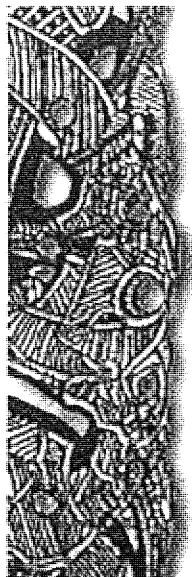


# NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

Vol. X No. 3

May, 2004



## Viking Women's Textiles

*Translated by Robbie LaFleur*

### **A seminar held at the Viking Museum at Borg in Lofoten August 2002**

In August of 2002, over 100 participants from Norway, Denmark, and even one woman from the United States, gathered at the Viking Museum at Borg on the Lofoten Islands for a weekend course on Viking women and their textile world. The speakers were well-known researchers from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. The program was designed to inspire further research into Viking era textiles.

All aspects of the workshop enhanced the educational experience. The conference center was at Lofotr – the Viking Museum at Borg. Borg was one of the 10-15 chieftains' seats from Iron Age North Norway, and the Viking Museum has reconstructed a cheftan's house, based on the excavation of an 83 meter long house. (For more on the museum, see its Website: <http://www.lofotr.no/English/default.htm>) Friday night's celebration featured performances on ancient instruments, singing, and dancing. The conference food was based in Viking times, or featured traditional northern Norway specialties.

Friday's activities began with a lecture on Viking times and Viking women's lives by Geir Arne Johansen from the Viking Museum. He described the museum's buildings and the original settlement from about 500 A.D. The afternoon featured workshops on a variety of Viking era handwork techniques: nålbinding, dying with Viking era dyestuffs, spinning with a hand spindle, card weaving, band weaving, braiding, and weaving on an upright loom.

Saturday and Sunday featured programs by guest speakers. Following is a translation of the synopses the speakers provided for the course summary. Some are quite detailed; others only make us wish we could have joined the group at this very interesting conference.

## Ellen Schølberg

*Zoologist. (Bergen) With a graduate degree in science, she has worked with archaeologists on a freelance basis, and has undertaken archaeological study trips to Normandy, Vienna, and London. She spent ten months in Iran, and lived in Gothenburg for 16 years. She is a guest researcher with ties to the Botanical institute in Bergen. Fiber is a special interest and she lectures on the topic. Her major work is "Ropes on the Wharf in Bergen" and "Goat Hair Products from the Middle Ages." She has published articles in the popular scientific journal Naturen on the history of sheep, the development of linen, the history of dyeing, and the use of nettle.*

### **"Fiber – Wool, Linen, and Nettle: Archaeological Finds and Research."**

The use of fiber has been an important factor in history since the first time we had the need to lash or tie something together. Hunters have always used sinew, and we know of over 2000 types of plants around the world that have been used for fiber. Using wool from sheep is a comparatively new development.

Nettles are one type of the innumerable fiber plants that were not grown as cultivated plants. Lovers of nitrate, they have always flourished around inhabited places. It has primarily been used in northerly regions. The fibers are similar to linen, comprised of small single cells, but with a looser structure. This means that with full processing they are much shorter, but also softer. For heavy use people avoided using the roots, so the fiber bundles hold together better.

Cultured linen originated from a wild linen plant in Kurdistan. It was cultivated and differentiated itself from wild linen at least 8000 years ago. From its area of origin it spread south towards Egypt, north toward the steppes, and west towards Europe in slightly different forms. Today's cultivated varieties are suited to the needs of industry and grow best in regions that are not especially warm or dry. For handcraft work the older varieties are probably best suited.

Sheep wool has been used for about 6000 years. Sheep were domesticated long before that, but had coats similar to a reindeer. The ancestor of the tame sheep is a wild sheep that lives in eastern Kurdistan and a portion of Iran. The first tame sheep that came to Europe resembled a wild sheep - sheep with woolen coats came here around a thousand years later. The oldest race of sheep that we have here in Norway, utegangersauen (the outdoor sheep) or the so-called wild sheep, came here first in the Iron Age. So there are no Stone Age sheep, as they are now and then marketed.

## Kjerstin Gustafsson

*Textile Artist. (Sweden) Her textile training is from Konstfackskolan in Stockholm and from Gothenburg University. She has taken many research trips and says she "travels in time to gain knowledge." Her textile travels have taken her to Asia, the Middle East, South America, European countries, the Baltic countries, and Iceland. Textile exhibitions, public decorations, book design, articles, and seminars are part of her textile background. Her last work was with the ethnographic museum in Gothenburg, where she documented archaeological textiles from Peru and Kyrgyzstan.*

### **Fiber: A Journey in Time and Knowledge**

Using a timeline of textile developments, I will illustrate the importance of textiles within a historical context: what do we know of textiles and what can we merely surmise with historical hindsight. I will discuss the survivors, those preserved textiles and textile fragments, and their importance as clues to our past. At the same time I will describe how industrialization in the last 150 years has changed our ideas about textiles and textile handling.

I will offer many of my experiences as examples of how we can seek a personal link

*Cont'd on Pg. 5*

## Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles

Mark your calendars for the Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles in Decorah, Iowa. The conference will take place on **October 21 to 23, 2005**, with pre- and post-conference workshops from October 17 to 20 and October 24 to 27, 2005.

