

Looming ITEMS

November 2023

Harmony Weavers Guild Newsletter

Vol. 49 Number #3

**November's Program — Zoom and in-person
March 9 @ 10:00 a.m.**

**Abstract Harmonies
presented by Sue Balascio, Kathleen Remsa, Marcia Weiss**



Sue Balascio



Kathleen Remsa



Marcia Weiss

Our presenters are three textile artists who recently exhibited in the Newark Arts Alliance show *ABSTRACT HARMONIES*.

This group exhibition celebrated the creative dialogue between Susan Balascio, Kathleen Remsa and Marcia Weiss. The artwork incorporates shifting geometries, ethereal textures and tactile expressions in traditional and non-traditional materials. Inspired and influenced by one another, these artists “strive to expand the boundaries of conventional weaving in subtle and overt manners. This is highlighted through entwined layers of complexity, sculptural layers of tactility and evocative layers of meaning. This new body of work illustrates the creative dialogue—the abstract harmonies—that exist between us.”

The three artists will share a few examples of their work and discuss their creative process and collaboration. Sue and Kathleen are HWG members.

Please see next page for more information about Sue, Kathleen and Marcia.

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87003062222?
pwd=V2VLV2dubm1ObVpFM29JODJWcmwwZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87003062222?pwd=V2VLV2dubm1ObVpFM29JODJWcmwwZz09)

Meeting ID: 870 0306 2222

Passcode: 046143

Meet the Artists . . .

SUSAN BALASCIO (SUSANBALASCIO.COM)

I have always had a love of textiles as evident through my years as a seamstress and knitter. Weaving has opened up a whole new world for me and added another dimension to my textile passion. The infinite combinations of threading, treadling, color and texture challenge me in ways I never thought possible. From subtle shifts in pattern to bold sweeps of color, I embrace it all! Weaving is, for me, an inspiring and fulfilling craft, and I am always amazed at the way the yarn and patterns come together to create something new and beautiful. Although my formal training was in painting, I have explored a wide variety of the arts. In addition to my current focus on weaving and fiber arts, I also work in jewelry design and colored pencil and pastel drawing. In the past, I have worked in painting, stained glass, collage and ceramics. I find that no matter what media I use, color is the underlying thread that fuels my passion for art.

KATHLEEN REMSA (KBRWOVENS.COM)

As a fiber artist I strive to record and communicate my interaction with nature through traditional and non-traditional textile techniques. Drawing inspiration from the beauty and detail I find in nature's offerings and natural processes such as eroding rock formations, decaying organic matter, and rusting objects, I work deliberately and intuitively to create layered, woven and often abstract images that are suggestive of nature's or man's mark on the environment.

After recently concluding a fifteen year career designing and styling jacquard woven fabrics and collections for the residential and outdoor markets for Sunbury Textile Mill and Glen Raven Corporation, Kathleen now devotes her full attention to creating fiber art and instructing others in the design process and textile explorations.

MARCIA WEISS ([HTTPS://MLW027.MYPORTFOLIO.COM](https://MLW027.MYPORTFOLIO.COM))

Marcia L. Weiss is an internationally exhibited artist, associate professor, director of the Fashion & Textiles Futures Center and the Harold Neuman Textile Design Chair at Jefferson (Philadelphia University +Thomas Jefferson University). A specialist in woven design, Marcia teaches advanced studio courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels, as well as invited workshops and webinars. She brings to teaching more than 30 years of design industry experience, including 19 years with Burlington Industries.

As an artist, Marcia's fiber-based work has been in solo and juried shows and invitationals. Her current body of work involves double cloth ikats, inspired by artisanal textiles of Central Asia and West Africa, and a rich heritage of Pennsylvania German quilting. Marcia holds a BS in Textile Design from Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science and an MFA in Fibers from the Savannah College of Art & Design.



From the President's Pen

Fall is now picking up momentum and so are the fall craft shows! So far, it looks like we will get a great weekend for Hagley - I hope everyone who submitted pieces will do well! In fact, having been inspired, I am currently warping up some fall colors on my loom.

I do love the crisp air, beautiful colors, and that smell of leaves that October and November brings with it. In fact, Helen Hunt Jackson wrote a beautiful poem named "September" which sums up this, my favorite time of the year -

The golden-rod is yellow;
The corn is turning brown;
The trees in apple orchards
With fruit are bending down.
The gentian's bluest fringes
Are curling in the sun;
In dusty pods the milkweed
Its hidden silk has spun.

Of course there are many more words — look it up if you wish. But I remember having to memorize this poem as a child. Now's the time to make that apple pie, pick those pumpkins, or take a walk in rustling leaves. Whatever your favorite fall thing is, take the time to enjoy the moment and the view.

