



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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April 12 Meeting: A Night at the MFA, with Rugs from the Rudnick Collection

On Friday, April 12, NERS members are again invited to enjoy an evening at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The focus of this year's event will be Caucasian rugs from the collection of NERS founding members Mitchell and Rosalie Rudnick. Hosted by the department of Textile and Fashion Arts, the program will begin at 7 p.m. with a reception in the Upper Rotunda. This will be followed at 7:30 by a half-hour gallery tour, led by NERS member Lawrence Kearney, of six Rudnick Collection rugs on current exhibition in the

adjoining Colonnade. Attendees will then move downstairs to the spacious Riley Seminar Room, where they will be treated to ten more stellar pieces from the Rudnick Collection, brought to the museum just for the evening. NERS thanks TFA curator Lauren Whitley for organizing this special night, Lawrence for presenting an appreciation of the Rudnicks' collecting and his observations on the rugs themselves, and of course Rosalie and Mitch for sharing choice examples from their outstanding collection.

April 12 Meeting Details

Date: Friday, April 12

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

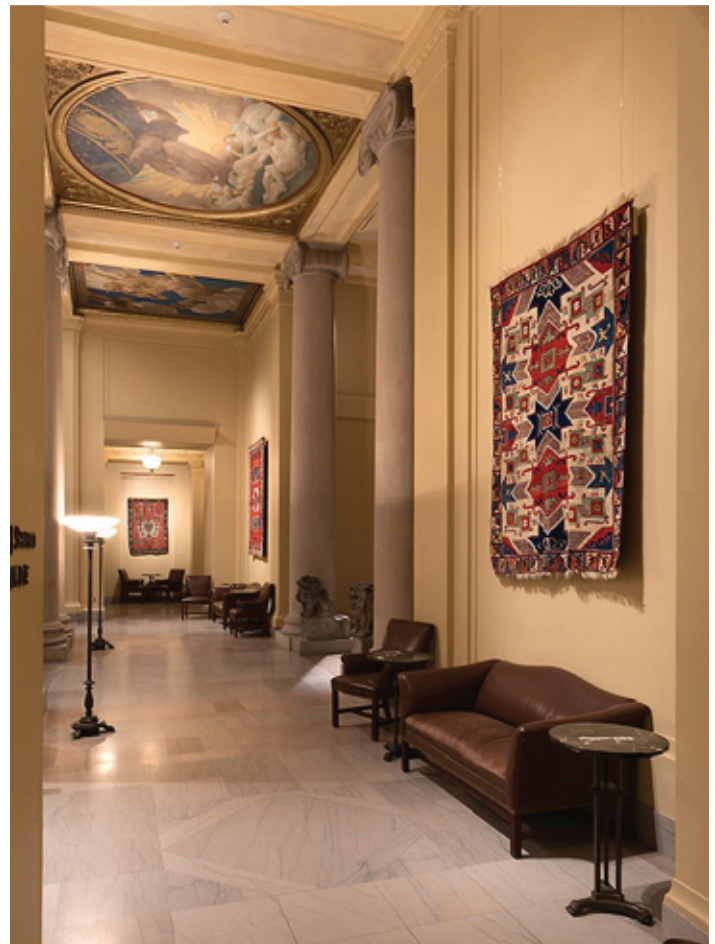
Directions: <http://www.mfa.org/visit/getting-here>

Parking: Valet parking is available at the Huntington Entrance (see **Entry**, below). Or park in the open surface lot or the garage, both off Museum Road.

Entry: Different this year! Use the **HUNTINGTON ENTRANCE** (on Huntington Avenue, the side of the Museum facing the T).

Admission: MFA members should present their membership cards just inside the Huntington Entrance. Julia will distribute complimentary tickets to NERS attendees who are not MFA members. Proceed up the Grand Staircase to the reception area.

Gathering point: Upper Rotunda, for the reception.



Three of the Rudnick carpets on exhibition at the MFA.

May 19: Annual NERS Picnic, with Moth Mart, Auction, and Show-and-Tell



Setting up for the picnic and moth mart, 2012.

Picnic Details

Date: Sunday, May 19

Time: Noon to 4 p.m.