### *Be part of the event!*

In this issue of Norwegian Textile Letter you will find the Call for Papers, Call for Workshops, and Call for Exhibition Entries.

Would you like to give a casual talk about your work or a formal research presentation? Then follow the Call for Papers. Deadline: January 15, 2005.

Would you like to teach a hands-on workshop in weaving, spinning, dyeing, or another fiber-related technique? Then fill out the form with the Call for Workshops. Deadline: January 15, 2005.

Do you have or would you like to create a “fresh” or “clever” weaving for the juried exhibition? Please respond to the Call for Entries. Deadline: June 30, 2005.

Please feel free to ask for a sample abstract (Call for Papers). Call if you'd like to discuss your presentation/ workshop/artwork idea. Contact: Laurann Gilbertson, Vesterheim Museum, 563-382-9681, [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org).

### Vesterheim Textile Calendar

#### 2004

- June 7-28 **Deadline** – Arrival of entries for National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition  
Note: Registration forms and entry fees are due June 21 for artwork arriving June 22-28.
- June 28 – July 3 **Exhibit** – “Art & Artifact: Sweaters by Designer Solveig Hisdal” at Showers of Flowers, 6900 W. Colfax Ave., Lakewood CO, 800-825-2569, [www.showersofflowers.com](http://www.showersofflowers.com)
- July 17-24 **Exhibit** – 23<sup>rd</sup> National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition
- Sept. 13-Oct. 23 **Exhibit and event** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Folk-Art Benefit Auction
- October 30 **Event and lecture** – 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Weavers Banquet with speaker Heather Muir on exploring and expressing heritage through Norwegian textiles (knitting, beadwork, sewing, weaving). Reservations required.

#### 2005 Preview

- January 15 **Deadline** – Proposals for workshops for the Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles
- January 15 **Deadline** – Proposals for presentations at the Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles
- May 8-19 **Tour** – Textile Study Tour to Norway (Bergen, Hardanger, Setesdal, Telemark, Oslo)
- June 30 **Deadline** – Entries for “Frisk og Flink!” (Fresh & Clever!)
- July 23-30 **Exhibit** – 24<sup>th</sup> National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition. Entry deadline in June.
- Sept. 19-Oct.23 **Exhibit** – “Frisk og Flink!” (Fresh & Clever!), a special juried exhibit of weaving in the Norw. tradition.
- October 17-20 **Class** – Pre-conference workshops.
- October 21-23 **Event** – Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles. With presentations by Norwegian and American scholars, book signings, exhibitions, and workshops.
- October 24-27 **Class** – Post-conference workshops.

For information go to [www.vesterheim.org](http://www.vesterheim.org) and/or contact Laurann at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org)).

# Vesterheim Museum - Looking Ahead

## Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on a Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles in Decorah, Iowa. There were 23 responses in postcard and email form. To the question of **when** to have the conference, 8 said Fall 2005, 2 people said Spring 2006, and 12 said either. Suggested **speakers and topics** included: those from the Seattle CNWT, knitting, nålbinding, fibers/yarns, looms, folk costume, ways to use traditional weaving, weaver Else Marie Jakobsen, weaver Ragna Breivik, and designer Gerhard Munthe.

The question of whether to include textile **techniques** other than weaving brought many different answers ranging from "positively only weaving" (4), to "a few carefully-selected techniques" (6), to "absolutely any Norwegian textile-related techniques" (10) (for examples, see above).

The **exhibition** ideas put forth for a vote all received many positive marks. The comparative exhibit of Norwegian and Swedish handweaving got 15 votes and a display of Ragna Breivik's folk-tale tapestries received 10 votes. Lila Nelson has declined the invitation for a solo show, but promises to lend some of her artworks for an exhibit of contemporary weaving. A contemporary exhibit was a write-in on several ballots. Study groups take note - displays of your projects have been requested!

**Workshops** for a variety of weaving and fiber techniques were suggested (dansk brogd, doubleweave, rya, bandweaving, nålbinding, etc.) with recommendations of teachers from all corners of North America (Inge Dam, Norma Smayda, Noel Thurner, Betty Johannesen, Nancy Jackson) and Norway.

Please feel free to add your comments at any time, though sooner is more helpful. Use the postcard in the last NTL, email, or snail mail. Laurann Gilbertson, Vesterheim, PO Box 379, Decorah IA 52101-0379, [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org), 563-382-9681.

## 2004 Vesterheim Textile Calendar

Thru Apr. 11	<b>Exhibit</b> – "Art & Artifact: Sweaters by Designer Solveig Hisdal" at Goldstein Museum of Design, 241 McNeal Hall, Univ. of Minnesota - St. Paul, 612-624-7434, <a href="http://goldstein.che.umn.edu">http://goldstein.che.umn.edu</a>
June 7-28	<b>Deadline</b> – Arrival of entries for National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition Note: Registration forms and entry fees are due June 21 for artwork arriving June 22-28.
June 13-17	<b>Class</b> - Rya Weaving Voss-style with Betty Johannesen \$280 / \$250 Vesterheim members
June 19-23	<b>Class</b> - Krokbragd & Boundweave Variations w/ Syvilla Tweed Bolson & Jan Mostrom. \$280 / \$250
July 10-14 & 17-21	<b>Class</b> - Weaving w/ Norwegian instructor. \$330 / \$300 Vesterheim members
July 17-24	<b>Exhibit</b> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition
Sept. 13 – Oct. 23	<b>Exhibit and event</b> - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Biennial Folk-Art Benefit Auction
Sept. 24-26	<b>Class</b> – Norwegian Sweaters with Arnhild Hillesland. \$180 / \$150 Vesterheim members
October 30-31	<b>Class</b> – Knitting with Laura Demuth. \$130 / \$100 Vesterheim members
October 30	<b>Event and lecture</b> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Annual Weavers Banquet with speaker Heather Muir (UW-EC Archivist) on exploring and expressing heritage through Norwegian textiles (knitting, beadwork, sewing, weaving)

