



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. X, No. 4 March 20, 2003

www.ne-rugsociety.org

April Meeting: Bertram Frauenknecht on ‘Collecting Through the Eyes of a Dealer’

Our next meeting is co-sponsored by Skinner, on whose Boston premises it will take place. Our speaker will be Bertram Frauenknecht, a well known rug dealer and scholar based in Munich, Germany. He specializes in tribal weavings with particular fondness for the Shahsavan. See his website at www.frauenknecht.com for information on his publications, exhibitions, and inventory.

In his talk, Bertram will address the questions of what characterizes a world-class rug and what are the criteria that collectors use to choose their acquisitions. Based on his own experiences as a collector and dealer, he will show how collections develop and change as the collector becomes educated, often under the guidance of dealers. His slogan is: “Only through knowledge can you open your eyes and see!”

Bertram’s academic fields of study were chemistry and biology, which he taught for three years. However, shortly after graduating he made the acquaintance of some rug collectors. He also started traveling in the Middle East (Iran, Afghanistan in the 70s and Turkey in the 80s), attracted by the people

Next Meeting Details

Date: Friday, April 4

Time: 6 PM. **PLEASE NOTE EARLY START!**

Place: Skinner, Heritage on the Park,
63 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Pkng: Street and neighboring lots and garages

and their cultures. One thing led to another, and before long he found his avocation in the field of oriental rugs. After accumulating a small (about 20 pieces) collection of his own, he decided that he could best finance this hobby by establishing his own rug gallery in Nürnberg, Germany. By 1980 he decided that collecting and selling were incompatible: clients always assumed that he was withholding the best pieces from them, so he gave up collecting. He moved to Munich in 1999.

Attendees arriving before the meeting (**note early start!**) will be able to view Skinner’s offerings for the next day’s rug auction.

May Meeting: Picnic, Show & Tell, and Moth Market

On Saturday, May 10, our annual Show & Tell meeting will get underway at noon, starting with a picnic in a delightful outdoor setting. It will again take place in a finished old barn situated on an expanse of rural acreage adjacent to the Concord River in Concord, MA. It’ll be a great setting, rain or shine.

Here’s how it will work:

Bring your own picnic. Pack up your own munchies, and we’ll provide the beverages, including soft drinks, coffee, tea, beer, and wine. If you can, bring a blanket or a lawnchair or two to make things comfortable. We’ll provide tables and chairs.

Participate in our moth market. We are inviting our members, dealers or not, to bring a few things for sale, and we’ll hold our own small informal flea market (moth market in ruggie terms). In case of inclement weather, we’ll move things indoors.

Share up to two of your treasures. Please limit yourself to two pieces for the Show & Tell session. That way we’ll keep the event from becoming an overly-long marathon. So load up your most spectacular recent (or not so recent) finds and you’ll have plenty of time to share them with the group.

See directions on page 10.

We need your help with the second NERS on-line exhibition! See page 11



February Meeting: Bethany Mendenhall and Charles Lave: “Out of the Cedar Chest”

By Yon Bard

It's mid-afternoon on Friday, February seventh. Eight inches have already settled on the ground and it's still snowing heavily. No way can there be an NERS meeting tonight! I call Mark to check. “We'll hold the meeting come hell or high water” he says. I can see his point: not only have Bethany and Richard traveled all the way from California; they have sent a cedar-chest full of rugs ahead of them for showing and telling; they must catch a plane tomorrow; how can we possibly not hold the meeting?

By 7 PM things are looking a mite better. It has stopped snowing and the main roads have been made passable. The Armenian Library is only a mile from our house—we, at least, will make it. Will anyone else?

The hubbub of voices grows louder as we climb the stairs to the third floor. Surprise! More than thirty people have shown up, some even from remote suburbs. The food and drinks have been set out. Bethany and Charles are pulling their treasures out of the chest—all is going to be well.

Bethany and Charles constitute a self-proclaimed rarity: a married couple with separate rug collections. Fortunately, both of them collect mainly Anatolian rugs, so they can travel to Turkey together—something they do frequently. Fortunately, too, their specific interests differ, which helps maintain domestic peace. There is some overlap, though, which means that when they visit a dealer and one of them spots a piece he or she likes, but suspects the other one would too, they yell “dibs!” to establish precedence.

At our meeting, Charles went first, showing his pieces and explaining his collecting philosophy. The latter is dominated by an attraction to asymmetry and quirkiness. As proofs for the proposition that asymmetry is esthetically superior, Charles cites the following arguments:

- The flyers for various rug exhibitions show asymmetric pieces (or at least asymmetric portions of pieces) on their covers.

- Photographers are always advised to place the main subject off-center.

- Measurements have shown that brain-waves persists longer when a person is shown an asymmetric composition than a symmetric one.

- Charles's love for symmetric pieces simply does not last.

Often, Charles prefers fragments to complete rugs. “Whole rug would be boring; fragment has everything.” Fragments' advantages are numerous: they cost less, take up less room, and, perhaps best of all, a fragment is likely to be asymmetrically patterned, even when the complete rug sports a symmetric design. While somewhat sympathetic to this view, I do worry that if too many people accept it, dealers will cut up all their rugs to be sold as fragments (a strategy rumored to be already practiced by some dealers).

