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The Red Ball

By Pamela J Davis

Biography of Pamela J Davis

"Don't forget the red ball!" When I designed my first series of tapestries I could hear in my head the words of my artistic mother when posing for family photographs. She strongly felt a touch of red was the key to a successful photograph. This need for brightness in my world might have been inherited, but with all due respect to my mother the environment also played a large role. As a youngster my world seemed aglow with color, whether marching through the fall red maple leaves, singing *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* from the movie *Wizard of Oz* as the sun set over Lake Erie with a rainbow of color, bushwhacking through the scrub collecting plump purple colored blueberries or as a pre-teen selecting fabric to sew a new skirt. During a professional career in costume jewelry and women's socks, I discovered a new field of color through women's accessories. Eventually, I found my voice in the art of tapestry where my enchantment with the natural world, a passion for color, and my Celtic heritage could be woven into delightful images.

Since 1640 my ancestors have lived in the New England and Appalachian Regions in the Eastern United States. I come from generations of artists and craft people. My maternal grandparents, Fanny Thatcher Kelley and Emerson Curtis Locke are from South Dennis, Massachusetts and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, respectively. Fanny did fine cut work and knitting. Emerson was an engineer and pattern maker aboard the ship USS Vandalia. The Locke family first came to New Hampshire from London around 1640.

My paternal grandparents are from southern Ohio within the Appalachian region. My paternal grandmother, Jeanette Louise (Jennie) Spurgeon, was born in Maxville, Ohio. She moved to New Lexington, Ohio where she married Nial T. Davis. "Grandma Davis" worked in a tailoring shop and was an excellent seamstress. Nial eventually became the mayor of New Lexington. Genealogists have speculated that the Spurgeon family name came to England from Norway in the 800s AD. My mother, Florence Jeanette Locke, was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. My father, Ralph George Davis, was born in New Lexington, Ohio. My mother was a homemaker and artist who taught me to sew and draw at an early age. My father was a businessman.

Growing up in Northeastern Ohio, on Lake Erie, our family moved every 4 - 5 years. My nomadic lifestyle began after college and continued with frequent moves around the country as my professional life required. I moved to New England, New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco. From the Sierra Mountains and deserts of California, to the rocky Atlantic coast of Maine, to the soft sandy beaches of Florida; all of these places were building steps towards developing my own sense of place.

In 1994 I moved to the northern state of Minnesota, United States, with its 10,000 lakes, enjoying the vegetative diversity of prairie grassland, boreal forest and big woods. The natural environment pleasantly mixed with the culture of the big cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis (Twin Cities). Only here has the ambiance of the natural environment interacted with my Celtic and Scandinavian cultural interests to nurture a sense of belonging.

Artist Statement

Vibrant color, unusual shapes, and whimsical patterns are characteristic of my woven tapestries. Mystical images can carry messages from the ancient ones when I combine traditional tapestry techniques and ancient symbols in a contemporary design. I dye Australian / New Zealand wool yarn in my underground studio to achieve the intense color palette for the weft, the yarn that creates the design element. The warp, which provides the structure for the tapestry, is primarily Irish or Belgium linen. As a bonus, the aroma of the linen is reminiscent of the outdoors. Guiding the weft through the warp I coerce the fibers to visualize my enchantment with a natural, mystical world. Since the beginning of my art career I have been creating my own visual language through the use of symbols. Currently my tapestries are exploring a sense of place through the use of Celtic and Viking interlock and spiral patterns, and the Norwegian weaving techniques of dovetail and outline.



The Use of Symbols in My Tapestries

How astonishing to find myself writing an article about my tapestries and the use of symbols in my designs. Should I pinch myself to make sure I am not daydreaming again, a state of mind that is expanding as I age? Let me review a typical day to demonstrate the amazing life I lead designing and weaving tapestries. I arise in the morning and commute down the hallway and descend 13 steps into what I refer to as my underground studio. Bright lights, bubbling water fountains, and the prevailing aroma of braids of sweet grass greet me. One small room houses my computer and sewing machine, the electronics of my work. The large unfinished side of the basement is my dye lab with a drop-in stove ventilated to the outside and large basins as my water source. A long work table allows plenty of room for designing and making my cartoons. A cartoon is a drawing of the tapestry design that is attached to the back of the warp on the loom. I weave the tapestry according to the cartoon, akin to coloring in the shapes in a coloring book.

The brightest room is the Loom Room, as designated by my husband. He formerly told his golfing buddies that I was home "looming". Fortunately, as time has transpired, he proudly refers to me as his tapestry artist and I am now weaving instead of "looming". The Loom Room glows from 7 rectangular fluorescent lights in the ceiling. The tapestry loom I most often use is my 7 foot Lervad Danish vertical loom made from Danish Beechwood.