Complete class information is available at [www.vesterheim.org](http://www.vesterheim.org). Contact Angie at Vesterheim for a detailed print-out (563-382-9681 or [classes@vesterheim.org](mailto:classes@vesterheim.org)). There will not be a class booklet. Classes will be added to this list. Please ask for updates.

For information on the exhibitions, lectures, and events, check the website and/or contact Laurann at Vesterheim (info above).

to thousands-year-old textile knowledge. I will describe nålbinding – the Åslevanten (Åsle mitten) from the 200s A.D. I will describe my own search for basic knowledge by traveling to Turkey and Central Asia.

I try to anchor this knowledge in my daily life as a sheep owner, mother, spinner, and weaver. In these roles I create a connection with all the generations of textile-creating women who have laid the foundation for our knowledge. At the same time, I don't want our view of history to be romantic or condescending.

### **Vadmal**

The lecture begins with a discussion of which fibers were in use in our part of the world during Viking times. I will describe the essential characteristics of wool and linen as a short explanation of why they were used for different types of clothing.

I will describe the basic characteristics of a fabric that is fulled to become vadmal. Various sheep breeds and wool types, different loom styles, and different spinning methods are some of the factors that result in textiles suitable for different applications. I will describe various techniques used for fulling vadmal at different times and in different geographic areas, and various clothing and non-apparel uses for the fabric.

I speak about how an archaeological fragment can be judged – is it possible to determine if it has been milled or fulled? I refer to the discussion in my lecture, "Fiber: A Journey in Time and Knowledge" to create an understanding both for the materials used and the completed products.

I use vadmal as an example of how all our knowledge and experience with various materials and textile techniques will give a finished product that will fill most textile needs in our part of the world.

Note: Gustafsson also gave a short course on nålbinding to the participants.

## **Amy Lightfoot**

*Social Anthropologist and biologist. (Kunvær, Norway) Originally from the United States, Lightfoot is currently a craftsperson and textile researcher from Hitra. She was responsible for projects documenting coastal textile traditions sponsored by the North Atlantic area for Handcraft development at Lillehammer. This collective work encompassed The Shetland Islands, Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Norway. She is the director of Tømmerverk Tekstilverksted. The Tekstilverksted has undertaken various research projects in conjunction with several European museums, including the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde and Vitenskapsmuseet (The Scientific Museum) in Trondheim. The verksted conducts practical research into textile creation and reconstruction from archaeological and historic textiles. Amy has written a series of scientific articles, documentation reports, and two video documentaries.*

### **Reconstruction of Wool Sails, with the Use of Earlier Textile Technique**

A new epoch in textile research history has begun. Many years of practical work with the production and reconstruction of textiles, using ancient methods, were accomplished in cooperation among Tømmervik Tekstilverksted, Hitra, The Viking Ship Museum at Roskild and Vitenskapsmuseet i Trondheim. The project involved analysis of supposed sailcloth remnants from the Middle Ages and production of a 100 square meter wool sail using traditional wool processing methods. These methods had been used in the North Atlantic region until the middle of the 1900s. For the first time in modern times it was possible, under controlled circumstances, to evaluate how the highest nuanced, older textile knowledge on cultivation of the landscape, raw materials and work methods affect the form, function and capabilities of an everyday article, also over time. The sail is being used today on the Viking ship replica Ottar, a copy of Skuldelev 1, a knarr (a type of sailing ship) that belongs to the boat col-

lection at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde.

There are extensive links among apparently simple processes, experience, and talent that are required to transmit knowledge over generations. It is this connection we wanted to extend with our work, and for the enrichment of future research. This project took up the connections among lyngheia (heather-covered uplands), the ancient outdoor sheep, production methods, wool quality, sorting, and traditional production methods: rooing (pulling unshorn fleece from a sheep) sorting, napping, teasing, combing, carding, spinning, weaving, and stamping) and the functional qualities of a sail in wool. Continuation of the project includes testing of the sail, measuring changes in the cloth over time, and comparing the sail to other fibers. It is an exciting endeavor that can give insight into the management of resources and technology in the past.

## Ellen Kjellmo

*Retired College Instructor. (Bodø) She is author of the exciting book, Båtrya i Gammel og Ny Tid (The Boat Rya in Past and Present). She has written many professional articles in various publications. She is curious about cultural themes from the past, humbled when her discoveries reveal a mastery of technique and use of materials by our ancient mothers, glad to learn from their knowledge, and eager to create anew. She experiments with weaves, materials, and dyes. Ellen was a lecturer in the United States at Colour Congress 2002, sponsored by Iowa State University.*

### Båtrya

I chose to research båtrya (boat rya) to show women's and children's roles in Norwegian fishing culture, to show how wise use of materials in connection with technique results in a functional product unsurpassed for its use, and to help dispel the image of a boat rya as an unaesthetic object of little value. A boat rya is a large heavy blanket of 10-18 kilos of home-grown, homespun wool. One side is smooth woven, the other knotted wool pile,

sometimes with rags knotted in as well. Typically, the knots are not visible from the other side.

