade numbers that categorize the traded items into groups based on what the item is made of, or what the item is intended to do. This makes it possible for the customs and duties offices to assess tariffs and fees associated with international trade agreements set by countries around the world.

To figure out the HS Tariff number, go to the website from the US International Trade Commission: <http://hts.usitc.gov/>. Scroll down to SECTION XI: TEXTILE AND TEXTILE ARTICLES. Click on the Chapter # that fits your item, e.g. tapestries are listed under Chapter 58. Scroll through the list to find which category best fits what you are shipping. For example, a hand-woven tapestry intended for wall hanging is HS Tariff # 5805.00.10. This number will go on form PS Form 2976 (or 2976A if the item is valued over \$400) that you get at the post office when you pack up the tapestry for shipping.

If you go to the USPS website: <https://www.usps.com/ship/customs-forms> you can fill out the forms online, and then print them out before heading to the post office. This website will lead you through the whole form including both the address portion and the CP-72 portion where you will declare what is in the package.

Finally, don't forget to insure your package. If the package is lost or destroyed, at least you will have the reimbursement available to you. And if you are shipping a tapestry or other work of art, make sure that you mark the package as return to sender if undeliverable. It would be a shame to have your tapestry sitting in the dead letter office in Guam if you mistakenly marked the address incorrectly.



*Katzy Luhning is one half of the energy behind Lunatic Fringe Yarns, inc. She devotes as much of her precious weaving time to tapestry as her loonie life allows.*

## Exhibition Review - Mark Adams: A History, Retrospective, and Symposium

by Deborah Corsini

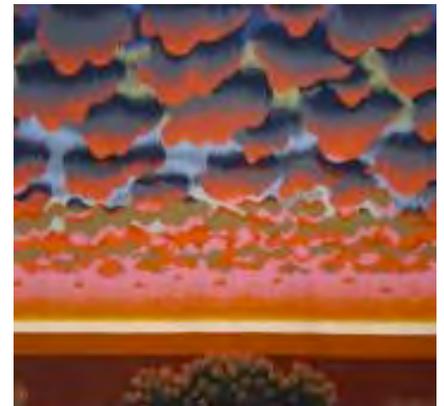
San Francisco artist and designer Mark Adams (1925 -2006) was a creative force in a variety of mediums from large stained glass installations, to intimate watercolors, to bold expressive tapestries. The retrospective **Mark Adams**, on view at the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles (May 15 through July 29, 2012), focuses on his long involvement with the tapestry medium and the unique relationships he forged with the weavers.

The saloon-style entrance to the exhibition is lined with watercolors, drawings, and photographs of a young Mark Adams by photographers Minor White and Imogene Cunningham. Pen and ink drawings of Mark by his wife, artist Beth Van Hoesen, were created during their four-month apprenticeship with Jean Lurçat in the 1950s, where Adams began his study, deep understanding, and commitment to the tapestry medium. Lurçat (1892 -1966) is known for reintroducing the art of tapestry weaving to contemporary artists, and for his vision of tapestry as a visual art-form in its own right. Lurçat used a simplified palette, strong contrasting color values, and shading (hachure) that is unique to the tapestry medium. He also returned to a coarser weave to emphasize the weaving texture.

After this apprenticeship Adams went to the Ecole Nationale d'Art Decoratif to learn tapestry weaving techniques to acquire a better understanding of the medium's possibilities. His desire was always to design tapestry, but to have them woven at ateliers by professional weavers. It was in Aubusson that he met weaver Paul Avignon and his wife Marguerite. Many of the earlier tapestries in this exhibit are woven by the Avignons—including *Messenger*, 1963, a stylized view of an angel's wing soaring on a deep red ground. This piece exemplifies Adams' early interest in symbolically depicting the spiritual. *Flight of Angels*, 1962, is another extraordinary tapestry both for its scale—10' x 12'—and imagery. Feathered wings contrast with stylized, colored wing shapes that cascade across a field of bright yellow ground. It is like looking from above onto an abstracted flock in a crescendo of movement.