Speaking of my husband Terry, I must digress for a moment; without him, my artistic career would be extremely part time, perhaps even miniscule. We made a decision 7 years ago to downsize by purchasing an affordable home dependent on one person's income. Not that we were pessimistic in predicting a small income as a full-time artist, but, well....one must be realistic when the bills show up. Much more than the financial support is his undying belief in my creative ability. He is proof that angels do exist. Imagine for a moment it is dinner time and I am weaving snug in the Loom Room. From the top of the stairway I hear "Ready!" accompanied by my routine predictable response "Coming!" I turn off the water fountains and mystical New Age music, lighten the tension on the linen warp, and ascend my 13 steps. At the dinner table are a delicious dinner and my husband's smiling eyes, full of mischief and love.

Before my digression about my beloved I was describing how it feels to live one's dream. Once the commute is finished by descending my 13 steps I approach the loom with honor and joy. As I sit before this magnificent wooden mechanical tool, my fingers seem to catch wisps of color and form them into visual shapes. Weaving on my loom can best be described as gently plucking the strings of a harp and laying in wool to create the melody. I dye my own wool yarn to feel completely immersed in these brilliant colors.

When I first discovered tapestry weaving I thought I could capture my love of the natural world through realistic designs of waterfalls, autumn maple trees, and crimson cardinals. I quickly found that realistic images

limited my experience to copying an existing visual world and didn't express the non-visual images from my day-dreaming. I sometimes feel I am more comfortable in my imaginary world where all things are connected and equally important. Within this mystical realm I can talk to the trees, pose questions to the Druids, and hug my beloved dog Whitney who died two years ago. In my world the connectivity between humans and our environment establishes a sense of place for the human spirit. I am drawn to the beliefs of the Druids who had a strong influence in Western Europe prior to Christianity. The Druids were males and females who were healers, scientists, astronomers, and natural historians. They memorized the history of their people and didn't believe in recording these stories in text. Within the framework of the Druids animals and humans talk to each other and could change into each other's shapes. You could communicate with the trees through an ancient divination system of tree language called Ogham. Ancestral teachers were called upon as if they were still alive. As my art career advanced, storytelling with abstract shapes and symbols seemed closer to my mystical universe. As each tapestry is completed, I am accumulating a more complete symbolic language.

At first glance my prior lives would lead one to wonder how I discovered a love of tapestry. My first business career was in the world of fashion and women's accessories. My love of color and analysis of the business statistics were the 2 components that kept me interested in this field for 20 years. Drastically needing a complete do-over, I left the business world, took three months to lose myself in the wilderness with only a backpack, and returned with a fresh look at my life. I went back to school to become a scientist. My objective was to gain the scientific knowledge I needed to help protect the natural environment. The study of water resources science provided a graduate degree which turned into a consulting career. Initially I was concerned that understanding the science behind the natural world would take away its magic. Quite the opposite occurred. I was amazed at the complexity of the natural world and how important it was to keep a balance within the natural processes. My education and training as a scientist showed me how to do research. Instead of the hap hazard approach of picking up a book in the library with an interesting title, I discovered a whole system of tracking down tidbits of knowledge. Another important aspect of my scientific career was learning about grants.

When I moved to Minnesota 14 years ago, I found my Celtic interests were intermingled with the Scandinavian culture. Through the Vesterheim Museum and the Weavers Guild of Minnesota I became fascinated by Norwegian and Swedish textiles, in particular, the stylized designs, symbolic motifs, and some of the tapestry techniques associated with the tapestries. These variables now form the basis of my art.

Early in 2007 I applied to the Minnesota State Arts Board for a \$6000 Artist Initiative Grant to join the 2007 Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum textile tour of Norway and Sweden. A section from my final report expresses the importance of the tour for me.

"The tour had a tremendous impact on my artistic development. My contemporary art uses the ancient craft of tapestry weaving to express the connection among the ancient ones, nature, science and the spiritual world through the use of symbols. Only a personal visitation can provide the visceral understanding of a culture and their myths and symbols that I desire. To pursue my visual language in tapestry weaving it is critical that I understand the environment and culture behind the art form and my particular design format of using symbols to create my 'otherworld' as I see it."

"...Numerous contacts and experiences [from this tour] will impact my career development. Through behind-the-scenes and curator-led tours of museums, colleges and other textile exhibitions I developed resources for further education in the field, expertise in the history and techniques of weaving tapestries, and a broader audience for my work. The factory tours offered a perspective in large scale textile production for future reference and provided possible sources for my tapestry yarn."

