



Volume 24, Number 2 - Summer 2017

Chaguar Textiles of the Wichí in Argentina

Rachel Green

Beating, spinning, and joining fibers, a woman perpetuates her culture a thread and a stitch at a time. Living on the periphery of a small oil town in northwest Argentina, she is a member of an indigenous Wichí community whose culture



Carolina Maria Miranda (l) spins chaguar, while her mother, Ana Alicia Doria, makes a bag using a netting technique

was forged over generations in the Gran Chaco. Divided among Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina, the Gran Chaco is a low-



Chaguar fiber

land plain drained by meandering rivers that sometimes flood, or dry up in the heat. In this difficult but beautiful land-

scape, the Wichí use a fibrous plant, called *chaguar*, to construct fishnets, bags, and clothing. While men help gather the chaguar, it is the women who dye, spin, and join the fibers into distinctive textiles which form a major part of their cultural identity. Estimates are that 80,000 Wichí live in Argentina where they maintain their traditions and speak their original language. Today, many Wichí have been displaced from their lands in the Chaco.

Carolina Maria Miranda lives in one such community along with her mother, Ana Alicia Doria, and daughter, Betina. Together, they represent three generations of artisans.

Because chaguar does not grow well near where they live, they travel at least forty-five kilometers to the east several times a year



From the top: Hí lu with Owl's Eye motif, Hí lu with Acron's Footprint motif (a bird similar to a hawk), Hí lu with a Chañar (a kind of tree) Seed motif.

continued on page 11

Creating A Connected Textile Community

MISSION

To foster a global network of enthusiasts who value the importance of textiles to grassroots economies

PURPOSE

Exchange information

Raise awareness of the importance of textile traditions to grassroots economies

Mobilize textile enthusiasts

Create conversations that result in action

CORE VALUES

Textiles are an important component of the human experience.

Networking and sharing information creates an environment for constructive action.

Making connections between textile artisans worldwide promotes positive social change.

Interacting with people who have similar values enriches our lives.



The Story Behind My Passion for Hmong Story Cloths

Linda Gerdner

The Hmong are an ethnic minority from China and Southeast Asia. Those living in Laos during 1961 had their lives disrupted when the Vietnam War covertly spread into their homeland. In 1975 Laos fell to

to experience life in Hmong villages. Next, we traveled to Thailand to a Hmong refugee settlement, adjacent to Wat Thamkrabok (Buddhist monastery). The settlement was built following closure of the last official refugee camp in 1996.



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newsletter is
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Send articles and
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*Shaman performing a spiritual ritual
prior to the Hmong New Year.*

communist rule, forcing Hmong allies of the Royal Lao Army and the US CIA to flee to refugee camps in Thailand. During confinement, women used their extraordinary needlework skills to create a new art form



*Man feeding chickens corn (the rooster has
a tiny corn kernel in his beak). In the
background is a woman is pounding rice*

known as Hmong story cloths. Meticulously embroidered images on cloth provided an alternative to the oral tradition of this special group, as a way to share their first-hand accounts of life and culture.

Upon reading about the Hmong people, I wanted to learn more about their culture. In 2001, I moved to St. Paul, MN, because of the large concentration of Hmong Americans living there. Shortly thereafter, I traveled to Laos with a Hmong American friend. We focused our time in the rural highlands



This piece depicts the history of the Hmong people, including the rebellion against the Chinese, migration to Laos, the airstrip at Long Cheng used for secret missions and bombings of North Vietnam during the "Secret War" in Laos, Hmong people fleeing Laos following communist takeover in 1975, Hmong refugees crossing Mekong river to Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand, refugees at international airport in Bangkok preparing to board flight to host country.

This piece was signed by the artist, Ge Yang

After returning home, Hmong story cloths became my growing passion. Every weekend I visited a nearby Hmong market, looking through stacks of these ethnic textiles, meticulously examining the quality of embroidery while searching for unique stories or scenes. I became overjoyed upon finding a new addition for my collection. These story cloths were embroidered by Hmong refugees in Thailand and mailed to family for sale in the US or purchased directly from newly arrived refugees. Occasionally, a story cloth of exceptional quality or one representing a rare story was retained in the

continued on page 10



Judy's List of Good Reads for the Oaxaca Traveler

Judy Newland

Artisans and Advocacy in the Global

Market: Walking the Heart Path, 2015, Simonelli, O'Donnell, and Nash, eds. The latest on working with artisan groups, including our own Christine Eber's work in Chiapas. She will be bringing two Chiapan women to the meeting in Oaxaca

Maya Gods & Monsters: Supernatural Stories from the Underworld and Beyond, 2016, Karasik and Huerta. Origin myths and stories of the Maya. Reviewed on the March ClothRoads blog.

