



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. IX, No. 1 August 20, 2001

Next Meeting: Bertram Frauenknecht on Understanding the Art of Oriental Rugs

Our season-opening meeting is, as usual, co-sponsored by Skinner, on whose premises it will take place. Our speaker will be Bertram Frauenknecht, a well known rug dealer and scholar based in Munich, Germany. As a dealer, he specializes in tribal weavings with special fondness for the Shahsavan.

Bertram's academic fields of study were chemistry and biology; however, shortly after graduating he made the acquaintance of some rug collectors. He also started travelling in the Middle East, attracted by the people and their cultures. One thing led to another, and before long he found his avocation in the field of oriental rugs.

In his talk, Bertram will address the questions of what characterizes a world-class rug, and what

Next Meeting Details

Date: Friday, September 14

Time: 7 PM. **Please note early start!**

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

Pkng: Street and neighboring lots and garages

are the criteria that collectors use to choose their acquisitions.

Attendees arriving before the meeting will be able to view Skinner's offerings for the next day's rug auction.

Last Meeting: Picnic, Moth-Market, and Show & Tell By Jim Adelson

NERS chalked up its third successive winner with the annual Show & Tell in Concord on May 19th. Once again, Mother Nature did her part, with a sunny and comfortable day; forecast showers and thunderstorms failed to materialize and dampen the Moth Market and ruggies' spirits.

For the Moth Market, about ten dealers spread their pieces out on the grass, and members fluttered around the desired objects. The Moth Market gave people a chance to explore all kinds of pieces, and talk them over with dealers and fellow members. One member was overheard to say "this rug doesn't fit my theory—burn it!" The easy-going tenor of the Moth Market carried over into lunch, where conversations ranged from rug arcana to the usual array of personal, political, travel, and other topics that ruggies seem to enjoy as much as the art itself.

After a casual lunch, members gathered inside for the main event—the Show & Tell. This year's offerings were considerably "narrower" than last year's, with almost all items from the conventional

weaving areas of the Middle East, plus a few pre-Columbian weavings from South America and a single North American example. By contrast, last year every continent was represented. But however narrow or conventional, the quality and interest level of the pieces was very high. The showing and telling followed the same procedure as in previous years—pieces were selected from the pile one at a time, and the owner would describe the piece and its highlights, with other members adding comments.

Gerard Paquin got things started with a central Anatolian prayer rug that had been woven in two pieces. The rug did not have a recognizable mihrab, and Gerard maintained that the rug had been woven for local use/consumption, rather than export. From his Turkish start, Gerard moved far to the east for his next piece, a Kirghiz applique [1] (numbers refer to the illustrations on pages 4 and 5). The design was created with red cotton on indigo felt. The piece demonstrated an impressive command of positive and

Continued on page 2



Last Meeting: Picnic, Moth-Market, and Show & Tell

Continued from page 1

negative space in its design. Two pieces of less certain origin followed. The first was a Caucasian weaving, possibly Seichur, with only a single border. And finally, there was a bagface with a modernistic, “Frank Lloyd Wright” design, possibly of south-Persian origin.

Al Saulniers came up next, with a late 19th century Ersari-Beshir prayer rug [2] with a beautiful yellow that he had purchased in Islamabad. On the subject of prayer rugs, Holly Smith followed with an east Caucasian (probably Shirvan) specimen [3], with a striped field, a gorgeous green mihrab, and an attractive border figure sometimes labeled dragon and at other times seen as a vine, depending upon whether you consider dragons or plants to be the sources of many designs. Holly’s rug had a main field design similar to plate 40 in Kaffel’s book *Caucasian Prayer Rugs*, and in fact Holly said that it was to be included in the book, but the pictures didn’t get taken in time.

Tom Stocker used the reference to the Kaffel book as a segue to his first piece, which was a painted copy of the Burns rug from Kaffel’s book. Tom described some aspects of how he goes about painting a rug, and how he accomplishes some of his wonderful effects. Tom then unveiled the world premiere of a pictorial rug he’d done recently that used images of Ayatollah Khomeini and a US hostage in Iran [4]. With this painting, Tom illustrated what an unbelievable variety of color it takes to produce particular color regions. In response to a question from the group, Tom indicated that he’d spent approximately 420 hours of his own work time to create this rug painting.

