



The Weaver's Bag

Mary Meigs Atwater Weaver's Guild of Utah • March 2009 • Vol. 54 No. 7

March Guild Meeting—An Evening with Peter Collingwood

When: Thursday, March 12, 6:30 p.m.

Where: South Valley Unitarian Church, 6876 South Highland Drive (2000 East)

Peter Collingwood, the legendary weaver and teacher of weaving, died on October 9, 2008, at the age of 86. He was one of the most important weavers of our time. He is especially well-known for his book *Techniques of Rug Weaving*, as well as his work with weaving gauzes and split-ply braiding. He made a living for decades weaving wool rugs and selling them, which is a hard thing to do these days. (For further information about Peter, see the obituary excerpts that follow.)

Just a few months before Peter Collingwood's death, English weavers decided to interview him about his art, his philosophies, his life's work, etc., while it was still possible to do so. Our Guild has a DVD copy of that interview, courtesy of Judie Eatough. The interview, which lasts about an hour, is fascinating and very moving and inspiring. We are going to show the interview at the Guild meeting. Afterwards, we will have a discussion of his philosophies about art in general, about weaving, and about being a weaver today. Everyone who watches this will take away important ideas and inspirations.

Please come at 6:30 for show and tell. If you have anything made by Peter Collingwood or his son, Jason, please bring it. Also, this would be a good time to bring handmade wool rugs or anything made using Peter's shaft-switching technique or his split-ply braiding technique.

Here are portions of an obituary of Peter Collingwood published in a British newspaper: "Peter Collingwood, who has died aged 86, was the pre-eminent British artist weaver of the past 50 years. His technical and aesthetic innovations have been appreciated around the world, most notably in his Macrogauze wall-hangings, in which his traditional skill and visual abstraction work in perfect harmony. A master craftsman and the author of several works on weaving, his work as a teacher and his generous spirit had a profound and lasting impact on generations of students.

"He was born in Marylebone, London. His mother was a classics scholar, and his father the professor of physiology at St Mary's hospital medical school. His father died when Peter was 12 and, having attended a preparatory school for the sons of doctors, he was educated at Epsom college, Surrey, and St Mary's hospital. However, he soon realised that he was not cut out to be a doctor and bowed to family advice to complete his training.

"National service in the Royal Army Medical Corps and a stint with the Red Cross in Jordan followed, but Collingwood had already found his vocation: weaving. He had even made his own loom out of two deck chairs and produced scarves for officers' wives on it. He had also discovered a lifelong passion for textile structures from around the world after receiving a gift of a Bedouin tent-hanging, which remained a treasured possession.

"On his return to Britain, he spent six months at Ditchling, East Sussex, in the workshop of Ethel Mairet, then the best-known weaver in Britain. . . . He then worked for two other prominent weavers, Barbara Sawyer and Alastair Morton (the latter went on to become the artistic director of Edinburgh Weavers). Both gave him freedom to try out ideas, and he began a lifetime of experimentation. In 1952 he set up a workshop in

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Pickup of Guild Show Pieces

Pieces in the Guild show must be picked up on Thursday, March 12, between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center, located at 1355 West 3100 South. If you are unable to pick up your piece, please make arrangements for someone else to pick it up. You must give this person a signed, written permission in order for your piece to be released to someone besides you.

Please note that March 12 is also the day of the Guild meeting. This means that you can go to the Cultural Center before 6:00, pick up your piece, and then get back on I-215 and travel east to 2000 East, where you will be just in time for the 6:30 start of our show and tell! ❖

Archway, north London. There he built his own equipment and wove rugs that he later peddled on his bicycle to shops such as Liberty and Heal's, where he sold them for £4 or £5. . . .

"In 1957 the educationist Henry Morris had established the Digswell Arts Trust in Hertfordshire, and the following year he invited Collingwood to become one of the first fellows, with a workshop and flat of his own. There he met the potter Hans Coper, with whom he was to have a joint exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1969. It was at this time that he also met his future wife, the teacher Elizabeth Brunston.