Researchers often conclude that things come *to* us; nothing has come *from* us. Some suggest the boat rya is a variant of oriental rugs. I claim that the boat rya is a more technical, ancient discovery. You don't speak in that case of patterns and fine colors, but quite simply about the product's value for its purpose.

Linguists claim that the word 'ru' came to Ireland with the Vikings, which could indicate rya was used already in Viking times, long before oriental rugs were known in Scandinavia. Evidence of flossa (a shorter pile weaving) is found around 300-400 in Øst-Prøysen, and in Sweden from the 700s. In Norway, there is evidence from the 1400s through farm sale records and cloister records. Finally in the 1600s comes indisputable evidence; a rya from Vefsn has the year 1681 knotted in the pile.

It isn't difficult to find ryas in North Norway, but they are of more recent dates. Even though they weren't valued as beautiful objects, and many were torn up, most regional museums have examples in their collections. Many are privately owned.

The large, heavy boat ryas are all woven in a twill variant, diagonal twill ..... Stripes and squares in strong colors mark the smooth side. The knotted side is not known for pretty patterns. There may sometimes be squares, stripes, frames, and geometric patterns, but boat ryas are most often knotted with blended yarns of a wide variation. When you examine an animal pelt in shades of gray, there is little doubt that boat ryas are inspired by fur pelts, but are actually an improvement for their purpose. While a pelt becomes stiff and hard after washing, a rya can be washed and dried and retain its softness.

Indications are that the oldest ryas were made of "utganger" wool. The strong, smooth hard-

spun warp yarn has long fibers that appear to be guard hair. Because this sheep wasn't clipped, but hair that was shed was used, the fibers don't have a cut end where water could enter the fiber. This, in addition to a high lanolin content, tight twisting, and a tight weave, make the rya almost waterproof.

The weft yarns lie hidden in the tight warp and therefore receive little wear. You can see that lesser quality yarn was used for that purpose.

The pile yarn is thick-spun, but tightly twisted. In some cases it is spun so unevenly that you wonder whether it was carded at all. Wool rags and leftover wool from other weavings create surprising spots in the pile.

Natural colors in the oldest ryas include gray, white, brown, and black. There is also frequent use of colors from plant-based dyes; for example, gold and brown from birch trees, heather, and leaves. I recently discovered the use of korsje for purple in a rya from Steiger Bygedetun. The later ryas are characterized by the use of synthetic dyes in the warp, but usually natural colors for the pile. While the larger boat ryas from Lofoten, Vesterålen, are characterized by simplicity in both form and color, the ryas from further south are more colorful.

There is little doubt that creating a boat rya was the work of women and children. This is confirmed by written and oral sources. Sorting the wool was an important part of the process. The long fibers were used for the warp, the lesser quality for the pile, and the poorest wool for the weft. We know little about how the wool was handled before spinning during the earliest times. It could have been combed. My informants only remembered using purchased warp yarn. I have done little analysis of ryas that have hand-spun or three-ply yarn in the warp.

The thick pile yarn was spun in the home, a large amount of wool for each rya. The yarn was washed after spinning in fish bile instead

of soap. Then it was "white and fine," my informants told me. Beating the yarn slightly with a wooden paddle felted it sufficiently that the yarn remained twisted when cut in short lengths.

To set up the loom was a group effort among many women in the neighborhood; most women knew the process. A rya had a 7-10 centimeter border on each end without knots, woven in twill. A row of knots followed. Two centimeters of twill was woven between each row of knots. The rya pile yarn was wound around a "noppakjevle" and cut to lengths two times that of the pile. The "Smyrna-knot" was used; simple to knot, and known the world over. Several of my informants told me that it was the mother or grandmother who wove the background; it was the children's job to knot.

The knotting is done on an open shed, on the raised warp threads. In a four-harness warp-faced weave two threads both in the warp and weft lie under the knots and hide them on the smooth side.

Rya weaving continued after the turn of the century; some have described rya weaving up to 1940. Today it has been rediscovered, and like the phoenix who rose from the ashes, but now in a new costume, not for warmth for the body under a cruel sky, but to satisfy the eye and mind.

## Anna Norgaard.

*(Denmark) She is a trained weaver who works with the reconstruction of archaic textiles, undertaking projects with museums, textile conservators and textile researchers. She has woven and sewn costumes for the Universitetets Oldsaksamling (University Museum of Cultural Heritage) in Oslo – a Bronze Age costume, a costume from the Roman Iron Age, to costumes from the folk migration period, and a cloak from Viking times. She works now with a project together with women from Greenland on the reconstruction of costumes from the 12 and 1300s, Nordbodrakter. The women spin yarn*

with wool from Greenland sheep and Anna weaves and sews the costumes. She makes two of each costume, one for the Nasjonal-museet (National Museum) in Copenhagen and the other will go back to Greenland. Anna has her own studio, teaches weaving and spinning, and has written many articles. Her publication "Weaving of sailcloth samples on a Vertical Loom" is a portion of a larger research report that is not yet published.