A second gallery is filled with works from his later years and features some of his most mature and sophisticated work. A group of tapestries from the Hawaiian Sunset Series, *Haena Point (Hawaiian Sunset No. 1)*, 1979 and *Young Palm*, 1985, capture the beauty and magnificence of a dramatic sunset and the dense intertwined richness of lush tropical vegetation. Next to each of these tapestries is a full scale painted cartoon, turned 90 degrees, to the orientation of the weaver. Numbers referring to the correct color yarn are clearly visible on these cartoons, as are the holes where the cartoon was stitched to the tapestry. These cartoons are not in themselves considered works of art, but it is instructional to see some of the process and the obvious differences between painted cartoon and wool tapestry.

In 1976 a major exhibition, *Five Centuries of Tapestry*, was on view at the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco's Legion of Honor. Curator Anna Bennett contacted Adams to create a new design to be woven during the exhibition as a demonstration. Jean Pierre Larochette, a third generation tapestry weaver, designed and built a low warp Aubusson style loom. Marjorie Livingston, head of the textile department at San Francisco State University, organized student volunteers who learned the tapestry process and demonstrated their skills at the same time.



*Haena Point (Hawaiian Sunset No. 1)* designed by Mark Adams, woven at the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop, 1979, 63 in x 67 in, wool, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Photo Credit: Lee Fatherree



*Lilith*, detail designed by Mark Adams, woven by Phoebe McAfee, 1991, 29.5 in x 79 in, wool, Collection of Jessie Jonas. Photo Credit: Lee Fatherree

In 1977 three of these volunteers, Ruth Tannenbaum (Scheuer), Phoebe McAfee and Ernestine Bianchi, along with Larochette, formed the nonprofit San Francisco Tapestry Workshop (SFTW). In addition to weaving tapestry banners for Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* project and the interiors for Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, the workshop was, for a time, the singular place to study tapestry in the United States. When the SFTW disbanded, Adams continued to work with SFTW master weavers Richardson and McAfee. The collaboration with these talented weavers, through studio visits and conversations, allowed Adams to become even more intimately involved with the weaving process.

*Lotus, Sumatra*, 1989, woven by McAfee and Richardson, is a spectacular and sensual work that glistens with color and movement. A singular flower with its graceful petals seems to rise from the ground into another dimension. This piece is a *tour de force* of profound design and skilled weaving and shows Adams at his most sophisticated mastery. *Lilith*, 1991, one of Adams few figurative works is another gorgeous work. A female nude floats gracefully amid a sea of pomegranates, symbols of fertility. Commissioned by Anna Bennett, this is Adams' last tapestry, although he continued to work in watercolor for the next 15 years.

A final gallery looks at Adams' more secular subjects of flowers and still-life vignettes. It also includes a 90-minute video recording of a talk that Adams gave for a solo exhibit at the Palo Alto Art Center in 1992. This gallery features the verdant *Pond in Golden Gate Park*, 1981, from the *Gardens*, a set of three tapestries commissioned by the Joint Committee of the San Francisco Arts Commission and the San Francisco Airports Commission. *Pond in Golden Gate Park* has a lively history. It was stolen while the tapestry was in a temporary exhibition space during the renovation of the SF airport. Adams secretly asked McAfee if she could reweave the piece and the original cartoon was located. It took McAfee a year to reweave the tapestry and the new piece now hangs at the SF airport in Terminal 2. The original tapestry, missing for well over ten years, reappeared a year ago with a phone call to the estate that a tapestry had "been found." The police were contacted, the tapestry was recovered, and arrests were made. The tapestry was eventually released from police evidence. It was heavily soiled along the bottom edge and was sent to a conservator for cleaning. The tapestry arrived at the museum during the week of installation! Adams would have been pleased with this happy outcome.



*Flight of Angels*

Designed by Mark Adams, woven by Atelier Mark Avignons, 1962, 120" x 144", wool, Collection of the E. Mark Adams and Beth Van Hoesen Adams Trust. Photo Credit: Lee Fatherree

As the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles celebrates its own 35th anniversary this year, it is fitting to feature this long overdue exhibit of Mark Adams and its rich local history. The museum is grateful to the Estate of Mark Adams and to the family, private collectors, and museums who have loaned objects for this exhibition.