Maya Threads: A Woven History of Chiapas, 2015, Morris Jr. and Karasik. A history of the cultural textiles of the Maya of the Chiapas area.

A Perfect Red: Empire, Espionage, and the Quest for the Color of Desire, 2005, Amy Butler Greenfield. (Added to Judy's list by Shannon Sheppard, who writes,

"It's the story of the 16th century search for the perfect red dye, which turns out to be cochineal, found here in Oaxaca. It's non-fiction, but reads like fiction!")

Textile Fiestas of Mexico: A Traveler's Guide to Celebrations, Markets and Smart Shopping, 2016, Sheri Brautigam. Fabulous and just what you need for Oaxaca. Available at ClothRoads and ThrumsBooks.

A Textile Guide to the Highlands of Chiapas, 2011, Walter Morris Jr. A must read if you are going into Chiapas!

The Unbroken Thread: Conserving the Textile Traditions of Oaxaca, 1997, Kathryn Klein, ed. Conserving the textile collection at the Regional Museum of Oaxaca.

Zapotec Weavers of Teotitlan, 1999, Andra Stanton. The culture, legacy, and techniques of Zapotec weaving.



Annual Meeting Agenda June 10, 2017 Hostel de La Noria Oaxaca, Mexico

The Annual Business Meeting will take place Saturday morning, June 10 during breakfast, with the following agenda:

- Presentation and request for approval of 2016 meeting minutes
- Presentation and request for approval of financial report
- Election of board members
- Report of board retreat and focus for upcoming year
- Plans for 2018, including Annual Meeting
- New Business
- Old Business
- Other Business
- Adjournment

For other meeting updates and the conference agenda, check WARP's website, <http://www.weavearealpeace.org>

What's in this Issue

| | |
|--|------|
| Chaguar Textiles of the Wichi | 1 |
| My Passion for Hmong Story Cloth | 2 |
| Reading List for Oaxaca Travelers | 3 |
| 2017 Business Meeting Agenda | 3 |
| 2017 Membership Information | 3 |
| From the Office | 4 |
| Farewell as President - Cindy Lair | 4 |
| Member Profile: Cheryl Musch | 5 |
| Thanks to WARP Donors | 6 |
| Three Receive ABM Scholarships | 6 |
| Textile Techniques: Suzani Embroidery .. | 7 |
| New Members | 7, 9 |
| 2017 Int'l Folk Art Market | 8 |
| Happy 25th Birthday to WARP | 8 |
| Blue (Indigo) Sundays | 9 |
| Hmong Story Cloths | 10 |
| Nominating Committee Presents | |
| Slate for Board Members | 12 |

Weave A Real Peace

Membership Information
www.weavearealpeace.org

2017 Annual Dues

\$50 - Individual in US/Canada
\$90 - 2 year special - Individual US/Canada

\$40 - International Individual
Simple living - Choose an amount you can live with

\$50 - Guilds/Organization
\$30 - Sister/Gift Subscriptions
\$75 - Business

\$75 - Supporting Individual
\$100 - Friend of WARP
\$150+ - Patron of WARP

All memberships are for 12 months, and expire 12 months from date of joining.

Members have access to annual Membership Directory through a secure 'members-only' section of the web site, a quarterly newsletter, and can participate in the WARP Google Discussion Group.

Dues are used for printing, mailing, and office expenses. Weave A Real Peace (WARP) is designated a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization by the Internal Revenue Service. All donations to WARP are tax deductible in the United States.

For membership or additional information, please send your name, address, telephone number, and email address with appropriate check, money order, or Paypal information in US funds payable to WARP to:

Weave a Real Peace
c/o 6182 Pollard Avenue
East Lansing, MI 48823

or join online at
<http://www.weavearealpeace.org>



From the WARP Office

Rita Chapman

I have several updates for you this time around. First, if you need to be added to the WARP Google Group, send me your email address. There have been great discussions lately about getting ready for Oaxaca, travel tips, input on good books on Oaxacan textiles and natural dyeing, on travel to Uzbekistan, and a new WARP member, Allen Nansubuga, seeking advice and input about products she's working to develop in Uganda. Please check it out!