It is impossible for me to describe each of Charles's (and this goes for Bethany's too) pieces individually. The accompanying illustrations show some of their favorites: “Primitivity and naiveté are good,” says Charles. The pieces mostly date from the 19th century and hail from Central Anatolia, i.e., the Konya and Cappadocia regions, but some are from the west (Bergama and environs). Many were Kurdish, and there was one Baluch—a piece sprinkled haphazardly with quirky botchs. Most were pile, but there were some kilims. A yastik (pillow-cover) with a particularly asymmetric design formed a bridge to Bethany's pieces with its hint of the ‘glow-worm’ design.

Charles exercises great care in the mounting of fragments and other heavily damaged pieces. The background material must match the piece's dominant color, and a narrow border should bring out one of the auxiliary colors.

Then it was Bethany's turn. Her tastes vacillate between instinct and rationality, between “heart pieces” and “head pieces.” Pieces appeal because

Continued on page 3



February Meeting: "Out of the Cedar Chest"

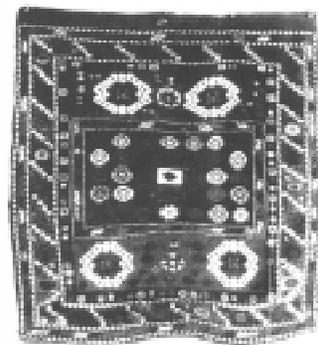
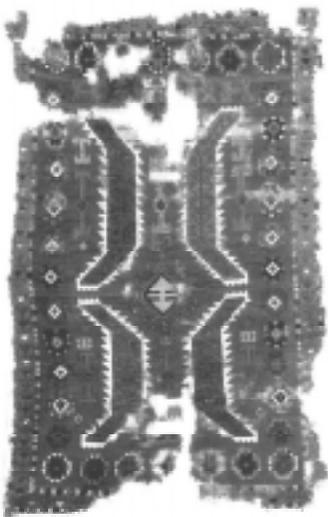
Continued from page 2

of color, character, and composition (there are those "C" words again!). But other reasons may also trigger an acquisition: The *Head* is interested in ethnography and in relationships to other pieces in the collection; the *Heart* experiences greed ("somebody else wanted it"—may even have been Charles); pity—need to give a piece a good home; "last rug in the world" syndrome (I'll never find another one like it!); "best of the lot" (can I leave a dealer who has turned over a dozen huge piles of rugs without buying something?); "eye candy"—it's simply too pretty to leave unbought; things that just appeal—"funky things with character;" and, above all, pieces with 'color, color, color!'

What does one do with so many treasures? Twenty or so can be hung on the walls, the rest are kept in the closet (cedar chest?) and the display is periodically rotated.

This was the kind of show that makes me wonder why I haven't been collecting those things all along. Now it's too late: Bethany and Charles have them all. Those of us who braved the weather have been more than amply rewarded; those who missed the show will, most likely, get another chance in April 2004 at the ACOR conference in Seattle.

We thank our speakers for their extraordinary effort in putting this show together, and ALMA for hosting it!

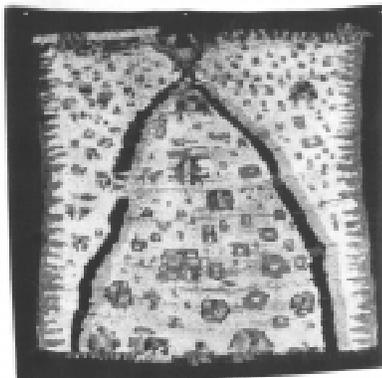


Top, left to right (Bethany):

Central Anatolian rug (mounted fragment), early 19c, 36" x 57"

Bergama area rug, late 19c, 36" x 38"

East Anatolian Kurdish yastik, 19c, 22" x 33"



Bottom, left to right (Charles):

Manastir rug (mounted fragment), 19c, 35" x 35"

Malatya area kilim, 19c, 43" x 68"





Two Dozen Recent Rug Books Worth Knowing About By Mark Hopkins

There have been many new books on oriental rugs and related textiles published in the last six years. Here are some that you might want to think about owning if you don't already.

Oriental Carpets—a Complete Guide, by Murray Eiland Jr. and Murray Eiland III, Bulfinch Press, New York, 1998, 368 pp, hardbound, \$75. If you don't have this book, get it. It's the essential resource for the serious or beginning rug addict because it presents an easily-digestible, well-illustrated survey of the field, summarizing the accepted knowledge and factoring in the most recent developments in rug scholarship and attribution as well. If you have the old Eiland book (*Oriental Rugs—A New Comprehensive Guide*, 1981), chuck it out and get this one instead; it's a totally revised edition that's far superior on all counts.

Koekboya—Natural Dyes and Textiles, by Harald Böhmer, Ganderkesee, Germany, 2002, 300 pp, hardbound, \$129. Should you have the slightest interest in understanding the dyes that make oriental rugs such an exceptional art form, you need to own this important new book. Harald is the rug world's foremost authority on the subject, and his worldwide research will give you a broad understanding of how natural dyes are made and used, and how they factor into the equation of what makes great rugs and textiles great. The title, as you might guess, is the Turkish word for natural dyes.