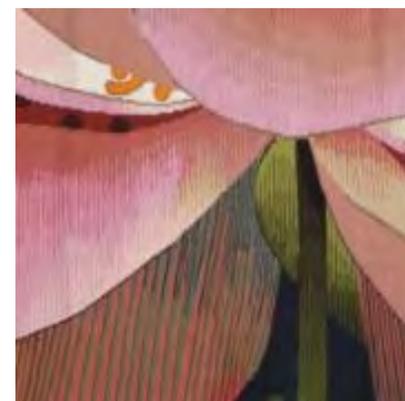
On Sunday June 24, in conjunction with the exhibition, a symposium, *Mark Adams: His Tapestry and Collaborators*, was held. A large and appreciative audience gathered to hear a fascinating mix of speakers. Melissa Leventon, former curator of Costume & Textiles at the De Young Museum of San Francisco, introduced Adams' work to the audience and discussed his background, artistic influences, and placed his work within the context of the fiber art movement of the 1960s and 1970s. She noted that unlike his peers in the fiber art movement, he was an artist and designer of tapestries, rather than an artist weaver, and thus was not as recognized for his accomplishments and fine work in the tapestry medium. Jean Pierre Larochette, renowned tapestry weaver and instructor, co-founder and director of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop, spoke about Lurçat and Aubusson in the 1950s and the many ateliers that were in production then, and about some of the other weavers and artists that Adams might have met during his time in France. Following a coffee break, weavers Phoebe McAfee and Rudi

Richardson spoke of their first hand experiences working with Adams. Their insights into the collaboration and process of working with him were heartfelt and fascinating. The day ended with a thoughtful presentation by Constance Hunt, of her personal experiences and mentor relationship that she had with Adams. She said, "I learned from Mark to dare, to stretch, to reach, to play with an idea, experiment, reach deep, and work hard." Her presentation was a fitting ending to this extraordinary day and a testament to Mark Adams' artistic legacy. His adage to her of "make it beautiful" is an important lesson to all of us.

The symposium also brought together the founders of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop. It was the first reunion in many years for Ruth Tannenbaum (Scheuer), Phoebe McAfee, Ernestine Bianchi, and Jean Pierre Larochette and some of their many students. The reception following the symposium was a grand finale for old friends filled with many interconnections, much laughter, and hugs.

A catalog raisonné of Adams' tapestries is available: <http://www.sjqiltmuseum.org>

**Deborah Corsini** is the curator of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles and a tapestry weaver.



*Lotus, Sumatra*, detail designed by Mark Adams, woven by Phoebe McAfee and Rudi Richardson, 1989, 80" x 92", wool, Gift of the E. Mark Adams and Beth Van Hoesen Adams Trust in honor of Phil Linhares, Oakland Museum of CA. Photo Credit: Lee Fatherree

## Exhibition Review - Sarah Swett: Weaver of Tales

by Kiki Dembrow

The Latimer Quilt and Textile Center was a very appropriate venue for an exhibit of Sarah Swett's tapestries. It is located in an unassuming turn-of-the-last-century white school house on a quiet, rural street in Tillamook, Oregon. In her artist's statement Sarah Swett writes, "My job is to tell stories with yarn and this exhibition, part of a body of work I call 'Slow Literature,' is the result." The exhibit was in what had been the school's small auditorium. The 19 tapestries covered the walls and the stage, and were divided in two very different ways to tell a story.