One of the contacts to whom I am most grateful was the Art Tapestry instructor Kristen Lindberg in Lillehammer, Norway. An article I wrote about the workshop and Kristen's work appears in the Norwegian Textile Letter volume XIX No. 1 November 2007.

Thus far in this article I have written a lot of text about the importance of symbols in my work; perhaps now would be a good opportunity to describe the symbols in some of my tapestries. The tapestries are described in chronological order of when they were woven, starting with the oldest first.

Maneuvering the Labyrinth tapestry

Symbols in *Maneuvering the Labyrinth*

- ❖ 4 blue Tapettes
- ❖ 3 red balls
- ❖ green labyrinth
- ❖ floating yellow ribbons

Examples of labyrinths date back to 2500 BCE. Scholars have described them as decorative, spiritual, and / or based on sacred geometry. For me, the labyrinth has a similar meaning. Even though we may lose our way, the labyrinth can help us find the path again. Focusing on the moment, and walking the labyrinth slowly, this practice becomes a form of walking meditation and can lead you to experience unity and wholeness. If attempting to stay in "the moment" is as difficult for you as it is for me, you could say

walking a labyrinth is a form of exercise.

When designing *Maneuvering the Labyrinth* in 2003 my intent was to start creating shapes that could tell a story. I wasn't certain where the story was going, but I realized that the only way to find out was to start the journey. Giving permission to myself to doodle without a predetermined outcome was a constant struggle but I knew no other way to get my imaginings into visual forms. Most importantly I wanted a shape that represented an interconnected natural, human, and mystical force. Eventually I created a shape called a Tapette (see drawing of *3 Tapettes Dancing around a Fire* earlier in this article). My Tapette is a mystical, hooded figure similar to a Druid who is capable of shape changing and only lives in tapestries. In *Maneuvering the Labyrinth* Celtic spiraling decorates some of the Tapettes.

According to scientists and mystics alike a vibration, or "hum" is in existence in all animate and inanimate objects that gives it its own sound. In ancient times vibrational technology (as it is defined in current times) was used to cut large blocks of stone. I wanted to symbolize the vibration. In *Maneuvering the Labyrinth* the yellow floating stripes represent a visual vibration as yellow energy ribbons.

The red balls started as a touch of red learned from my mother as a youth when we took family pictures. After lots of drawing the red ball remained a red ball. The meaning behind the red ball started to change. The ball turned into a symbol of the universe, a finite shape that keeps us focused on the idea that there is oneness in the universe. The ball grew to represent an interconnectivity of 2 legged, 4 legged, plants, soil, water, and all the natural processes. Each of our actions and thoughts impacts the universe, as we dance along the spiral, between light and dark, goodness and evil. In the tapestry all these symbols are floating around a labyrinth searching for harmony and balance.

Red Unicorn tapestry

Symbols in Red Unicorn

- ❖ Unicorn
- ❖ Tapestry techniques of dovetail, hatching

I wove this unicorn based on a design from a Flemish tapestry woven in the mid-1700s. The original tapestry was used as a bench cover. Typical of symbols unicorns have numerous meanings. The unicorn can represent purity, strength, magnificence and power. The unicorn is good, represents selflessness, and yet remains a solitary creature. To me the unicorn represents nature that is untouched by humans and lives within a magical forest. The unicorn can only be called forth by the deserving few who are pure in their belief of the power and beauty of the natural world. When weaving this tapestry and duplicating the techniques typical of this style of weaving I fell in love with dovetailing and interlock; weaving techniques used to join shapes in a tapestry. In the original tapestry the Flemish referred to the dovetail joins as soumak.

Life Cycle tapestry

Symbols in *Life Cycle*

- ❖ The Tapettes have transformed into amoeba-like shapes falling as rain drops landing on the earth, dispersing as pairs, to ascend through evaporation.
- ❖ The life cycle is represented by the color wheel in the large circles and the raindrops. Life is coming to earth through the black hole, separating into pairs, as in DNA, along the bottom of the tapestry.
- ❖ Sacred geometry was used in the placement of the shapes

Throughout my tapestry career I have been fortunate to have worked with well – known tapestry weavers in the United State, Mexico, and Norway. Based on a workshop with the New Mexico tapestry artist James Koehler, who recently was the recipient of New Mexico's 2007 "Governor's Award for Excellent in the Arts", I became engrossed with the concept of sacred geometry and mathematical patterns such as the Fibonacci series found in nature. Sacred geometry is the geometry used in the

construction of sacred art and architecture, based on mathematical proportions and ratios. The Fibonacci series is a mathematic sequence where the first number is 0 and the second number is 1. The sequence continues by adding the previous 2 numbers together. For example, $0 + 1 = 1$, $1 + 1 = 2$, $1 + 2 = 3$, $2 + 3 = 5$, etc. Understanding the sophistication of number sequences in nature, ancient architecture, and artists such as Leonardo DaVinci was fascinating to the scientist and nature lover in me. Mathematical formulas were also used in Celtic patterns of spirals and knotwork. Most recently this topic gained popularity from the book *Da Vinci Code* written by Dan Brown in 2006 (ISBN-13: 9781400079179) followed by a movie with the same title starring the actor Tom Hanks.

