



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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September 11 Meeting: Heather Ecker on Spanish Carpets



Heather Ecker

At the first meeting of the 2015–16 season, independent scholar and writer Heather Ecker will introduce NERS members to Spanish carpets, discussing aspects of their designs, manufacture, commissioning, survival, and presence in American collections today.

Knotted-pile carpets utilizing the single-warp knot were woven in Spain, principally by Muslim women, at least as early as the tenth century. This major rug-weaving tradition flowered until the early seventeenth century, declining with the expulsion of the Moriscos (descendants of Muslims forced to convert to Christianity). Two separate and unrelated carpet-weaving traditions also arose: at the Royal Tapestry Factory in Madrid, established in 1721 by Habsburg ruler Philip V, and in the Alpujarra Mountains, home of a folkloric production of looped-pile rugs. These latter two traditions continue today.

Heather Ecker is the founder and manager of Viridian Projects, LLC, an interdisciplinary art consulting company. From 2011 to 2013, she served as Head of Curatorial Affairs

September 11 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Durant-Kenrick House, 286 Waverley Avenue
Newton Centre, MA, 02458

Directions: From Boston and east, take Mass Pike to exit 17 and follow signs for Boston/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre St. for 0.1 miles. Go LEFT on Franklin St. for 0.3 miles. Turn RIGHT on Waverley and go 0.2 miles. House is on LEFT.

From Rt. 128 and west, take Mass Pike to exit 17, turn RIGHT onto Centre Street, and follow directions above.

From Watertown Square: Take Galen Street (Rt. 16) toward Newton Centre for 0.4 miles. Continue to Washington St. toward West Newton/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre Street and follow directions above.

Parking: On Kenrick Street. Parking places at the end of the Durant-Kenrick House driveway may be used for dropping off people or supplies, but **NOT for parking during the meeting.**

Food: Provided by members whose last names begin **H** though **P**. Please arrive before 6:45 to set up, and stay to clean up after the meeting.

at the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto. Previously, she was Curator of Islamic Art and Department Head of Arts of Asia and the Islamic World at the Detroit Institute of Arts. In 2003–4, she was the guest curator of “Caliphs and Kings: The Art and Influence of Islamic Spain, Selections from the Hispanic Society of America at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Freer Gallery of Art.” She is currently working with conservator Monica Katz on a catalogue of the Spanish carpets at the Hispanic Society.

October 23 Meeting: Honoring Ann Nicholas and Rich Blumenthal



Rich Blumenthal and Ann Nicholas with their Qashqa'i horse blanket

Ann Nicholas and Rich Blumenthal are moving to Austin, Texas! Before they leave us, the October meeting offers us the opportunity to see choice examples from their collection (yes, it too is going to Texas), and to say our fond goodbyes.

Ann and Rich joined NERS in 1989. Since 2010, Ann has served as NERS co-chair and Rich has run the digital projector at meetings and managed the sales of rug books donated to NERS. As newsletter contributors, Rich has supplied photographs and Ann has interviewed members and reported on rug shows, exhibitions, and conferences.

The two began collecting in the late 1980s, focusing exclusively on small South Persian tribal weavings. Later, to complement an exhibition of their collection at ACOR 8, in Boston (see ne-rugsociety.org/gallery/acor-swp/index.htm), they began searching for photographs of such pieces being used in South Persian nomadic life. They also published a two-part series, "South Persian Tribal Weavings" and "Knotted-Pile Saddlebags," in *HALI* 150 and 151 (2007),

October 23 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

Directions: From Rt. 95 (128), take exit 28B, Trapelo Road West. Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there's a white planter in the middle of the intersection). Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on the right. First Parish is on your left.

From Rt. 2, take Bedford Road, Lincoln Center exit (eastbound, turn right at the light; westbound, go through light, turn right, and circle 270° to cross Rt. 2 at the light). Proceed 0.9 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your left. First Parish is on your right.

Parking: Park in the lot behind the parish house, along the street, or in front of Bemis Hall if that building is dark and not in use.

Food: Provided by members whose names begin with **R** through **Z**. Please arrive before 6:45 to set up, and stay afterwards to clean up.

and have spoken to many American rug societies, including NERS.