The absolute last date to register for the June 8-11, 2017 Annual Meeting in Oaxaca is May 31, depending on hotel room availability. So if you have not registered yet, and you really wish now that you had, there is probably still time if you move quickly. Please go to our website <http://weavearealpeace.org>, and follow the links. Contact me before June 1 with any questions at info@weavearealpeace.org.

The WARP Board met in February for a strategic planning session, ably led by Liz Gipson. They developed a plan for

moving WARP forward, and some of that will involve new opportunities for you to engage in outreach committees. If you have some time to give and wish to be more involved, let me know. Plus, we really do use the information that you enter into your membership form every year when you join or renew, as that's how we find out your interests. So please do complete those forms, especially as our lives change, or we gain new insights, and new skills. Thank you!

The MidAtlantic Fiber Association will meet in Millersville, PA, July 20-23, 2017, and Carole Ireland has arranged for a WARP get-together! See the website at <http://mafa-conference-2017.org> for the event schedule. If you plan to go, please let others know on our Google Group (and if you're not signed up for that, let me know!), and on Facebook. I hope to attend at least part of the event, and I'd love to see you there, too! What a great summer this will be!

Rita can be reached at info@weavearealpeace.org

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Farewell as the President of WARP

Thank you for giving me the privilege of serving as the President. I know I am leaving this position and the board in the most capable of hands. The organization will continue to



Cindy with a new Buttercup

grow and move forward with the leadership of these women.

WARP has become more important than ever given the current political state. I would encourage you to keep fighting because YOU are the people who go about their work quietly and steadfastly, changing the world to a better place each day.

Kind regards,
Cindy Lair

WARP is on YouTube! You can learn more about WARP by viewing our two wonderful YouTube videos. *What is WARP?* is a two minute version of WARP's fascinating work, background on our mission, and how we network together. The second is a longer, nine minute version suitable for sharing at gatherings, called *The World of WARP*. Both feature beautiful imagery, and may be used to educate your friends and family. Both videos are available on WARP's main website, <http://www.weavearealpeace.org>



Member Profile

Cheryl Musch: "I see fiber arts through the lens of fair trade"

Gloria Miller

"I see fiber arts through the lens of fair trade. It provides both economic opportunity and an artistic expression for thousands of artisans around the world."

Newer members might not be aware that Cheryl served as Administrative Coordinator for WARP for about eight years in the early 2000s. A master and teacher of Fair Trade, she has worked to help artisans from all over the world earn a living while continuing to perfect their craft and honor their traditions. For over 20 years she has had the privilege of working full time pursuing this passion.

Although she sees herself as an admirer of the fiber arts, she has always had an interest in making and was introduced to the loom and its meditative side when she was in college. She earned her master's degree in museum studies which gave her further credibility to pursue her career.

Cheryl was working in a fair trade store in Bloomington, IL when a woman who worked there introduced her to WARP. She has been an active member ever since. She was later the Executive Director of the Fair Trade Federation when an intriguing job posting in international development came across her desk which seemed a perfect fit. She applied for and got a job as Director of International Development at SERRV, one of the largest and oldest fair trade organizations in the

US. While in this position, she travelled extensively for a total of about three months of each year to developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America working with artisans to develop and market local products.

Now living by the forest in Kirksville, MO, she is the director of Partners for Just Trade, a small St. Louis-based fair trade organization working with artisans in Peru, Cambodia, and Haiti. After many years of travel, she appreciates living in a beautiful place with her husband who teaches nearby, being able to work from home part of the time, and enjoying knitting and its meditative side.

Some of Cheryl's words of wisdom to WARP members include the warning that although many are interested in Fair Trade, before promises are made to artisans, market research must be done first. Be sure the product truly can be sold. Sales have become more competitive and people are looking first for quality and then for the story to back it up. The Fair Trade Federation is the best place to go for advice about how to help artisans in this manner.

Cheryl's own making these days is knitting pussyhats and she is the go-to person for this locally sourced expression of culture. Cheryl is happy to connect with WARP members at cheryl@yachana.org

Gloria Miller is a Sister of Mercy and has been working with a knitting group in Peru for many years. She became connected with WARP when she started weaving in 2006 and continues to enjoy weaving and her weaving connections all over the world. She can be reached at gmillerrsm@gmail.com

Books and More....

Once again, there wasn't room in this issue for more **Books You Want to Know About**—which turns out to be publications in all formats by WARP members.

I'm looking forward to the continuation of this feature in future issues.