*Blue Day*

2007, 48 in x 36 in, wool warp and weft.  
Photo Credit: Mark LaMoreaux

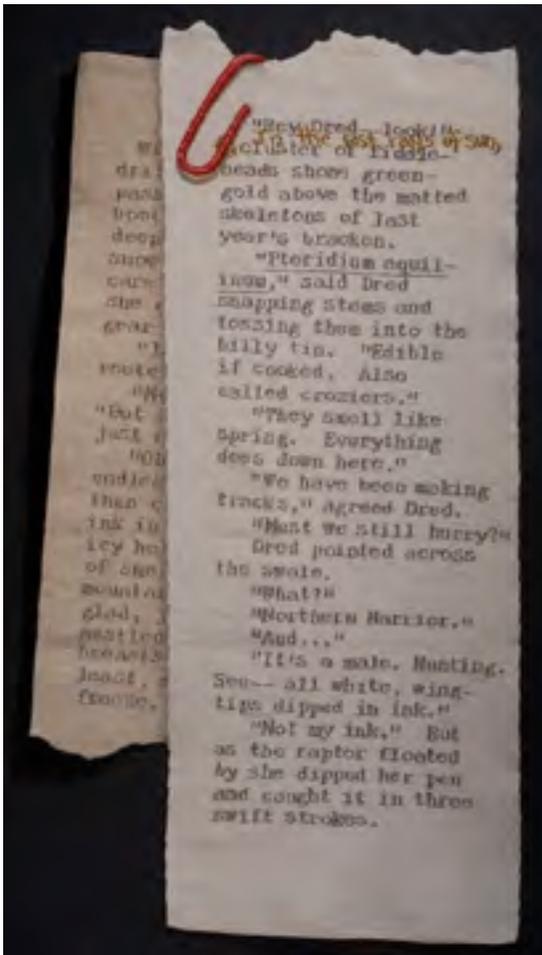
The tapestries on one side of the exhibit consisted of 6 brightly colored images and one monochromatic. Those familiar with Sarah's work know her designs have a strong narrative quality. They capture a moment: the tranquility and joy of a quiet afternoon, an evening roasting marshmallows and making s'mores. The voice is female and the subjects often female: a young girl knitting, a woman on an old fashioned dial phone with the cord wrapped around her leg. Sometimes the central image is framed, sometimes part of the scene is cut off, "incomplete." But both are scenes in the middle of a much longer story, very rich in detail, often with a touch of whimsy. The scene of a couple roasting marshmallows includes only some of the legs and hands of the couple, only half of a large bar of Hershey's chocolate, and half of a plastic bag of marshmallows that are also scattered on the carpet. The viewer looks at the tapestry of a solitary woman seated on a chair next to an open window and wonders what she is thinking and doing. These colorful images engage the viewer to interpret the "story," to complete it. Our brains fill in, complete what is suggested, which is also how a line can suggest a foot and slits a leg as in the tapestry of the woman on the dial phone.

Sarah Swett has also been writing a novel. The other half of the exhibit consisted of tapestries of parts of that story, words woven from the novel. The novel looks like it was written on scraps of found paper. The story appears to have been written in bits and pieces, on whatever was at hand, and whenever there was an opportunity to "write" in an otherwise busy life. One tapestry/ segment of the story has a "burnt" edge, another is on the back of a grocery receipt, another is on the stationery of a fictitious motel,

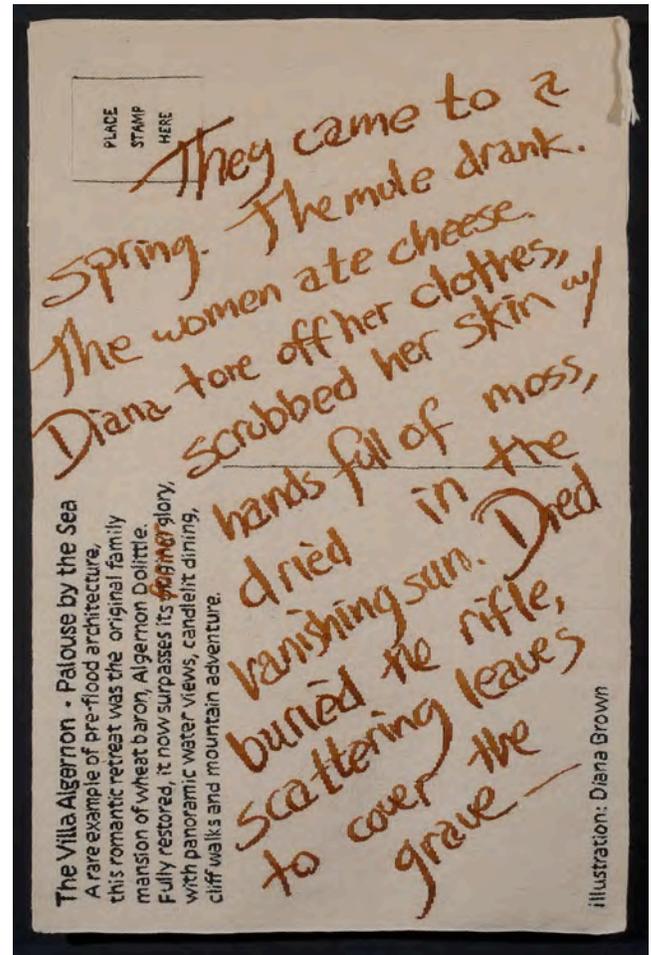
and another looks like two scraps of paper held together by a paper clip. One has coffee stains, and another is a "postcard" with print and handwriting as well as fanciful stamps.

