

**PRESS RELEASE****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Ellen Ramsey  
"Rift"  
Photo: Scott Ramsey

**Bellevue Arts Museum presents**  
**American Tapestry Biennial Six**  
**American Tapestry Alliance**  
**October 6, 2006 to January 7, 2007**

**Bellevue, WA** – Bellevue Arts Museum presents the exhibition *American Tapestry Alliance Biennial Six*, is a showcase of forty-two hand woven tapestries by artists from nine nations: the United States, Denmark, Canada, Scotland, Hungary, Mexico, Germany, Belgium, and Norway.

The exhibition highlights the work of some of the best contemporary tapestry weavers in the world, whose resulting pieces represent the diverse and creative ways in which each individual artist successfully integrates contemporary issues into this ancient medium. The exhibition provides visitors with a comprehensive survey representing this craft in the hands of contemporary fiber artists. Dr. Lotus Stack, Textile Curator of the Minneapolis Institute of Art and Professor Shelly Goldsmith of Winchester School of Art in Southampton, England were asked to jury the work from 209 entries submitted from over 20 countries for this impressive exhibition.

A tapestry is a woven image which may use any number of textiles and may come in a wide range of sizes. Generally a tapestry refers to a wall-hanging which depicts a scene, but the term may also be used with other textiles to indicate that a tapestry scene is woven into an item. Various colored threads are blended together into a seemingly three dimensional shape. These

artists all use thread to create an intricate interplay of color and light with subtle shadings, juxtaposing light and dark to alter the appearance of the tapestry from various angles. Because the imagery is carried by the colored weft, which weaves through and covers the warps (threads running lengthwise), wefts (horizontal threads) do not travel from selvedge (the non-fraying edge of the fabric) to selvedge as in a typical weaving; instead, the wefts are discontinuous and their placement is determined by the overall design. The tapestries are vastly different in design and subject matter with examples of realism, abstract art, portraits, nature, landscapes, patterns, photorealism, and geometric abstraction.

Historically, tapestry has very long established traditions on five continents. Today's tapestry artists draw their inspiration from Asian, Coptic, Pre-Columbian, European and the Native American traditions, and infuse these traditions with their own contemporary issues to create tapestries that can both honor the past and challenge with fresh ideas. The 42 pieces in this exhibit which come from nine countries reveal a lively contemporary interest in exploring new materials, new dimensions and addressing contemporary issues common to all 21<sup>st</sup> century artists.

Alexandra Friedman and Christine Laffer  
Co-Directors of American Tapestry Alliance

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog with a comprehensive essay by noted tapestry scholar Dr. Jessica Hemmings. Tapestry weaving has been practiced for millennia throughout the world. In the words of Jessica Hemmings, "contemporary tapestry weavers face the considerable challenge of reconciling the rich and lengthy legacy ... with a desire to make modern, to increase relevance and respond – through fiber – to the cacophony and chaos of modern life."

An excerpt from the catalog:

Fiber may no longer feel like the mainstay of our contemporary world, but the virtual webs that technology has introduced to our daily lives most certainly are. Email has replaced hand written letters, cell phone messages and voice mail the personal visit, and films get downloaded via broadband in lieu of a trip to the cinema or theatre. Virtual though it all may be, the pervasive influence of technology is based on many of the same notions that draw us to textiles. The interconnection of seemingly discrete elements into a larger whole, the possibility of rendering material that which exists in the imagination and the security which stems from a network of connections that bind and tie individuals together are all "woven" evidence of the striking similarities to be found between our virtual and material webs.

At the Sixth Biennial of the American Tapestry Alliance viewers will see the breadths to which contemporary tapestry artists have asked the tradition to stretch. Imagery is appropriated from other medias well as born straight from the imagination: marks of graphite, photographic negatives, leaf veins and portraits both iconic and familial are all in evidence. Eye watering detail is deployed to capture the faded and uneven frank on the perforated edge of a stamp. But so too are experiences that often defy translation into material: pollen, darkness, moisture. Making material the intangible proves the expressive breadth contemporary tapestry art tackles.

Dr. Jessica Hemmings, Essayist

### **About American Tapestry Alliance**

The American Tapestry Alliance (ATA) is a non-profit educational organization. The purpose of the Alliance is to promote an awareness of and appreciation for woven tapestries designed and woven by individual artists; to establish, perpetuate and recognize superior quality tapestries by artists world-wide; to coordinate exhibitions of tapestries to establish a professional networking system for tapestry designers and weavers throughout the world; to encourage use of tapestries by corporate, liturgical and private collectors and to educate the public about the history and techniques involved in tapestry making. ATA was founded in 1982 to bring together tapestry weavers throughout North America. It has grown to include over 400 members from 24 countries. ATA is a non-profit educational organization staffed entirely by volunteers, that offers a network through which tapestry artists can interact by means of a quarterly newsletter, an active website and both educational and exhibition opportunities.

### **Bellevue Arts Museum**

Bellevue Arts Museum is the Pacific Northwest's center for the exploration of the fine art of craft and design. An emphasis is placed on regional craft artists as part of the national and international conversation on fine craft and design. Bellevue Arts Museum is located at 510 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue, WA 98004. The Museum's main information line is 425.519.0770 and website is [www.bellevuearts.org](http://www.bellevuearts.org)

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