Tapestry series Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring

An artist's visual images are translated into form through his or her chosen media. During this process, I believe a piece of art becomes alive. The Tapette is a metamorphosis of animal and human. The Tapettes first evolved in the tapestry *Maneuvering the Labyrinth* and were transformed in *Life Cycle*. The *Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Summer, Fall, Winter, Spring* series visualized the Tapettes as they experience the 4 seasons in Minnesota. The circles represent the universe and light source, changing in color throughout the series. The long and short, thin, sometimes wavy, shapes are the energy paths or vibrations that are the essence of life. Where theses shapes are positioned and their color in each tapestry is indicative of the season. Some of the background designs are replicated in all 4 tapestries but in different positions. At the bottom of each tapestry are Ogham letters that spell the season to which the tapestry is associated. The 1500 plus year-old Ogham alphabet is a form a divination or communication used by the ancient Druids, similar to the use of Runes used by the Celtic and Scandinavian cultures.

Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Summer. Summer in Minnesota is bright and sunny with long 16 hour days. The environment feels as if bright green and yellow are all that exist. The grass, plants and trees are filled to bursting with green. The Tapettes, colored blue in *Summer*, are representative of water since Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes. Summer Solstice is celebrated in our back yard with a drumming circle around the fire.

Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Fall. Late fall is a mysterious time in Minnesota. The fall leaf color has muted and the Tapettes have floated down to cover the earth for the impending cold and dark winter. Fall creates a transition to a quieter time as the darkness of winter approaches. The Ogham letters along the bottom spell Fall.

Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Winter. Winter in Minnesota is crisp, dark, with long 15 hour nights. The cold temperatures and clear skies sharpen all the sounds. The moon is in charge. The blue Tapettes huddle together on earth to stay warm. This tapestry uses some sculptural tapestry techniques to highlight the sense of the shape of objects since shapes can't be seen in the darkness. The vibration lines are much wavier and bulky, again creating a textural depth to the shapes. The slits on the bottom half of the tapestry are not sewn to enhance the sensation of frozen crystals reminiscent of winter. The Ogham letters along the bottom spell winter.

Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Spring. Life begins anew with spring. The *Spring* tapestry magnifies the tip of a leaf, with the sun illuminating the leaf edge, and the blue sky a welcoming relief from the winter. The color patches on the leaf are tiny specks suggesting the early blooming of flowers. The sun is the background. The cycle is complete as energy morphs into the new life of spring. *Spring* is spelled in Ogham letters along the bottom



***Stilla Aqua* tapestry**

The *Stilla Aqua* tapestry was a commission for the new state-of-the-environment office building for the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed (www.rwmwd.org) in St. Paul and the adjacent northern and eastern suburbs. The following text is the script that accompanies the tapestry.

Environmental Description of the Tapestry

Stilla Aqua by Pamela J Davis

Written to accompany the tapestry exhibited in the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed New Office Building in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Stilla Aqua means "drop of water" in Latin. The Stilla Aqua tapestry demonstrates the beauty, power, layering, and natural cycle of a rain drop. Water is critical to the natural and human world and highly responsive to its environment. The crystalline structure and quality of a rain drop is impacted by the quality of its environment.

Water on the ground evaporates creating clouds. Raindrops can coalesce within the clouds. As raindrops fall to the ground, each water drop can have a huge impact upon the surfaces with which it comes into contact. Raindrops that fall uninterrupted onto the soil are the biggest contributors to soil erosion. If a raindrop is interrupted in its path downward to the soil, its impact is lessened.

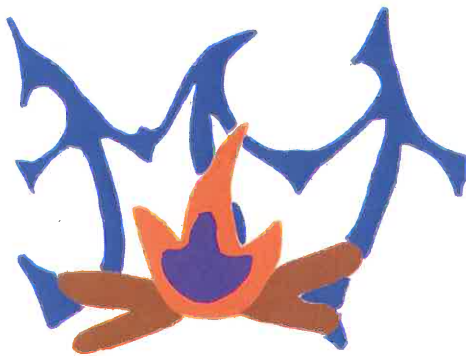
The Stilla Aqua tapestry portrays the cycle and environmental impacts of rain drops. The background color of the tapestry depicts the blue of the sky, deepening in intensity from lighter blue in value at the bottom of the tapestry to a deeper blue at the top of the tapestry. The height in inches of each blue tone follows a naturally occurring number sequence called the Fibonacci series. The Fibonacci series is a mathematic sequence found in nature such as in number of florets found in a sunflower seed. The 1st and 2nd number added together



I am on the right, with my 2 brothers on the left, standing on a bridge with the autumn colors behind us. Note my brother's red sweatshirt in the middle.