### **The Viking Woman's Loom: The Upright Loom's Functions and Possibilities**

We know today that weavers in Viking times used vertical looms, partly because of several discoveries of weights used to hold the warp taught, and the discovery of fabric fragments with tablet woven edges, typical of fabric woven on a vertical loom.

Portions of an upper warp beam, portions of the bottom of a side rail, and a piece of the lower stretcher bar were discovered in Greenland in 1992. These pieces were dated around 1250 and therefore come from the oldest loom discovery related to Scandinavia.

In Iceland we know from written records from the early Middle Ages that a weaver at that time could weave 22 ell of vadmál in a week, 12 meters, on a vertical loom. In Iceland and the Faroe Islands the vertical loom remained the most common type until the end of the 1700s.

The Sami in Northern Norway continue to use a vertical loom for a certain type of weaving, the grena. We don't know whether this tradition goes all the way back to Viking times. The first written record of a grena is from 1567, where nine blankets, together with some fish, are recorded as a form of payment.

There is no doubt that the vertical loom is very functional, if you know how to take advantage of its capabilities. Fabric has been discovered from earlier times, and even back to Viking times, with amazingly many threads

per centimeter in both the warp and weft. Many fabrics also had a complicated weaving pattern, which you wouldn't think possible on a vertical loom. But when you lift several shafts at one time and in different sequences, you have unlimited possibilities for variation in pattern.

In an excavation at Trondheim at the end of the 1980s several shaft holders were found for a vertical loom with places for two shafts. This was useful when there was a need for shafts that were pulled out at different distances so there could be a more visible shed or possibly two sheds at the same time.

### **Lise Bender Jørgensen**

*(Trondheim) An archaeologist with a university degree from Copenhagen, she has worked for ten years as a research fellow with various institutions, with textiles as her main area of study. She has had several projects with handworkers in Scandinavia. She defended her doctorate from Copenhagen University on the topic, "North European Textiles until 1000 AD," in 1993. After working at the Department of Archaeology at Gothenburg University, she came in 1996 to Vitenskapsmuseum (Scientific Museum), NTNTU, in Trondheim, where she teaches archaeology. This year she is working on a project, "Textiles from Roman Egypt." Lise has published many professional articles and has published books: *Forhistoriske Tekstiler i Skandinavia* (Prehistoric Textiles in Scandinavia) and her doctoral dissertation in 1992. In 1981, she was among those who initiated and established NESAT: the Nord Europisk Symposium for Arkeologiske Tekstiler (Northern European Symposium for Archaeological Textiles). NESAT arranges conferences in various European countries every three years.*

### **Viking Womens Textiles**

What do we know of Viking women's textiles and how do we know it? Archaeological discoveries are an important source, telling us



what types of textiles people owned, the raw materials used to make them, their colors, and how they were created. They also give us series of clues for what the clothing looked like.

Our undertaking of Viking women's clothing is based especially on a rich textile discovery from Birke in Sweden. The find included a shift of linen, worn under a jumper of fine wool, and with an apron decorated with tablet-woven borders. The jumper suspenders were held together with bronze oval fasteners and it is these that are the key to our knowledge and understanding of the clothing. Metal pieces ... the fasteners were removed from their surrounding textiles and preserved sufficiently that we can reconstruct the garment from the various textiles, and how it was worn, over or under the suspenders.

A drawing of Kong Knud den Mektige (King Knud the Powerful) in the manuscript *Liber Vitae*, published in 1030, was the starting point for a reconstruction of a Viking-era man's costume created for the Nationalmuseet in Copenhagen in 1990. Another important resource was well-preserved textile fragments from a grave in Mammen in central Jylland, dated around 970. Fine wool fabrics in a 2/1 twill and plain weave were dyed with madder and indigo and decorated with colorful wool embroidery. Several costume details were in silk, dyed with korskje (a lichen that produces purple), and created in tablet weaving worked with gold and silver. Fragments of marmot furs were found. A team of specialized craftspeople – a tailor, weaver, silk weaver, band weaver, embroiderer, designer, and shoemaker, worked on the costume for nearly two years on the basis of analyses done by textile archaeologists and conservators. This close collaboration between craftspeople and academics was very fruitful, producing much new knowledge of Viking times costume, and was an exciting experience for all involved. The costume was sewn for a specific person who resembled the picture of Knud the Powerful and who was willing to play the role. The project had many dimensions: the

craftspeople's skills gave the two-dimensional drawing and three-dimensional textile fragments a fourth dimension; the model's performance added a fifth.

Many Viking era graves have been excavated around Scandinavia. In 1982 I visited the larger Nordic museums and registered textile fragments from almost 400 sites. That was a basis for a short description of what varieties of fabric were used, together with where and how they were used. Norwegian Viking graves held especially plain weave fabrics in linen, tweed-like wool fabrics in diagonal twill, and fine, lightweight worsted yarn fabric in diamond twill. In addition there were a few silk fabrics, and some wealthy graves held fragments of tapestries, embroideries, and woven bands. The yarn is nearly always z-spun. The quality varies from about 10 threads per centimeter and for the diamond twill fabrics all the way up to 62 threads per centimeter. Wool fabrics are almost always blue, and the wool is clearly selected for its purpose. We can imagine that the Norwegian Viking era woman clad herself in a white linen shift with a jumper in fine, blue diamond twill. An over-piece in coarser wool twill had a warp of blue and undyed weft. Excavations in older cities (for example, Hedeby) have yielded a different selection of textiles. Here heavier woolen textiles were noted, indicating fragments of everyday dress. In contrast, textile discoveries in graves represent the "Sunday best" of the upper class.