Next up was a Shabsavan kilim khorjin of Doug Bailey’s. The basic design was extremely simple, with a polygon figure in different colors on indigo stripes that alternated with plain stripes of other colors. Typically for Shabsavan weavings, beautiful color and precise execution combined to create a very attractive piece. A second Al Saulniers piece followed; this was one of the more unusual items of the middle eastern weavings—a Moroccan head scarf with very

broad color areas. Such scarves are made of wool with a very light, open, gauze-like weave, and they get their color from a dip-painting process. These pieces have just started to be shown and collected in the West, and Al purchased this particular example in Marrakesh.

The next piece to surface was a Karapinar yatak brought by Julia Bailey. The piece had large areas of a single color with very pronounced and attractive abrash. Then on to a Caucasian blossom-carpet fragment of the late 17th or early 18th century from the Rudnicks’ collection. From the large scale of the blossoms, the fragment must have been part of a very big carpet—perhaps 12’ x 18’.

Carl Strock brought several Central Asian weavings. The first was a Kirghiz embroidery [5], that Carl said he’d purchased from the internet auction site eBay. He also had a Kirghiz flannel obtained from the same source. This was followed by an Uzbek prayer suzani [6] embroidered on a velvet ground and visibly worn where the knees had been placed in prayer.

Wayne Barron showed a late 19th century Bidjar saddle cover. The design drew from western influences with European roses providing the main element. Birds served as the main border design figure. Wayne’s second piece was a Melas rug, battered but still appealing.

The hand of chance next turned to Lawrence Kearney, who displayed an early shawl, which he dated to 1680-1720. A Mughal-looking flower covered the piece. According to Lawrence, the shawls were luxury textiles even when originally made, so they were treasured, used sparingly, and therefore more likely to survive over the years. Lawrence’s second piece was a very old Karapinar kilim [7]—200 years old, or perhaps older, in Lawrence’s words—with excellent color. The story behind the piece was almost as interesting as the piece itself. Lawrence had once owned the piece, but then sold it very reluctantly. The kilim hung in the buyer’s house for 4-5 years, then it was stolen, presented for auc-

Continued on page 3



Last Meeting: Picnic, Moth-Market, and Show & Tell

Continued from page 2

tion, recovered, and re-auctioned, where Lawrence got it for the second time.

As he had done before, Lawrence exceeded the two-piece limit when he displayed his third item. And as usual, he was speedily forgiven because of the interest and charm of his choice. This time, he had a set of perhaps 90 or so mounted doll dresses from 1910-1915. They had been made from linings of candy boxes, and were very colorful, both individually and collectively.

Cornelia Montgomery had the tough job of following Lawrence, but handled the challenge with two unique pieces. The first was a small rug woven in bagface format—the warps were in the opposite direction from the typical rug. Cornelia had bought the rug in Iran in the 1960s. Her second item was a South-Persian kilim [8], with lots of great colors and a strong trefoil border.

Judy Smith had the first pre-Columbian weaving of the day, a Nazca or proto-Nazca mantle fringe showing small birds and flowers. The piece was very old and very finely woven, using a stitch called cross-knit looping. For those interested, Judy recommended Allen Sawyer's book on early Nazca needlework.

Mark Hopkins brought a Baluch bagface, with characteristic Baluch birds and high-quality wool enlivened by an atypically broad color range and animated spacing. Mark has shown this piece on previous occasions, but everyone welcomed its repeat appearance since it is certainly one of the finest Baluch bags of this or any design.

Next up was a Qashqa'i complementary warp face double khorjin, with an unusually colorful border and a very decorative back as well. A little later, another member displayed an Akstafa runner with a diagonal stripe design and very attractive colors. She commented that she hung the piece diagonally on a stairway, causing the stripes to appear horizontal.

