

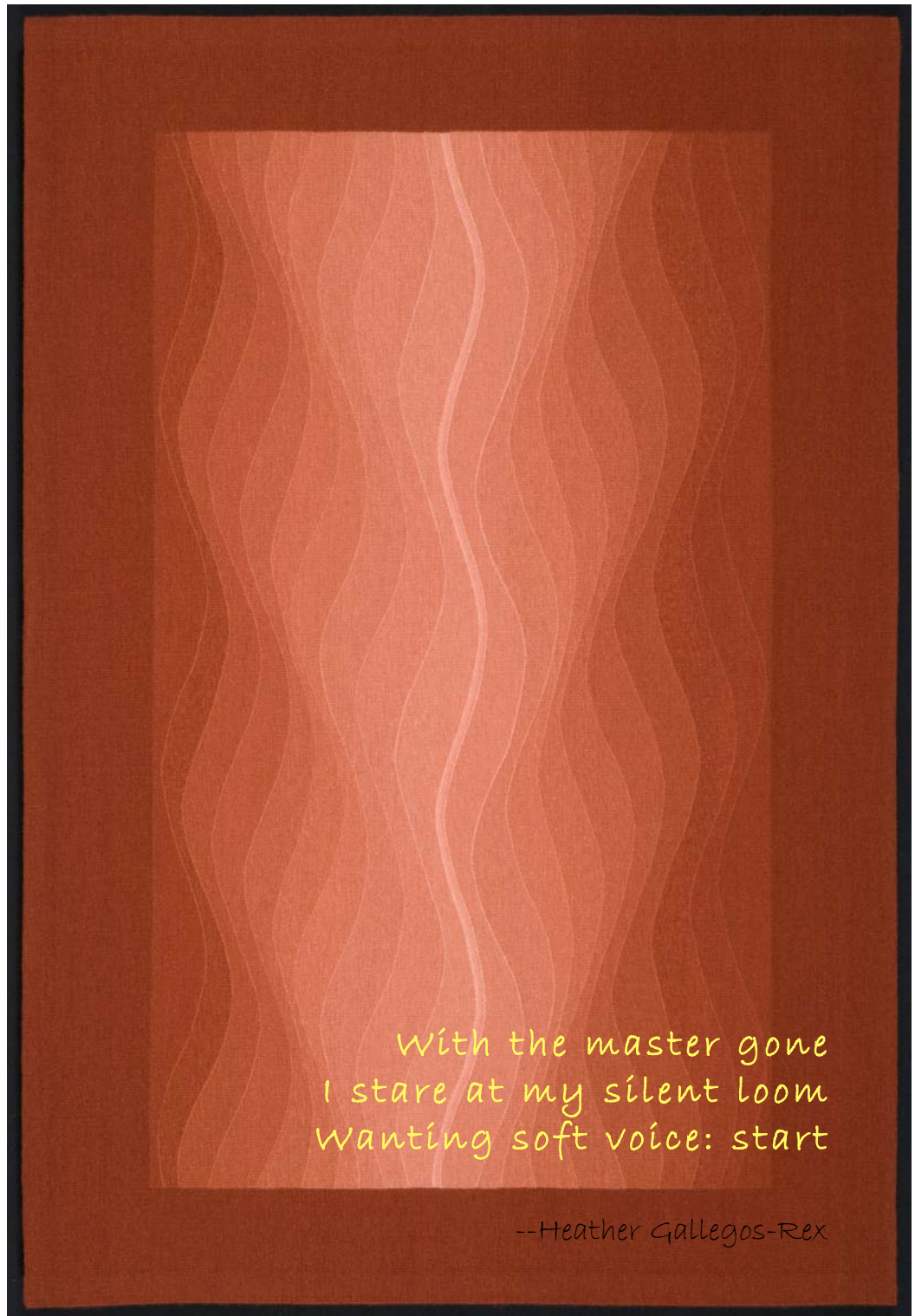


Tapestry Topics

A Quarterly Review of Tapestry Art Today

www.americantapestryalliance.org

Summer 2011 Vol 37 No 2



*With the master gone
I stare at my silent loom
Wanting soft voice: start*

--Heather Gallegos-Rex

James Koehler
"Harmonic Oscillation LXIII"
65 x 44", Hand-dyed wool
Photo by James Hart.

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IMPORTANT DATES

July 15, 2011 Submissions due for Fall Issue of Tapestry Topics: Professionalism

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

September 15, 2011, 7:00-9:00pm Opening of Small Tapestry International 2: *Passages*

October 1, 2011 Submissions due for Winter Issue of Tapestry Topics: Wedge Weave

October 31, 2011 ATB9; Entry postmark date.

NOTE THAT THIS IS A CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS ATBs.

Small Tapestry International 2: *Passages*

Catalog Errata

Our sincere apologies for errors in the Small Tapestry International 2: *Passages* catalog. On page 6, Patricia Armour should be listed as living in New Zealand. On page 10, the materials in Dorothy Clews' tapestry should read "antique verdure tapestry fragments," instead of "antique velvet fragments." On page 19, Joan Griffin should be listed as living in the United States. On page 16 and 49, the correct spelling is Patricia Dunston.

Greetings from the Co-Directors

Dear Membership,

This summer 2011 issue of Tapestry Topics is dedicated to the life and work of the accomplished tapestry weaver and ATA member James Koehler. The world-wide tapestry and art communities are silenced and stunned by the loss of this outstanding human being. James was a light immeasurable: a gifted and giving teacher, prolific and brilliant artist, an exacting and iconic tapestry weaver, and an inspiring friend, mentor and colleague.

James Koehler is one of the truly great creative forces of the 21st Century — shoes that will not be filled again in quite the same way. His remarkable legacy of teaching tapestry weaving will be long held as a standard of excellence in our field. James holds a unique and remarkable frequency and place within the history of art, tapestry, and the human heart. He will be deeply missed.

Within this issue, Santa Fe weaver Rebecca Mezoff has condensed a powerful and moving collection of tributes from James' students, apprentices, and colleagues in the world of tapestry. Rebecca also has written an excellent biographical article about James' life, sharing stories from her studio apprenticeship and personal friendship with James.

In mourning and celebration of a life well lived,

Mary and Michael

Additional summer news bites from the Co-Directors:

Our 2011 ATA summer calendar has a much different look than 2010's. This is an odd numbered year, so there are no ATA Convergence related activities.

ATA will not be manning a Resource table at SOFA West in Santa Fe this August.

If you missed seeing the ATB8 exhibition, it is now off the show circuit, having completed its very successful run in Lincoln, NE and Lowell, MA, garnering huge attendance numbers and catalog sales. Enormous thanks to all the helping hands that have made this possible. The 54 tapestries have found their way safely back to their respective countries and homes.

Small Tapestry International 2 met with rave reviews at Weaving Southwest in Taos, NM and in Tacoma, WA at the Handforth Gallery. If you missed seeing the exhibit, you can still purchase one of the beautiful catalog from the ATA website.

In case you were hoping to spot them at the beach, our core of dedicated ATA exhibition volunteers isn't taking the summer off. They have been working behind the scenes for months to secure a dynamic trio of host venues to house the upcoming ATB9 exhibition. We have one exhibition contract signed in a very exciting prominent textile exhibition space in the Midwest. And we are leaving no gallery space untouched in our search to secure similarly appropriate venues in Long Beach, CA in conjunction with Convergence 2012, and in Washington DC in conjunction with the fall 2012 Textile Society of America Conference, *Textiles & Politics*.

Our thanks go to Tricia Goldberg, Deann Rubin, and Ann Booth for their valued time and efforts. We are very pleased to announce that our exhibition co-chairs for the upcoming ATB9 exhibition are Thomas Cronenberg and Jennifer Sargent.

And yet another capable team of member volunteers has stepped forward to organize our unjuried small format exhibition to be held in Long Beach in 2012. Hats off to Merna Strauch, Nicki Bair, and Karen Leckart. They are eagerly anticipating receiving your tapestry entries. This year there will be several new show guidelines in place, so please read the entry requirements carefully.

If you are a winter weaver, then you are winding down your precious season at the loom, hopefully with your ATB 9 entry piece successfully on the road to completion. If you're a summer weaver, your long anticipated luxurious season to weave is just beginning. And for all of us who live life behind a loom, the season of graduations, weddings, family vacations, reunions, and yard work has arrived—ready or not.

Happy summer!

Michael & Mary

Mary Zicafoose, Co-Director of Resources
Michael Rohde, Co-Director of Members Services

The Tapestry of James Koehler

By Rebecca Mezzoff

In the English language, people use words about weaving and tapestry in many different ways. We describe life as a tapestry, talk about interwoven strands of our lives, and use imagery about warp, weft, and fabric as metaphors for our journey. But James Koehler's life really was a tapestry, marked by a search for the essential nature of things explored through his art, accented by brilliant teaching and heart-felt friendships, and dyed with subtle gradations and undercurrents most of us couldn't fathom — just like his luminous tapestries themselves.



James Koehler at Michaeliskirche in Erfurt, Germany.

James Koehler is one of this country's most accomplished and well-known tapestry artists. Or he was. Verb tenses have become difficult. James died unexpectedly on March 4, 2011 in Santa Fe, NM. He was devoted to tapestry as an art form and his light-filled pieces grace many galleries, museums, and public and private collections all over the world. James will continue to speak through his art and hopefully through his students.

James grew up in Detroit and attended the University of Michigan graduating with a degree in anthropology in 1974. He became involved with a charismatic community during college, subsequently read the writings of Thomas Merton, and became interested in joining a monastic community. In 1976 he was accepted as a postulant at New Melleray, a Cistercian monastery in Iowa. In 1977 he moved to the Benedictine Christ in the Desert Monastery in the Piedra Lumbre west of Abiquiu, NM. He learned to weave there, began making tapestry, and taught other monks and retreatants how to weave. He left the monastery in 1987 after a lengthy internal struggle about his vocation. He had a few borrowed weaving tools and from there proceeded to build his tapestry career in Taos and then Santa Fe, New Mexico.

James might have said that his life was a koan. He began studying Zen koans when he lived at Christ in the Desert and they continued to be one of the primary inspirations for his art throughout his career. His first tapestries were images that were influenced by his life in the monastery and Christian symbolism. From the very beginning, his work was influenced by his interest in what he called the mystery.