---

#### **NORWEGIAN TEXTILE GUILD MEETING IN DENVER, JULY 2004**

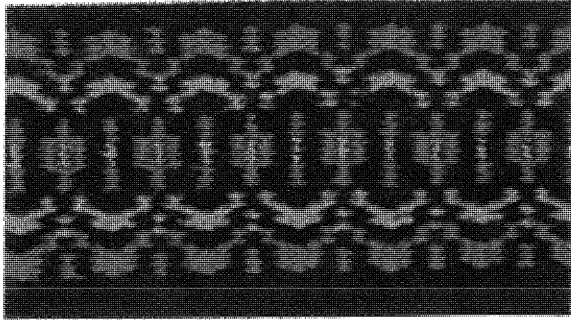
If you are going to Convergence in Denver this summer, be sure to attend the Norwegian Textile Guild meeting. Laurann Gilbertson will give a presentation on plans for the Third Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles, to be held in Decorah, Iowa in October 2005. There will also be information about the Textile Study Tour of 2003, which was so successful that Vesterheim plans to repeat significant parts of the tour in May of 2005.

The Flesberg Study Group will present a progress report and make future plans. The meeting will be held on Friday, July 2 at 11:45am in Meet Area B, adjacent to the commercial exhibit. Please bring your lunch and join us!

---

---

## FLESBERG STUDY GROUP



For those interested in either krokbragd or rosepath, the Flesberg technique is worth investigating. The Farm Women's Organization in Flesberg, Norway, felt they had a responsibility to document one of their local weaving traditions, and we are the luckier for their efforts. Thanks to Vesterheim, we are now able to study the booklet of samples they created. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Kay Larson, [kaylarson@hotmail.com](mailto:kaylarson@hotmail.com), 9390 Miller Rd NE, Bainbridge Is, WA, 98110. There are no requirements for joining but internet access is preferred. We also encourage our members to participate in an informal exhibition of study group results at the Decorah Conference in October of 2005.

---

---

## MEMBERSHIP 2003-2004

Frances B. Alcorn  
1615 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North  
Seattle, WA 98109-2930

Toni Ammons  
1 Good Hope Road  
Elkton, MD 21921

Connie L. Anderson  
1707 James Ave  
St Paul, MN 55105-2114  
(651) 698-8399 Gloria A.

Barnes  
2575 S. Syracuse Way  
I 102  
Denver, CO 80231

Mary Basmann  
P.O. Box 1460  
Alto, NM 88312

Astrid Anderson Bear  
506 Lakeview Road  
Lynnwood, WA 98037-2141  
(425) 743-1768  
email:  
[astrbear@ix.netcom.com](mailto:astrbear@ix.netcom.com)

Ruth E. Beck  
10035 31<sup>st</sup> St NE  
Seattle, WA 98125  
(206) 522-0455

Sylvia Bjørge Berman  
2340 Benton Pl  
Davis, CA 95616  
(530) 792-0470

Gayle E. Bingham  
745 Oakland Hills Lane  
Kerrville, TX 78028  
(830) 896-7545

Ase Blake  
1771 Timberland Rd NE  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 634-4809

Elaine LeTourneau Bohnet  
4542 Cherry St  
Grand Forks, ND 58201  
(701) 775-2858

Syvilla Tweed Bolson  
512 Locust Rd  
Decorah, IA 52101  
(563) 382-3711  
email: [smtweed@willinet.net](mailto:smtweed@willinet.net)

Kathryn A. Brewer  
321 Silver Lake Rd SW  
New Brighton, MN 55112  
(651) 636-8566  
email:  
[kndbrewer@earthlink.net](mailto:kndbrewer@earthlink.net)

Margaret A. Bruland  
8430 15<sup>th</sup> Pl SE #88  
Everett, WA 98205  
(425) 335-1150  
email:  
[mbruland@cedarcom.com](mailto:mbruland@cedarcom.com)

## Call for Entries

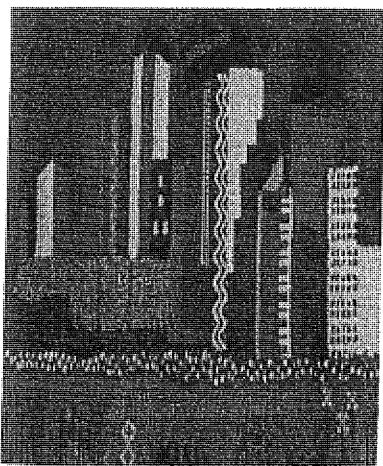
**Frisk og Flink! Fresh Artwork by Clever Weavers** is a juried exhibition of contemporary weaving in the Norwegian tradition as interpreted by members of the Norwegian Textile Guild (NTG). The themes of the exhibition are inspired by the teaching and artwork of Lila Nelson, retired Vesterheim curator of textiles. Lila has encouraged and inspired weavers to explore traditional Norwegian weaves and to celebrate them with contemporary interpretations and applications. The exhibition is organized by Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum and is presented in conjunction with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles, held in Decorah, Iowa, on October 21-23, 2005. The exhibition will be on view in Vesterheim's Westby-Torgerson Education Center from September 19 until October 23, 2005.