[Editor's note: we didn't catch the names of the owners of the last two pieces; please drop us a note and we'll credit you in the next issue.]

Kyle Hedrick showed a Kurdish rug, with the

comment that (like many Oriental weavings) its design used a window-pane concept. The overall design has a larger scale than the piece, and appears to show through a central window created by the border. Kyle's second piece was a stellar Malayer-Sarouk mat—a miniature version of a classic Sarouk design with a central medallion on an open, abraded indigo field.

Jim Adelson had a pair of Turkmen items. The first was a fragment from a mid-19th century Tekke chirpy (coat) [9], with very colorful silk embroidery on a typical mustard-colored fabric. The second was an early to mid-19th century Chodor chuval, with large primary guls, secondary chuval guls, and beautiful additional field and elem designs shining forth, despite significant damage in certain areas.

Yon Bard continued the Turkmen theme with his two weavings, starting with a Tekke mat which he acquired literally in pieces. After getting the first fragment from one source, several additional fragments of the same piece surfaced later, and Yon was able to reunite the fragments. Yon also showed how he recreated a picture of the entire rug from computer images of the fragments. Yon's second item was a splendid Tekke main carpet, with round, well-spaced primary guls, secondary Gurbaghe guls, and some terrific tertiary elements in the field.

Tom Hannaher provided a climactic conclusion to the day with his pre-Columbian textiles. His first item was a colorful figural coca bag that was more than 2000 years old. And, to make sure that he had the oldest piece at the event, he'd also brought a Paracas piece from around 400 BC. These Paracas pieces have a unique and complex structure, with two or three complete sets of warps and wefts, and threads pulled through to form the design and a reverse version on the back.

Once again, all the NERSers marveled at the collective treasures, and at how pleasurable the day had been. Thanks to all the members who made it such a success. It has become one of the most eagerly anticipated events in the rug schedule, and those who haven't had the good fortune to attend should mark their calendars early for next year!



Seen at the Show & Tell



[1] Khirgiz applique (detail)



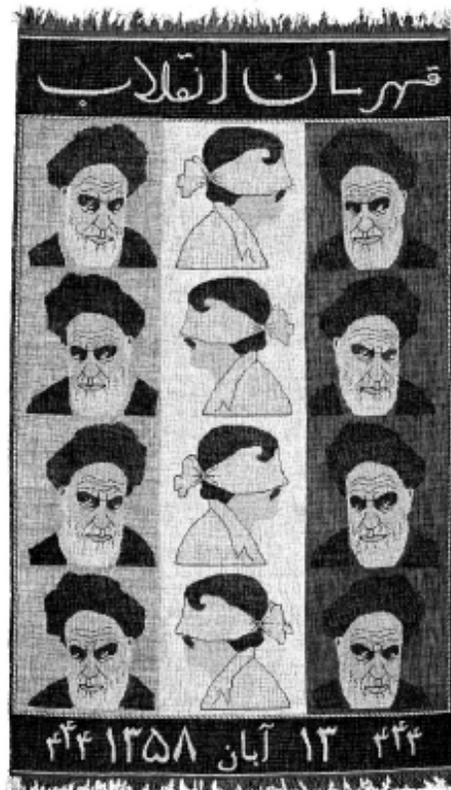
[2] Beshir prayer rug



[3] Shirvan prayer rug



[5] Khirgiz embroidery



[4] Ayatollah Khomeini with hostage. Painting by Tom Stocker

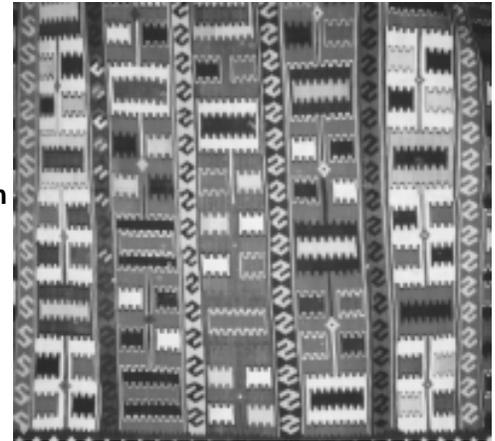


Seen at the Show & Tell (cont.)