Place: Gore Place, 52 Gore Street, Waltham

From the Mass Pike: Take exit 17 and follow signs to Rt. 20 westbound (Main St. in Watertown). After 1.5 miles, turn left onto Gore St. at the second of two adjoining traffic lights (Shell station on right). Proceed 0.2 miles on Gore St. Turn left (through center island) to Gore Place entrance.

From Rte. 128: Take exit 26 onto Rt. 20 eastbound (it starts out as Weston Road and becomes Main St.). After 3.3 miles turn right on Gore St. at the first of two adjoining traffic lights (Shell station on left). Proceed on Gore St. as above.

From Newton: Go north on Crafts St. Turn right (at traffic light) on North St. Cross the Charles River and go straight. The street eventually becomes Gore St. Gore Place entrance will be on right.

Parking: Use the parking area on the estate grounds.

The annual picnic, the last event of the 2012–13 NERS season, will be held on Sunday, May 19—rain or shine—at Gore Place, the lovely grounds of the former governor’s mansion in Waltham. We’ll again have a huge enclosed tent with water and electricity, bathrooms in the adjacent barn, tables and chairs for all, and plenty of lawn space. Bring your own picnic lunch and we’ll provide soft drinks, coffee, and tea.

Lunch will be preceded by the now-traditional and ever-popular “moth mart”; we invite NERS members (whether dealers or not) to bring things to sell, swap, or give away. Past offerings have included rugs, bags, kilims, and other textiles; books and periodicals; and even tribal jewelry and clothing. Buying is of course encouraged!

An unprecedented event at this year’s picnic will be the auction sale of five rugs and textiles (see next page) belonging to member Gillian Richardson, who is downsizing in preparation for a move to smaller quarters. As with her holdings of *HALI*, Gillian wishes her pieces to go to NERS members. In addition, she has generously offered to split the auction price with NERS.

And do not forget the final show-and-tell of the season! Bring one or two of your treasured items—mystery textiles or rugs, exotic specimens you think fellow members should know more about, or wonderful acquisitions you want to share.



1. Kurdish(?) rug and detail, NW Iran, 6' 10" x 4' 4".



2. Kuba panel, DR Congo, 2' 6" x 11' 7".



3. End panel of a French silk shawl, ca. 1815, 1' 6" x 4' 5".



4. Niche suzani, Uzbek, 4' 10" x 4'.



5. Large gadjari flatweave, Uzbek, 10' 6" x 6' 4".

March 1 Meeting Report: DeWitt Mallary on Baluch Rugs

On March 1, DeWitt Mallary spoke to NERS on his collecting passion, Baluch pile rugs. He opened by saying that three points formed the core of his message: First, that the Baluch label really encompasses a bunch of different rugs. Second, that “any and all specific attribution of these rugs should be taken with a grain of salt . . . they vary from hypothetical to imaginary.” DeWitt’s third point was more personal: that he feels “some of these rugs are really, really good.”

DeWitt indicated that, for a variety of reasons, there hadn’t been as much study of Afghanistan and its peoples and history as of its neighbors Iran, India, and the Central Asian nations. Rugs made in Afghanistan were less studied and understood as well; in illustration, he showed a picture of a Baluch rug labeled “Turkestan” in one of Schurmann’s

books from the 1970s. He also noted, “When I started out, the camel-ground prayer rug was the iconic Baluch.”

Regarding the various peoples of the region, DeWitt noted that the area was ethnically very mixed; carpet studies were further complicated because in some cases the names of some tribal groups had changed while they retained particular carpet designs, and in other instances tribal names had remained unchanged while designs varied. He felt that most of what are called Baluch pile rugs probably weren’t woven by Baluchis.

He went on to say that, in the face of this complexity, the different types of Baluch pile weavings are primarily grouped by structure, color, and wool. He listed a number of different groups of asymmetrically knotted rugs, whose names were drawn from tribes, locations, and carpet formats or types: Torbat-i-Haidari (a.k.a. Karai), Timuri, Arab, main carpets, camel-ground prayer rugs, Dokhtor-i-Ghazi, and blue-ground prayer rugs. He then showed pictures of a number of examples and talked in more detail about some of these groups.

The rugs classified as Torbat-i-Haidari most frequently have depressed warps (uncommon in other Baluch weaving), blue fields, *mina khani* designs or variants thereof, and distinctive selvages. There are deviations, though; some do not have depressed warps but share the other characteristics, as do certain examples with red or purple grounds. In response to a question about age, DeWitt replied, “The whole question of dating is as unclear as anything else about these rugs.”