If you've produced a book, DVD, or other resource that we want to know about since the Fall of 2015, let me know. Or if you didn't get around to sending info sooner, send that as well.

Thanks, LT

2017 Newsletter Copy Deadlines

V24N3 - Fall 2017 - July 28

V24N4 - Winter - October 27

Save these dates and send your contributions to the Newsletter!
Contact me at lgtempleok@gmail.com if you have questions. Thanks!



Three Receive Alice Brown Memorial Scholarships for 2017 Annual Meeting

Kelsey Viola Wiskirchen

Thanks to WARP Donors!!!

Donna Brown
Rita Chapman
Diane de Souza
Catharine Ellis
Teena Jennings
Judi Jetson
Cindy Lair
Irene Schmoller

This year, we are delighted to offer three conference scholarships through the Alice Brown Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund provides the opportunity for students or fiber artists 35 years or younger to attend the WARP conference. Representing a diverse range of textile interests, all three are distinctly aligned with WARP's mission and goals in their work and research. We look forward to learning more about these three women, and welcoming them into the WARP family!

Nicole Giacomantonio is a textile artist and enthusiast from Halifax, Nova Scotia. She holds an interdisciplinary degree in textiles and art history from Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. Nicole is thrilled to attend the WARP conference in Oaxaca, Mexico this year and is excited learn from those who are equally as passionate about textiles as she is. She plans to incorporate what she learns from the artisans of Oaxaca and the WARP community into her own art practice, and hopes she can help ensure that the traditional textile and craft practices of Oaxaca will remain alive and accessible. Nicole is pursuing a career in textile conservation and plans to apply her education and skill to the preservation and promotion of art in Canada. She can't wait to spend time getting to know other members of WARP. If you see her be sure to say hi, she'll love to chat about all things textile!

Alisa Ruzavina was born in Moscow and currently attends Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design in London, specializing in Womenswear Design with Print. Alisa's current interests lie in resisting fast fashion and total digitalization of design processes through detailed study, conservation, and preservation of world traditional craft techniques in her own fashion work, as well as in manifestation of radical joy through the use of color.

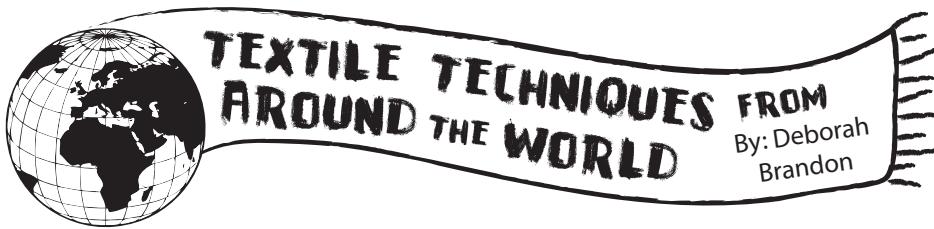
She explores cultural, historical, esoteric, occult, and mythological artifacts and dreamscapes through elaborate surface design and textile manipulation to create a contemporary narrative with deep roots in art and craft history. To view her work, please visit www.alisa-ruzavina.com.

Alisa says, "I am grateful to be selected for this scholarship and to be introduced to your rich community, as I hope with your help I'll be able to dive deeper into explorations of local textile traditions, find opportunities for collaborative and supportive practices with traditional craft-makers, and make bigger steps towards a more ethical and ecologically sustainable practice."

Dakota Mace is currently an MFA student at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Working both in photography and textiles, much of her work focuses on re-contextualizing the stories and deities inspired from Navajo designs. Her MFA work is a series developed from learning traditional as well as western weaving styles to incorporate her interpretation of Navajo weaving.

Dakota writes, "The development of my work is part of a larger idea of wanting to create a bridge to understanding Native American traditional practices through nontraditional forms of art. My photographic work is a continuation of understanding my Native heritage through my lens, and through the loom I understand the connection between the weaver and the materials. The ultimate goal is to bring awareness to the development of Native American art forms and bring tradition into the Fine Arts world. Through the Alice Brown Memorial Scholarship, my research will go further into understanding the aesthetics of Navajo weaving and embracing the connection between weaver and loom."





Uzbekistan: Suzani Embroidery

Most associate Suzanis with chain-stitched, embroidered wall hangings from Uzbekistan. I, on the other hand, associate Suzani embroidery with the Old City of Jerusalem.

On my most recent trip to visit my family in Israel, my brother, knowing of my love for ethnic textiles, suggested we check out Omar's shop in the Old City.