Nancy Everham

December
Newsletter

Articles are due Tuesday,
November 28, 2023

MAFA VIRTUAL

Upcoming online classes and lectures:

- November 11, 16, & 18th: Essentials of Tapestry Design - Molly Elkind. Register here: lessonface.com/apply/Essentials-Tapestry-Design. Only a few spots left!
- November 28th: Craft Activism, Memory-Making, and Political Action - a FREE LECTURE by Hinda Mandell. Register here: www.lessonface.com/apply/Craft-Activism-Memory-Making-and-Political-Action

Find class and lecture details, and registration on Lessonface: lessonface.com/mafa



Hagley Craft Fair a Success for HWG!

The leaves danced in the cool autumn air. The sky was azure blue. The crowds were many. And Harmony took advantage. Our total sales amounted to \$3879, a very good showing. **BUT ABSOLUTELY BEST OF ALL — EVERYONE SOLD AT LEAST ONE ITEM! A FIRST FOR HWG SALE AT HAGLEY.**

If you are interested in numbers, we sold:

30 scarves - 1 cowl -2 framed art - 12 towels - 1 runner - 5 bags - 3 shawls - 3 purses - 1 coverlets - 2 placemats - 3 yarn skeins - 6 cards

We received numerous positive comments about the quality of our weaving and the attractiveness of the booth.

Sonnie Sperati



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BethleHEM or Bethlehem?

Well it depends on whether you are a native or not. That is just one of the things ten HWGers learned last week when they trekked to Bethlehem to view the silk exhibits in this old Moravian town, part of *UNSPUN Stories of Silk*. It tells the fascinating story of silk in the Lehigh Valley. Starting with the attic cocooneries of Moravian Bethlehem, the exhibition details the region's rise in the industry and looks at silk's impact on fashion and the global marketplace.

A small group of Moravians had been granted land in Georgia by King James VI if they would raise silkworms, make silk thread and produce silk fabric. Things did not go well. In the summer of 1740, the remnant of the colony, migrated to Pennsylvania and after rather complicated events settled on land which they called Bethlehem. They again attempted to raise silkworms. But, they had dubious results. And in the 1830s there occurred the Mulberry Tree scam, a bubble and bust cycle in the 1830s that ended silk cultivation for the early Moravians but not the story of silk. By the 1920s, Bethlehem had become one of the world's leading producers of silk — thanks, in part, to the Laros Silk Mills, and the work of Helen and R.K. Laros — who continued the silk legacy in Bethlehem.

We enjoyed a private tour of the Moravian Museum of Bethlehem, the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts, and the National Museum of Industrial History



Some of us



Our guide

(on the property of the former Bethlehem Steel Company). There we saw the large looms and machinery used in silk production. This rich period stretched from the 1880s until the 1950s, when mills closed or switched to synthetic fabrics.

Sonnie Sperati

Will Work for Yarn

At the Sheep and Wood Festival in Rhienbeck the smell of wet wool was in the air. Yes, it rained, but was fun anyway. An estimated 30,000 people attended, most dressed in their funky fiber creations with their sunny attitudes intact. All ages were shoulder to shoulder in the cavernous buildings: parents maneuvering baby contractions, elders on scooters, young people galore. It is was a congenial atmosphere. After all, fiber artist are the best kind of people.

My only purchases were a sheep Halloween mask and directions to crochet of all things Granny Squares. My first fiber creations were crocheted garish granny squares. Hoping for an updated looks I will use fingerling wool and make lacey borders. I thought I had a variety of Harrisville Shetland, but actually have only a few colors. If you have any left over from a project, I could use even a small amount. Like Kaffe Fassett says the more colors the better.

Gynnie Moody



Cotton, wool, silk, camel, irate, suzan, and so much more in Uzbekistan

When you read this I will have returned from a three week textile tour in Uzbekistan with Marilyn Romatka. You may remember Marilyn gave a Zoom program on Uzbekistan to our guild a couple of years ago.

This article just touches on all the things we saw and learned about.



Cotton was truly king in Uzbekistan during the Soviet era (ending in 1991). It's still grown everywhere. We picked some beautiful cotton growing in a field and I spun it with my drop spindle on the long bus rides. Some ikat is made with all cotton.

Wool—Sheep are important to Uzbekistan for both meat and wool. Wool is used for making “architectural felt”. We watched as two men made huge sheets of thick felt, maybe 2 meters x 4 meters, in just 60 minutes! These sheets of felt are used in homes as well as yurts.