These woven words and sentences are not what we expect from tapestry. Sarah seems to be challenging our assumptions. To fully appreciate this newer body of work, one needs to take the time to read the different tapestries, each a different segment of the story, and to examine the detail. Someone with an understanding of weaving can appreciate the skill they require. In these tapestries as well there is an incredible attention to detail: in the appearance and choice of the words, as well as in the creation of the fictional setting of her novel. For example, for her tapestry of the library card she researched the Dewey decimal system to come up with a fictional but realistic classification for the imaginary setting for part of the story. To weave the words, she used an EPI of 9 because it worked better for weaving letters. The letter M, for example, consists of five warps. The model for her printed letters is the type face of an old manual typewriter whose letter

“e” is always slightly raised compared with the other letters. The handwritten words are woven in different shades of “blue ink.” With the exception of the stamps on one of the “postcards,” these tapestries are not rich in color, but the story is compelling. The language is rich and descriptive. There is drama and tension; the words and subtle details in the tapestries engage our imagination, creating vivid images in our minds. As four of us sat on the bench in the middle of the room and read the story, we talked about what we imagined. We had first assumed the main protagonist, Dred, was a man, but upon learning it is an old English name for a woman, we realized that we had been too casual in our reading, so we read the tapestries again and worked to decipher the story. Why did Dred bury the rifle? Whose grave is it? Where is she going?



*Rough Copy #9*  
2011, 52 in x 28 in, wool warp and weft.  
Photo Credit: Mark LaMoreaux



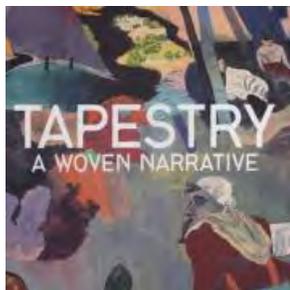
*Rough Copy #11*  
2012, 44 in x 30 in, wool warp and weft. Photo Credit: Mark LaMoreaux

Although the brightly colored tapestries on the other side of the room seem more accessible, they too deserve our attention and time to be fully appreciated. With its uneven floors, the old school house takes us back to a slower era. Sarah Swett’s tapestries remind us to slow down and exercise our imaginations.

**Kiki Dembrow** is a weaver at Damascus Fiber Arts School, Damascus, Oregon.

## Book Review: Tapestry: A Woven Narrative

by Linda Rees



Published by Black Dog Press, January 2012 Hardback

240 pages

227 b/w and colour illustrations 28.0 x 23.0 cm

11.0 x 9.0 in

ISBN13: 978 1 907317 24 8 Reviewed by Linda Rees

Tapestry: A Woven Narrative is an extensive collection of color plates depicting a wide variety of tapestries and several supporting essays. The introduction states that the book is "a general introduction to the state of artisan tapestry weaving in the twenty-first century" and proceeds with the caveat that, "The book is not meant to be a comprehensive account of contemporary work but is intended to give a taste – by way of contextual essays outlining the developments and highlighting famous works of international tapestry from the Middle Ages through to the modern day – of the prolific and fascinating, but relatively little documented arts movement."

Timothy Wilcox presents an interesting read in "Tapestry from the Middle Ages to Enlightenment" starting out with the novel statement: "Late Medieval tapestry had more than a whiff of Hollywood about it". Eleven color plates accompany the text. Fiona Mathison's essay, "Tapestry in the Modern Day" is an extensive overview of the twentieth century after summarizing the earlier influence of William Morris in the UK. It documents the Bauhaus emphasis in Germany on more structural concerns and progresses to the French influence of Marie Cuttoli and Jean Lurçat and the Dovecot Studios, also known as the Edinburgh Tapestry Company.