Antique Rugs of Kurdistan—A Historical Legacy of Woven Art, by James D. Burns, self-published, Seattle WA, 2002, 320 pp, hardbound, \$260. Fresh off the presses, this is an extremely important book researched and written by one of America's most important rug collectors. Lavishly illustrated with superb rugs, its text conveys many new insights into Kurdish weavings, discussing the people who created them and exploring the colors, designs, and construction methods they used. It is well worth its high price and is sure to be the definitive authority on Kurdish rugs for many years to come.

The Kyrgyz Carpet I, by K. I. Antipina, 120

pp, and **The Kyrgyz Carpet II**, by L. G. Beresneva, 84 pp, both published by G. O'Bannon, Tucson, AZ, 2000. \$210 for both. George O'Bannon's last work before he died, these two soft-bound books, while expensive, are a must for any serious collector interested in the weavings of this important but little-documented Central Asian tribal group. The illustrations are excellent and the texts, authored by two respected Russian experts, are valuable.

2000 und 1e Nacht—Teppiche und Textilien aus Privatsammlungen, G.M. Dienes and H. Reinisch, ed., Graz, Austria, 2001, hardbound, 343 pp, \$86. This is a nicely done museum exhibition catalog of rugs and tribal weavings from private German and Austrian collections. Although the text is entirely in German, the 270 illustrations are excellent and many of the pieces are interesting examples.

The Fabric of Moroccan Life, by N. I. Paydar & I. Grammet, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN, 2002, 304 pp, hardbound, \$45. This is the catalog of an important exhibition of Moroccan rugs and textiles held in conjunction with last year's ACOR 6 conference. It is a wide-ranging, competently documented survey of textiles from this North African country, with much worthy text, beautifully presented in an exquisitely designed book. With its remarkably low price, this is a real bargain and a must for anyone interested in weavings from this area.

The Classical Tradition in Anatolian Carpets, by Walter B. Denny, The Textile Museum, Washington, DC, 2002, 128 pp, soft-bound, \$25. This catalogs the TM's recent excellent exhibition of 15th-19th C. Anatolian rugs. The illustrations are good, many of the rugs are world-class, and the text includes an essay by Walter on the history, designs, and types of classical carpets from this area. A bargain at the price.

One Woman, One Weft/Rugs from the Villages of Hamadan, by Tad Runge, self-published,

Continued on page 5



Two Dozen Recent Rug Books Worth Knowing About

Continued from page 4

Yarmouth, ME, 2002, 152 pp, hardbound, \$93. This is a well-researched tribute to the often-overlooked weavers of the Hamadan region in northwest Iran, well-illustrated and with a most readable text, written and produced by a longtime NERS member.

Rustic and Tribal Weaves from Varamin, by Parviz Tanavoli, Yassavoli Publications, Tehran, Iran, 2001, 144 pp, in English and Farsi, hardbound, \$39. A survey of rugs, sofreh and bags from this Iranian weaving area south of Tehran, with an introduction surveying the ethnic groups and types of textiles characteristic of the area.

Three Dusty Dozen, by Frank Diehr, self-published, Wuppertal, Germany, 2001, 64 pp, \$30. A passionate German Baluch collector, Frank has assembled his second book on Baluch weavings, this one documenting 36 fine pile rugs and khorjin faces from various collections. Excellent illustrations, though a bit light on text, in a soft-bound, folder-encased volume.

Die Orientalischen Knüpfteppiche im MAK, by Angela Völker, Bohlau, Vienna, 2001, 436 pages, hardbound, \$98. This is primarily a pictorial record of the oriental carpets in the MAK, or Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, (Austrian Museum of Applied Art), one of Vienna's important museums. 150 rugs are nicely illustrated, with technical analyses. Text is entirely in German. This is a fine record of the kind of oriental rugs that were fashionable to collect in the first half of the twentieth century, but despite the presence of some fine classical pieces, one is left with the impression of having seen most of them before.

Caucasian Prayer Rugs, by Ralph Kaffel, Laurence King Publishing, London, 1998, 192 pp, hardbound, \$75. Presenting a scholarly review of this important group of antique weavings, this well-designed book illustrates 97 outstanding prayer rugs, preceded by interesting discussions of rug weaving and trading activities in the Caucasus. Ralph draws on his database of over 2000 prayer rugs to offer some interesting new insights into the genre.

Oriental Rug Repair, by Peter Stone, Greenleaf Co., Chicago, 2000, 184 pp, hardbound, \$40. If you have any interest in cleaning, caring for, or repairing your oriental rug treasures, this is the best book on the subject. Even if you don't plan to do it yourself, Peter's informative text will help you become a more canny buyer of repair and restoration services. This second edition contains more information than the 1981 original version.

The Oriental Rug Lexicon, by Peter Stone, Univ. of Washington Press, Seattle, 1997, 268 pp, softbound, \$30. If you've ever wondered what it means, or where it's at, or why you should care, this is the book to have. Peter has assembled a remarkable alphabetically-listed glossary of oriental rug terms, creating an interestingly-written reference source that no serious ruggie should be without.

Woven Structures—A Guide to Oriental Rug and Textile Analysis, by Marla Mallett, 188 pp, self-published, Atlanta, GA, 2000, soft-bound, \$39. This important book has become the bible for ruggies concerned with the technical aspects of rugs and textiles. Very clearly written and lavishly illustrated with hundreds of photos and drawings, it is an invaluable guide to understanding the structure of knotted pile, flatweaves, end finishes, and selvages. This latest version contains additional material not in the first (1998) edition.