I believe that the only thing we can grasp or hang onto is the acceptance of mystery. In reality, what do we know? Is there really any truth? That is at the crux of what koans are about because there are no straight answers. It is not a black-and-white world. It is a grey world. (Koehler 153)

Much of my work has to do with my own meditation on mystery.... I had to let go of my notions about idealism when I came to that understanding of mystery, and that is reflected in much of my work... A lot of people look at my tapestries, and they say that what they experience is silence. That is very common, and that is exactly what I hope for.

That is the nature of koans. They are very central to what I am about and to what my work is about. It is all about trying to enter into the mystery. It is about trying to become a part of the mystery and to create a way for a viewer of the work to go into that space, to ask questions, and to enter into the silence. (Koehler 154)

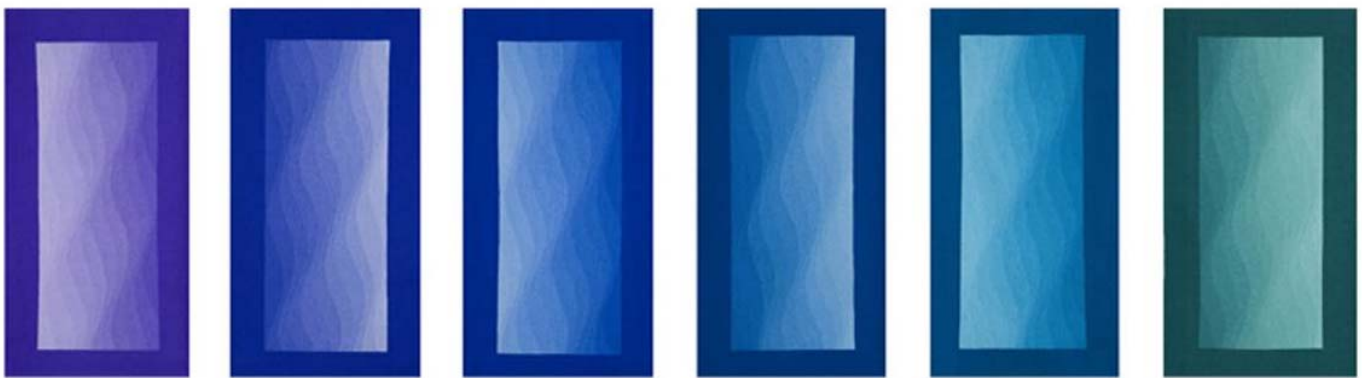
James was also very interested in the Bauhaus (an early 20th-century German art school). He studied with Evelyn Anselevicius while at the monastery. She had been a student of Joseph Albers at Black Mountain College and James relished that connection to the famous Bauhaus teacher. In recent years James returned to his study of the Bauhaus masters. In his last few years he began teaching a new set of classes related to Bauhaus thought and design based

especially on the writing and artwork of Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Joseph Albers. One of his last projects was a three-year study of the Bauhaus and its influence on tapestry in New Mexico: *Interwoven Traditions: New Mexico and Bauhaus*.

As any prolific artist, his work evolved through many stages. His first tapestries were based on spiritual or religious iconography. Later he started making pieces based on Navajo Chief blankets, pieces inspired by Native American ceremonial masks and koshares, and his limited edition series which could be reproduced in editions up to eight. He wove a poignant series of tapestries called *Regarding Abiquiu* when he lived on Glorieta Mesa outside of Santa Fe which helped him process events surrounding his experiences in the monastery. In 1997 he began his series of work based on Zen koans, and in 2001 he started weaving waves. His Harmonic Oscillation series filled his last decade of work.

James loved teaching. In the last years of his life his teaching schedule was intense. He often was out of the studio one or two weeks each month teaching workshops all over the country.

I want to continue to teach because the world of tapestry has enriched my life in so many ways. I want to pass on that gift to a new generation of weavers who are willing to learn from me. Tapestry weaving is an art form that does not get a lot of attention from the mainstream art world. I hope my work will help to change that.... [Tapestry] is an art form that enables people to enter into their own creative process where they can explore the medium and expand the possibilities that are inherent in it... I like to live my life from the vantage point of considering unexplored possibilities, and I am passionate about approaching my work in the same way. (Koehler 253)



James Koehler, "Harmonic Oscillations LIV - LIX" Six panels, each 48 x 24", Hand-dyed wool.

James had an extraordinary number of tapestry students who speak about the influence he had on them. James was devoted to searching for an essential simplicity for himself and expressing that in his art. He wanted his students to continue working to further tapestry as an art form, but perhaps the most important thing he taught us was to find the essential place in each of ourselves that no one else can express and to make sure we live our lives from that place no matter what our vocation.

I remember one student of James' working at her loom in his studio would call out occasionally, "I'm coming to a question soon." I hope in some way to continue hearing James' lively reply: "I'll be right there!"

James completed his autobiography *Woven Color: The Tapestry Art of James Koehler* in 2010, and it is available from Blurb Publications.

Reference

Koehler, James, & Carole Greene. *Woven Color: The Tapestry Art of James Koehler*. Blurb Publications, 2010.

In Tribute of James Koehler

James had many students, apprentices, and colleagues in the world of tapestry. The following are tributes from a few of them.

I met James shortly after moving to Santa Fe in 1999 and had the honor and pleasure of working as his studio assistant for the next five years. Our relationship evolved over time to encompass being colleagues in the gallery world, fellow travelers on the teaching circuit, and most importantly, friends.

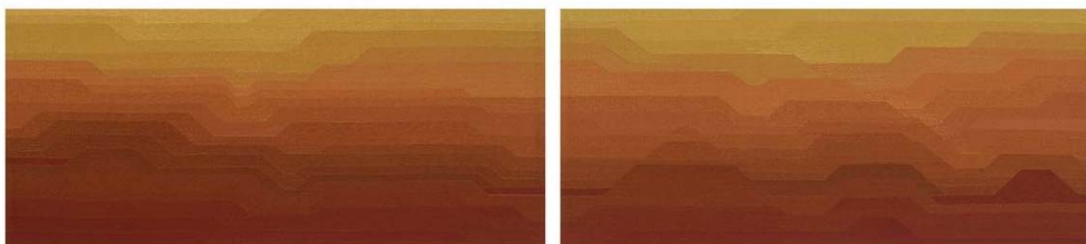
For the first year and a half that I worked with James, he still lived in his remote, off-grid little house and studio on Glorieta Mesa. Even though it was often an ordeal to travel the rugged and sometimes impassable four-wheel drive road to his studio, in many ways my fondest memories of working with James come from that time.

Because that studio was so small, James and I worked literally side by side, he at his loom, and me doing finishing work on a table. Often while James worked, he would stop in his weaving to ask me what I thought about the direction his tapestry was going or whether he should use this color here or that color there. I knew that he really didn't need my input and would make his decisions just fine on his own, but I always felt honored that he shared his thought process with me. Best of all was when we would break for lunch and have relaxed, heart to heart talks about both our personal and professional lives.

While James was in some ways a very private person, he was utterly open and generous in sharing his knowledge, experience and advice – he held nothing back. It was from him that I learned what it means to be a professional artist. His devotion to his craft, the deep thoughtfulness of his design process, and the impeccable attention to every detail of his work and every level of his career are unsurpassed.

I know that I wouldn't be who I am if James hadn't come into my life. I can count him as being one of the great treasures that has come my way because of being part of the world of weaving, and that he will continue to be one of my guiding lights for as long as I am doing this work.

—Jennifer Moore



James Koehler, "Desert Solitude Diptych" 30 x 150", Hand-dyed wool.

It is with great sadness that I consider the untimely death of James Koehler, a very gifted artist and master weaver. A quiet and gentle man, his weavings spoke of his own serene nature, interest in understanding the foundations of religion, and the magical possibilities of color.

I first saw James' artwork as a juror for Southwest Fiber Artists. In a field of several hundred, his work immediately caught my attention and was awarded first place. It was bold and compelling. I was very surprised to find that this work was created by a monk. He was not able to attend the opening much to my disappointment. Several years later I learned that he had left the monastery and was living in Taos. Again I wanted to meet this elusive amazing artist but to no avail. I finally was able to visit his studio somewhere between Santa Fe and Taos traveling over a rocky unmarked road. I found his home, a small building mostly dedicated to his studio, containing a loom, dye area, and many notations of next projects. I thought of all the expensive expansive studios I had visited and what miracles came from this modest man in a very limited space. After several years and relationships with other galleries, James was showing at Thirteen Moons Gallery, where I became the artistic director and later the owner. He had four solo shows at the gallery and each was a deeper exploration of his inner vision. Each time I thought "he can't advance

from this level,” but he always did, taking on a new challenge whether it be mathematical, color arrangements, or stripping his weavings closer and closer to essential meaning and purity. James had many patrons who would travel across the country to see his solo show and take home a treasured piece.

James never gave up teaching and thinking about how to promote tapestry weaving. He enlarged his studio in his new home in Santa Fe. His students grew in numbers and fierce desire to learn from a giving teacher. They appreciated spending time in his spacious studio with an enormous wall of hand dyed yarns that would bring joy and excitement to anyone entering the space. Finding a balance between his own work and teaching his methods and skills to others was always difficult for James. He struggled with how to say “no” which led to many hours sitting at his loom to meet expectations and deadlines. Although the work was painstaking, meticulous, and slow, he never disappointed and met all responsibilities. He clearly loved the solitary hours at the loom as much as the camaraderie of his students and admirers.

James’ smile and tender nature will be forever missed. His many accomplishments are spread across the country in museums, public spaces, offices, and residences. These are the gifts he left to us and to society to cherish with his memory.

—Jane Sauer

The tapestries of James Koehler hold a position and a frequency in the world of textiles that is unparalleled. They are visually intoxicating, technically impeccable, and always mystical. For over two decades I have consistently been thrilled to open a magazine, walk into a gallery, or attend an American Tapestry Alliance Biennial exhibition only to be touched by yet another new “James piece”.

Who knew that this magnificent stream of work would come to an abrupt and premature halt? Or that one day we would be asked to live our creative lives without the constant creative beacon of James and his work.

James, without question you have left this world a far better place. If indeed there is a place called Heaven, I know the looms were warped in readiness, and you are hard at work giving angels and saints a few lessons on the golden mean.

—Mary Zicafoose



James Koehler, "Harmonic Oscillation XL"
40 x 40", Hand-dyed wool.

Teacher, mentor, friend — James is gone, but not gone. I live his legacy, weave his legacy, every day.

I was a scatter-shot weaver before I met James, as likely to be working on over-shot table runners or alpaca scarves to give away for Christmas as tapestries. Then I happened to enroll in James’ *Color and Design I* and from then on only tapestry interested me.