For the October program, Ann and Rich will bring twelve weavings and some photographs representing the breadth of their collections. Lloyd Kannenberg will act as their interviewer, asking them prearranged questions to allow for an orderly show of digital images, but tossing in a few unexpected ones for drama. The format will enable Ann and Rich to discuss the examples they have brought to the meeting (including the Qashqa'i horse blanket shown in the photo above), to share their "war stories" about NERS and the rug community, and to impart lessons they have learned from twenty-five years of acquiring pieces for their collection,

Finally, they encourage any member with a favorite South Persian weaving to share it at a celebratory show and tell following their presentation.

Co-Chair Report for the 2014–15 Season (and News of Coming Changes)

Leadership

Ann Nicholas and Julia Bailey have completed their fifth (and penultimate) season as Co-Chairs of NERS. Ann's major roles throughout her tenure have been managing the speaker program, handling NERS finances, and arranging meeting venues. Julia edits and produces the newsletter and has run the meetings. Other Steering Committee members who have kept NERS going are Lloyd Kannenberg and Louise Dohanian, who transport our amplification system and screen as well as food supplies; Joel Greifinger, who with Rich Blumenthal has handled the digital projection equipment; Jim Sampson, who manages our membership rolls and distributes newsletters and other announcements; newsletter writer Jim Adelson, who so ably reports on speaker presentations; and other regular or occasional newsletter contributors Jeff Spurr, Ann, and Lloyd. Jeff posts upcoming meetings on www.RugRabbit.com. Yon Bard is our meeting photographer. Richard Larkin fills in as needed; this year he subbed for Jim Adelson, reviewing the Montague-Dohanian meeting on rug care. Richard Belkin found us our Durant-Kenrick venue and has been instrumental in organizing our meetings there.

Julia and Ann will give up their Co-Chair roles at the end of the 2015–16 season. (Ann and her husband, Rich, have already left their Charlestown home for a new one in Austin, Texas.) In anticipation of the Co-Chairs' departure, other Steering Committee members will take on additional roles, starting immediately. Most significantly, Joel Greifinger will become Program Chair, working with Ann to implement speaker and meeting-venue arrangements. Jim Sampson will take charge of NERS finances, and meetings will be run by Jeff, Joel, and possibly other committee members.

Meetings and speakers, 2014–15

Meetings during the past season focused on the history, design, conservation, and collectibility of rugs, textiles, and fragments. In September, at the Durant-Kenrick House, Jeff Spurr discussed the history of the Kashmir shawl in Persia and its impact on Persian dress and rug design.

At the October meeting, at ALMA, MFA textile conservator Meredith Montague and Bon Ton Rug Cleansers CEO Buzz Dohanian gave informative (and cautionary) presentations on cleaning rugs and protecting them from pests.

In November, at Lincoln First Parish, John Collins illustrated the history, design range, and aesthetic appeal of Shahsevan sumak and pile bags, supplementing his slides with some fifty examples from his collection.

Despite record snowfall in February, twenty intrepid members made their way to a special daytime meeting at the

Durant-Kenrick House, where ACOR-sponsored speaker Ali Tuna detailed his reconstruction of lost Turkish carpets from their depictions in Renaissance paintings.

The March meeting, at the MFA, featured member Raoul "Mike" Tschebull's gallery tour of six kilims from his collection, followed by his slide talk on Caucasian rug design.

In April, at First Parish, Beau Ryan extolled the beauty and collectibility of fragments (see pp. 4–6).

The May picnic, at Gore Place, concluded the season with a book sale, a silent auction, the customary moth mart, and an eclectic post-lunch show and tell (see pp. 8–9).

Finances and Membership

Our finances have remained sound; we again ended the season with a budget surplus, due in large part to the generosity of Life member Gillian Richardson. Membership in NERS decreased modestly, from 122 to 118, but we added eight new members—**Marion Nina Amber, Robert Bergelson, Barbara Kaslow, Michael Lesniak and Jessica Allen, Susan Ward, and Donald Woodford and Katy Zeiger**—and a former member, **Stephan Landrigan**, rejoined. We continue to be one of the largest and most active American rug societies. True to our name, the great majority of our members hail from New England (with every state represented). But a few of us are from farther away: New York (3), Texas (3), Pennsylvania (1), and California (1), plus an international member from Austria.