[6] Uzbek prayer suzani

[8] South
Persian kilim
(detail)



[9] Tekke chirpy
fragment



[7] Karapinar
kilim (detail)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!
Please send your dues by September 5

Newsletter contributors and helpers: Yon Bard (editor), Jim Adelson, Dora Bard, Mark Hopkins, Sheryl Read, Janet Smith
Comments/contributions/for sale ads to: Yonathan Bard, e-mail doryon@rcn.com



From the Editor's Desk

By Yon Bard

Editor needed: at the end of this season I'll have completed six years as editor of this Newsletter. I feel it's time for a change of guard! **If you are interested in taking over this responsibility**, please contact me at the address given on page 5. Needless to say, I shall be happy to assist in all phases of the transition.

Newsletter distribution: for our readers' convenience, not to mention savings in copying and postage charges, we are offering optional distribution of the NERS Newsletter by e-mail. You will receive the Newsletter as an e-mail attachment file in PDF format (a widely used format for document interchange). To view the newsletter on your screen or print it on your printer you will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader program. You can download a free copy of this program from the website <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. If you are using a MAC you will also need some software for converting the file from PC format (you may try MacLink though that failed to work in the one test that we have made).

If you would like to receive—or even just try to receive—the Newsletter in this fashion, please contact me.

Preservation of cultural treasures: Last March's issue of this Newsletter contained a profile of Jeremy and Hanne Grantham, contributed by Sheryl Read. While editing that article for publication I was particularly struck by the following passage:

Jeremy explains about the Afghan statue on the mantel. "This statue is from a part of Afghanistan called Gandhara. Gandhara was as far east as Alexander the Great reached. Some of his people intermarried, and as a result, their artwork has Greek features. That's why this statue, even though it's Afghan, looks Greek."

I read this at about the time when the Taliban were destroying all statues in Afghanistan that they could lay their hands on, including the two giant

Buddhas. My first thought was "how lucky that we have grave robbers, smugglers, and traffickers in stolen art who dig up such statues and see to it that they find safe homes. Had it not been for them, these statues would have been destroyed with the others." (Of course I don't know whether this particular statue was taken out of Afghanistan illegally, but I suspect that there are many like it that were). Now, the Afghan situation is hardly the first time that cultural and artistic treasures have been destroyed as a result of iconoclasm, wars, or natural disasters; nothing is totally immune. But the more concentrated such material is geographically the more vulnerable it is; world-wide dispersal in public and private collections is the best guarantee that some treasures from each genre will survive.

Yet, if present laws are respected, just about all valuable material must remain where it is. All archaeological finds are placed in museums at the site, with perhaps a few of the top pieces siphoned off to the country's premier showcase museum. Antiques and works of art are barred from export. Not only do these practices incur the above mentioned perils, they also frustrate the international community of collectors, with resulting escalation in prices. Thus, the grave-robbers and their kin are encouraged to go to ever greater lengths in the pursuit of marketable illegal treasures. These illicit traffickers wreak enormous havoc in the course of their activities: many treasures are destroyed outright, and those that are taken lose much of their significance because any light their careful study can shed on past cultures is lost. Under the present system this trade can no more be stopped than the drug traffic: by hook or by crook, supply will arise to meet the demand. I recommend that you read Peter Watson's *Sotheby's—The Inside Story* (Random House 1997) to see how pervasive the ensuing corruption is.

I believe there is a way out of this conundrum. The laws in the arts and antiques rich countries must be amended to allow the following procedure: when

Continued on page 8



Upcoming Rug Events

NERS 2001/2 Meetings:

10/10/01: Elena Tsareva on Turkmen design origins

11/30/01: Saul Barodofsky on Anatolian kilims

January 2002: Tour of MFA's Persian textiles exhibition, hosted by Julia Bailey

February 2002: Jenny Wood on dyes

March 2002: Raoul Tschbull on Kazak rugs

April 2002: Al Saulniers on new opportunities in Moroccan tribal weavings

May 2002: Picnic and Show & Tell.