I was not an easy student. Physical issues make strict adherence to traditional technique a hurdle that I found more practical to avoid. From the beginning, James was extraordinarily patient. Though a stickler for technique, he encouraged me to work in the ways that were best for me, pointing out that even though my technique was odd, somehow the finished work looked right.

In the years that followed, I took virtually every course James offered. As all who were fortunate enough to study with him know, he was a marvelous teacher, purveyor of a wealth of information: design history, color theory, tapestry techniques, and the challenges faced by the professional weaver, to name but a few.

Working with James, I learned where to go for inspiration: art books, photographs, paintings... and the beauties unfolding, moment by moment, at my door. He taught me to recognize in myself the spark of excitement that means, “Stop. Look. There’s something for you — right here!” First, it was photographs

continued...

of trees, the more gnarled and misshapen the better. Then the sense of motion and turmoil in Italian Futurist paintings. Could I do that in tapestry? Then architecture: the way buildings tower against the sky... the play of light and shadow between their angles... how age and weather pattern their surfaces.

Generous of his time and his expertise, James was a brilliant mentor. I developed the habit of bringing finished work, as well as ideas for projects yet to be realized, to the studio for brief review. His input was invaluable, pointing out aspects of my work I was only half aware of, identifying trends and directions I might like to follow (or not), addressing whatever thorny issues I stumbled upon.

At one of our last meetings, I showed him a small maquette for a piece I was about to begin. A semi-abstract architectural, it seemed fairly successful, but failed to capture the drama I was hoping for. James suggested I exaggerate and articulate the shadow line that defined the curve of one adobe wall. "Like this," he said, opening a book of Georgia O'Keeffe's abstracts. "Study how she uses line to dramatize." I did, and it worked.

—Mary Cost

The last time I saw James, we talked about light — not the sunlight playing on the Spokane River to our right, or odd gallery schemes for the illumination of textiles. Our conversation was about the light emanating from tapestries — light which, masquerading as color, is captured, preserved in wool, and sent back into the world. More than an effect, we agreed, it is physics in action, fascinating both to discuss and to weave.

In the course of that conversation, James invited me to write the preface to his book, *Woven Color*. I was startled, for we did not know each other well. We had met before, but this last in-depth conversation was also our first, at least in person. Our tapestries, however, have hung together in several venues, they share a page in Carol Russell's book, *Tapestry Handbook: The Next Generation*, and proximity has apparently led to conversation, perhaps even dispute, about things that really matter — color, content, weaving and hanging methods, the joys of being a textile. How else could we, the weavers, have gone straight into a discussion of weaving physics?

When I collected my work from the show in Spokane weeks later, I examined each piece, curious

about what might have been learned this time. For James' tapestries speak with a precision most of us cannot dream of. Defying categorization, his work is no imitation of paint with its glossy or glass covered surfaces. Nor is it like other textiles. It is not, indeed, an imitation of anything, but rather one man's curiosity made manifest.

This, then, is his gift to us — a body of precise and luminous tapestry which, in the vacuum of his absence, must serve to broaden our understanding of the possibilities of the medium and ourselves. And the tapestries will do it. For within each, preserved in wool, is the thought, the study, and the shimmering energy that was James.

—Sarah Swett

When I remember James Koehler this quote seems appropriate:

"There comes that mysterious meeting in life when someone acknowledges who we are and what we can be, igniting the circuits of our highest potential." Rusty Berkus

For me, James was that person. Not only did he help me develop my weaving ability, but we became close friends as well. I live in the same area as he did and was an apprentice at his studio—a gift of a lifetime. James was such a generous, kind, and gifted teacher that this humble beginner soon lost her apprehension and gained some measure of confidence.

James was focused, exacting, encouraging and also very funny. We had many good times during all those hours spent in the studio. It was a center of friendship and inspiration.

Lunch at the studio during the summer was usually outside on the portal. I remember James pointing out the tiniest hummingbird nest perched on the end of a cherry tree branch while underneath my two orphaned gold fish swam with his Koi family. Both the large and small rhythms of the universe mattered to him.

Louisa May Alcott said it well: "We all have our own life to pursue, our own kind of dream to be weaving. And we all have the power to make wishes come true, as long as we keep believing".

I know James would want us all to keep on believing in our own dreams. I will miss you James.

—Nancy Lane

The first time I saw any of the tapestries that James had woven, some twenty years ago, I knew that whoever created these was an exceptional person, both as a weaver and in a spiritual sense. I can't explain how one can sense that from yarn, color and composition, but it was present and there was no denying it.

Later, I got to know the man behind this work and learned that my instincts were not wrong. James had a vision and dedication to that vision that few of us can hope to come close to, even in approximation. Many tapestry artists weave for the enjoyment of the materials and the process. For himself, James added to those joys a dedication to only weaving what would be true and lasting. As with any good weaver, he would not design in haste, then rush to weave that quick design; I remember him saying that his sketches were very personal, almost spiritual, and never wanted help in that area.

Having taken this approach to his art, it is no wonder that his tapestries were widely treasured, sought after and collected. James achieved such success because of his dedication and care in the execution of his ideas. He is a lesson to us all.

Despite his fame and accomplishments, the man behind all this was gentle and caring, was a teacher to many and friend to all. We have lost a treasure, but should all be glad to have known him and his work. The world is richer because of James.

—**Michael Rohde**



James Koehler, "Harmonic Oscillations LXII"
60 x 60", Hand-dyed wool.

After seeing James Koehler's tapestries at Weaving Southwest in 1998 I realized I wanted to learn how to weave. In 2005, I became one of his students. His teachings gave me the tools and, more importantly, the freedom to express myself within tapestry which I might not have found that easily on my own. James Koehler's dedication to the art of tapestry weaving will continue to be an inspiration for my work and I will always remember his advice of allowing yourself the time and space to get to "that place" where art happens.

—**Cornelia Theimer Gardella**

Those of us in northern New Mexico are very fortunate to have had James Koehler living in our midst. He was very generous with his time, teaching a 5 day course twice a year at the Espanola Valley Fiber Arts Center. He did not charge as much for the classes as he did in other areas because he wanted the Center to succeed. I have been taking these classes regularly since 2003, each time picking up something that had gone over my head the session before. One time I told him he was getting to be a better teacher, and he said it was just because I understood more. He was always so helpful, patient and inspiring.

Two years ago a friend and I spent a week in his Studio and it was a different experience. From then on, we were considered to be one of his 'students'. We could call him about a problem and he was always available for consultation. He came to my house once and fixed my new Macomber loom when it was not quite right from the factory. When I asked him why he was so generous with his time, his reply was, "I want you to weave." My friend and I visited him two weeks before he passed away and he critiqued my completed weaving. I asked his advice about whether a small 9 x 12" piece that I had completed in the Bauhaus design Theory I class was good enough to weave a much larger version. He said, yes it was and his last words were, "I really like that". I will always remember that and will try to progress in my tapestry weaving in a way that would honor his memory.

—**Evelyn Campbell**

When James recently and unexpectedly died, he left a large void in the lives of his many friends and students. James, the consummate tapestry weaver with never-ending energy had accomplished so much, developing his own spiritual style leading to wide recognition and many awards.



James Koehler, "Harmonic Oscillation LXI"
84 x 72", Hand-dyed wool.

I have known James for approximately 10 years and during that time he has been a teacher, mentor, critic and wonderful friend to me. He has been an inspiration to me as he has been to many and has opened his world of tapestry to us. Wishing to bring wider recognition to the art and craft of tapestry, he felt the responsibility to be the best of teachers and showed an admirable amount of patience for every student.

We traveled to Santa Fe frequently and a visit to James' studio was always the highlight of the trip. The many dyed wools were always there to tempt us, there were always new tapestries on the walls, and he was always eager to talk about his most current project on the loom. Often wonderful discussions ensued, at his studio or over dinner; choices of color, designs, choices of wool, tapestry as an art form, the future of tapestry and many other topics were covered. On the lighter side he was full of excitement about recent hiking trips, the Santa Fe Opera, an upcoming visit by his family or future teaching projects.

James thought he had at least 30 more years of weaving in him; we all miss him so much and our world of tapestry will never be the same again.

—Klaus Anselm

The Journey.....a beginning, an ending and an enduring legacy ~

My love of fiber began in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 70s where I was surrounded by many creative artists and the mantra was "do your own thing." Fiber was mainly off loom, structural, and experimental. For many years I traveled to Santa Fe and Taos on vacation. On one of those trips I passed by Weaving Southwest and was struck by the extraordinary tapestries of James Koehler that I saw through the window. His work inspired me to hold the dream of creating high quality tapestries...one day.

In 2003, I moved to Santa Fe continuing to telecommute to my company in the Bay Area. In the summer of 2005, I realized it was now time to get back to weaving but had no idea how to find a teacher. On Canyon Road one day I went into Thirteen Moons and saw one of James' pieces. I remember commenting to the sales associate how I would love to study with someone like him (thinking he lived in England or Paris or somewhere overseas). I asked if she knew of anyone teaching weaving locally. I was stunned to find out James lived in Santa Fe and taught classes locally too! To further such a serendipitous meeting, I immediately looked him up in the phone book only to find he lived on the same street as I do in Eldorado! I was blown away to say the least. I immediately called him, set up a meeting and started an apprenticeship two weeks later.

For the next four and a half years I worked side by side with James at his studio, learning the high art of tapestry weaving. His patience and ability to work with my overly ambitious mind and oh-so-slow beginning skill set are greatly appreciated and remembered. His command of the tapestry process is extraordinary and knowledge of color blending unsurpassed. He taught students around the country with dedication, patience and focus. Yet, he still pursued his own dream of creating new techniques, refining old ones, developing new hanging methods for his own tapestries...all within his vision of excellence combined with precision technique and quality. His tremendous drive to elevate tapestry to an art form raised the bar for all of us. He has left an enduring legacy that we can only hope to continue in some small way to honor the gift that he gave to all of us. Thank you, my friend. You will be so missed.

—Sheila Burke

Using a Cartoon

By Doris Florig

Not many of us have the luxury of working with a cartoonier or care to work with the design restrictions expected when tied to a cartoonier. Creating the design, choosing the colors, and selecting the desired techniques are as exciting as the process of weaving. But, every now and then I see someone's painting that has brush strokes that stand out as representing a warp and a weft. I can't help wanting to see the art work represented as a tapestry. It happened to me just recently while sharing a studio with Dwayne Harty, a landscape painter.