Sovereign Carpets/Unknown Masterpieces from European Collections, by E. Concaro and Alberto Levi, Torino, Italy, 1999, 234 pp, hardbound, \$50. This attractive volume catalogs the exhibitions of the Ninth International Conference on Oriental Carpets (ICOC) held in Milan, Italy. It records some superb pieces, mostly from European collections, and is a well-illustrated and soundly-documented record most worthy of ownership by the serious ruggie.

Flowers Underfoot, by Daniel Walker, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, 1997, 220 pp, hardbound, \$75, soft-bound \$45. Although this was the catalog of a major exhibition of Mughal carpets at the New York Metropolitan Museum, its scope is far wider: it

Continued on page 6



Two Dozen Recent Rug Books Worth Knowing About

Continued from page 5

is a beautifully illustrated scholarly compilation of all that is known today about these sumptuous historic weavings from India's past.

IKAT, by Kate Fitz Gibbon and Andrew Hale, Laurence King Publishing, London. There are two versions of this book, both featuring Central Asian silk ikats from Bukhara and surrounding regions. The examples come from the renowned Guido Goldman collection, and the text covers the history, materials, designs, production approach, usage, and other elements of ikat creation. The 1997 original is an elegant boxed volume with 368 pages priced at \$225. The 1999 208-page hardbound "economy" edition, smaller in size and with 124 illustrations compared with the large version's 407, can be yours for a mere \$60.

Gols and Guls II, by David M. Reuben, self-published, London, 2001, 76 pp, \$85. This is David Reuben's second Turkmen exhibition catalog (the first in 1998), with short introductory essays on Yomud attribution and Tekke gol design. There are 52 items, including particularly interesting early Tekke, Saryk, and Yomud main carpets. Each plate is accompanied by a few observations and brief technical analysis, plus notes in the back on published and unpublished similar pieces. (*Thanks to Jim Adelson for this addition to the list*)

The Caucasian Peoples, by V. Dmitriev, L. Slastnikova, et al., deHingh, Antwerp, Belgium, 2000, 327 pp, \$51. A softbound exhibition catalog not as much about rugs as the people who wove them. It documents the marvelous Caucasian object collections of St Petersburg's Ethnographic Museum that were exhibited in Antwerp two years ago. While it presents some rugs and textiles, its interest lies mainly in its well-illustrated collections, its many wonderful old photographs, and its extensive text on the lives, customs, and histories of the Caucasus's many diverse ethnic groups.

The Nomadic Peoples of Iran, Richard Tapper and Jon Thompson, eds., London, 2002, 324 pp,

\$85. Recently published in Britain and just now coming into the US market, this hardbound book is described in *HALI* 126's review as "the marriage of a stunning visual record of the Iranian nomads and an extended coverage of their history and anthropology." Illustrating a text written by a team of field experts are 215 color photographs documenting nomadic life. I haven't yet seen the book, but those who have recommend it highly.

Oriental Carpets, by Volkmar Gantzhorn, Benedikt Taschen, Köln, 1998, 532 pp, \$40. With its 707 illustrations, this hardbound book is a superb bargain if you want to own top-notch pictures of some of the world's great rugs. But beware the text. It was originally the author's doctoral thesis in which he attempted to fly in the face of accepted rug scholarship and prove that all rug weaving was originated by Armenian Christians. Virtually no-one takes his ideas seriously, but the illustrations make it worth the price.

Oriental Rugs of the Silk Route, Culture, Process and Selection, by John Gregorian, Rizzoli, New York, 2000, 176 pages, hardbound, \$55. An introductory book, with some interesting photographs and anecdotes recalling the Gregorian family's adventures as oriental rug dealers. It tries to do too much on too few pages and is too superficial to be of much value to the serious ruggie, but it does capture some of the charm of what it's like to be a traveling rug merchant.

Oriental Rugs Today, by Emmet Eiland, Berkeley Hills Books, Berkeley, CA, 2000, 200 pp, \$35. This soft-bound book presents a broad-brushed survey of the new rugs being produced today, suggesting that they are most likely to be the collectibles of tomorrow. Nicely illustrated and persuasively written.

Editor's note: an essay on the history of rug books appears at http://www.turkotek.com/salon_00095/salon.html, and a discussion follows at <http://www.turkotek.com/VB22/forumdisplay.php?s=&forumid=30>.



March Meeting: Tom Hannaher on “The Enigmatic Art of Ancient South American Textiles” By Jim Adelson

Illustrations for this report appear on page 10.

On March 14th, more than 50 NERSers came for the first meeting in our new venue, First Parish house in Lincoln. The draw for this large turnout was Tom Hannaher’s talk titled “The Enigmatic Art of Ancient South American Textiles.”

Tom started out with the comment “I want you to get excited about it, but don’t collect it, because that would ruin it for me!” His point was that, for all but the topmost pieces that have reached astronomical prices, the relatively small number of collectors has made this a fairly affordable area of specialization. The financial accessibility of very good pieces was part of what persuaded him—previously a rug and Shahsavan bag collector—to turn to so-called “pre-Columbian” weavings about seven years ago.