The Arab group may come from the area of Firdaus, Birjand, and Tabas, in eastern Iran. These rugs are mostly asymmetrically knotted, open right (although some are open left). They are characterized by a loose, floppy weave.

Some weaving types have even more distinctive characteristics. DeWitt showed a fine camel-ground prayer rug with a flatwoven finish present only at the bottom of the rug. Another type of prayer rug, classified as Dokhtor-i-Ghazi, had a distinctive mihrab shape; such examples may come from the area of Afghanistan near Herat.

There are also symmetrically knotted groups; according to DeWitt, approximately ten to twenty percent of Baluch rugs use the Turkish knot. The two main groups of such pieces are the Bahluli and the Mushwani. The Bahluli exhibit some degree of warp depression; generally have finer weave, more colors, and shorter pile than other Baluches; and use a flat goat-hair selvaige. Pieces labeled Mushwani (also called Hazara by Michael Craycraft and Sistan by Tom Cole) tend with some exceptions to be woven in long, narrow formats;



1. Torbat-i Haidari Baluch rug.

to utilize a concentric diamond design; and to make greater use of green than other Baluches.

There are design groups that don't have a common set of characteristics: "bird" Baluches are an example. A number of other groups remain undefined as well. Furthermore, the same peoples produced flatweaves, and even less is known about such pieces.

After DeWitt concluded his prepared remarks, there was an extensive show-and-tell, featuring examples from his own collection and others brought by NERS members. In total, more than twenty-five pieces were included, representing a number of the groups and themes DeWitt had mentioned. The display started with a Torbat-i-Haidari



2. Baluch with pronounced diagonal field pattern.

rug (1). In talking about this weaving, DeWitt also made the general remark that better, older Baluch pieces often have more colors and a softer handle than their more recent counterparts.

A number of the show-and-tell pieces used diagonal-repeat designs, usually consisting of juxtaposed diamond-shaped motifs. The diagonal emphasis was often reinforced by color—an effect particularly apparent on one example that included a brilliant white (2).

In design, the show-and-tell rugs ranged from well known to very uncommon. Mushwani pieces, with their arrangements of concentric, serrated diamonds, and "bird" Baluches (3) were two of the more familiar types, even to those who are not specifically Baluch collectors. On the other hand, there were Baluches with more unusual



3. "Bird" Baluch.



4. Baluch with turreted Salor guls.

renditions of familiar forms, such as a camel-ground prayer rug whose mihrab was filled with a lattice repeat rather than the more common tree or leaf forms. This prayer rug also had an unusual panel of a different color at the bottom. A pair of bagfaces used another less common Baluch design, with a set of nine compartments in the field.

Study of Baluch designs often leads to the observation that the weavers of Baluch rugs utilized many motifs also found in Turkmen weaving. Usually, it's believed that the Turkmen renditions were earlier and the Baluch versions derivative. DeWitt echoed this thinking with the comment



5. Baluch with cruciform Tekke *gurbaghe* guls.

that a number of Turkmen designs that began to be used by Baluch weavers got more and more “Baluchified” over time. Several show-and-tell rugs had Turkmen-derived design elements; these were probably most recognizable in a piece with its main field dominated by three Salor turret guls (4). Another striking example was a camel-ground rug with a set of what appeared to be Tekke *gurbaghe* guls down the center (5). Sometimes, though, Turkmen influences were more subtle. The field of a small rug was filled with a design element known in Turkmen weaving as the *tekbent* motif. With less certain linkage, a larger Baluch carpet used a main-border motif perhaps modeled after Turkmen jewelry.

Our thanks to DeWitt—both for sharing his learning and observations as a twenty-plus-year Baluchophile, and for bringing Baluch rugs from his own collection to combine with those from NERS members for a lively show-and-tell.

Jim Adelson

March 22 Meeting Report: Sarah B. Sherrill on Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i Weaving

On March 22, at Lincoln First Parish, Sally Sherrill shared observations and photographic images of her 1975–77 fieldwork with the Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i in western Iran. She characterized this period as “the edge of the twilight”; not only were weaving craft and skill disappearing, but the nomadic lifestyle was ebbing, and, following the Iranian revolution, the opportunity for Americans to observe firsthand would soon vanish.