Dwayne and Harvey Locke, the founder of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, were sorting paintings in preparation for *The Journey of Wildlife and Art* exhibition. Dwayne's painting "The Gates to the Nahanni" caught my attention. It looked like a weaving. Transposing that image would give me the opportunity to experience what it would have been like to be a weaver during the middle ages, when tapestries were designed and directed by the courtyard painter. Of course being a modern day woman, I would not be expected to work with the restrictions that were required of the ateliers of the Middle Ages. I would have the freedom to choose my own style and colors.

In order to fairly represent "The Gates to the Nahanni", I needed a good cartoon. Again, taking advantage of being a modern day woman, I had a 54 x 48" black and white copy made from a photo of the original painting. The resolution of the large copy was terrible, but it was all I really needed. It provided out-



Doris Florig at her loom.

line shapes and shading but no detail. It gave me plenty of freedom to develop my sense of color and interest in texture.

"The Gates to the Nahanni" is the first weaving in my Yellowstone to Yukon Tapestry Series. During the summer of 2011, I will be spending design time exploring Yellowstone National Park. Surrounded by the natural beauty, I'll be inspired to dye my fibers using wild plants found just outside the park in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This tapestry will be an abstract landscape, allowing me full control of the creative process. Considering this may be a very different style tapestry, I will continue to rely on a cartoon as a very important guide in my work.

The Emerging Edge

By Karen Piegorsch

Regardless of the art medium I'm immersed in, my thrill and satisfaction come from the aliveness of responding to what emerges moment by moment. I choose not to use a cartoon while creating tapestries. Instead, I merge my consciousness and then dive in and let the medium tell me what to do. For me, that process provides the most satisfying experience and results.

The closest description I've found for this process is Carolyn Jongeward's "conjuring," explained in *Weaver of Worlds*, by David Jongeward: conjuring is "a spontaneous approach" that results in a piece which is "a representation of the present moment of her psyche." They describe it as "feeling-centered, yielding an intuitive approach" that is distinct from a "thinking-centered, ordered approach to design." This resonates with me because I've noticed that my most authentic art emerges from a particular state of unity of body, mind and spirit in which embodied intuition dominates.

I am kinesthetic and nonverbal while creating. When I am in that state of consciousness, most pieces start as abstractions, and interpretation emerges from, rather than leads the creative process.

To weave with this level of immersion I need a container that feels safe and distraction-free. My small studio is an uncluttered space that gives me a sense of enclosure. My weft stash is organized by color and easily accessible. I keep earplugs handy, and when I use music it's always a nonverbal selection that doesn't interfere with my inner movement.

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There's a large floor mat in a corner of my small studio. Each time I come to the loom I spend a bit of time on that mat, to prepare through an eclectic mix of embodied meditation methods that include: Emily Conrad's "continuum movement" (www.continuummovement.com); Paula Reeve's "spontaneous contemplative movement" (*Women's Intuition: Unlocking the Wisdom of the Body*); Alok Hsu Kwang-han's "resting in presence and moving from emptiness" (www.zencalligraphy.com).

Later, while weaving, I intend to stay tuned-in. When, inevitably, I notice that my consciousness has fragmented, I pause, and deliberately return my attention to my body until, once again it's my body and not my mind that's moving me. Over-analysis and carelessness are common signs of fragmentation. For example, struggling to make a choice rather than peacefully knowing which direction to insert a weft; anxiously rushing to choose the next shape or color rather than waiting and trusting; or, automatically working in a specific area without a sense of connection to the whole piece. Sometimes I can restore the flow without leaving the loom; more often, though, I return to the mat to reenter the state of wholeness from which conjuring is available. Paradoxically, weaving on this emerging edge is calmly exhilarating!

Small Tapestry International 2: Passages

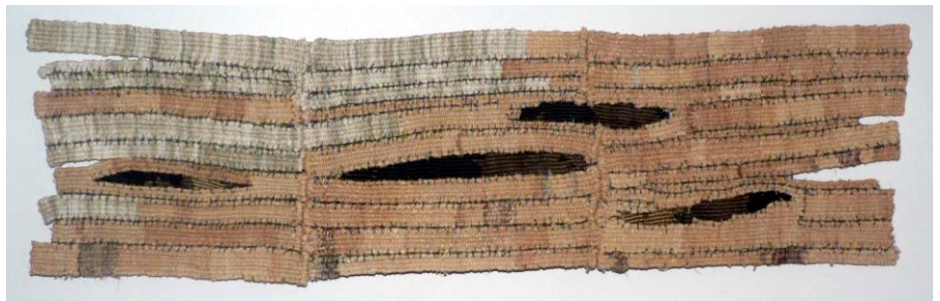
By Kathy Spoering

Those who are familiar with the large, bright, southwestern styled tapestries that typically grace the walls of Weaving Southwest in Taos, New Mexico will have been surprised to see them replaced for a time with tiny woven jewels of texture and color. There could not be a more beautiful space for the *Passages* exhibit to hang. Weaving Southwest has allowed both large gallery walls for the 48 small pieces in the exhibit, giving an overall effect of spaciousness and the generous light of the Southwest.

The gallery hung the exhibit beautifully. In fact, the pieces seemed to be chosen so carefully to enhance and complement each other, I was surprised to find that they had been hung in the order they are printed in the catalog, which is alphabetically, by artist name! While that would not often work with an exhibit of such varied works, I did not see any case where the arrangement was not a pleasing one.

Because the work is small, I saw viewers take that extra few steps toward them, allowing the tapestries into their personal space. That viewpoint seems to make reactions to the pieces more intimate. Closer study of each piece was not only allowed, it seemed required.

Even though the tapestries are small, it is apparent that the medium is one which allows a great deal of variety. Styles range from pure abstraction to representative, with the inclusion of several figural images. Materials also vary, with the most surprising piece, "Fallow Fields Turning Inward" by Dorothy Clews, being woven of antique verdure tapestry fragments, and plant fibers; a lovely little piece that seems to have 'woven straw into gold.' Other tapestries have also included mixed fibers and metallics, and, in the case of Susan Martin Maffei's "Feather Work," actual feathers. In most cases, the use of mixed fibers works well.



Dorothy Clews, "Fallow Fields Turning Inward" 4.5 x 17.5",
antique verdure tapestry fragments, plant fibers
Photo by the artist. Detail below.



Technical variety is also a quality of the medium. Variation is seen in the fine sett and scale used by Kathe Todd Hooker in her two beautiful sunset pieces as well as the varied setts Pamela Topham has used to express landscape perspective in "Peter's Pond, Sagaponack #3." Wedge weave is used by Merna Strauch in "The Edges of Doo-wop" and Deborah Corsini in "Shifting Sands." Ruth Manning's use of slits for pattern and variation is a delight, and both Mary Colton and Federica Luzzi have presented their content with shape weavings. The juror has chosen an exhibit that showcases the wide variety that tapestry offers.

The juror, Kay Lawrence, took the theme of the exhibit, "Passages," seriously, writing in her statement that it was 'easy to exclude entries that didn't address the theme.' In most of the tapestries, the artist's interpretation of the theme of 'passage,' was clear, with some relating to the passage of time, as in Tori Kleinert's figurative "Semblance of Generational Passage" and Patricia Armour's "Beginnings." Others refer to passage between and among spaces and places, such as Jean Pierre Larochette's exquisite "The Points in Between," and Cecilia Blomberg's "Between the Birches." Another beautiful and appropriate interpretation of the theme was Monique Lehman's "Chopin," which is a woven passage of a musical manuscript. Sharon Crary's "Going Through the Motions" piece expresses the theme in a literal way, with a small woven ribbon passing in and out of bands across the tapestry, seeming to hold it to its mount.

There are a number of pieces in the exhibit that have to be enjoyed in person, as they did not translate well into the printed catalog images. The most striking case of this is Izabela Mamak's tapestry, "Upstairs." While it doesn't look bad in print, it does not capture the beautiful weaverly-ness of the tapestry. It could be a text-book example of the use of blending, hatching, and joins to create movement and atmosphere in fiber. Another piece that the catalog has not done justice to is Luzzi's "Small Black Shell." The photographer may have used a flash, as there are small white spots all over the photo, looking like warp 'lice' or beads. The actual three-dimensional shaped tapestry is pure black, with the sheen of the waxed cotton cord.

One of the things that cannot be overlooked in a small format tapestry exhibit is the way the artists have chosen to present their work. A number of the tapestries seem to stand very well on their own, with mounts that are not apparent to the viewer. There are a few pieces in which the artists



Merna Strauch, "The Edges of Doo-wop" 5.5 x 5", linen.
Photo by Ralph Strauch.



Deborah Corsini, "Shifting Sands" 10 x 9.75" silk. Photo by Bruce Hirschman.



Tori Kleinert, "Semblance of Generational Passage" 11 x 9 x 1", linen, cotton
Photo by James Kleinert.



Izabela Mamak, "Upstairs" 12 x 8", wool. Photo by the artist.

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Margaret Sunday, "A Transect Through the Enchanted Wood" framed and detail, 9.5 x 7" wool, cotton, silk, flax, synthetics. Photo by John Blake.



have made somewhat unfortunate choices, using frames or mounts that detract from the tapestry. I am aware that presentation is a difficult arena for fiber artists. I personally don't like to see a tapestry under glass, as it seems to take away from the tactile nature of the work. I can see that it is sometimes necessary, as in the case of Maffei's feathers, for protection of the materials.

A few pieces also used wooden frames that seemed to overshadow the delicacy of the medium and size of the tapestry. Most mounts, however, were tasteful in both size and materials used. The one presentation

that most caught my eye is not shown in the catalog. It is of Margaret Sunday's "A Transect Through the Enchanted Wood." The tapestry is only 9 1/2 x 7", yet the mount makes the piece the largest in the exhibit, perhaps 20 x 20". At first, I wondered if there had been a size limitation that this piece might have gone beyond, but if so, I am glad it was allowed in this way anyway. All surfaces of the frame and mount are covered with a neutral white fabric, emphasizing that this is a fiber piece, and making the mount an integral part of the piece. The tapestry is hung within a shape that mirrors the eccentric shape of the tapestry itself. The entire tapestry is woven in a somewhat eccentric manner, with warp showing through, edges curving, holes peeking here and there, and no real apparent plan to the image. Sunday explains that the inspiration was a walk her daughter had taken in an 'enchanted' wood that included fairy sightings. I have to say, I believe in fairies, based on this little tapestry. It is a visual surprise and delight! In spite of, or perhaps because of, all the 'broken technical rules' in the execution of this tapestry, it is the one that will stay with me long after the exhibit is over.