Special acknowledgment is due to our Supporting and Patron members, whose "above and beyond" generosity has helped maintain our financial health. Supporting members for 2014–15 are **John Clift, Jeremy and Hanne Grantham, Barbara Kaslow, Gary and Susan Lind-Sinanian, Barbara Matheson, Selma Newburgh, Ann Nicholas and Rich Blumenthal, Nina and Tim Rose, Klaudia Shepard, Steve and Harmony Sponberg, and Alan Varteresian**. Patron members, who support NERS at the highest level, are **Jim Adelson and Debbie Sheetz, Doug and Julia Bailey, Richard Belkin, Louise and Buzz Dohanian, Michael and Nancy Grogan, Lloyd and Susan Kannenberg, Lena and Charles Nargozian, Mitch and Rosalie Rudnick, Beau Ryan, and Julian Taibi**. Thank you all.

In conclusion, we the co-chairs extend to every NERS member our warm thanks for your support during the past season. We hope that, during the transitional year to come, you'll consider volunteering to help organize activities, and continue to offer the encouragement, enthusiasm, and constructive ideas so necessary to keeping our society vital and rewarding.

Julia Bailey and Ann Nicholas

April Meeting Review: Beau Ryan on Collecting Fragments

On April 17, at Lincoln First Parish, NERS member, dealer, and collector Beau Ryan spoke to the group on collecting carpet and textile fragments. To illustrate his presentation, he used both images and actual examples from his collection **(1)**.

He opened his talk by noting that fragment collecting isn't limited to carpets; fragments are prized in many other sorts of art, including ceramics and drawing. Showing one of many bits of the Great Sphinx's beard, he defined a fragment as an isolated or incomplete part of something. Nevertheless, he added, a great fragment can be read like a complete piece.

Certain specific features, Beau explained, attract him to fragments. As a dealer, he's buying and selling rugs for a living, and fragments are something he can afford to keep. If, for instance, he owns a complete carpet and can get \$50K or more for it, "it's out the door." In contrast, a small fragment is something he can hang onto and relish, something that provides "an awful lot of bang for the buck."

Beau proceeded to illustrate some fragments he

has owned. One was a section of a seventeenth-century Chinese carpet, featuring a dragon motif and a Greek-key border. Next was an embroidery: two pieces of a Lakai belt. Third came two incomplete Afshar bagfaces, leading him to speculate on how partial a piece has to be to count as a fragment. He next showed part of a rug, perhaps Sauj Bulagh, with a *herati* field design **(see p. 17, bottom right)**.

He then reminisced about a striking Turkmen tent-band fragment he'd once owned, which had come from a house in the Tuckernuck section of Nantucket. Several sections of the band had been joined side-by-side to form a rectangular assemblage. Even Jack Cassin had been complimentary about it, which Beau said was unprecedented in his experience.

Beau went on to talk about how and why rugs become fragmentary. People may actually create fragments, often to fit a certain space. Fragments aren't always just a matter of subtraction: he showed a picture of a northwest Persian fragment to which new tassels had been attached. He also noted "fragments being used for other things"—for instance, a Tibetan hat made from bits of an earlier Chinese robe. He added that certain aspects could diminish a fragment's appeal, and pictured a carpet fragment with heavy wear in the center that distracted from its merits.

Showing a beautiful little vase carpet fragment **(2)** (deaccessioned from the Brooklyn Museum) that he had acquired and sold, Beau spoke as a dealer, noting, "I feel happy that it's headed on to a good home." He concluded his slide talk by summarizing, "You can find some pretty amazing things in [the form of] fragments, when you could never find or afford the whole piece."