Here I am as a toddler, lower left, with family and colorful red balls. My oldest brother must have been taking the picture.



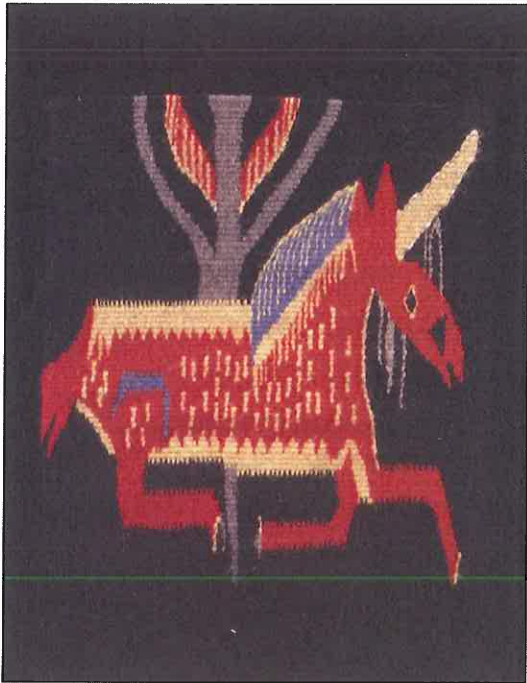
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3 Tapettes Dancing Around the Fire
Drawing, Pamela J. Davis



©

Maneuvering the Labyrinth
Tapestry, 12" x 17"
Pamela J Davis



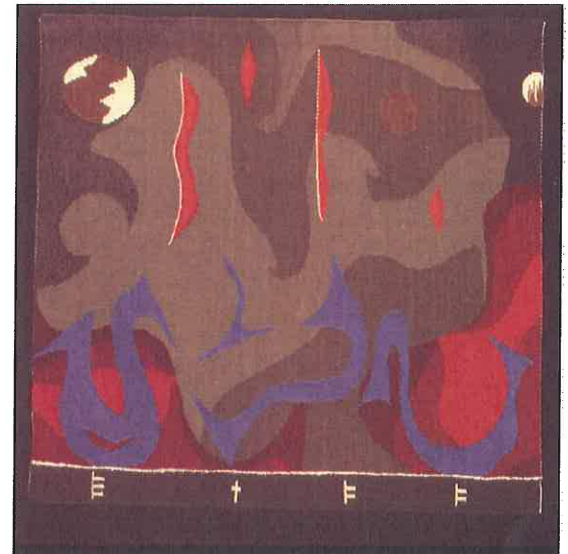
© *Flemish Red Unicorn*
Tapestry, 8" x 8"
Pamela J Davis
Private collection, L. Nelson



© *Life Cycle*
Tapestry, 15" x 24"
Pamela J Davis
Private collection, C. Winterkamp



© *Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Summer*
33" x 29"
Tapestry by Pamela J Davis



© *Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Fall*
29" x 32"
Tapestry by Pamela J Davis



© *Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Winter*
34" x 26"
Tapestry by Pamela J Davis



© *Tapettes and 4 Seasons: Spring*
52" x 14"
Tapestry by Pamela J Davis



© *Stilla Aqua*
Tapestry by Pamela J Davis
2 feet by 6 feet
Public display, Ramsey –
Washington Metro Watershed
District, St. Paul, Minnesota



© *Connect the Dots #1: Over the Rainbow*
49" x 34"
Tapestry, Pamela Davis
Private collection, C. Winterkamp



© *Connect the Dots #2: Separating*
28" x 18"
Tapestry, Pamela Davis



© *Connect the Dots #3: Emerging*
18" x 24"
Tapestry, Pamela J Davis



© *Connect the Dots #4: Celts, Runes,
Tree Rings, and Chocolate*
33" x 24"
Tapestry, Pamela J Davis

forms the 3rd number and the series continues to repeat itself. For example, $0 + 1 = 1$, $1'' + 1'' = 2''$, $1'' + 2'' = 3''$, $2'' + 3'' = 5''$, and upward.