Entries will be reviewed by a jury of past and present NTG Coordinators. To enter, weavers must be members of NTG or must become members of NTG if their weavings are accepted for **Frisk og Flink! Fresh Artwork by Clever Weavers**. In lieu of an entry fee, artists are asked to cover the cost of delivery and pick-up or round-trip shipping of accepted artworks.

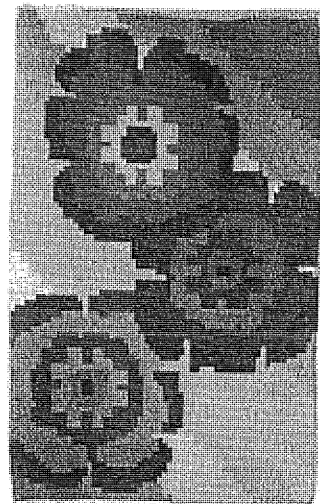
Entries must be original, woven within the past 5 years, and not done under supervision. Weavings may have been previously exhibited, but not in the 2001 NTG exhibit at Nordic Heritage Museum. Artists are invited to submit up to 4 entries that fit into one of two categories:

**FRISK!** Artworks woven with traditional Norwegian techniques and showing excitingly **FRESH** contemporary designs (colors and patterns). Traditional Norwegian weaving techniques include: pictorial and geometric tapestry, krokbragd and danskbrogd, double weave, rya, overshot weaves (skillbragd, tavlebragd, Telemarksvev), damask, tablet and other band weaving, etc. Please keep the weaving technique traditional, i.e. dovetail joins for pictorial tapestry.

**FLINK!** Artworks woven with a **CLEVER** and creative combination of two or more traditional Norwegian weaves. The designs should have a contemporary flair. While the weaving techniques should appear traditional, you may make technical adjustments in order to execute the combination, i.e. picking up bands of one weave with the loom warped for the other weave.



Lila Nelson, *Cityscape 5*, tapestry, rosepath, danskbrogd, and Vestfold tech.



Lila Nelson, *Autumn Flowers*, rutevev (geometric tapestry)

**Deadline for entries is June 30, 2005.** Fill out the entry form and mail along with color photographs of the finished artwork to Laurann Gilbertson, Vesterheim Museum, PO Box 379, Decorah IA 52101-0379. Photographs should be about 4" x 6" and show one full front view, one full back view, and one or more details for each entry. Mark the backs of the photographs with the letter (A-D) that corresponds with the entry. Enclose a SASE for the return of your photographs. Photographic prints are preferred, but slides will also be accepted. Electronic images will not be accepted. Do not mail your weavings! If your artwork is accepted, you will receive instructions for shipping or delivery. Artists will be notified by August 15, 2005.

Questions? Contact Laurann Gilbertson at 563-382-9681 or [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org)

**FRISK OG FLINK! Fresh Artwork by Clever Weavers**  
**Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, Iowa**  
**September 19 – October 23, 2005**

**1. Artist Information:**

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Artwork Details**

Weaving A. Category:  *Frisk / Fresh*     *Flink / Clever*

Title / Description and Function: \_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaves: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaving B. Category:  *Frisk / Fresh*     *Flink / Clever*

Title / Description and Function: \_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaves: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaving C. Category:  *Frisk / Fresh*     *Flink / Clever*

Title / Description and Function: \_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaves: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaving D. Category:  *Frisk / Fresh*     *Flink / Clever*

Title / Description and Function: \_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Weaves: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Enclosures:**

- Photographs of weavings (write the letter of the entry, A-D, on the back of the corresponding photographs). For each entry, include one full front view, one full back view, and at least one detail.
- Biographical statement and artist statement (not to exceed one page total).
- SASE, if you would like your photos returned.

Mail to Laurann Gilbertson, Vesterheim Museum, PO Box 379, Decorah IA 52101-0379. Do not send by fax or email. **Forms are due June 30, 2005.** Artists will be notified by August 15, 2005.

## *Call for Workshops*

The Norwegian Textile Guild's 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles will be held in Decorah, Iowa, on October 21-23, 2005. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum is hosting the event, which will include presentations by Norwegian and American scholars, book signings, exhibitions of historic and contemporary weaving, and both pre- and post-conference workshops.