In his introductory remarks, Tom pointed out that there is a 4000-year tradition of weaving in South America, with the oldest examples carbon-dated to approximately 2000 BC. The variety of weavings is amazing, using virtually every weaving technique known in other regions, and also employing one particular technique—discontinuous warp and weft—known only in this region. The dye range is also phenomenal, with more than 200 colors having been employed. Textiles were an incredibly important and valuable part of the culture, achieving higher status and enjoying more appeal than gold. But it’s probably the mysterious symbolism that is most compelling for today’s collectors, dealers, and scholars. Tom observed “I’m convinced that the fact that they didn’t have a written language was a contributing factor in the development of their amazing iconography.”

We’re very fortunate that so many of these ancient textiles have survived. Two main factors led to the incredible textile preservation: extremely dry climate, and lack of soil acidity. According to Tom, “most of the textiles available today are grave goods”—they were buried with mummies. He described how most of them have surfaced because indigent Peruvian peasants dig them up as a source

of income.

The primary weaving areas that Tom covered are located in the area of modern-day Peru and Chile. They are divided into north, central, and south sections, and there is also a division between coastal and highland weaving. Over the long period of time, there were a number of different civilizations that flourished in the area—more on that later.

The primary material for weaving was camelid wool. The term “camelid” refers to a number of related animals: alpaca (the best for weaving), vicuna, guanaco, and llama (the worst). All of these take dyes very well, although llama is distinctly inferior to the others. Weavers also employed vegetal fibers, human hair, and feathers, sometimes in combinations within a single piece. Cotton was widely used, and South American cotton displays a number of natural shades, ranging from white through beige, mauve, and all the way to chocolate. The dyes came from many sources, too—mollusks, insects (including cochineal), minerals, and particularly a huge variety of vegetal materials.

Tom went on to cite a number of major weaving techniques, with examples and comments on each one. A partial list of the more unusual techniques or weaving formats includes painting, where the color is absorbed by the cloth rather than painted on the surface as in Western European fine arts; tie-dye, shown in a Nasca-Huari mantle from 400-600 AD; conventional pile weaves represented in Huari four-corner hats from 600-900 AD; double cloth, with two sets of warps and wefts brought forward and back so that the two sides show the same designs in reverse colors; double cloth with embellishments including embroidery or even 3D objects sewn on; several forms of tapestry weave; block-colored embroidery from the Paracas peninsula (of which the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston has one of the finest collections outside of Peru); and the discontinuous warp and weft technique unique to this region, woven on

Continued on page 8



March Meeting: “The Enigmatic Art of Ancient South American Textiles”

Continued from page 7
special scaffold looms.

Tom indicated that the history of the region has been divided into seven reference periods:

- Pre-Ceramic 2200 - 1300 BC
- Early Horizon 1300 - 400 BC; Chavin culture dominant
- Early Intermediate 400 BC - 600 AD; many cultures
- Middle Horizon 600 - 900 AD; Huari culture dominant
- Late Intermediate 900 - 1400 AD; many cultures
- Late Horizon 1400 - 1550 AD; Inca culture dominant
- Transitional 1550 AD onward; post-conquest.

He quickly showed pieces from each of the periods. The oldest piece, from the pre-Ceramic period, had a design which was no longer evident to the naked eye, but showed up under the microscope. The next three periods had the most intricate and varied design vocabulary. By the Late Intermediate period, the designs had become much more basic and less intricate. And in the Transitional period, Spanish influences became evident, with more realistic drawing.

As Tom had mentioned at the start, it is the iconography that prompts such a strong reaction to the weavings. There are many theories about the origin and evolution of the many designs employed in the weavings. Since prior to the Spanish arrival there was no written language and therefore no documentation, there is no body of literature to study for clues.

Tom separated the design vocabulary into a number of categories. The first was purely abstract design consisting of blocks of color—he illustrated this with a Nasca mantle strangely similar to 20th-century Western abstract art. The next class was also one with abstract designs, but with a possible derivation from the agricultural terracing patterns that were employed for many local villages. He moved on to another class of abstract design with water symbolism, this time perhaps reflecting irrigation sys-

tems; one illustrative example was a Sihuas mantle from 200 BC-250 AD.

Tom’s next design family also used abstract designs, but with figural patterns as a repeated unit. He started off with a pattern based on the jack bean, which was common locally. Human figures understandably also provided a base, particularly in patterns from Chimu pieces dated 1100-1400 AD. Animals were another common design theme, more or less identifiable in different cases. Another treatment was figure within figure—he showed examples of animal within animal and human being within human being.

Supernatural images formed another major design class. Tom illustrated both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic supernaturals. One particularly frequent and well-developed example was the “Staff God”—a figure used in many time periods. The Staff God was always shown with a headdress and with a staff often terminating in a human head. He showed an example from the Tiahuanaco Gateway of the Sun (a carved stone arch), as well as a number of woven examples. Some of the textile variations included a Moche-Huari example, with the Staff God changing into insect forms, and another example from a Huari mantle (approximately 800 AD) which Tom kiddingly labeled the surfing or skiing Staff God. He also displayed a variation of the Staff God called the Sun Face; this design was like the Staff God without a body, and with rays emanating from the head, often ending in other heads or in animals. This led to a discussion of trophy heads, another frequently encountered design element used over an extended period of time.

Tom pointed out that the weavers were very clever in constructing designs that could be read differently from front and back. In some cases, the designs on a single piece were rendered in different orientations. Dualism was also a recurrent design theme, with pairs of figures or of heads.

