

## FEBRUARY PROGRAM

by Karen Searle

Those intrepid souls who braved the weather on Feb. 1 heard Lotus Stack, Textile Coordinator of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts speak about the subject of textile preservation as it concerns weavers of today. She listed the factors to consider in order to ensure that the products of our looms will be of lasting quality (so that there will be twentieth-century weaving to study in the museums of the future). Contemporary weavers need to exercise care in both the construction and the display of their textiles. She also showed a few slides of textile display methods in use at MIA.

As a textile conservator, Lotus is concerned with eliminating as many destructive factors from a textile's environment as possible. These factors include

1. Stress on the fibers: during manufacture, display and storage; from the loom, from the weight of the piece as it hangs or rests; from friction during weaving, from friction caused by air currents and vibrations during use and display.
2. Changes in temperature and humidity which make fibers expand and contract.
3. Exposure to light and heat which disturb fibers chemically.
4. Chemical contamination: from the air; from chemicals used in fiber manufacture; from chemicals added to fabrics such as sizing and fireproofing.

Contemporary weavers need to exercise care in both the construction and display of their textiles. It is important to consider the above factors in choosing materials for a piece, and in choosing the means to display, ship and store it.

A warp should be able to withstand not only the tension and friction of weaving, but also the stress of the ultimate use and display of the piece. Jute fibers currently in use have been found to disintegrate within 50 years, possibly due to the chemical sizing used on it. Lotus expressed a fear that the same thing may happen to linen as the manufacturing process becomes speeded up with the use of caustic chemicals.

Materials should be compatible and react similarly to changes in temperature and humidity. Linen, for example, becomes heavier in high humidity

A piece should never be on constant display. The fibers need to rest periodically from the destructive factors they are exposed to while on display. The main stress during display should be on the warp whenever possible.

Some mounting devices used by the MIA for heavy rugs and tapestries are:

- Vel-cro: The stiff side machine sewn to stiff seat belt webbing and then nailed to a board or to the wall; the soft side handsewn to the textile very carefully between warp and weft threads.
- tapestries which must hand weft-way.
- A muslin "sleeve" or tube sewn to the back of the textile into which a hanging rod can be slipped.

Fragile textiles are sewn into a fabric covered and backed stretcher frame. The frame is then covered with plexiglass on the front and peg board on the back for air circulation and elimination of vibrations.

Care should also be used in the packing and shipping of textiles. A piece can change in size and shape if sent from a damp to a dry climate.

A small humidifier made from a piece of rubber tubing punched with holes and with a damp sponge inserted will maintain the humidity at a constant level during shipping. Lotus suggested that the ideal packing situation would be the textile rolled on a tube and the tube suspended in a box so there is no stress on any part of the textile during shipping. If pieces are being sent for display, it is wise to have a permanent mount in the piece and to provide detailed instructions on hanging.

For storage of textiles, pieces should be rolled rather than folded, and light kept to a minimum whenever possible.



## THE YARN WORKSHOP


by Lindy Westgard

The Yarn Workshop at the Guild was a day of something for everyone. Joy Rosner's lecture on the characteristics of various yarns was concise and informative, and filled with a touch of pathos as she described the little silk worm dining on mulberry leaves and then giving his life as he spun a mile of silk into a cocoon from which he could not be allowed to emerge. Why? Because he would have to cut his precious fibre.

Joy then discussed an industrial formula for figuring sett when planning a weaving project. Experienced as well as novice weavers listened intently to her informative instructions and discussion.

Charlotte Haglund described the yarn committee's collection of catalogs and opened a general show-and-tell period. Many items were shown and weavers shared their knowledge on projects for both frame loom and floor loom.

Those of us who attended the workshop agreed that this should be a yearly workshop, for it was a subject every fiber artist was intrinsically involved with on a day-to-day basis and it was a good forum for sharing weaving techniques and experiences. Our thanks to Joy and Charlotte for their fine presentation.



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