Overall, *Passages* is another excellent exhibit the American Tapestry Alliance offers for the presentation and promotion of our medium. Well done, ATA!

Tapestry Exhibitions in Minnesota's Twin Cities:

Christine Pradel-Lien, Maximo Laura, Nancy Jackson, and Susan Gangsei

By Pamela J Davis

I want to share news about tapestry weaving within the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Exhibitions, demonstrations, classes, and lectures have been seen everywhere in the Twin Cities. The tapestries of Christine Pradel-Lien from St. Paul, Maximo Laura from Peru, Nancy Jackson from California, and Susan Gangsei from Minneapolis warmed our senses as the winter freeze started its crawl into our homes last fall.

This article showcases the recent exhibition of local artist Christine Pradel-Lien in the Community Gallery of the Textile Center in Minneapolis from Oct. 27 - Dec. 30, 2010. Christine's exhibit is a review of her tapestry weaving during the past 15 years, including her recent work about spiders and water fountains. Her interest in spiders began when her daughter, Mathilda, started photographing arachnids. The two of them huddled together and, based on Mathilda's photographs, determined spiders would provide admirable subjects for tapestries. Why not feature the greatest weavers engaged in the process?

Christine's tapestry titled "Il était une fois Arachné III" (9 x 23") is one of two tapestries in the exhibition about the shared interest of mother and daughter. The tapestry has a sharp contrast between background and spiders that emphasizes the detail, texture, and color of her subject. It is made of wool, cotton, linen, and synthetic thread. The imagery is enhanced with the use of cotton and synthetic threads.



Christine Pradel-Lien, "Il était une fois Arachné III" 9 x 23"

Another recent theme for Christine is her fascination with water fountains. In particular she is captivated by the effect of the water splashing and floating as mist through the atmosphere. Christine's placed one of her water fountains on the moon in "La fontaine sur la Lune." (34 x 50 1/2") It is also made of wool, cotton, linen, and synthetic thread.



Christine Pradel-Lien, "La fontaine sur la Lune" 34 x 50.5"

Growing up in the Loire Valley of France in her hometown of Angers, Christine often uses the French landscape in her work. The Loire Valley has a strong tapestry tradition dating back to the fourteenth century. The lure of the warmth, softness, and color of the tapestries enticed Christine to follow in the weaving tradition in her art classes. As a child Christine would step outside her front door and play in the bandstand across the street. As an adult she was lulled by the concerts in the bandstand. Closing her eyes she could feel the warmth of the sun on her face and visualize the colors from the flowers surrounding the bandstand as they seemed to dance to the tunes.

For Christine it is the physical act of moving colorful fibers in and out of the warps that most appeals to her as she weaves her tapestries. Christine continues the traditions surrounding her youth in the Loire Valley and explains, "...my goal is to continue to practice this art form and to transmit the tradition of weaving to the public." (Other tapestries by Christine that reflect these themes can be seen in the catalogs for ATB1 "Des Pierres, Des Prières"; ATB3 "Fete de la Musique"; and currently, ATB8 "Ecoutez Chanter la Fontaine II".)

Overlapping Christine's incredible tapestry exhibition we had a visit from Maximo Laura from Ayacucho, Peru. It was an honor to have an internationally acclaimed, Master Weaver come to the Twin Cities from Peru to give a lecture and demonstration in the Textile Center Auditorium on November 3, 2010. As a fifth-generation weaver, Maximo follows the traditional style of ancient weaving called *cumbimayocs*. He has a personalized style of weft faced weaving that tucks the bundles or coils of yarn into three-dimensional layers. The colors and iconography of Maximo's Huari culture are translated into his own visual designs.

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During the weaving demonstration Maximo's magnificent tapestries hung from the rafters throughout the Textile Center's Auditorium. He had a loom shipped from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC for the event. Watching Laura's demonstration at the Textile Center, we could see how he transformed his bundles of brightly colored yarn to create the spectacular tapestries for which he is known. Maximo's appearance was sponsored by ArtAndes, a small business located in the Twin Cities devoted to the design and marketing of textiles from Peru. (Images of his work can also be seen in the ATB7 and ATB8 exhibition catalogs.)

A few miles from the Textile Center, the Luther Seminary Museum in St. Paul was the host of another striking tapestry exhibition titled **Tradition and Innovation: The Tapestry Art of Nancy Jackson and Susan Gangsei**. Nancy Jackson teaches and weaves in the classical French Gobelin and Aubusson style and resides in Vallejo, CA. She has had many exhibitions worldwide, and her work is held in numerous public and private collections. Susan Gangsei lives in Minneapolis and has trained with Nancy Jackson. Susan's tapestries are influenced by Nordic myths and fairy tales woven with a contemporary twist. Susan and Nancy's tapestries were on display at Luther Seminary until December 1, 2010. (See Traudi Bestler's exhibit review of **Tradition and Innovation** in this issue.)

If you wish to discover more about tapestry weaving, we offer tapestry classes at the Weavers Guild of Minnesota within the Textile Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Christine Pradel-Lien:

pradellientapestries.blogspot.com and

www.americantapestryalliance.org

Nancy Jackson: www.timshelstudio.com and

www.americantapestryalliance.org

Susan Gangsei: www.astontapestry.com

Maximo Laura: www.maximolaura.com and

www.americantapestryalliance.org

ArtAndes: artandes.com/maximo-laura

Luther Seminary Museum in St. Paul, MN:

www.luthersem.edu/archives/museum

Tradition and Innovation

By Traudi Bestler

Two tapestry artists, Nancy Jackson and Susan Gangsei, presented a show of their work during fall 2010 at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. There were 10 pieces by Jackson and five by Gangsei. I have had the pleasure of being in a workshop taught by Nancy and one of Susan's first tapestry teachers. Although their work springs from a similar theological base, and both work in the Gobelin technique, they are very different from each other in style.

Nancy Jackson was inspired many years ago by weaving instruction from Lila Nelson, an authority on Scandinavian weaving techniques, who introduced her to the pleasures of Nordic style weaving. She notes that other influences on her work include African art, music, and icons. Since she is an iconographer as well as a tapestry artist, much of her meditation and thought while preparing to paint icons is evident in the weaving that she does. Her work is mostly abstract, complex, and many-layered with much to look at and think about in each piece. When viewing the show, I often relied on her exhibit's didactic labels placed beside the work to understand what the tapestry was telling me.

Susan Gangsei has a Nordic background, and her work often illustrates stories from the Bible. She says that she tries to tell the old stories in a new way, and that her work starts out telling the story of her life and ends up telling the story of mankind. Her work is bright, colorful, and representational with the flat perspective often seen in Scandinavian tapestry. The colors she uses are limited in each piece and used very carefully. There often is a secondary part of the image that does not appear at a first glance, but teases your eye with sudden discovery. Gangsei began weaving in 2002 when she took a class from Jackson at Vesterheim. She continues to work one-on-one with Jackson to further her skills in execution and design.

Gangsei has five pieces of work in the show, some designed by Susan alone, and some designed with Jackson. A series of contrasts in mood, design, and intention is created as one walks around the open, spacious display viewing Gangsei's tapestries interspersed with Jackson's pieces.

In her artist statement, Jackson notes that she develops her imagery to take advantage of the expressive quality of tapestry. Using 20th and 21st century under-

standing, she uses techniques employed since medieval times to create her images. "Saint Olav King of Norway" shows a thoughtful Olav standing on the conquered dragon which represents the triumph of religion over the past violence of the Vikings. The background is filled with the eight-pointed stars and other motifs derived from Scandinavian folk art and weaving. This is one of the few representational pieces by Jackson in this show.

Her work, mostly abstract, includes a mastery of creating a many-layered, complex tapestry that bears looking at, looking at again, and thinking of the weaver as a conduit for the religious ideas expressed in the tapestry.

In "Small Fallen Angel with a Cut", she states that she wants to convey the idea that even angels who are spiritually perfect can be injured and fail. Her use of metallic threads creates another layer of transparency. She states that she has woven herself as an observer in this tapestry. The scattered eyes suggest seeing and being seen in the presence of God.



Nancy Jackson, "Small Fallen Angel with a Cut I", 30.5 x 24", 1st of 6, wool, silk and metallic weft/cotton warp
Photo by Charlie Langton, Vesterheim Museum, Decorah, IA.

In "Man of Sorrows", she has woven in the tradition of painted icons. The tapestry has borders, but the halo of a crucified Christ travels beyond the borders, creating a sense of immediacy. Christ's head with its crown of thorns is offset by the brilliant and metallic red of the drops of blood we see. The feeling of suffering and death suffuses the piece.

In "Lakota Creation Myth" we see layers of water and a turtle bearing a crow on its back. In tapestry it is difficult to weave a black shape that has enough variety in shades to make the shape luminous, but Jackson shows us a turtle and crow that manage to be many-hued and interesting to look at.

The entrance foyer displays Gangsei's "Nativity", a piece owned by Luther Seminary. It is the image of a child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and the word "messiah". The perspective is looking down, above Mary's head and the interesting border revealed itself to be her hair, shoulders, and hands. The weaving of Mary's dress is unique, creating a textured surface that is not often seen in this type of tapestry. Stylized crowns and a star complete the image.

In "The Prodigal Son", Gangsei shows us a father, with furrowed brow, a snake bearing on its back shapes that suggest dice and gambling, a quizzical pig, and a sorrowful looking bovine shape embellished with the letters E.S. On looking again, what appears to be the father's beard becomes the hair of the son that

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Susan Gangsei, "Nativity" 39 x 39.5, wool, cotton
Photo by Petronella Ytsma.



Susan Gangsei, "Nativity" detail, wool, cotton
Photo by Petronella Ytsma.

he is clutching to his chest, lifting him off his sandalled feet. Gangsei asks us, “How would you feel as the eldest son?” – Aha, I’ve figured out what E.S. stands for! “What did the local farmers think of this rich kid gone astray?”

In “Creation”, we see a lively, swirling tree of life, the leaves of which are almost a sampler of hatching, hachure, pick and pick, and other techniques. There is of course a vivid snake, figures in the background that suggested to me the shapes seen in petroglyphs, and a sea inhabited by fish and other sea creature shapes. In the upper corners there are two quizzical looking winged angels. The piece as a whole explodes with color, movement, and life.

Both artists’ work can be seen in color and detail at their web sites.