He then turned to his own area of collecting focus and affection—coca bags, known as ch’uspas.

Continued on page 9



March Meeting: “The Enigmatic Art of Ancient South American Textiles”

Continued from page 8

These bags were produced from 200 BC onward by most pre-conquest cultures except Chavin and Paracas. As the name suggests, they were used to carry coca leaves but also other items such as beans, corn, and even popcorn!

Tom showed ch'uspa examples utilizing many of the major design classes that he had previously outlined. A Nasca example was completely abstract, with stripes, meanders, and other blocks of color. Another bag made use of water/terrace symbolism. Animal-based designs were very common, again with some animals more recognizable than others. Trophy heads were popular, with a particularly interesting example being a Huari trapezoidal piece from 600-700 AD. In addition to the intriguing symbolism, the technical challenge of a trapezoidal piece, with warps closer together at the top of the trapezoid and more spread out at the base, had collectors scratching their heads about how they were woven. Tom also selected an Arica (northern Chile) example from 1100-1400 AD, with a being-within-being design. His chosen Dualism example had repeated snakes or lightning bolts. He presented several anthropomorphic examples, including a Nascoid piece from Bolivia, from 400-1000 AD. He concluded with Staff Gods, which are rarely seen in coca bags. One example was actually a “recycled” tunic fragment made into a coca bag, but the final example, one of Tom's most prized treasures, is a straightforward Staff God from Tiahuanaco from approximately 0-200 AD.

After his talk, Tom took a number of questions from the group. An audience member asked about who had woven the textiles—had it tended to be the female members of the family, as most commonly encountered in the Middle East? Tom responded that there were records of women in factory-like settings in Inca times. There are indications of master weavers training novices—some pieces reflect a more skilled execution of some figures by the master, and less skillful execution of others, presumably by trainees. Another questioner asked about the origin and

reliability of the dates. Tom answered that most dating was based on carbon-dating, which worked pretty well for the time periods covered and the degree of date precision sought. In certain cases, the dating came from archeological evidence in seriation—cases where excavation revealed civilizations mounded upon each other, indicating the order of occurrence. In a follow-up question on structure as a basis for dating, Tom remarked that structure doesn't seem to be indicative of age, with certain structures found throughout the period, and some of the most complex structures found in earlier eras.

At the end, attendees examined the plethora of wonderful pieces on display. Tom had brought many, including a number that he'd used as illustrations in his talk. Some other pre-Columbian specialists brought a number of pieces, and even collectors whose major focus is in other areas turned up with an item or two. So, all in all, pre-Columbian novices and veterans alike had a lot to savor.

For this summary, Tom supplied a short list of books and articles that interested members can turn to for more on pre-Columbian weaving:

- *HALI* issues 54, 77, 100 & 125
- *To Weave For The Sun* by Rebecca Stone Miller (catalog of the collection of Boston's Museum of Fine Arts)
- *The Textile Art of Peru* by Jose Lavalle
- *Weaving for the Gods: Textiles of the Ancient Andes*, The Bruce Museum.

Our heartfelt thanks to Tom for a great talk, and for anchoring and attracting an excellent collection of pieces for the show and tell!

Erratum: in the January 15, 2003 issue of the Newsletter, on page 5, my reprise of the Sackler tour mistakenly attributed the comments on the last three pieces in the exhibit to Mike Tschebull. Mike had led the discussion on earlier pieces, but Jeff Spurr took over for the Mughal prayer carpet, the Persian piece constructed from Kashmir textiles, and the Central Asian suzani. My apologies to Jeff, and thanks again to him for sharing his insights with us.



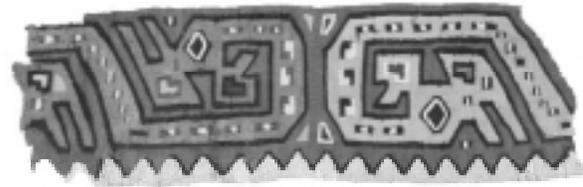
Ceremonial sling of vegetal fiber wrapped with Alpaca depicting bicephalic zoomorph. Nasca culture. c. 200AD



Chancay painted cotton plain weave textile depicting staff figure. c. 1100-1300AD



Arica coca bag with warp-faced design of zoomorphic beings, c. 1000-1300AD



Fragment of a Huari-period tapestry-woven textile depicting double-headed snake figures transforming into legged beings. Huarmey Valley. c. 800AD



Large satchel in warp-faced and tapestry-woven bands depicting zoomorphic figures. Unknown culture, late-Huari period. c. 900AD

Picnic and Show&Tell Details

Date: Saturday, May 10

Time: 12 noon to 4PM rain or shine!

Place: Barn at 418 Monument Street, Concord

Note: \$10 charge for non-members

Directions:

Coming from the East: From Rte. 95 (128) take Rte. 2 west. At the 2nd traffic light where Rte. 2 turns left, continue straight following the signs to Concord Center. Proceed until the Colonial Inn is directly in front of you. Turn right at the Inn onto Monument Street. Proceed over the Concord River bridge. After crossing the river, go past the fourth house on your right (no. 418) and turn into its driveway. Follow the signs for parking. **Do not park along the street!**

Coming from the West: From Rte. 2 make the first left turn after Rte. 62, and proceed through Concord Center. Upon reaching the dead end at the Concord green, turn left. Where the road dead ends at the Colonial Inn, turn right onto Monument Street and proceed as above.