Sally recapped the primary reason for migration: the search for suitable climate for tribespeople and their animals. Each of the tribal groups had established lands for winter and summer. The Bakhtiari had been in Iran the longest and spoke an Iranian language, in contrast with the Turkic of other South Persian tribal groups. Nomadic Bakhtiari were known as Luri Bakhtiari, while those who had settled were simply Bakhtiari.

Turning to Bakhtiari migration, Sally showed slides of tribesmen wearing distinctive blue-and-white coats and round, black hats. (In the nineteenth century, these hats had been white.) She then showed animals carrying various utilitarian woven items. Mixed-technique bags were used to transport grain, the resulting flour, and other items. Flatwoven bands served to secure the bags to pack animals. Spoon bags carried the wooden spoons for which they're named, but also household articles, bread, and more modern items such as radios. Salt bags held the salt needed by the animals. Horse covers were used not when the horse was being ridden but rather for warmth when the day's migration was complete or for show during ceremonies.

Sally explored flatwoven bands in more detail, indicating that the good, and often older, ones have more patterns. While such bands continued to be woven in the 1970s, she said that she was not sure they are still being made. Their warp-faced, warp-twined structure gave them the strength important for their function (she illustrated their use on donkeys and in supporting an infant cradle). The primary technique employed to produce them, card or tablet weaving, is not that difficult, she reported; she herself had done a bit of it. Nevertheless, the more complex bands required considerable skill. She showed a series of slides of a Bakhtiari woman weaving on a ground loom, with warps stretched as long as 30 to 35 feet. The warps passed through a set of cards, and the cards were twisted to cause different warps to come to the surface and form the design. The weaver then used a wooden beater to push the weft tightly into place, before moving to the next round of card twists to continue the design.



Sally Sherrill.

Regarding Bakhtiari village weaving, Sally reported that significant numbers of Bakhtiari have been settled for centuries; she illustrated a prominent Bakhtiari village west of Isfahan that dated to the seventeenth century. Virtually all of the dyeing in the village was still done with natural dyestuffs. In fact, the weavers themselves produced all the colors but blue and green, since these hues required a more complex process, handled by specialist indigo dyers. Red shades were achieved using madder, and there were a number of sources for yellow, with grape leaves being the most common. She showed views of red-dyed skeins hung out to dry, and noted that a classic Bakhtiari rose shade was produced by placing madder-dyed wool in yogurt water.

She then illustrated an indigo dyer at work; she explained that indigo dyeing is an oxidation process, with the dye solution being clear and the color appearing only when the wool is removed from the dye bath and exposed to air. Because the indigo solution had to be kept from undue contact with air and light, the dyers worked in dark conditions and covered dye baths with tightly woven wicker lids. Deeper shades of blue were produced by repeated dippings. Green and purple resulted from immersing yellow- or red-dyed wool in indigo.

Bakhtiari village weaving was done on both vertical and ground looms. Many carpets were produced from cartoons. Sally explained that since these cartoons were expensive, families would acquire certain ones and then copy others belonging to their neighbors in order to expand the repertoire of designs that each had to work with. Even with the aid of cartoons, it took considerable skill to render the more complex design elements of the typical central-medallion and square-compartment carpets.

Having focused on the Bakhtiari, Sally then turned to the Qashqa'i, who were somewhat more prosperous; her slides showed a wealthier subtribe migrating via costly camels as well as donkeys. She even had the chance to visit a Qashqa'i khan whose tent, while furnished with many weavings, featured as its "prize possession" a full-size refrigerator, hooked up to a generator, with cold Coke inside!

Sally showed Qashqa'i women working on ground looms, making several types of flatweaves, including one with a warp-faced structure and another with tufts of pile to enhance the design. Reflecting the family nature of the weaving effort, one of her slides depicted a group of young Qashqa'i girls spinning the wool.

She then illustrated different Qashqa'i weaving formats. Of several horse covers, one outstanding example depicted figures in the wedding ceremony. Bags were of various types, including pile-faced double bags with hooked-diamond central medallions or overall botehs. Flatwoven bags featured a characteristic blue-and-white, warp-dominant pattern in the main field and multicolored borders and selvages. She showed several Qashqa'i kilims and a pile gabbeh with a kilim design.