"Collingwood benefited from Morris's contacts with architects and planners and received commissions for large works from Shell and BP. For his rugs, he began to experiment with a practice he called shaft switching, for which he adapted the loom to enable him to weave quickly designs that would normally use a slow tapestry method. Another innovation was weaving the weft at an angle; this he named anglefells.

"By 1962, the year of his marriage, his reputation was such that he was invited to run a workshop in the U.S., something that became a regular occurrence. Thanks to a loan from a well-wisher, he was able to buy an old school

at Nayland, near Colchester in Essex, in 1964, which he converted into a home and studio, where he worked until his death. By this time he was developing his Macrogauze wall hangings, using a technique that permits warps to cross each other and even move sideways. Collingwood eventually extended these into 3D structures, culminating in his vast 2m by 4.5m hanging for the Performing Arts Centre, Kiryu, Japan, in 1997, woven with a new Japanese stainless steel yarn and weighing 100kg. The next year he was celebrated as a master weaver in an exhibition at Colchester that then toured the world.

"Collingwood wrote five highly influential books of which the first, *Techniques of Rug Weaving* (1968), is probably the best known. His personal favourite—and the one that gives the most insight into his inquiring mind—is *The Maker's Hand* (1988), in which he analyses, with diagrams and photographs, 100 woven structures from around the world.

"One of the few to earn a living as a full-time weaver, his innovations were not only aesthetically pleasing, but his efficient production methods were essential to his economic success. He was awarded the OBE in 1974.

"He is survived by Elizabeth, his son, Jason, also a weaver, and his daughter, Rachel." ❖

President's Message



As I look back to February and forward to March, I am reminded of how much we learn from the Guild. It really is quite remarkable to think about the amount and variety of knowledge and skill that a person can acquire just by being a member of the Guild and participating in its activities. Last month, the lecture given by Marjie Thompson about the history of handweaving in the United States was so well done. I don't know where else we could have gotten such a concise and knowledgeable summary of this subject, helping us understand the place of handweaving in American history. I am grateful to know who was weaving and when and why. For me, her lecture cleared up a number of misconceptions I had carried around, introduced me to some remarkable people, and helped me understand how proficient those weavers were, both in technical and artistic aspects of their work.

At our March meeting, we will have the opportunity to become better acquainted with one of the most remarkable

weavers of our time. Peter Collingwood started out as a doctor and became a weaver "accidentally," then he took the craft to a remarkable level, figuring out how he could actually make a living and support his family as a handweaver. In the interview that we will watch, he makes a number of very important points about weaving and about art and being an artist. One of the things that most impressed me is his philosophy that we must see weaving as an important part of today's world, not as a holdover craft from an older time. We need to think and act in ways that make weaving useful and desirable in the world as we know it. His ideas on how to do this are well worth watching.

I may have mentioned this before, but I'll say it again. Without the Guild, I probably would be a knitter and a quilter, and I would probably enjoy doing these things. But the Guild has given me the gift of making me feel that I am an artist, with artistic feelings that need to be expressed and the abilities to express them. What a great gift! I hope that all of you feel this way as well, and that you will continue to take advantage of the many wonderful opportunities offered by the Mary Atwater Weaver's Guild. —Susan ❖

Report on the February Meeting and Workshop with Marjie Thompson

This month's meeting was held at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center in West Valley. Our guest speaker was Marjie Thompson, who also led the Forgotten Weaves workshop. Her Guild presentation focused on the role that textiles played in colonial people's lives, and how valuable textiles were to them. Often textiles were very valuable and prized possessions passed down from one generation to the next. She read from diaries and accounts people kept, and interpreted their stories for us—giving us a real-life feel for how the people lived their day-to-day lives. Her workshop was also lively—made so by her enthusiasm and seemingly limitless knowledge of old “forgotten” weaves and their place in history. We were able to try our hand at many patterns for all different types of cloth: coverlets, drapes, clothing material, upholstery material, etc. in this “round-robin” styled workshop. One came away from the experience with a healthy respect for the knowledge and skill of the weavers of yesteryear and the weaving tradition we share with them today. Submitted by Sonya Campana ❖

Napkin Exchange Study Groups

The Guild is organizing study groups that will allow weavers to weave napkins and exchange them with other Guild members. Teri Jo Mauch is heading up this effort, and we really appreciate her willingness. These exchange study groups are a lot of fun. Teri Jo said:

We are organizing two different napkin exchanges. There will be 4 people assigned to each group. You will make 4 napkins, one to keep and 3 to exchange. If you want more than 4 napkins, please sign up for more than one group. (If enough people want 8 or more napkins, we can have some 8-person groups.)