Nancy Jackson: www.timshelstudio.com

Susan Gangsei: www.astontapestry.com/Gallery.html

A Show of Hands: Alex Friedman

By Marianne Haller

Alex Friedman’s solo tapestry exhibit, **A Show of Hands**, Oct. 9, 2010 - Jan. 7, 2011, offered visitors to the Gail Van Dyke Atrium in Greenbrae, CA a remarkable collection of 24 pieces woven over a 20-year span. A select group has been among the visitors to the venue: cancer patients and their families coming for appointments at the Institute of Healing and Health, Marin Cancer Center.

A venue with a central atrium connecting to hallways which lead to doctors’ offices presents placement and lighting problems. However, the resulting arrangement, placing most of the large pieces in the entry way and main sitting area while the smaller tapestries, with their theme and variation, line the narrow and darker hallways to the individual offices, allows visitors to see all of the large pieces and most of the smaller ones as well.

The 24 tapestries in **A Show of Hands** represent three approaches to weaving structure and design that have interested Alex over the past 20 years. The show nicely illustrates the evolution of both surface structure and design: beginning with traditional tapestry flat weave of photo realistic images and ending within the last few years. Friedman’s work has moved towards

abstraction and two dimensions as well as tapestries where the sculpted warp and weft are very deftly twisted or “flipped” out of the flat background and remerge with it after the “flip” is accomplished.

Three large pictorial tapestries introduce the show to visitors. These pieces were woven in the early 1990s, and all three (“Three Graces”, “American Perspective, Can’t Stop, Can’t Look”, and “Beach Stairs”) catch our attention with an interesting photo-realistic image on entering the atrium. Each of the three images shares design elements, with strong verticals and horizontals that delineate blocks of colors. Repeated elements break up the picture plane and an architectural or “man-made” presence is evident along with a strong sense of place. With early and more recent work in close proximity, it is easy to see that the composition of the early pieces prefigures some of the more recent abstract tapestries. Consider the towels in the “Three Graces.” Elongated, they become the template for both the series named *Bound* and *Flow*.

The design elements that have carried through from the early work to the more abstract now exclude the pictorial. In many pieces of recent work, the composition has been simplified from one to several free flowing vertical or horizontal bands of color that reach from top to bottom or side to side on a background of repeated geometric shapes. There is a new emphasis on the use of bold color, and contrasting hues in the background are carefully considered. There is a feeling, for example in the *Flow* series, that these new works have a counterpart in tribal textiles from around the world in their composition. In several



Alex Friedman, "Three Graces" 50 x 53"



Alex Friedman, "Flow 3" 50 x 43.5 x 2"

pieces both ends of the color bands are indented from the rectangular dimensions of the background. These tapestries with indentations appear to be functional, though in reality they belong on the wall.

What is most important in the creation of the large abstract pieces, "Bound," "Flow Unfathomed," "Flow 3," and "Flow 4," is the incorporation of a weaving structure that has its own long history and is not often combined with flat weave. Alex's novel approach in using contrasting and alternating colors for her eccentric weave to delineate and accentuate her foreground shapes has two desirable consequences. She can modulate her repeated diagonal lines for any degree of subtlety she wants, and she gains from this technique a slight third dimension, since the eccentric weave structure within a background of flat weave physically pulls the warp slightly to one side. The modulating effect can be seen in the comparison between "Bound" and "Flow 3" where the choice to repeat or alternate the same color in one or more passes is a question of style. The three dimensional feature is certainly one of the aims of these pieces, yet photographs of most of these tapestries can-



Alex Friedman, "Flow 4" 43 x 35 x 2"



Alex Friedman, "Bound" 50 x 35x 2"

not easily capture the undulating organic quality in the drape of the fabric. If a description of the foreground has to be made, this reviewer can say that the foreground of *Bound* and the *Flow* series is evocative of strands of the very material used in weaving the tapestry, skeins of wool.

A third focus of this show is a series of smaller pieces, the majority of which fall into the categories, “Flips” and “Flows.” With her series entitled “Flips,” woven between 2000 and 2003, Alex explored another way to add a dimensional feature to her surface structure. Bands of color, which are so basic to her composition become ribbons of warp and weft that are no longer bound tightly and flatly within the fabric. For a short duration, warp and weft jump from their surface, do a flip in one direction and reverse the flip within a short distance and dive back into the body of the tapestry’s surfaces. These sculptural elements are not spirals; hence, the name “Flips.” Six “Flip” pieces are in this show, each with the sculptural element distributed at various intervals. The third dimension is the aim of this series, so many of these small tapestries don’t necessarily rely on a broad color palette to make their playful impression.

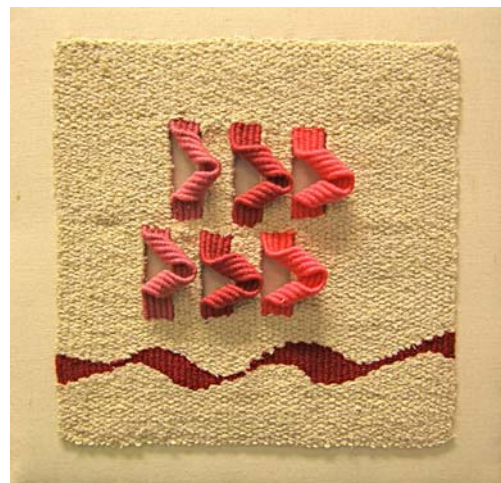
The small “Flows” are a miniature version of the large “Flows,” a series that started in 2005. Both large and small “flows” have similar compositions, though in the case of the small pieces, the bands of color flow horizontally. The background of these small tapestries has been simplified further, with one or two colors blocks behind a horizontal band of color. “Blue Flow” and “Rift Flow” are two examples of the smaller pieces, the one with a flat surface and the second with the undulations resulting from the eccentric weave of the foreground. The repeated color changes creating the linear quality of the eccentric weave are used very effectively in the small pieces in describing “flow” in this otherwise static medium.

What effect has **A Show of Hands** had on visitors and staff at the Center? A Nurse Navigator, Cathleen, told me, *“There is something about them that is healing. Patients get a few moments of beauty while they stop, talk and share.”*

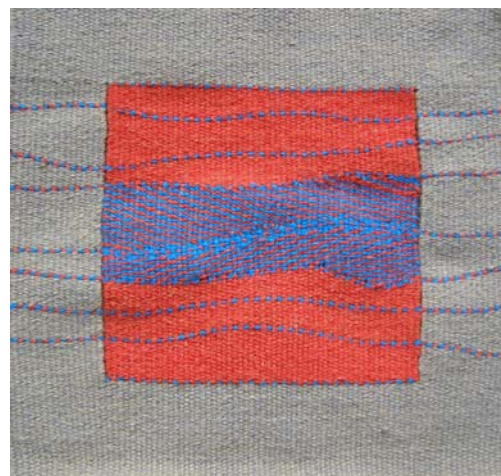
When asked which of the pieces has drawn most attention, she mentioned two in particular. “Flow Unfathomed” and “Nocturne,” the first of which is the largest tapestry in the show and well placed at the far end of the Atrium visible to all. It is an image figuratively pulled from a blue ocean, with its repeated pattern of blue shaded diamonds and triangles backing seven horizontal bands of light blue. “Nocturne” allows a fanciful escape to a balustrade that overlooks a blue bay and a blue landscape that is topped by a blue sky.

Alex Friedman’s show in Marin has been a resounding success. We can see in the twenty four pieces an evolution that began with traditional tapestry methods that evolved over the last twenty years towards experimentation and innovation. Whether there will be an additional phase in her very productive career we will wait and see.

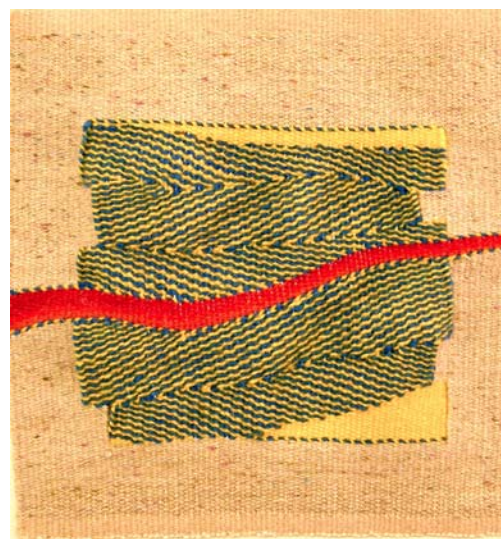
Visit www.alexfriedmantapestry.com for additional information about Alex’s tapestries.



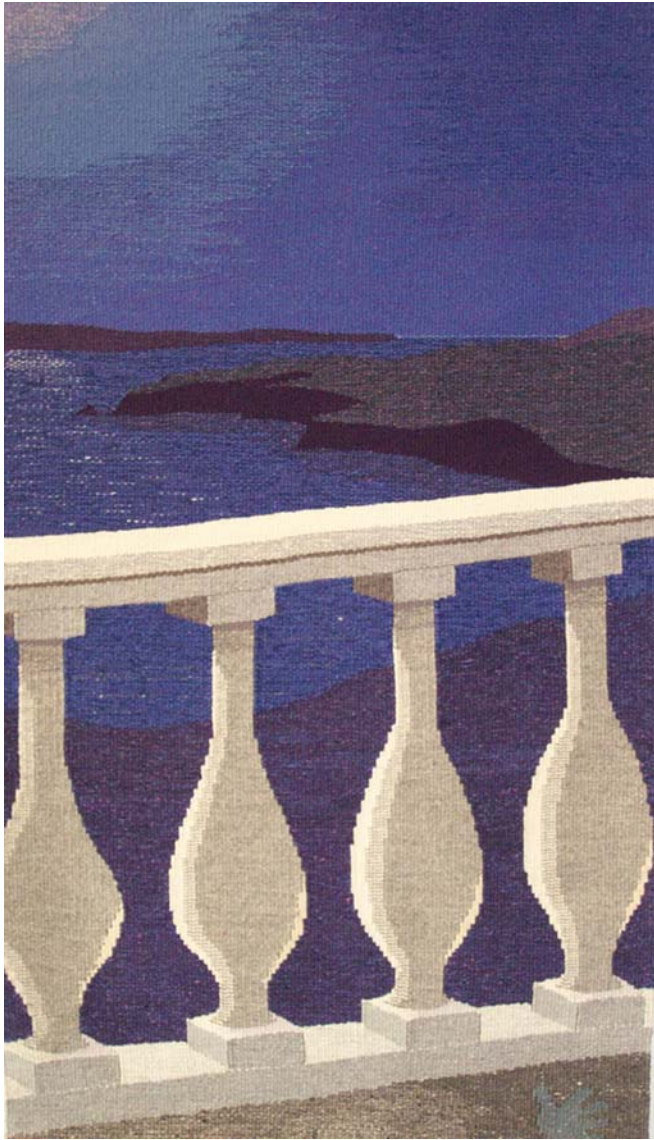
Alex Friedman, "Pink Flips" 8 x 8"



Alex Friedman, "Blue Flow" 11 x 11"



Alex Friedman, "Rift Flow" 11 x 11"



Alex Friedman, "Flow Unfathomed" 45 x 71 x 2"



Alex Friedman, "Nocturne" 53 x 29"

FROM LAUSANNE TO BEIJING

6th International Fiber Art Biennale

By Elisabeth Quick



In front of Henan Art Museum. Left to right: Shigeo Kubota (Japan), Dorota Antoszkiewicz (Poland), Monique Lehman, Ewa Latkowska (Poland), unidentified, Narahira Noriko (Japan), Elisabeth Quick, unidentified (Japan), and Professor Lin Lecheng (China).