As I entered the shop, piles and piles of eye popping textiles greeted me—pillow covers saturated with Palestinian cross-stitch, ikat textiles from Central Asia, Indian mirror-work. Stepping deeper into the shop, my breath caught as my eyes swept over the spectacular suzani, lively block-printed textiles from Persia, Moroccan rugs.

Omar proceeded to spread one gorgeous suzani after the other at my feet. The colors... the designs...

In the western part of Uzbekistan, inhabited mostly by a settled people, suzani patterns are mostly floral. Further east, influenced by the Uzbek nomadic traditions, many suzani artists create celestial designs.

The motifs, even on contemporary suzani, carry meaning. Images of peppers portray protection from the evil eye, birds stand for happiness, and paisley patterns represent fertility and regeneration, as do pomegranate blossoms. Water jugs signify cleansing rituals and knives deflect bad luck.

Traditionally, a bride-to-be and her female relatives create a variety of suzani for her dowry, including a cover for the wedding bed and an awning for the wedding ceremony. The beauty of the embroidery provides a measure of the bride's skill and her family's wealth.

Creating large suzani is also a community undertaking. First, they loosely sew pieces of fabric together. The background is usually bleached cotton or linen, sometimes silk or velvet—in the past the fabrics were handwoven, now they are machine-

made. Next, a master drafts-woman draws the pattern on the background. Needleworkers then take the pieces apart and embroider each section separately, in most cases with silk embroidery floss, though in some locales with wool thread.

They use Bokhara couching for the fillers, and outline the images with chain stitch. I was surprised to learn that they use tambour hooks for chain stitching. The hook resembles a crochet hook, which the women jab into the background fabric again and again, each time drawing up loops from the underside, to form a crochet-chain-like effect.

Finally, they reassemble the pieces together, not always matching the patterns perfectly at the joins.

Suzani date back to the mid 18th century, reaching their peak in the 19th century, but over the past decade or so, there has been a resurgence in this embroidery technique.

An ethnic textile scholar and textile designer, Omar commissions his pieces from Uzbek embroiderers, insisting on traditional designs and naturally dyed embroidery floss—his suzani are stunning.

Resources:

Embroidered Textiles, by Sheila Paine, Thames & Hudson, 2008

Needlework Through History: An Encyclopedia, by Catherine Amoroso Leslie, Greenwood Press, 2007

"Suzani Embroidery of Uzbekistan," by Carter Malik, from *Asian Embroidery*, edited by Jasleen Dhamija, Abhinav Publications, 2004

Traditional Textiles of Central Asia, by Janet Harvey, Thames & Hudson, 1997

Deborah Brandon is a multi-talented mathematician and former board member. She can be reached at 412/963-7416 or at brandon@andrew.cmu.edu

New Members

Valerie DeVries
Weavers' Guild of Rochester
Rush, NY

Sandy Gally
Sharjah
United Arab Emirates

Nicole Giacomantonio
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Ellen Goldman
Norwalk, CT

Linda Hanna
Oaxaca, Mexico

Catherine Hemenway
Oaxaca, Mexico

Taylor Landry
Fort Collins, CO

Kelly Larson
Maplewood, MO

Nancy Liebrecht
Fries, VA

Stefanie London
Saint Louis, MO



International Folk Art Market July 14,15,16

The 14th Annual International Folk Art Market | Santa Fe, to be held July 14,15, and 16, will feature 160 Master Artists from 53 countries. Many WARP members attended this fantastic Market last year during WARP's Annual Meeting. Many of us will volunteer again this year. Volunteer registration is now open (see <https://www.folkartalliance.org/volunteer/opportunities/>) Barbara Mauldin, this year's chair of the Artist Selection Committee, writes "... the 2017 Market will once again be full of many different types of beautiful textiles. One of the new artists to look for this year is Rahul Vinayak Salvi, a master weaver from India. He and his family have one of the last workshops producing Patola - double ikat. Another exciting aspect of this year's Market is the Innovation section, featuring folk art that grows out of traditional forms, but is exploring new expressions. One artist in this section is Far-

zana Sharshenbieva from Kyrgystan. She has participated in past Markets with the Seven Sisters, but will have her own booth this year that features her fashion line of felted and embroidered clothing. You can see some examples of the work of these artists, and more, on the website." (<https://www.folkartalliance.org/>).

Barbara also writes that the artists do not seem to be having more than the usual difficulties obtaining visas so they can participate in the Market.