*The tapestry depicts a water cycle. The dominant shape of the tapestry is a large raindrop composed of 4 segments as it descends from the clouds to the soil. The direction and impact of a rain drop often depends of the type of interception it may or may not encounter during its descent. A leaf of Green Bulrush (*Scirpus atrovirens*) is the first vegetative cover the large raindrop in Stilla Aqua encounters. The Green Bulrush leaf forces the raindrop to the viewer's right. As a rain drop hits vegetative cover it slows its rate of descent. As the raindrop continues, it encounters an Eastern Cottonwood leaf (*Populus deltoids*). The Cottonwood interrupts the rain drop's descent by forcing the raindrop to flow to the viewer's left.*

As the raindrop hurtles towards the soil, it appears larger and larger, until upon impact the raindrop expands. The impact of the raindrop on the lake at the bottom of the tapestry forces 2 waves to form and stirs up the layers (zones) in the lake.

Variables in the ecosystem separate lake water into zones. At the bottom of the tapestry, on the viewer's right side, the layers of the lake are clearly separated into shades of reddish-grey. On the viewer's left side the motion of the wave has disturbed the layers, causing the layers to mix and become all 1 color of reddish-grey. The Bluegill fish found in the lake is swimming out of the tapestry away from the disturbance caused by the wave. The aquatic plants underwater are also impacted by the waves and pushed to one direction. Please note the bottom right hand side of the tapestry is the face of my dog, Whitney. I describe it as an otter to outsiders, but secretly it is my dog.

The yellow right-hand border of the tapestry suggests the sunshine before the storm started. The red left-hand border of the tapestry suggests the jagged shapes of lightening. The grey cloud at the top of the tapestry is lighter in value at the top of the cloud. The concentration of moisture keeps building until the rain starts to fall. The yellow shape above the cloud at the very top left suggests the sun that shines above the cloud layer.

Tapestry Series *Connect the Dots*

Connect the Dots tapestries represent a series of 4 pieces that explore the development of symbols in my own life. Through the *Connect the Dots* series, I have divided my lifetime into what appears to be meaningful phases in my emotional development. I have tried to refrain from starting with current issues and linking the past to determine from what event / period these current issues initially surfaced. Instead, I have attempted to take myself back in time and contemplate what was significant in my life during that period, regardless of whether those events still hold meaning in my life today. It has been a fascinating process.

Connect the Dots #1: Over the Rainbow

As a young girl living in the northern Midwest (state of Ohio on Lake Erie, United States), the yearly showing of the *Wizard of Oz* movie on our black and white TV was a monumental event. Imagine my thrill when color TV was developed and the Land of Oz turned into the colors of the rainbow. The fantasy of traveling over the rainbow triggered my insatiable need to daydream. Inspired by this dream state was a fervent wish to own a "Toto" dog when I grew up. During my early childhood I couldn't have a dog; I had turtles. My two turtles lived in a little plastic bowl complete with a ramp that led to a plastic palm tree. During a science project about turtles in the third grade, I entered them in a turtle racing contest. The turtle has become my spirit animal or talisman.

During this time of my life, I was an avid reader. Occasionally I found the same favorite books in my bicycle basket because I had read everything in our local library. Books and TV shows about animals were my favorite. The TV star Flipper the dolphin captivated the swimmer in me. During our snowy winters I read in

front of the fireplace, lost in the adventures of the tree-house of the *Swiss Family Robinson*, author Johann Wyss, and getting pulled in the dogsled by my buddy Buck, the husky dog featured in the book *Call of the Wild* by Jack Frost. Several years ago I described this setting in a poem titled *Fireplace Theater*

Fantasy merged into reality during the Christmas season. What a glorious event in our home! We purchased a fragrant pine tree, carved the trunk to fit the tree stand, dusted the cobwebs off the ornaments, and decorated our tree. Days before Christmas, I spent hours playing with my plastic horses, cowboys and Lincoln Logs, building forts in the branches of the tree and the growing pile of presents.

Other activities impacted my life. A very significant impact was my love of water. We lived a few short blocks from Lake Erie and belonged to a small county Country Club where I spent my summers in the swimming pool, competitively and recreationally. All our family vacations were either enjoyed on the warm beaches of Florida or in the cooler waters of the New England coastline. We skied in the winter. As a tom-boy, I played football with my brothers and friends and shouted the loudest during the Cleveland Browns professional football games. Jim Brown, a Hall of Fame running back with the Cleveland Browns in the 1960s, and Elvis Presley, rock and roll star of the same era, were my heroes. Living in a moderate-sized town and within a commutable drive to a major city, we enjoyed the benefits of both cultures. All of these activities are symbolized at the top of the *Over the Rainbow* tapestry with small shapes.

Family trauma forced a huge wave to crest over the rainbow. I was forced early out of my idyllic childhood. Water drops turned into irreconcilable tears. I grew into Dorothy's (*from the Wizard of Oz*) ruby shoe only to feel it sinking me into the next stage of my life.