We Need Bags!

The Second NERS On-Line Exhibition Is Underway

The first New England Rug Society on-line exhibit was a great success, and here's your chance to get in on the second one!

For our next exhibit, the theme will be *Transport and Storage Bags from Morocco to Central Asia*, with focus on the interplay between function, design, materials, and technique. We'll be looking to include items from throughout the Middle Eastern rug belt, so there'll likely be some "classic" types such as Anatolian, Shahsavan, Caucasian, South Persian, Kurdish, Baluch and Turkmen bags, but we'd also love to have esoteric examples like Moroccan, Bedouin, Greek Anatolian, or Lakai mirror bags from the diverse NERS collections. Complete bags would be great, but don't hesitate to submit a bagface or fragment, particularly if it makes clear how the bag originally looked and functioned. We aim for variety of origins, formats, sizes, structures, and materials.

Mike Tschebull has very graciously agreed to write an introductory essay. Jeff Spurr's introduction to the first exhibit was highly praised and appreciated by all who visited the exhibit—Mike will have a tough act to follow, but will surely have many interesting things to say. Thanks in advance to Mike for yet another contribution to NERS.

For those who haven't yet had a chance to look at the initial exhibit, check it at <http://www.ne-rugsociety.org/gallery.htm>. Its format worked very well, so our second exhibit will probably have a similar look, with individual plates that show the whole piece as well as detail images, accompanied by descriptive text and technical analyses. According to each owner's preference, a piece can be credited or can appear anonymously.

Join the fun, and share the beauty of what you

have! Here is what to do:

1. For any pieces that you'd care to submit, send any reasonable photographs you have and a short description to Bob Alimi. You can reach Bob at ralimi@ne-rugsociety.org.

All submissions should be in **NO LATER THAN JUNE 1**, but beat the rush and send early! There's no limit to the number of pieces that anyone can submit.

2. Bob will collect all the submitted pieces, and Mike will head up a selection panel to decide which pieces to include. Because our goal is to exhibit bags featuring a wide variety of traditional uses as well as artistic beauty, our selection criteria will consider both factors in equal measure. We are looking to have approximately 30-40 pieces in the exhibition.

3. For those pieces selected, we'll need to get high-quality photographs, which Yon Bard has again volunteered to take, or the owners can provide. We'll also be looking for written comments and technical analyses. Again, help will be available for this.

4. We'll assemble the whole exhibit, expecting to unveil it in October '03!

This exhibit is made possible by commitments from Mike Tschebull in writing the essay and leading the selections, from Yon Bard for digital rug photography, from Bob Alimi in getting the materials onto the website, and from Jim Adelson and Jeff Spurr in supporting roles. We're very lucky to have this talent. Incidentally, if you'd like to get involved in this or another future exhibit, please contact us. We'd welcome your help!

So send photos of your intriguing pieces to Bob Alimi by June 1, and let's continue this pleasurable and innovative tradition for NERS!

We welcome the following new NERS members: Basharat Sheikh and Christina Kasica.



Are Your Rugs Sufficiently Insured? By Mark Hopkins

It always happens. Somewhere in the life of a rug collector the question arises: are my treasures adequately covered by insurance? Here are a few thoughts on the subject.

To most of us, insurance—or more specifically in this case, homeowner insurance—is as mandatory a budget item as food and clothing. The question is, does your homeowner policy do a satisfactory job of insuring your rugs? The most likely answer is: maybe and maybe not.

As a general rule, homeowner policies insure the contents of a home at around 50% of the value of the structure that houses them. So if you insure your home for, say, \$400,000, your policy covers you for loss of contents valued at up to \$200,000, less whatever deductible your policy carries. It follows, then, that if the total value of your contents, including your rug collection, remains under half the value of your house, at least in theory you're covered.

What inevitably amazes people, however, is the total replacement value of a home's contents. Try it yourself if you never have. First make a guess. Then go from room to room, itemize each item's replacement value, and add it up. Be prepared to be surprised.

So what to do if your rugs have put you over the top? That's where a fine arts floater comes in. Put simply, you can purchase (often from your present insurer) additional coverage at so much per thousand dollars of value. There are choices. One is that you buy what's called blanket coverage; for example, you might supplement your basic homeowners coverage with \$20,000 blanket fine arts coverage of your rug collection with a maximum coverage per item of \$2,000. Or, you might choose to itemize each individual piece and assign it an appraisal value.

The general rationale on fine arts coverage is that the objects it covers are individually valuable and are therefore accorded better care than ordinary household items. Lower risk means lower cost, and cost saving (although slight) is one of the advantages

of fine arts coverage. Since a fine arts policy can cover not only your rugs but all your works of art and items of either historical value or artistic merit, you may have other objects around the house—antiques, paintings, and so forth—that would benefit from such coverage.

Even if the value of your rugs doesn't put you over the 50% mark, fine arts coverage makes extremely good sense. For one thing, unlike your regular homeowner insurance, there is no deductible when you file a claim. Just as important, you won't be fighting the insurer on such issues as proof of value and depreciation. Under standard homeowners coverage, the insurer can easily contest a \$5000 claim on a lost carpet by saying, look, your bill of sale says you paid \$4000 for it and you value it at \$5000, but since you've owned it for ten years, our depreciation schedule says it's worth \$1500, so with your \$500 deductible, we'll pay you \$1000.