Since 2004, more than 800 Market artists representing 90 countries have earned a combined \$25 million. They have returned home to build schools, bridges, wells, and community centers, purchase milking cows and medical supplies, and fight political dislocation, gender inequity, and other forms of social and economic oppression. Their success has collectively impacted an estimated 1.1 million lives.



Happy 25th Birthday to WARP!

In August 1992, six women gathered at Elizabeth Harvat's log cabin in the mountains outside of Denver, CO, to talk about,

was unanimously decided that there was much more to talk about than could be done in one or two or even 50 get-togethers. WARP was born. Of the six attending that meeting, three continue to be active members (Deborah Chandler, Linda Temple,



in Deborah Chandler's words, "weavers here, weavers in developing countries, other craftswomen (and men), starting projects, cross-cultural sharing." This gathering followed a letter sent by Deborah earlier in the year to a number of friends, suggesting that interested people get together for a one-time event to share ideas and information. We did that at Convergence 1992, and decided to meet again in the summer. At the August gathering, it



and Beth Davis). And while the written mission and goals of the organization have been re-worded since that initial meeting, the meaning hasn't changed: to support women and communities-in-need through textile arts.

And we still haven't run out of amazing topics to talk about and share!

WARP on the Web - <http://www.weavearealpeace.org> features WARP history, annual meeting information, member access to the directory, and past newsletters. You can join or renew your membership online.

"Like" WARP on **Facebook** - Find 'Weave A Real Peace' in the search bar on your personal Facebook account to follow what WARP members share and to make posts to the page. Click 'Invite Friends to Follow' to promote WARP to other Facebook friends.

WARP Blog - To subscribe to receive an email when a new article has been posted, click on 'Blog' in the main menu at <http://weavearealpeace.org>. Enter your email address where you see 'Subscribe to the WARP Blog Via Email!' To contribute an article to the blog, please email info@weavearealpeace.org

Google - You are invited to join our Google Group. If you want to join please email Rita at info@weavearealpeace.org to be added.

Katie Simmons also maintains a WARP presence on ravelry.com, the knitting networking site; and on Weavevolution, <http://www.weavevolution.com>. Please send her information at ktd26@hotmail.com.



Blue (Indigo) Sundays and Olga Reiche

Marilyn Anderson

During my recent trip to Guatemala, I spent time with Olga Reiche, the author of the book *Plantas Tintóreas de Guatemala (The Dye Plants of Guatemala)*. (Ediciones del Pensativo, Antigua Guatemala,



2014). Currently it is available only in Spanish but hopefully will be translated into English soon.

Turning its pages, the sources of the color riches of natural dyeing are shown in the effective photos of the plants and the lone insect dye source—cochineal. Olga's book is a feast for the eyes while being a compendium of the dye plants of Guatemala and information about their use. It includes a history of dyeing and a section which shows examples of yarns dyed with various natural dyes used to obtain different yellows, purples, reds, oranges, blues, and browns. It speaks to the knowledge and dedication of the author and the skills of the photographer. Even to locate the dye plants in order to make the photos required much travel, patience, and persistence. Many years ago, when Olga determined to write a book about the plant dyes of Guatemala, she

wanted a book that not only served as a manual but a work of art. and a guide of the plants for botanists, natural dyers, dye enthusiasts, and scholars.

A story always lies behind the genesis of every book and Olga's is interesting and varied. She is a textile artist, an authority on natural dyeing and of the dye plants of Guatemala. As well, she is a long time activist in support of the weavers and dyers of Guatemala. Olga's work as an textile activist dates back to the conflict era of the 80s when she coordinated artisanal social projects for refugees living in jungle areas of the lowland Petén area of Guatemala. She was forced to flee to Mexico during that time.



When she was able to return to Guatemala, she continued her efforts to support Maya weavers.

While doing that, she encountered the need of alternative methods of dyeing yarns, because textile exports from Guatemala were being rejected (by many countries) because of their "AZO" content, (a very cancerous substance in the dyes). Consequently, she trained a group of Maya women to dye cotton yarns with indigo—along with additional dyes from plants and trees.