The show-and-tell consisted mainly of Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i examples from NERS collections. First was a Bakhtiari mixed-technique double bag, with soumak faces, piled bottoms and corners, and striped kilim backs with characteristic white soumak panels. Next was another Bakhtiari double bag, also utilizing multiple techniques but lacking the white panels of the previous example. Smaller examples included a Bakhtiari soumak bag with the diamonds

in the main field extending into the border, a pile bag with a soumak back, and a pile salt bag with several stripes of piled design on an otherwise flatwoven back.

Qashqa'i weavings were well represented. An extremely fine pile-faced double bag utilized silk wefts to permit its density of design. A second bag had a similar design in coarser, but still relatively fine, pile. A third featured many small plant forms in its square main field **(1)** and a contrasting, plain red kilim back with a miniature "eyedazzler" design in the center **(2)**. There was also an example of the sort of warp-faced, alternate-float weave blue-and-white double bag that Sally had pictured in her talk.

Representing other South Persian weavers, two pieces were attributed to the Khamseh: a pile bag with nine small medallions on the face and a plain red kilim back, and a small rug with a design similar to that found on flatwoven *ru-korsi*, but rendered in pile and in smaller scale. The show-and-tell concluded with a modern South Persian kilim, made perhaps ten years ago, indicating continuing tribal production of at least some woven items.

Our great thanks to Sally for her first-hand observations and excellent slides. While she was very careful to link her findings to the 1970s, and to note possible differences from activity and weaving prior to 1900, her informative presentation allowed us to see daily practices that collectors otherwise know, if at all, only through narrative descriptions in books.

Jim Adelson



(1) Qashqa'i bag with plant-filled knotted-pile face.



(2) Kilim back of the same Qashqa'i bag.

In Memoriam: Ingeborg Tschebull

Ingeborg Tschebull, a member of NERS since 1997, passed away on January 24, following a long illness. Together with her husband, Raoul (“Mike”), Inge founded and ran Tschebull Antique Carpets in Darien, Connecticut. She and Mike generously shared their private collection with NERS and the wider public, lending some of the most admired rugs to the ACOR 8 exhibition “New England Collects” (Boston, 2006) and regularly bringing outstanding examples to show-and-tells at the annual picnic.

Inge was born September 14, 1939, in Gablonz in the Sudetenland (now part of the Czech Republic), and grew up in Fuerth, near Nuremberg, Germany. In 1965, after attending the Free University of Berlin, she moved to New York City to work as a journalist for German publications. There she met Mike, and in 1967 they were married. With him and their two children, Johanna and Jens, she moved back to Europe in 1975, when Mike took assignments with an international bank in Germany and Spain. The family returned to the United States in 1982 and settled in Darien; shortly thereafter, Inge and Mike launched their carpet business.

Inge is survived by her husband, her two children, a sister, a niece, and a granddaughter. A memorial service will be held at the family home in Darien on May 11 (for further information, contact Julia before April 15: juliabailey@rcn.com). Fellow NERS members will miss Inge’s fair, smiling presence and discerning taste, and we offer our condolences to Mike.



Inge Tschebull in Gubbio, Umbria, ca. 2007.

Rug and Textile Events

Auctions of rugs and related arts

Boston: May 11, Skinner, Fine Oriental Rugs and Carpets

London: April 23, Christie’s King St., Oriental Rugs and Carpets

April 23, Bonhams, Indian and Islamic Art

April 24, Sotheby’s King St., Arts of the Islamic World

April 25, Christie’s King St., Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds

April 26 Christie’s South Kensington, Arts of Islam

New York: June 5, Important Carpets from the William A. Clark Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art

Wiesbaden: May 25, Rippon Boswell, Major Spring Auction: Collectors’ Carpets

Exhibitions of interest

Boston: through November 1, Museum of Fine Arts, “Caucasian Rugs from the Collection of Mitchell and Rosalie Rudnick”

Cambridge: through June 1, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, “In Harmony: Islamic Art from the Norma Jean Calderwood Collection”

Fairs

London: April 18–21, London Antique Rug and Textile Fair (LARTA)

Photo Credits

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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. Our meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120, Student \$25. Membership information and renewal forms are available on our website, www.ne-rugsociety.org; by writing to the New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 290393, Charlestown, MA 02129; or by contacting Jim Sampson at jahome22@gmail.com.



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