Conference organizers invite proposals for 1- to 4-day workshops in topics related to the Norwegian textile tradition, including weaving and embellishment techniques, fibers and fiber preparation (including spinning and dyeing), design, and contemporary adaptations. The theme of the conference is Norwegian weaving, although workshops on related topics will be considered as well. Complete and submit a separate form for each workshop. Photocopy the form as necessary. Proposals are due January 15, 2005, and teachers will be notified by March 31, 2005. Questions? Contact Laurann Gilbertson at Vesterheim Museum: 563-382-9681, [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org)

*Please read the following conditions carefully. By submitting a proposal, you agree to the fee schedule offered by Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum and the Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles.*

### **Fee schedule:**

No. of Days	Salary	Housing Allowance	Total		Transportation
1	\$200	\$70	\$270	+	mileage or airfare
2	\$400	\$105	\$505	+	mileage or airfare
3	\$600	\$175	\$775	+	mileage or airfare
4	\$800	\$210	\$1,010	+	mileage or airfare

Vesterheim will pay \$200 per day of class, a housing allowance for class and set-up days, and mileage or airfare. Teachers will receive a 10% discount on the cost of conference registration. Vesterheim must receive the teacher's signed contract by May 20, 2005. A workshop must have 4 or more students registered 30 days before the start of class or it will be canceled.

### **Facilities, looms, and equipment:**

There are four classrooms in Vesterheim Museum's Westby-Torgerson Education Center. Each classroom has climate control, good lighting, and is accessible by elevator. Three of the classrooms have sinks. The Lila Nelson Weaving Classroom is equipped with some basic weaving supplies including umbrella swifts, ball winders, bobbin and quill winder, pick-up sticks and shuttles. The following looms are available for classes. Except for the Glimåkra, Cranbrook, and Newcombs, the looms can be used in other classrooms. You may also bring looms or request that students bring their own looms for class.

No.	Loom	Type	Width	Harness	Reeds	Notes
7	Macomber Ad-a-Harness	jack (rising shed)	26"	6	8, 10, 12, 15	
2	Macomber Ad-a-Harness	jack (rising shed)	22"	4	8, 10, 12, 15	
1	Macomber Ad-a-Harness	jack (rising shed)	39"	8	6, 10	
1	Newcomb Studio	jack (rising shed)	36"	2	10, 15	
1	Newcomb Studio	jack (rising shed)	45"	4	6, 12, 15	
1	Glimåkra table	jack (rising shed)	20"	4	8, 10, 12	
1	Don Johannesen skillbragd	counter balance	27"	6	8, 10, 11, 12, 15	long-eyed heddles
1	Glimåkra	counter marche	46"	10	6, 12, 15	long-eyed heddles
1	Cranbrook	counter marche	60"	4	6, 8	
6	Nancy Jackson Gobelin tapestry		16"	2	lamms for 10 epi	
10	Beka rigid heddle		14"	2	8	
7	Beka rigid heddle		20"	2	10	
2	Norwegian-style warp-weighted		48"			

**Workshop Proposal** for the **Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles**  
**October 21-23, 2005**  
Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, Iowa, USA

*Copy as needed. Submit a separate form for each workshop.*

**1. Contact Information:**

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Workshop Details**

Proposed workshop title: \_\_\_\_\_

Description (30 words or less): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How many days?  1 day (7 hrs.)  2 days (14 hrs.)  3 days (21 hrs.)  4 days (28 hrs.)

When?  before the conference  after the conference

Class size limit: \_\_\_\_\_

Skill level/s:  beginning  intermediate  advanced

Describe any special skills students should have:

How much is the supply fee? \_\_\_\_\_ (Students will pay the teacher for supplies)

What do students need to bring to class?

Describe your space and equipment needs: looms, reeds, tables, slide/overhead projector, special lighting, sink

Would you like to use Vesterheim artifacts for patterns and/or visual aids?  Yes  Maybe  No

Attach a lesson plan that describes workshop goals and the skills to be taught each day of class.

**3. Biographical Information:**

Attach a one-page resume that includes your experience teaching Norwegian fiber art.

Mail to Laurann Gilbertson, Textile Curator, Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, PO Box 379, Decorah IA 52101-0379. Do not send by fax or email. **Proposals are due January 15, 2005.** Teachers will be notified by March 31, 2005. Questions? Contact Laurann at 563-382-9681 or [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org)

## *Call for Papers*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Norwegian Textile Guild

### CONFERENCE ON NORWEGIAN WOVEN TEXTILES

October 21-23, 2005

Decorah, Iowa, USA

Hosted by Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum

The conference organizers invite abstracts for 30-minute presentations (in English) on topics related to the Norwegian textile tradition in Norway and North America, including: weaving and embellishment techniques, fibers and fiber preparation (including spinning and dyeing), equipment for the creation and care of textiles, design and aesthetics, historical and economic aspects, cultural perspectives, the impact of immigration on textiles and textile-making skills, Norwegian textiles within Scandinavian or global contexts, teaching methods, textile collections or collectors, and contemporary fiber art and artists.

The theme of the conference is Norwegian weaving, although papers on related topics will be considered as well.

Abstracts should be one page in length. Put the title of the presentation on the abstract, but not the name/s of the author/s. On a separate cover page include the title of the presentation, name and affiliation of the author or authors, mailing address/es, daytime phone number/s, and email address/es. Authors will be notified in late February. If your paper is accepted for presentation, you will have the option of revising the abstract for the proceedings (packet of abstracts distributed to conference attendees).

Mail 3 copies of the abstract and one copy of the title page to Laurann Gilbertson, Textile Curator, Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, PO Box 379, Decorah IA 52101-0379, USA. Abstracts will not be accepted by email or fax.

*Envelopes must be postmarked on or before January 15, 2005.*

For questions or a sample abstract, contact:

Laurann Gilbertson at 563-382-9681 or [textiles@vesterheim.org](mailto:textiles@vesterheim.org)