Because of her other commitments, she only found time on Sundays to dedi-

continued on page 10

More New Members

Dakota Mace
Albuquerque, NM

Diane Manning
Los Gatos, CA

Sara Miller
Portland, OR

Allen Nansubuga,
Uganda

Lynn Novotnak
Glendale, WI

Susie Robison
McCloud, CA

Alisa Ruzavina
London, UK

Rolly Thompson
Eugene, OR

Amanda Trainor
Brooklyn, NY

Anisa Zafer
Asheville, NC



Hmong Story Cloth

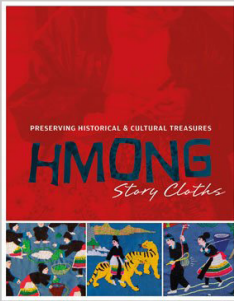
continued from page 2

artist's personal collection and later sold during a time of financial need. I clearly remember the faces and circumstances surrounding the purchase of each story cloth. My quest took me to other areas of the country with large populations of Hmong Americans. Over time, my collection grew to 51 cloths.

I never tire of looking at these treasures. Often I discover an embroidered detail, previously overlooked, that expands my knowledge of the intended story. The last wave of refugees relocated to the US around 2005. This resulted in story cloths becoming a dying art. As time passed, I felt the need to share my collection through the pages of a book with explanatory text,

photos of village life, and handcrafted artifacts that paralleled embroidered images. My dream became a reality with publication of *Hmong Story Cloths: Preserving Historical & Cultural Treasures*. This book is dedicated to the enduring spirit of the Hmong people, who shared their legacy in a culturally relevant medium that transcends time and language to speak on their behalf.

Linda A. Gerdner's love of the Hmong people led to her passion for collecting story cloths and for the learning opportunities they provide. She has traveled to the Hmong villages in rural Laos and the last refugee settlement in Thailand. Linda can be reached at lgerdner@gmail.com



***Hmong Story Cloths
Preserving Historical &
Cultural Treasures***
Linda A. Gerdner,
PhD, RN, FAAN

Schiffer Publishing - Hmong story cloths provide a visual documentation of the historical and cultural legacy of the Hmong people from the country of Laos. The Hmong first began making the story cloths during their time in refugee camps, and featured here are 48 vibrant story cloths that provide a comprehensive look at their lives and culture. Topics include history, traditional life in Laos, Hmong New Year, folk tales, and neighboring people. The quality and diversity of content of the story cloths build upon one another to provide a holistic understanding of the Hmong culture and history. Augmented with personal stories and artifacts, this book is perfect for history buffs and textile artisans alike.



Blue (Indigo) Sundays and Olga Reiche

continued from page 9

cate to writing her book about dye plants of Guatemala. She continued her "Blue Sundays" (Olga is especially devoted to indigo) over time and her present book about natural dyeing encompasses her work on those Sundays, along with other practice and research over twenty-four years.

The image many hold of Guatemala is that colorful hand woven textiles are a signature of its culture. A deeper consideration of the garments worn by many Maya women tells that much of the cotton used to weave their clothing is still chemically dyed with products manufactured by multinational companies. Many years ago, a museum curator related to me that an executive of one of these companies told her, when looking out over the scene of the Chichicastenango market, "The colors you see here are all

from our dyes." Yet, needless to say, synthetic dyes are still one of the most contaminating agents in the world.

Olga gives us a new window to understand the natural colors of Guatemala. We see that the natural dyes are subtle and are in harmony with nature and do not damage the environment. She shares her knowledge about these colors generously by giving workshops in many parts of Guatemala and to many different artisanal groups. She ends her book with an eloquent reminder of our responsibility to heed the call to protect the resources of our mother earth and of the necessity to make things and lead lives upholding such principles.

Postscript: Since 1996, I have treasured an indigo dyed shawl (rebozo or perraje) produced in a Maya women's dyeing project in collaboration with Olga. Many of those women were widows whose husbands were killed during the brutal war of the 80s.

Marilyn Anderson is an artist, photographer, and author who, since the 1970s, has researched, written books, and had exhibits about Guatemalan Mayan artists and their textile and other arts and crafts traditions. Her website is www.proartemaya.org

Plantas Tintorias de Guatemala is available at *Libreria Sophos (The Sophos Bookstore)* 4a Avenida 12-59 | Zona 10, Guatemala City 01010, Guatemala, Tel: 502 2419 7070 and *La Casa del Conde Libreria (Bookstore)* 5a Avenida Norte #4, Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala Tel: 7832-3322



Chaguar Textiles of the Wichi

continued from page 1

to gather, dry, and transport the leaves home. After the leaves are soaked overnight, Carolina beats each bundle of chaguar with an iron bar to separate the fibers and remove the pulp.