Connect the Dots #2: Separating

Separating was designed from teen / young adult memories. At this stage, my life was turbulent and emotionally unstable. But at the same time, perhaps because of the emotional pain, I began a search to find myself through education, spiritual growth, physical health, and a career. The top border uses Celtic symbols for water. The bottom border of peaks and valleys represents fire. The left hand side represents the silhouette of a cliff. The right hand image of green with yellow and red outlines is the partial silhouette of the Tapette which curves outward right out of the tapestry then back in at the top right. As Tapette materializes into a visual form and comes to earth, it separates into other forces, until it finds its way, climbs the cliff on the left hand side of the tapestry and returns as an invisible life force. The background images are Celtic crosses, step and key patterns.

Connect the Dots #3: Emerging

Emerging, the third tapestry in the *Connect the Dot* series is from the third phase of my life that I categorized as "professional business career". In this phase, I was an obsessive workaholic as I tried to find happiness in the business world, moving 22 times in 20 years around the United States. My personal and business relationships were intense, but short term. Towards the end of this phase, I discovered that the relentless pursuit of business success did not provide balance or harmony in my life. In the tapestry *Emerging*, my Tapette finally burst from under the water, broke through the cobwebs, and raised its head clear of past emotional baggage. Orange and red Celtic key patterns are shown on the left hand side starting to emerge out of a plateau, next to a cliff falling off into the water below. The bottom right hand corner shows my husband, dog, and me. My husband is fishing. The characters are underground, facing the sun in the right bottom corner. The top right side of the tapestry is the tree of life.

Connect the Dots #4: Celts, Runes, Tree Rings and Chocolate

The *Celts, Runes, Tree Rings and Chocolate* tapestry is the current stage of my artist life as a "professional tapestry artist". I continually explore historical symbols as I develop my visual language. The border is a Celtic interlock pattern. On the tree branches are words in rune symbols for "chocolate" and "welcome" that I

created. Tree rings, cut from inside the trees, show symbols developed from my dog and turtle spirit. In this tapestry, the journey began in the upper left side. The Tapette glided down the water fall, swimming deep to the bottom of the pool on the bottom left hand side, where it finds an entrance to a cave deep inside the earth (middle bottom of tapestry). A light ray, in the form of a yellow stripe zigzagging down the middle of the tapestry, lights the cavern and beyond. The cavern has steps that lead into a magical forest with huge trees, similar to Llothorien, the Elven city in the giant mallorn trees in the *Lord of the Rings* movies.

[I will not transgress with any further details about the impact of the Lord of the Ring books by J.R.R. Tolkien, or even more so by the movies, directed by Peter Jackson, except to state that this is the first time when I can categorically state I became obsessed. I was overwhelmed with the life time study of J.R.R. Tolkien to present this incredibly detailed account of what I refer to as a historical-fiction-of-a-fantasy-world that was written based on an imaginary history of Britain from the study of Celtic and other cultures. Some say J.R.R. Tolkien was developing an imaginary history of Britain that they could claim as their own, instead of the constant influence of foreign occupation. J.R.R. Tolkien was a scholar of linguistics at Oxford University in England. Within his Lord of the Rings books and others, he developed several different languages and a rich genealogy of characters. But it wasn't just the wealth of knowledge, research, and creativity that went into the books. It was the movies and the amazing attention to detail that the director Peter Jackson and his crew mastered in the weapons, jewelry, clothing, and textiles. The woven capes worn by the hobbits were discussed in several articles such as the magazine Handwoven issue 117, November / December 2003. Due to the talented artists Alan Lee, John Howe, Paul Lasaine and others, the sets for movies were indeed masterpieces. For example, Rivendell was the home of the elves and a refuge for kings. Rivendell was built in a gorge at the foot of the Misty Mountains. The buildings were a combination of Prague architecture, Art Nouveau, mingling with Celtic designs and other influences. ..And so it begins, once again I become addicted to the Tolkien magic...]

The Tapette found in Dots 2 and 3 has now evolved into creative energy and visual forms.



I close with this cartoon drawn by my brother in reference to my fear of heights. One of our favorite camping trails in Canada requires walking a 50 yard rope bridge over a roaring river gorge. As you might imagine it is not my favorite site, but to get to the beauty on the other side, I have to get over it.



"Do you think she will ever get across?"
Cartoon by Stuart L Davis, brother of
Pamela J Davis

This article is dedicated to my mother who is blind from glaucoma. Thanks Mom for handing me the red ball.



Save the Date - September 25-27, 2009

The 4th Conference on Norwegian Woven Textiles will be September 25-27, 2009, in Decorah, Iowa. Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum and Luther College will again host the conference, which will include Norwegian keynote speakers, North American speakers, special exhibitions, study group displays, pre- and post-conference classes, and more!