Mathison's commentary on the Lausanne Biennales notes the increasing dominance of Eastern Block countries and American artists as the transition from pictorial to structural constructions reached its apex. She mentions the emergence of many other international biennial exhibits with a brief nod to the American Tapestry Alliance [that] "runs a Biennale, but the works tend to be much smaller and more generally pictorial." After noting the newly formed European Tapestry Forum exhibits, she suggests these organizations' "remit is to promote and support gobelin-style tapestry and they apply a strict definition of what that is." Her coverage of the many tapestry artists in the UK is well rounded. She highlights other work from throughout Europe and also Australia and Japan -- with many artists familiar to ATA. There are 36 images in this section.

The book continues with a unit of "Contemporary Weaver Profiles" including images from 32 artists. Jane Kidd and Susan Martin Maffei represent the U.S. and Canada. There is no indication of who compiled the selection nor do all biographies include the country of the artist. The following section "Studio Profiles and Weaving Technique" contains anonymous descriptions of "The Australian Tapestry Workshop", "Dovecot Studios" and "West Dean Tapestry Studio". It also includes "The Technique of Tapestry Weaving" that does have an author, Caron Penney. These accounts have many images of equipment and studio layouts and some of work produced at the studios.

The last four essays, compiled as an appendix, begin with an interview with William Morris by Aymer Vallance. There is no indication of when or where the material was originally published. The material suffers for the space-saving aspect of not having the conventional separation of each question/answer for interviews. Two articles, "Transposition of a Painting into Tapestry" by Archie Brennan and "An Artist's View of the Dovecot Studios" by Harold Cohen, were originally published in Master Weavers: Tapestry from the Dovecot Studios 1912-80. The last item, "Tapestry: A Contemporary

Medium", is by Jennifer Sanders and is a discussion of the role of collaboration between "artists, architects, clients, collectors and weavers" at the Australian Tapestry Workshop.

The strengths of *Tapestry: a Woven Narrative* are the impressive number of images it provides. Mathison provides comprehensive coverage of the past century as it relates to the evolving centers of influence in Europe and it is interesting to see studio configurations of the workshops featured. Tapestry woven in a workshop setting and those created by artists in the UK are well documented. While the image documentation is thorough, it is surprising that there is no editor listed for this anthology. The book leaves the introduction and other commentary without authors. Although many of the tapestries pictured in the book have been produced in the twenty-first century, it presents little forward-looking commentary supporting the opening statement of its intent to provide an "introduction to the state of artisan tapestry weaving in the twenty-first century".

*Linda Rees has been weaving for almost 50 years and an exhibiting Tapestry artist since the late 1970s. Besides weaving, I like descriptive writing and enjoyed my time as editor for Tapestry Topics. I currently live in Eugene, Oregon.*

## ATA Award for Excellence - Frances D. McClure



*Beyond the Desert*  
16 1/4" x 18 3/4", wool weft on Scandinavian seine twine

Frances D. McClure received the ATA Award for Excellence for her tapestry, *Beyond the Desert*. Her tapestry was part of the Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati Members' Tapestry Exhibit entitled, "Discontinuous Wefts: Imagery and Imagination." The show opened February 17 and closed April 25, 2012.

Frances grew up in the middle of the Dust Bowl in West Texas, where she learned to entertain herself and to appreciate handcrafts at an early age. "I was taught to crochet and embroider by the time I was six years old." Her tapestry, *Beyond the Desert*, was inspired by childhood memories of the Southwest. She has been a resident of Oxford, Ohio, since 1964, where she "worked as assistant to the Head of the University Special Collections and Rare Books Library. At the University, I initiated a library conservation program for the rare books and manuscripts, as well as the university management program. I was one of the founding members of the Ohio Preservation Council with the purpose to preserve all types of library materials in the State.

After my retirement, I was appointed a member of the Board of Directors, Handweavers Guild of America, Inc., and subsequently was elected to serve another six years, including two years as president of the Board. I continue to be a member of HGA and the Weavers Guild of Greater Cincinnati, Inc., where I am currently the chair of the Scholarship Committee." Frances' extensive travelling led her to volunteer in local projects that provide meals to those in need.