With fine arts coverage, since there's no deductible and depreciation is not an issue, when you make a claim on a \$5000 loss, you're pretty sure to receive a \$5000 check.

Normally you'll find that a fine arts floater offers the advantage of both convenience and the promise of more equitable compensation in the event of a loss. These are hard times for insurers. Their profits derive primarily from returns on their investments, not from their premiums. And as you know, the investment markets have been tanking for three years now. So insurance companies are energetically contesting claims these days. With proper fine arts coverage, proof of ownership and record of value are understood when you file a claim, minimizing the chance you'll be contested and often enabling speedier payment.

In addition, you'll find that some fine arts policies offer fewer exclusions than regular homeowners policies. Another advantage: many policies will cover loss during shipment, including internationally. And some insurers offer the convenience fac-

Continued on page 14



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2002/3 Meetings:

April 4: Bertram Frauenknecht "Collecting Through the Eyes of a Dealer," joint meeting with Skinner

May 10: Picnic and Show & Tell.

Auctions:

Christie's, London, 4/9, 5/1, 6/11

Christie's, New York, 4/1,2,10 (incl. rugs)

Sotheby's, New York, 4/2

Skinner, Boston, 4/5/03

Bonhams, London, 4/29

Sotheby's, London, 4/30

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 5/18

Nagel, Stuttgart, 5/27, 11/4

Christie's, New York, 6/19.

Conferences:

Tenth **ICOC**, Washington DC, Omni-Shoreham Hotel, 4/17-21. This is the major international rug-world event that is held every three years. Just as important as its academic sessions are its many exhibitions of rugs and textiles (see list on right), and its lavish Carpet Fair. **The reduced registration fee of \$425 will be in effect until the time of the conference!** Visit www.icoc-orientalrugs.org or call 317-635-4755 for registration information.

Exhibitions and Fairs:

New York International Tribal Arts Show: 5/17-19, Seventh Regiment Armory, New York.

Carpets of Andalusia: until 8/10, Textile Museum, Washington, DC

Mamluk rugs of Egypt: 3/28-9/7, Textile Museum, Washington, DC

ICOC exhibitions: rugs and flatweaves of Central and southern Zagros; Kurdish rugs from the James Burns collection; Kaitag embroideries; the ensi: doorway to paradise; a collectors' potpourri; khorjin & mafrash from northwest Persia; treasures from the museums of Uzbekistan, 4/17-21, Washington, DC

HALI Antique Carpet & Textile Art Fair: 6/5-8, London

Antique Baluch carpets and bags from the collection of Conan Brooks: 4/21-28, Aquarius Showroom, 484 Broom st., NY. Call 212-343-0311 or email info@antiquarius2000.com for more information.

Tours:

Textile traditions of old Europe: A Textile Museum tour of Romania and Hungary, 7/7-22. Call 703-243-5611 or email etrtours@erols.com for information.

Newsletter contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jim Adelson, Dora Bard, Mark Hopkins, Janet Smith

Comments/contributions/for sale ads to: Yonathan Bard, 6 Holland Street, Newton, MA 02458; telephone (617) 244-7688, fax (617) 965-2897, e-mail (the preferred venue!) doryon@rcn.com

The New England Rug Society is an informal, non-profit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Its meetings are held six to eight times a year. Annual membership dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120. Membership information or renewal forms can be obtained on our website www.newenglandrugsociety.org, or by writing to **New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 582, Lincoln, MA 01773**, calling Mark Hopkins at 781-259-9444, or emailing him at mopkins@netway.com.

NERS 2002/3 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President) 781-259-9444

Jim Adelson

Robert Alimi

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

John Clift

Tom Hannaher

Sheryl Read

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr



Are Your Rugs Sufficiently Insured?

Continued from page 12

tor of not requiring a professional appraisal or bill of sale in the event of a claim. Their rationale is: as long as your premium is based on cost-per-thousand of insured value, you can insure a rug for whatever you're willing to pay for.

Naturally there are certain limits to fine arts coverage. The two of most concern to ruggies are exclusions for animal damage and public exhibition. If your favorite Bijar has its corner demolished by your new puppy, or your storage closet gets discovered by moths, you're probably not covered. Damage inflicted by rot, mildew, cleaning or restoration is usually excluded. And you're on your own if your rug is displayed in a public exhibition, although that's usually no problem because the exhibition most likely has purchased its own coverage.

What companies provide the best coverage for

a rug collector? While it's not within NERS's scope to endorse or recommend commercial sources, we recently surveyed several of the society's most dedicated collectors and confirmed that all of them carry fine arts riders on their collections. So, if you're interested, ask around and chances are you'll get the recommendations you need.

Finally, it's important to understand that no two insurance companies operate under the same rules. That's where insurance agents come in. It's their job to assess one's particular needs and recommend the best coverage at the best price. And if you're not satisfied with one agent, shop around. But in general, if you've got even a few valuable rugs around the house, make sure you check out fine arts coverage next time you talk to your agent. Someday it could save you a lot of grief.



New England Rug Society
Post Office Box 582, Lincoln, MA 01773