Be part of the program:

1. Give a presentation. The "Call for Papers," inserted into this newsletter, gives details about how to submit an abstract for a presentation. The presentation can be a more formal research paper, a panel of people discussing a particular topic, an informal sharing of fiber trials and triumphs, or an open discussion group as we've had at previous conferences with the topics of old looms and Scandinavian spinning wheels. Not sure what an abstract should look like? Contact Laurann Gilbertson at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or lgilbertson@vesterheim.org) for a sample. Deadline: January 15, 2009.
2. Teach a class. The "Call for Classes," inserted into this newsletter, includes information about Vesterheim's facilities and our class program. Complete the *Class Proposal Form* and don't forget the photographs – prospective students will want to see examples of the techniques or projects. If you haven't taught at Vesterheim before, we'd like to get to know you through an *Application to Teach*. Contact Diane Weston at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or dweston@vesterheim.org) for a copy of the *Application* and send it with the *Class Proposal Form*. **Deadline: June 15, 2008.**
3. Weave. Everyone is invited to create traditional or contemporary handwoven artworks for *Woven Women: Representations of the Female in Norwegian Weaving*. This exhibition is a celebration of weaving and of women, and we're looking forward to a variety of Norwegian techniques. Class projects and collaborative works are welcome. Submit photographs of up to four weavings according to the directions in the "Call for Entries," inserted into this newsletter. Deadline: June 15, 2009.
4. Weave some more. If you're a member of the Rya Study Group and/or the Bandweaving Study Group please plan to share some of your projects during the conference. Rya projects will be on display in Vesterheim's Westby-Torgerson Education Center and the bands will be on display in the Center for the Arts at Luther College. Warp up! And watch for more details.

Important Information about Fiber Arts Classes

The "Workshop Proposal Form" should be completed for all fiber arts classes offered during 2009. If you are interested in teaching at conference time, please note that proposed classes should be one- to four-days in length. The classes will be scheduled between September 21-24, 2009 and September 28 – October 2, 2009. Classes at other times of the year can be one- to five-days in length.

June 15, 2008 is the deadline for proposing a class during 2009.

Norwegian Teacher at Vesterheim

Ingebjørg Monsen, from Morvik near Bergen, will teach two classes at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, in July. Ingebjørg is an experienced teacher with excellent English-language skills. The classes are sure to be informative and fun!

From July 12 to 16, try **halvfloss or voided-pile weave**. Halvfloss is a pile weave on a plain weave ground. Unlike rya, which typically has all-over pile, halvfloss has pile only as the decorative pattern. Cushion covers were woven in this technique in the 18th and early 19th centuries, particularly in Gudbrandsdal. *Photo: cushion cover in the Maihaugen collection.*

From July 19 to 23, learn to sew a **"gusset jacket" or lasketrøye**. Gusset jackets were worn traditionally with the folk costume in Hordaland County on the west coast of Norway. Today, the jackets can be worn as ethnic fashion – or with a bunad. *Photo: woman's lasketrøye in the Vesterheim collection.*

For more information on the classes, go to vesterheim.org and click on "Lifelong Learning." Register now! Call Diane Weston at 563-382-9681 or email dweston@vesterheim.org



From your editors ---

July 9th, 1994 between 7 and 8 AM, forty individuals met for breakfast and to discuss the formation of a textile group. Norwegian Breakfast Club became the temporary name of this new organization. Later this organization became the Norwegian Textile Guild with 137 members (some of whom are charter members). We have served as editors for the NTG publication, *Norwegian Textile Letter* from the beginning. After 59 issues we have decided to retire. Long time member, Mary Skoy, has kindly offered to serve as the new editor. We feel confident that your publication is in good hands.

Don & Betty Johannesen

From Syvilla Tweed Bolson
512 Locust Road
Decorah, IA 52101

Raumagarn and Røros Tweed Spelsau
for weaving, knitting, felting, embroidery
Prydvevgarn, Åklegarn, Ryagarn
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50 Gram Nøster/ball in Finullgarn 2 tr.,
Strikkegarn, 3 tr., Gammel Series, 2 tr.,
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Specials in May and June.

Harrisville Designs Merino wools
for knitters, weavers, felters.
Cones: Shetland, Highland, Designer
New: Bulky Heathered wool for
felting and knitting. Sample cards.

Hand dyed wool rovings
Scoured black wool for spinning
Pillow size bottens for hand rya
Linen and cotton warps. All sizes

Equipment-Schacht products/weaving
Swedish temples, damask shuttles
Handcrafted pickups, stick shuttles
Spaltegrind, clamps for band work

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