## ATA News

### Board of Directors Election Results

We are very pleased to announce that the slate of candidates on the 2012 ATA Board of Directors Election was approved by a quorum of the membership. In addition to the reelection of the following board members: Elaine Duncan (Promotions Chair); Michael Rohde (Director of Member Services); Becky Stevens (Education Chair); and Diane Wolf (Membership Chair), please welcome new board members: Tal Landeau (Awards Chair) and Margo Macdonald (Exhibitions Chair). Any questions or comments you have for the board can be addressed to [board@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:board@americantapestryalliance.org).

### Interweaving Cultures: The Meeting

ATA is excited to announce, in conjunction with Jean Pierre Larochette and the Museo de Textil Oaxaca, an international symposium of tapestry weavers in Oaxaca, Mexico. January 18-19, 2013. Read more about it on the ATA website: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/education/interweaving-cultures-the-meeting/>

### Helping Hands

For newer tapestry weavers and anyone who needs advice and motivation in creating a tapestry, Helping Hands is a program designed for you. The only requirement is that you be an ATA Circle member. The program requires a 6-month commitment, and pairs up experienced tapestry weavers with weavers who wish to learn more. Mentors and protégées stay in contact by email, exchange of digital photos, Skype and any other means they wish.

Wouldn't it be nice to have someone who has been there show you the ropes? A person to help choose the right warps and wefts, to consult on colors, to encourage when you need it? If you're a new weaver who has taken a class, or studied on your own, this could be your next step forward in becoming comfortable with tapestry. Recent correspondence from one mentor and her protégée reported on good communication, and good results when the protégée used the mentor's advice with a weaving problem. Both were very positive. To join Helping Hands, please contact Traudi Bestler, [bestler@aol.com](mailto:bestler@aol.com). I have a list of willing mentors who are waiting to help you.

### Tapestry Topics Themes & Deadlines

#### Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation

**Deadline: October 1, 2012**

The tagline for ATA was the top choice by the membership of several suggestions. How does the phrase pinpoint what we are about? Are you excited by the roots of historical tapestry, or are you seeking the new, the untried in your tapestry pursuit? Send in your thoughts and photos please! Contact Theme Editor, [Lynn Mayne](mailto:Lynn.Mayne@americantapestryalliance.org).

#### Social Fabrics

**Deadline: January 15, 2012**

This issue will explore tapestries and related creative work that incorporates or encourages community involvement, for example, community tapestries, interactive installation work, work intended to motivate social, or political action. Articles might also explore ways in which tapestry artists could move their work out of the traditional gallery/museum setting into alternative modes of interaction with the public. Contact Theme Editor, [Dorothy Clews](mailto:Dorothy.Clews@americantapestryalliance.org).

Do you have an idea for a theme? Would you like to be a Theme Editor? Lost a link to a Tapestry Topics? We would be happy to send it to you. Contact: [newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org). Send theme articles to the Theme Coordinator for the issue. Send other articles to: [newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:newsletter@americantapestryalliance.org)

## Other News

### Wissa Wassef Art Centre, Egypt



Suzanne Wissa Wassef and a tapestry weaver from the Wassef Art Centre

The following information about the Wissa Wassef Art Centre was provided by Nancy Arthur Hoskins. Please [email Nancy – nhoskein@comcast.net](mailto:nhoskein@comcast.net) for more information.

This quote is from Ikram Nosshi who is the husband of Suzanne Wissa Wassef:

"The political Life in Egypt after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution is still looking for directions among the so many political factions. This uncertainty has negatively affected the Egyptian economy in all of its aspects. Naturally the Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre is badly suffering too. While we are looking for a bright future for the country, we are in need of "international exposure" through organizing tapestry exhibitions, with interested museums or Art Galleries in Europe and America, hopefully in 2013/ 2015."