Auctions:

Sotheby's, New York, 9/14

Skinner, Boston, 9/15 and 12/1

Rippon Boswell, Wiesbaden, 9/22

Christie's, New York, 9/25

Christie's, London, 9/26 and 10/18

Phillips, London, 10/16

Sotheby's, London, 10/17

Bonhams & Brooks, London, 10/18

Nagel, Stuttgart, 11/6.

Tours:

NERS member **Diana Altman's Specialty World Travel** offers tours of special interest to ruggies: **Textiles, Folk Art, Beads of Hungary & Prague**, 9/12-26; **The Tribal Markets of Southern Morocco**, 10/18-30; **Exotic Bazaars of Turkey: Istanbul & Beyond**, 10/20-11/3. For details, call 617-332-1951 or visit the website at www.specialtyworldtravel.com.

Conferences:

The **Second International Conference on North African Carpets** takes place in Marrakesh, Morocco, 9/27-28 followed by six days of touring major Moroccan cities. Contact Mark Hopkins for more details.

The 2001 **Textile Museum Conference** in Washington, DC, is scheduled for 10/12-14; its subject is *Textile Treasures of Central Asia*. Call 202-667-0441 or email nevans@textilemuseum.org for more information.

ACOR 6 is scheduled for 4/25-28/02 in Indianapolis. If you haven't received your registration materials, call Mark Hopkins at 781-259-9444. Time is of the essence—space is filling up fast!

The next **ICOC** is scheduled for 4/17-21/03 in Washington, DC. A call for papers is out; see their website at www.icoc-international.org. Papers are due by 4/1/02.

Exhibitions:

Painted with Thread: The Art of American Embroidery, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, until 9/30.

From the Amu Darya to the Potomac: Central Asian Bags from Area Collections, Textile Museum, Washington, DC, 9/7/01-2/24/02.

Poetry of the Loom: Persian Textiles in the MFA, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 9/26/01-1/21/02. Organized and curated by our own Julia Bailey.

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 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 hoppmoto@earthlink.net.

NERS 2001/2 Steering Committee:

Mark Hopkins (President)

Jim Adelson

Julia Bailey

Yonathan Bard

John Clift

Tom Hannaher

Sheryl Read

Gillian Richardson

Janet Smith

Jeff Spurr



From the Editor's Desk

Continued from page 6

artifacts are dug up, they should be made available to scientific teams for analysis over a reasonable period of time, say a year or two. All important aspects, including photographs, are recorded and made available on the internet. At the end of this period, a selection of the best objects is retained for the local and national museums. The remainder is auctioned off on the open market, where collectors and other museums can vie for the treasures. Such a system

should satisfy most scholars and collectors, and provide the dispersion required for 'survival of the species.' At the same time, the money realized by the sales would provide the funds needed for further archaeological work. Thus, everybody but the grave-robberts benefits!

I invite our readers to send in their comments on this subject. In five years on the job I have not received a single *letter to the Editor*—this season is my last chance!

Rug Book Sources

The following are among your best bets for rug books, but you might also try *www.amazon.com* for the standard reference works.

The Rug Book Shop (Paul Kreiss), 2603 Talbot Road. Baltimore, MD 21216. Phone 410-367-8194 (call evenings and weekends), e-mail *enquires@rugbookshop.com*. Website *www.rugbookshop.com*. No charge for shipping.

Dennis B. Marquand, P.O.Box 1187, Culver City, CA 90232. Phone 310-313-0177; e-mail *dennis@rugbooks.com*. Website *www.rugbooks.com*. No charge for shipping.

The East-West Room (Myrna Bloom), 3139 Alpin Drive, Dresher, PA 19025. Phone 215-657-0178, e-mail *eastwestroom@netreach.net*. Charges extra for shipping.



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