One exchange will focus on surface design and could use purchased napkins, decorated with dyes, paints, embroidery, etc. Once we know how many people are interested, we can purchase plain napkins to embellish.

The other groups will create woven napkins. For the woven groups, we'll ask Kristine Bullock of Three Wishes to order 8/2 cotton. We plan to use a natural color for all the warps. Each participant will choose a weft color, which we'll wind off in amounts sufficient for one napkin. Each weaver will receive weft colors to weave 4 napkins on the same warp, one for her/himself and one each for the other 3 people in the group. For ease of laundering, these will be hemmed, and we'll use matching sewing thread to weave the hems to reduce bulk. We'll provide drafts, tie ups, etc. If you have a favorite weave structure, please speak up and we'll include it. Possibilities include Gebrochene (with either twill or plain weave tie-up), huck, Swedish lace, Bronson, and overshot. The finished napkins will be about 20" square. We understand that handmade products will vary slightly in their final dimensions.

Even if you've already signed up, please let me know how many you'd like to make and if you have a favorite weave structure. I'll bring drafts to the April meeting. Finished napkins are due at the November meeting, and only those who bring finished napkins to exchange will be allowed to take any home. If you haven't signed up, please do so now by contacting me.

I'll have a better estimate of cost soon. Please contact me by email if you have internet access: teri.mauch@hsc.utah.edu, or by phone if you don't. 801-582-7977 (home) or 801-244-1728 (cell).

It'll be fun! —Teri Jo ❖

Basket Making Study Group

The first meeting of the basket making study group will be held in April. As you know, Connie Denton is a busy woman, and we are very fortunate to have her as the teacher for our study

group. You can join by contacting Connie at cdenton222@aol.com. We will let you know the date in the April newsletter and will try to even put it on the Guild website earlier than that. It will be wonderful! Please consider coming to the first meeting even if you don't know anything about baskets. ❖

Call for Entries

Fiber Celebrated 2009 is open to all who work with fiber. Entries must be handwoven or handmade fiber forms that are one-of-a-kind and completed within the two years prior to January 1, 2009. Pieces exhibited in any previous *Fiber Celebrated* exhibition may not be submitted.

Two pieces are allowed in any category but only three pieces are allowed per entrant. The entry fee is \$15 per item for IWC members and \$18 per item for non-IWC members.

Deadline for entry is March 15, 2009. Only digital images in jpg format on a CD will be accepted.

For a prospectus and entry form, go to intermountainweaversconference.org or e-mail Elaine Bakkenson at fibercelebrated@intermountainweavers.org. ❖

Upcoming Fiber Conferences

IWC 2009

Fort Lewis College
Durango, Colorado
July 30–August 2, 2009

The registration booklets are out and registrations are being accepted as of the first of February. If you didn't receive a booklet contact Julie Schwartz. Information is posted on the IWC website.

HGA Convergence 2010

New Visions: Ancient Paths
July 18–25, 2010
Albuquerque, New Mexico

There's not much information yet on the internet, but check with the HGA website: weavespindye.org for updates. ❖

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be to the editor by the 20th of the month.

To join the Guild send \$30.00 (\$35.00
to receive the newsletter by mail) to
Sonya Campana, 8407 Dynasty Way,
Cottonwood Heights, UT 84121

To join the Guild e-mail list:
MMAWG-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Guild web page: www.mmawg.org

Guild meetings are held the 2nd
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2008–2009 CALENDAR

March 12

An Evening with Peter Collingwood
South Valley Unitarian Church

April 9

“Weaving Rag Rugs,” by ReNee Page
South Valley Unitarian Church

May 13

“Collapse Weaves,” by Teri Jo Mauch
South Valley Unitarian Church

June 6

Tartan Weaving and a Waulking
by Ann Carroll Gilmore
Pioneer Craft House