Silk—highways are lined with mulberry trees for feeding hungry silkworms. Silk is unwound from the cocoons and used for warp, and sometimes weft, for making warp ikat fabric. Uzbekistan is the 3rd largest producer of silk, after China and India.

Camels played such a critical role in transporting goods and people along the Silk Road, which went through Uzbekistan. We spent a night in a yurt camp and had a short ride on a camel. Great fun! Shawls, leggings, leg warmers and socks made from camel hair were prevalent in the vendor stalls in Khiva. Most probably came from Iran.

Uzbek ikat — There's too much to say! It's warp ikat, with 300 meters of warp wound, wrapped, dyed and woven (by hand with flying shuttle looms or by machine) in plain weave or twill. The end result is incredibly beautiful and very different from ikat done in Japan, Indonesia, Thailand or Guatemala. It is ubiquitous, despite the proliferation of cheap printed ikat. The silk warp/cotton weft ikat fabric has a wonderful hand.

Suzani was new to me — chain stitch embroidery done by punching fine silk fabric with an ultra-fine crochet hook, creating beautiful, complex, traditional designs. We got to try doing it ourselves, with very little success. An 8 year old girl was one of the instructors!

I'll bring some of the textile samples to our guild meeting so you can see and feel them for yourself.

Carol Ireland



A Modern Masters Series dress

- by Maleyne Syracuse
Cooper Hewitt Museum January 28, 2014

This shirtwaist day dress was designed by celebrated fashion designer Claire McCardell, who is noted for her important contribution to “The American Look” of casual and active sportswear for women. It was made from a printed cotton fabric, *Parade Savage*, designed by Fernand Léger, one of the most prominent, prolific, and influential modern artists of the early twentieth century.

In the post-World War II period, advocates for the American textile industry actively promoted ways for manufacturers to improve the design quality of their products. One outspoken champion, the magazine *American Fabrics*, encouraged manufacturers to find design inspiration in the collections of fine art to be found in museums. “Let’s have art in industry,” they demanded. In 1953, Dan Fuller, President of Fuller Fabrics, went one step further. He bypassed the museums entirely and went directly to the studios of five of the twentieth century’s most distinguished artists: Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, and Raoul Dufy. The groundbreaking collaboration between the American manufacturer and the five European masters resulted in the acclaimed Modern Masters Series.

Fuller’s Modern Master Series was unique in America in the 1950s. The artists were not commissioned to produce original patterns specifically for the textiles. Instead, Dan Fuller worked personally with each artist to select motifs from their existing oeuvre that were then incorporated by the company’s designers into repeating textile patterns. It was truly art by the yard for the masses. Fidelity of reproduction was essential and Fuller’s designers worked diligently to successfully render the motifs in printable form. The patterns were designed to be roller-printed rather than screen-printed because the fabric was to be mass produced and sold at low price points, less than \$2 a yard, for use by both garment manufacturers and home sewers. This was not haute couture, but rather modestly priced fabric for sportswear and casual clothes.



Each artist approved the final patterns derived from his work and was involved in the selection of the colorways. Every design was copyrighted. Engraving the rollers and printing the patterns on cloth was technically challenging and took more than a year to meet Fuller’s high standards.

Marketing was a key element of the project – the Modern Master Series was launched in the fall of 1955 with a museum exhibition and documentary film that featured the artists in their studios, the original works of art, the finished

fabrics, and the production process. The film and exhibition opened at the Brooklyn Museum and then traveled to other American Museums.

Publicity for the Modern Master Series also included a five-page editorial in *Life Magazine*, “Modern Art in Fashion.” Life’s fashion editor Sally Kirkland enlisted the participation of her friend, designer Claire McCardell. McCardell designed a wardrobe of separates and dress ensembles using Modern Masters Fabrics which were featured in the *Life* photo essay, including the *Parade Savage* dress.

The Modern Masters Series was much celebrated when it was launched. *American Fabrics* applauded Fuller for its daring and courage in bridging “the abyss” between fine and applied arts. The brilliant collaboration between Fuller and the artists was held up as an important example for other American textile manufacturers. Claire McCardell was an influential American mid-century ready-to-wear designer, and her fashions using Modern Masters fabrics added prestige to the collection. The fabrics were also a commercial success. In addition to McCardell, other prominent American sportswear designers and manufacturers like Adele Simpson and Lanz of California used the Modern Master Series.

Continued on next page

Long Thread Media to Host Weave Together with Handwoven

Inaugural All-Inclusive Retreat Welcomes Weavers for Education, Community

The publishers of *Handwoven* and *Little Looms* are pleased to offer a four-day weaving retreat on February 25–29, 2024, at the Embassy Suites in Loveland, Colorado. The event will feature some of the best and most iconic weavers in the world, including weaving legends Linda Ligon, John Mullarkey, Bobbie Irwin, Deb Essen, Sara Goldenberg White, Angela Schneider, Gabi van Tassell, and Sarah Neubert, with a special presentation by award-winning Navajo weaver Lynda Teller Pete.