Henan Art Museum, a soaring and starkly modern exposed structure, was the setting for China's 6th International Fiber Art Biennale, *From Lausanne to Beijing*, held in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China from October 22 - November 6, 2010. Taking up two full floors of the museum, this was a sprawling exhibition which encompassed a wide variety of techniques, forms, and materials that stretched the definition of the term "fiber arts."

The exhibition included 261 works executed by around 290 artists, some of them working cooperatively in pairs or groups. Artists from China provided the largest number of pieces with artworks executed by internationally respected artists shown alongside works of enthusiastic Chinese students.

Included in the exhibition were works of tapestry, embroidery, appliqué, sculpture, clothing, rugs, constructions, and any number of works that defied definition. Materials ranged from wool, silk, cotton, rattan, linen, sisal to just about any imaginable kind of weavable or constructible fiber or fiber-like material including paper, plastics, metal, rope, fabric, fiber optics, and piano wire plus materials that would not be considered "fiber" (like marbles, chili peppers, price tag fasteners or plastic cups) but were integral parts of pieces that included fiber.

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Inside exhibit hall.



The "Memorial Tapestry," - a four-panel piece consisting of small tapestries by 100 artists woven in commemoration of the events of September 11th.

"Elegy of Fall" were all executed in traditional tapestry technique, combining abstracted imagery with pictorial elements reminiscent of something visually recognizable.

In Rohde's case, the eye imagines a landscape, open and arid like the American Southwest; Li Fangfang's piece evokes people, perhaps birds and trees, without describing any of them literally. Birgitta Hallberg placed ghostly head-like shapes at the top of her piece that seem to melt into the mind's disarray and chaotic disorder. Lee Sang Ho's "Light" appears to emerge from rain in a sheet of diagonal purple-blues but with no specific image reference. All of these artists might claim that we (the viewers) are imagining things about their pieces – which would be an accurate assessment of their works' effect.

Polish artist Wlodek Cygan challenged the traditional methods of constructing tapestry with "The Miracle" by not only creating unusual shapes that require a specially built frame-loom to weave them, but also by working in unadorned, undecorative wool and sisal, causing a primal power to emerge. He received a bronze medal for this work.

Tapestry works were scattered throughout the exhibition, with pieces from the U.S., China, Poland, Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Korea, Turkey, and Georgia, among others. The "Memorial Tapestry," conceived and compiled by U.S. artist Monique Lehman was graciously accorded a special place for display alongside the formal exhibition entries. This tapestry is a four-panel piece consisting of small tapestries by 100 artists woven in commemoration of the events of September 11th.

Peru's Maximo Laura's piece set the exuberant tone of the exhibition. His brilliantly-colored, multi-stitched "Balance of Life," which hung in the entryway to the galleries, showed off his trademark combination of impeccably composed reds, oranges, yellows, and greens. The placement of animal and natural forms alongside geometric shapes and checkered bands gives the piece the lively musicality of a calliope.

Monique Lehman's "Poetry," a blue and purple-dominated, wave-formed tapestry constructed in the shape of a long evening gown, had a crocheted lace wing stretching the idea of tapestry from clothing into sculpture. Situated beside Japanese artist Matsutani Mami's eerie black kimono woven of human hair, Laura's and Lehman's pieces combined with Mami's to create an unsettling juxtaposition of scarcely related elements that characterized the exhibition as a whole.

Artworks in the exhibit were often positioned in proximity to other works which had no natural affinity for one another. Each piece had to stand on its own merits in the surrounding space. While some artists found certain placements disconcerting, I was struck by the unpredictability and enjoyed the entertainment value of finding student works alongside those of highly mature artists.

There was a range of traditional tapestry, abstract and pictorial, as well as tapestries that combined other techniques. U.S.'s Michael Rohde's "No Terra Incognita," Korea's Lee Sang Ho's "Whisper of Light," Sweden's Birgitta Hallberg's "Minds" and China's Li Fangfang's



Monique Lehman and daughter of Professor Lin Lecheng next to Lehman's tapestry "Poetry".



Michael Rohde with Chinese artist, Zou Ruoteng
"No terra Incognita"

Denmark's Anne Broderson's "Dream and Myth" achieves an intermittent texture by adding embroidery to the tapestry that lends depth and dimension to the surface of her abstract expressionist-style piece in black, reds, yellows and grays.

Adding atypical materials to a tapestry technique, Bai Bing of China achieved a wispy, floating elegance with the inclusion of feathers to her wool and silk tapestry, "Top of Cloud," creating a sensation almost like water flowing around rocks, rather than clouds. U.S. artist Carol Westfall left an impression of rain in "Cascade III" by weaving in metallic threads that end in a froth of curls reminiscent of foamy water.

With all the different materials, techniques and forms included in this exhibit, the tapestries appeared to be some of the more traditionally executed and classically referential among the different types of artworks. In some cases, in other media as well as tapestry, the classical techniques – for instance, Liang Xuefang's group's (from China) phenomenal "Bizarre" embroidery that took three years to execute and uses traditional embroidery techniques on a non-traditional image – are taken to new places while honoring the lineage of the art. The addition of unexpected materials, surface embellishment and unusual shaping have amplified the tapestry vocabulary and demonstrated new avenues to explore.



Elisabeth Quick with her tapestry, "Crane and Loon"

All in all, with *From Lausanne to Beijing* was ambitious and earnest in its intent to join the credible discourse of the international artistic community after centuries of cultural isolation. They are inviting many artists to join them in the conversation on a worldwide stage. It's been a pleasure, and the banquets were superb!

Elisabeth Quick's "Crane and Loon" was included in this exhibit. She said that for the piece she utilized a rustic embroidery technique to create elemental bird-like shapes that soar diagonally across the tapestry's surface from bottom to top.

Not an Artist

By Leslie Mitchell

I've been a tapestry weaver for about 10 years. A **WEAVER**, not an artist. Many tapestry weavers are artists or vice-versa. Many have no need of a designation one way or the other. In recent years I've found it necessary to make a distinction for my own skill set. Why? Because I'm not an artist, never will be, and I'm OK with that.

I am however, a technician. You gotta problem widdat?? *I* don't, as the world needs technicians & I'm a decent one. I can set up many types of tapestry looms and warps, retrofit one loom to work with another's components, jerry-rig misbehaving components into working at all, and ask questions of loom company tech support that prompt uneasy responses such as, "uhh...you're doing *what?*" Upon having completed our phone conversation, these people no doubt instant-message their co-workers with, "Oh my, another genius...wait'll ya hear this!"

I embrace the concept that masking tape is our friend and take its practical applications to new levels (avoiding the issue of whether those levels are high or low). Bungee cords and cable ties never had it so good. A broken warp merely presents the challenge of tying a solid square knot onto a 1/16" badly frayed end.

Design-wise, I seek out images of true artists' work with the eye of a sneak, as in, "Wow, that's beautiful. I can dumb that down, take it apart and reassemble the idea into something *I* can weave!" Doing so often makes my day, while extending a grateful thank-you to Photoshop for making it all possible. Comparing anything that passes for my own personal creativity to that of many of this publication's contributors is akin to comparing Shakespearian comedy to cream pies in the face. Woody Allen to Moe, Larry, and Curley. Broadway to burlesque. Both extremes are enjoyable but not interchangeable.

So what constitutes art, in my humble opinion? Real creative vision combined with refined technical skills. Ideas so outrageous that they're almost tangible. In other words, originality and imagination that I've never spawned, but that's all right. When this subject arises, (true) artist friends feel the need to reach out and comfort me with indignant replies. The usual suspects include:

- I've seen your work and it's your unique personal artistic expression and no one else's.*
- You put your heart and soul into your work and that counts as art.*
- Design and execution are true measures of art rather than complexity.*

Sorry folks. I appreciate the goodwill thrown in my direction, but ripped-off, simplistic motifs and elementary color schemes executed with genuine effort do not art make. They may however result in pleasing weavings that look colorful on my cluttered walls and won't win prizes anywhere, anytime. I weave for my own enjoyment and hopefully for results that are nice enough to pass around at my weavers' guild meetings, rather than mistakes destined to be shoved to the bottom of a drawer for eternity.

So in closing, to my friends, relatives, teachers, and weavers' guild buddies who kindly misinterpret my state of mind, it's time to set the record straight: I'm not an artist; I'm a *technician*...and **I'M OK WITH THAT!**

Leslie Mitchell is the editor of the Weavers' Guild of Pittsburgh Newsletter and declares she is "a sometime tapestry weaver and not an artist."

DID YOU KNOW?

by Mychelline Fiadhglas

Everybody expects financial people to be reliable, organized, and focused; but would you also expect them to be flexible people who seek out challenges and think abstractly? An organization of creative types, like ATA, attracts people with diverse, if not surprising, skill sets, and our Treasury Committee is no exception!

Treasurer Rosalee Skrenes and Assistant Treasurer Marcia Ellis together handle two main functions: administering funds and managing financial reports. ATA's online bookkeeping system allows these two to work together effectively despite the geographical distance between them. Rosalee lives in Wisconsin, and Marcia lives in California. Rosalee pays bills, reimburses volunteers, creates invoices, receives payments, and makes bank deposits. Marcia makes bookkeeping entries for bank deposits including exhibitions and

workshops fees, catalog sales, and Valentine's Day Appeal donations. Rosalee is in frequent contact with other board members to submit fiscal quarter reports and work on budgets. She also completes and files annual tax returns to the IRS and the state of California. ATA is a virtual organization with no physical location, but it was originally registered in the state of California in 1982, so state tax returns must be filed there every year.