The family of Ramses Wissa Wassef still run the workshop and are very interested in having future exhibits of tapestries from their workshop. This is a wonderful institution still creating in the midst of the turmoil in Egypt. There has not been an American exhibit of their work for many years and those of you in other countries may never have had an opportunity to see the tapestries from Egypt. If anyone wants more information, I have pictures, lists of exhibitions, and contact names I can forward. Please visit their website: <http://www.wissa-wassef-arts>



*Glaucophanes et Prasinites 1*  
Marie-Thumette Brichard, 2009, 146 cm x 142 cm, wool, cotton

## Important Dates

**August 30, 2012** Pacific Portals closes.

**September 1, 2012** [ATA Scholarship for Tapestry Study](#). Application deadline.

**September 1, 2012** [Emerge: Membership Grants for New & Emerging Artists](#). Application deadline.

**September 19-22, 2012** [Textiles and Politics: TSA's 2012 Biennial Symposium](#). ATA sponsored session: *Political Strings: Tapestry Seen and Unseen*.

**October 1, 2012** Submissions due: Winter Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: "Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation."

**October 19, 2012** ATB 9 opens at [The Dairy Barn Art Center](#), Athens, Ohio. Opening reception, 5:00-7:00pm

**October 31, 2012** STI 3 entries due. Enter at the last minute with our new [online entry form!](#)

**January 12, 2013** ATB 9 opens at the [Fort Wayne Museum of Art](#), Fort Wayne, Indiana

**January 15, 2013** Submissions due: Spring Issue of Tapestry Topics. Theme: "Social Fabrics"

**January 15, 2013** [Interweaving Cultures: The Meeting](#), Museo Textil de Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico

**April 15, 2013** [International Student Award Application](#). Application deadline.

**April 15, 2013** [Emerge: Membership Grants for New & Emerging Artists](#). Application deadline.

**June 14, 2013** STI3: Outside the Lines opens at [TACtile Arts Center](#), Denver, CO

## Contact ATA

### Director of Member Services

Michael Rohde [mrohdeata@me.com](mailto:mrohdeata@me.com)

### Director of Resources

Mary Zicafoose [mzicafoose@gmail.com](mailto:mzicafoose@gmail.com)

### Treasurer

Rosalee Skrenes [rosaleeskrenes@tds.net](mailto:rosaleeskrenes@tds.net)

### Assistant Treasurer

Marcia Ellis [mellis@sonic.net](mailto:mellis@sonic.net)

### Membership Chair

Diane Wolf [membership@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:membership@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Education Committee Chair

Becky Stevens [stevensreb@gmail.com](mailto:stevensreb@gmail.com)

### Education Committee: Distance Learning

Barbara Heller [bheller@telus.net](mailto:bheller@telus.net)

### Educational Articles

Lyn Hart [desertsonghart@gmail.com](mailto:desertsonghart@gmail.com)

### Exhibition Chair

Margo Macdonald [margomac53@comcast.net](mailto:margomac53@comcast.net)

### ATB9, Co-chairs

Jennifer Sargent [jsargent@mca.edu](mailto:jsargent@mca.edu)

Thomas Cronenberg [thomascro@hotmail.com](mailto:thomascro@hotmail.com)

### Small Tapestry International 3: Outside the Line, Chair

Terry Olson [sti3chair@gmail.com](mailto:sti3chair@gmail.com)

### Catalog Distribution

Lois Hartwig [lhartwig65@frontier.com](mailto:lhartwig65@frontier.com)

### Awards Chair

Tal Landeau [tlandeau@msn.com](mailto:tlandeau@msn.com)

### Award for Excellence, International Student Award

Elisabeth Quick [ataaward@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:ataaward@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Promotions Chair

Elaine Duncan [elaine@elaineduncan.com](mailto:elaine@elaineduncan.com)

### Volunteer Coordinator

Joan Griffin [volunteer@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:volunteer@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Web Editor

Marzena Ziejka [webEditor@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:webEditor@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Web Exhibits

Sarah Swett [mildredestelle@gmail.com](mailto:mildredestelle@gmail.com)

Christine Laffer [webgallery@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:webgallery@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Artists Pages

Sarah Warren [artistpages@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:artistpages@americantapestryalliance.org)

### Executive Administrator

Mary Lane [adminassist@americantapestryalliance.org](mailto:adminassist@americantapestryalliance.org)

## Tapestry Topics Committee

**Editor:** Pat Williams

**Copy Editor:** Mary Colton

**Layout:** Mary Lane

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