The all-inclusive event provides classes, community events, meals, lodging, airport transfers, activities, and materials fees with registration. Students will choose three days of classes from a curriculum of two-day, one-day, and half-day offerings. Subjects include weaving on multi-shaft, rigid-heddle, inkle, tapestry, tablet, and pin looms, as well as embellishment and mending techniques.

Continued from previous page

The Museum currently holds six fabrics from Fuller's Modern Masters Series in its collection, including one other by Léger, *Vitraill*. The source motifs for most of these fabrics are conventional: for example, the fabric *Birds* by Picasso uses a figure of a bird taken from a painted ceramic plate. Léger's designs, on the other hand, represent decidedly odd motifs for American sportswear fabrics. The motif for *Vitraill* is a monumental stained glass window that Léger designed for a Catholic Church in France, Pincers and Nails, depicting the instruments of Christ's passion. The motif for *Parade Sauvage* is even more curious.

In 1949, Léger completed a series of fifteen lithographs for an illustrated edition of French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations* (1874). Rimbaud was the influential *enfant terrible* of late nineteenth century French poetry, whose writing draws heavily on his rebellious and dissolute lifestyle.

Léger's lithograph *Parade Sauvage* is an illustration for "Parade," one of the prose poems in *Illuminations*. The joyful iconography of circus parades, including clowns and acrobats, appears frequently in Léger's work, but the figures in *Parade Sauvage* are different. "Parade" is a graphic and violent homoerotic poem and Léger's illustration aligns with its more sinister imagery. The lithograph also contains the final line of the poem in French: "J'ai seul la clef à cette parade sauvage," in Léger's own hand. [12] The lithograph in its entirety, with the calligraphy, was used as the motif for the Modern Masters fabric, in an offset repeat pattern. Consistent with Léger's painting style, independent patches of bright colors in organic shapes are superimposed on the black and white lithograph design. The fabric was made in several different colorways.

The bold strokes of Léger's complex black and white lithograph, combined with the bright colors, created a lively and appealing fashion fabric. The origin and meaning of the original motif, and the incongruity of its use in a cotton day dress for American middle class women, was apparently ignored at the time. In retrospect, there is a certain irony in Fuller Fabrics' advertising for the Modern Masters Series, which noted that Léger's work "lends fashion its greatest surprise."

"Four days of weaving immersion, tailored for you, without interruptions from everyday life. Weaving bliss, right?" says *Handwoven* editor Susan Horton. Instructors Bobbie Irwin and Deb Essen will lead classes in multi-shaft weaving on subjects such as color, woven transparencies, and iridescence.

Little Looms editor Christina Garton adds that the event is "a small-loom weaver's dream," with skill-based and project-based classes using simple equipment. The small-loom-based classes are designed to teach skills such as hand-manipulated techniques, finishes, and bandweaving that multi-shaft weavers can also incorporate into their work.

In addition to classes, students will attend evening programs as well as informal happy hours and community gatherings. A curated marketplace with sponsors Yarn Barn of Kansas, Treenway Silks, and Turtle Loom/BlueBonnet Crafters will offer shopping opportunities for looms, tools, yarns, and books.

Looms are available for rental for attendees who are traveling or may not have all of the equipment required for a class.



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For more info contact Nancy Everham — 856-313-6449



Triangle Loom for sale \$75.00



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Contact Sandy Buckworth — 302-378-2755

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www.haverfordguild.org/Holiday2023

submitted by Elisabeth Brown



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MEMBERSHIP

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE GUILD? Please contact Linda Shinn at 302-655-9434 or e-mail info@harmonyweaversguild.org. Membership renewal for each year begins in June and ends by the September meeting in order to be included in the Membership List.. Membership includes a monthly Newsletter available through the web site: <https://groups.io/g/harmonyweaversguild> or by e-mail attachment.

All monthly meetings are in person at Red Clay Presbyterian Church and by Zoom.



Membership Form for 2023-2024

Categories for Membership: Active \$35 Full-Time student \$15

👉 NEW MEMBERS ONLY: Joining between January 1 and March 31 - \$20 🗨️ Joining between April 1 through June - \$40 (Includes next season's dues)

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AS YOU WISH THEM TO APPEAR IN THE MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

NAME: _____

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Checks payable to Harmony Weavers Guild.
Mail form & check to Linda Shinn PO Box 4458 Wilmington DE 19807