The fiber is dyed with natural dyes or simply left its off-white color. Carolina spins the fiber by taking two strands that are the length of the chaguar leaf and placing them into staggered pairs. She spins the strands by rolling them between her hand and thigh first forward and then back (see photo page one). She spins all the fiber into sets of two, then the pairs are joined by spinning together the uneven ends to create one long thread.



To begin a bag, Ana ties a thread of chaguar horizontally across the back of a chair and draws double loops over the thread (above). Ana's explanation for the origin of chaguar textiles is that "Originally, we only ate the tubers of the plant, then later the husbands asked their wives for something to carry fish in, and the women began to weave with it." A cactus spine is used for measuring the loops. The bag is created as one whole piece with the shape and pattern determined by color of the threads and the number of the stitches.

Square bags, called *hi'lus* (photos page one), are used by men for carrying fish and large banana-shaped bags, called *sichéts*, (photo page one) are used by women to carry the sweet, yellow seed-pods of the Algarroba tree. Patterns are derived from animal motifs, for example the "owl's eye" or the "iguana's belly." Traditionally, a mother would make her son his first *hi'lu* around the age of seven when he begins

his training as a hunter and fisherman. Once married, his wife would make him a new one. Used to carry necessities to and from the forest, *hi'lus* serve as a sign of manhood. As such, only a woman could provide it.

On a warp-faced vertical loom, Betina demonstrates weaving the traditional wide, long belts that men would wear



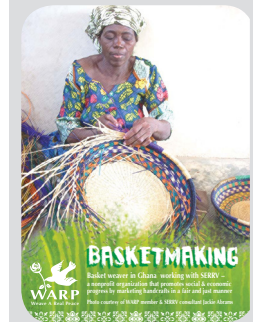
into battle or for dances (above). Now, these looms are primarily used to weave the straps for the bags.

Though grounded in tradition, the weaving and selling of these textile items has become their primary source of cash income. Through partnership with the Armstrong State University Study Abroad program, this family has been able to develop a small, artisans' center where they teach others about their textiles, traditions, and language. As they face the struggles of poverty, oppression, and disenfranchisement, they stubbornly hold on to their cultural identity while sharing it with others through their textiles.

Rachel Green is a Professor of Fibers at Armstrong State University. For the last ten years, she has directed a Study Abroad program to Salta, Argentina, visiting indigenous communities to study local crafts and assist in developing sustainable tourism industries. She can be reached at rachel.green@armstrong.edu

Postcards for WARP Members

If you would like some beautiful WARP postcards to distribute, contact Rita Chapman at info@weavearealpeace.org.





Weave a Real Peace
c/o 6182 Pollard Avenue
East Lansing, MI 48823

Oaxaca, Here We Come!

Nominating Committee Submits Slate for New Board Members

Terms for two board members, Cindy Lair and Teena Jennings, are expiring this year. Board terms are for three years with the opportunity for one additional three-year term. Both Cindy and Teena have served the additional three-year term and now must step down.

The Nominating Committee, appointed by the board of directors, was chaired by Teena Jennings with assistance from members Adrienne Sloane and Carole Pierce.

The Committee is recommending the following two WARP members as new candidates for the board – Barbara Scott and Devik Wyman. Both have submitted biographic information, which you can read below.

The election will be held at the Annual Business Meeting in Oaxaca, Mexico, on Saturday morning, June 10. Nominations can also be made from the floor.

Barbara comes to WARP from a wide background in education, health care, and non-profit administration. With degrees in International Studies and Occupational Therapy, she has directed community college programs, taught ESL, worked with community organizations in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Costa Rica, provided in-patient rehab ser-

vices, and homeschooled her son through high school. A relative newcomer to weaving, she attended her first WARP conference in Santa Fe and was delighted to find an inspiring community of talented people who share many of her interests and concerns. She welcomes the opportunity to serve this group as it continues to grow.

As the owner of a fair trade store for over fifteen years, Devik had the pleasure of meeting artisans, visiting markets, and learning about fair trade from the inside. She takes frequent trips to Mexico and Guatemala where she works directly with a few families as well as shopping the markets. Recently she's taken small groups of customers and friends to visit artisans and favorite places in Oaxaca and Guatemala. Textiles have been a long-standing interest--Devik is a quilter, and hopes to learn to weave some day. She also teaches English as a Second Language in the evenings and enjoys gardening, walking, and spending time with her family. She writes, "I've enjoyed WARP and the annual meetings so much over the years that I have been a member."



Barbara Scott



Devik Wyman