Rosalee and Marcia's tenure on this committee began approximately at the same time, two and a half years ago. Rosalee has been a member of ATA for six years. Becoming Treasurer of ATA was her first role volunteering with the organization. She retired from a long career in accounting after studying it in college. Rosalee is originally from Wisconsin, but moved with her family to South Africa for a job opportunity and lived there for over a decade. In South Africa, she was the accountant for two businesses run by members of her family: a software company she and her husband had, as well as a small rug weaving business that she operated for five years. She and her family have since resettled in Wisconsin.

Marcia has been a member of ATA for about 10 years. She briefly worked on the committee for the ST11: Connections exhibition before leaving it to become Assistant Treasurer. Although she does not have an accounting education, Marcia finds this role a good fit for her because she is highly organized and had an extensive background working with computers before she, too, retired. Marcia was a computer programmer and then a manager. She enjoyed the change of pace when she took a break from her computer career "to weave and to give tours at a winery in Napa Valley." Rosalee and Marcia find they work well together despite being connected only electronically. The one time they've met in person was for a workshop before they joined the Treasury Committee.

Both Rosalee and Marcia weave tapestries with non-representational designs. Marcia describes her designs as "colorful geometric abstractions" and recognizes a soupçon of her other great love, music, in her tapestry designs: she also plays jazz piano. Marcia's tapestries have been seen in exhibitions with her local guild, Tapestry Weavers West, and ATB7. Rosalee has been weaving for 35 years, but it was only recently that she decided it was time to try tapestry, which she had long been interested in. She considers herself a beginner in tapestry, and has not yet exhibited her work.

Both women speak highly of the friendly and knowledgeable people they have met through ATA. Rosalee's favorite part of volunteering is "the opportunity to meet tapestry artists from all over the world, who are so willing to share their knowledge and expertise." Marcia relishes volunteering for ATA because she sees the organization as "helping to keep tapestry alive and well". Our volunteers' unusual array of talents add unique value to ATA generally, and the Treasury Committee specifically.

Kudos

By Merna Strauch

The Textile Museum's (Washington, DC) exhibition *Green: the Color and the Cause*, a group show of historical and contemporary textiles referencing the color green, includes work by **James Koehler, Susan Martin Maffei, Susan Iverson, Michael Rohde, and Pat Williams**, April 16 - September 11, 2011.

In addition to *Green*, **Susan Martin Maffei** has more current and upcoming exhibits. *Paper and Fiber*, a two person salon style show of tapestry, textile, and book

continued...



Susan Martin Maffei, "Who's not on 2nd"



Susan Martin Maffei, "Reconstructing Wracraw" (detail)

arts by Susan and fellow artist Bojana Leznicki at The Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America (208 East 30th St. New York, NY), April 8 – 28, 2011. From October 3 - 15, 2011, Artes Gallery (333 West 38th St. New York, NY) will host the two artists. The opening reception will be held Thursday, October 6, 2011, 6-9 p.m.

Letitia Roller exhibited with Weavers & Fiber Artists of Northern New Mexico at La Tienda at El Dorado (7 Caliente Road, Santa Fe, NM), March 23 - April 26, 2011. From August 15 - September 15, 2011, Letitia's new tapestry works can be seen at the Karen Wray Gallery in Los Alamos, NM.

Three of **Lyn Hart's** tapestries are included in the multimedia exhibit *Pattern & Rhythm*, featuring artwork exploring the visual patterns and rhythms inherent in the natural world, at Tohono Chul Park, Tucson, Arizona, April 7 - June 19, 2011. Two of the pieces were created during her work with **Silvia Heyden**.

Nicki Bair was among the California Fiber Artists whose work was in *Fiber Optics* at the Bakersfield Museum of Art, March 26 - May 29, 2011. "Folding Space" 62 x 26", depicts the planet Uranus and conveys the wonder of space through the recurrence of universal forms and the use of black yarns. "An Empty Spot in Time" 9 x 5", is woven in self-dyed silk. Hidden in the blocks of color is a line from a poem written by Nicki.

Sherri Woodard Coffey's and mask maker Pat Souder's work was shown in *Connecting Threads: Tapestries to Masks* during April, 2011 at the Fort Worth Community Center and in May, 2011 at the Doss Heritage and Cultural Center in Weatherford, Texas.

Tapestry Artists of Sarasota (TAOS) members **Becky Stevens, John Nicholson, Lynn Mayne, Pat Looper,** and **Terri Stewart** report on their 2010-2011 exhibition schedule. The Ringling Museum of Art was the site of Saturday tapestry weaving demonstrations and the display of one tapestry by each TAOS member from October 9 to December 18, 2010. Tapestries were shown during the month of January



Nicki Bair, "An Empty Spot in Time" 5 x 9" (framed)



Nicki Bair, "Folding Space" 62 x 26"

2011 in the Sarasota Arts Council lobby. The Studio at Gulf and Pine, Anna Maria Island, operated by Rhea Chiles, former First Lady of Florida, displayed 40 TAOS tapestries, February 5 – 18, 2011. *The Art of Tapestry: Thread by Thread* at the Longboat Key Center for the Arts, was the final venue of the Florida season for TAOS tapestries April 7 - May 12, 2011.



Michael Rhode, "Water" 35 x 48", wool, natural dyes

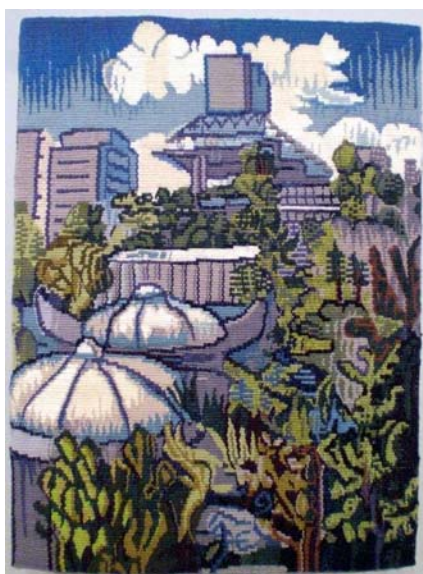
Marcel Marois exhibited large dramatic tapestries in Gallery Roger Bellemare, Montreal in March and April, 2011. Visit www.rogerbellemare.com/marois/Marois_Tapisserie.pdf to view his work.

Amaranth Ehrenhalt had work in a group show during April, 2011 at Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York, NY and a solo show in March, 2011 at the Maximillian Gallery in the Sunset Marquis Hotel in West Hollywood, California.

Selvedge, tapestries by **Ruth Jones** showed at the Circle Craft Co-operative Gallery on Granville Island, Vancouver, BC in March, 2011. On March 26th, Ruth chatted with Sheryl McKay on her radio show **North by Northwest** on CBC1. A podcast of the interview can be found at www.cbc.ca/nxmw/.



Ruth Jones, "Nurturing Words (Strengthening the Weak)" 11.5 x 15.5", wool, cotton



Ruth Jones, "Arthur's Court, Cornelia's Garden (Fair Play)" 12 x 16", wool, cotton

Myla Collier and her tapestries were featured in the local San Luis Obispo, CA magazine "Journal Plus". The writer saw Myla's work at a SLO Pecha Kucha Night (<http://www.pecha-kucha.org/>) several years ago. Myla's Tapestry-to-Go Weaving Kits are available in Halcyon Yarns Spring 2011 catalog.

Making the rounds of some film festivals is "A Weaverly Path: The Tapestry Life of Silvia Heyden", a new documentary film by Kenny Dalsheimer. The film also played in Durham, NC in April, 2011.

The 6th International Fiber Art Biennale From Lausanne to Beijing in Zhengzhou, Henan Province,

China, from October 21 - November 6, 2010 included work from **Deborah Corsini, Barbara Heller, Maximo Laura, Wlodek Cygan, Dorothea Van De Winkel, Birgitta Hallberg, Christine Alrona** and **Michael Rohde**.

Pam Patrie was Artist in Residence at the Museum of Contemporary Craft in Portland, Oregon, April 5 through 16, 2011. As part of her residency Pam held a Craft Conversation regarding her studio work for "Laurie Herrick: Weaving Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" which was on view at the museum. Combining weaving with a trompe l'oeil painting technique from the WPA era, Pam worked collaboratively with the Portland Handweavers Guild members to create a piece based on Herrick's shawl designs from the 1970s. Visit <http://cal.pnca.edu/events/147> for more information.

Lastly, not an ATA member Kudo, but of interest — June Wayne's "Narrative Tapestries: Tidal Waves, DNA and the Cosmos" were seen at The Art Institute of Chicago this spring. Eleven large tapestries, designed by artist June Wayne and woven by weavers from France, were on display. A 36 page catalogue edited by Christa C. Mayer Thurman documents the show. The French weavers are given full credit, and the catalog includes the history of how they were found, the arrangements made, and June Wayne's cartoons.



Marti Fleischer, "The Dolphin" 4 x 7',
 wool, rayon, cotton
 See kudos in Tapestry Topics,
 Spring 2011, Vol 37 No 1.

visit our website:
www.americantapestryalliance.org

Call for Submissions



Connie Lippert

Wedge weave is the theme of our winter issue, and Connie Lippert has graciously offered to coordinate the articles. Contact Connie at indigo55@bellsouth.net to discuss article ideas and content guidelines. Submission deadline is Oct. 1, 2011.

Our spring 2012 issue will focus on Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Innovation. As ATA's newly adopted tag line, it is a perfect time for reflection on its meaning and how it relates to ATA members, all tapestry weavers, and members of the wider artistic community. The deadline for this theme is Jan. 15, but feel free to submit pieces before the holidays are upon us. Contact me for more information, to discuss an idea, or submit an article (ATA_Julie@msn.com or 360-380-9203). ~ Julie Barnes

Deadlines ~

October 1, 2011: Wedge Weave
 January 15, 2012: Honoring
 Tradition, Inspiring Innovation
 April 1, 2012: TBA
 July 15, 2012: TBA

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

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

Articles should be under 1000 words. Submission will be edited for clarity and space requirements.

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

Newsletter committee: Asst. Editor/Proofreader: Mary Colton, Layout: Elinor Steele, Kudos: Merna Strauch

ATA MEMBERSHIP FORM

	1 year	2 years
Individual	\$35	\$65
Studio Circle	\$60	\$110
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*enclose copy of current student identification card with payment

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