1. Beau Ryan with some of his fragments



2. Seventeenth-century vase carpet fragment formerly in Beau's collection, shown at the NERS picnic in 2013



3. Velvet ikat fragment, Bukhara

Then he turned to actual examples—most but not all of them woven—that he'd brought from his collection. First was part of a sixteenth-century Iznik tile; then came a section of an embroidered Mughal covering, then a Ming or earlier Chinese silk. He showed two circular pile-woven fragments, one from a Chodor *chuval*, that had been cut to go under glass atop small tables. A colorful velvet ikat fragment (3) had been mounted on a monochrome backing, leading Beau to observe that it appeared “like a window.” He then showed a long section of a *kelleh*-sized Kırşehir or Mucur runner (4), saying, “If ever I was tempted to cut



4. Unwieldy but still beautiful remains of a Kırşehir or Mucur runner

something up, this would be it.” But, he added, he never cuts up whole rugs (or even ragged remains of them), although in the case of this oversized fragment, smaller portions of it would be easier to display. Next he held up an exquisite Salor border fragment with silk details (1), which had once belonged to a main carpet. “Having a Salor,” he remarked, “is like having a Fifth Avenue apartment.” He also showed a large Chodor *ertmen*-gul fragment, likely from a main carpet, with a red background and a few human figures (5). Such red-ground Chodor pieces, he thought, were extremely uncommon. Turning to textiles, he showed part of the end panel from a Kashmir shawl, noting, “The shawl market seems to be on fire these days.” His other textile fragments included an embroidery, possibly Greek, that he'd gotten from Andy Lloyd, and a metallic-thread fragment bought from John Taylor via RugRabbit. Returning to a last pile fragment, he concluded with a Yomud main-carpet elem with large, colorful design motifs.



5. Detail of a red-ground Chodor carpet fragment, some of its *ertman* guls containing human figures



6. Salor “turreted-gul” *chuval* fragment

A show and tell of NERS members' fragments followed Beau's presentation. Turkmen examples formed the largest category, with fragments from an Ersari main carpet, a Salor *chuval* (6), a Yomud tent band, a Salor main carpet (7), a Tekke *ak-chuval*, and two embroidered Tekke *chyrpys* (8). From Anatolia, there were fragments of two kilims and of a very old Ladik prayer-rug border (9). In several cases, members showed multiple fragments from the same original, or two extremely similar fragments, that they had obtained at different times and from different dealers. Every so often, it seems, collecting fragments provides the opportunity to go in the opposite direction—to reassemble something, or at least to reunite portions of it.

Our thanks to Beau for extolling the collectible and commercial merits of fragments, and for bringing so many examples to educate and entertain us.

Jim Adelson



7–9. Fragments of a Salor main carpet, a Tekke *chyrpy* (woman's cloak), and a Ladik prayer-rug border

Calling All Members: Your Chance to Speak at Our April Meeting

Our April meeting will be an experiment. We're looking for volunteers! We plan to have a number of members (likely five) speak about a particular type of textile that they know. It could be any weaving type—it's not limited to rugs. Each speaker should select three or four examples representing a spectrum of good, better, and outstanding and explain what distinguishes them, whether it's design, color, materials, weaving execution, or some other feature.

Speakers will present from images, but we ask that they bring to the meeting at least one of their chosen examples, whether it's from their own collection or another source. Each speaker's presentation should be approximately ten minutes.

Because of the brief and informal nature of the talks, we hope that a range of members will be willing to speak about areas of personal collecting/research interest. You may not think this is something you can do, but think again! This is your opportunity to get others to appreciate a particular type of weaving the way that you do. Here's the process:

- Pick the weaving type and the examples you'll include.
- By December 1, write up a paragraph describing your chosen type and some elements that distinguish your selected pieces, and send it, along with images, to Joel Greifinger (greifing@comcast.net) and Jim Adelson (jamesadelson@charter.net). The images you submit at this point don't have to be your final ones, but you must be sure you'll ultimately be able to get high-quality images that, when projected, will let viewers who may be sitting fifty feet away see and understand the differences you're highlighting.
- By early January, Joel and Jim will indicate which speakers they'd like to include in April. (If there are more speakers and topics than we can fit in, and if the session is well received, we'll bring it back in a future year to give others a turn.)
- Participating speakers will have until the end of January to get and provide their high-quality images. In early to mid-February, Joel and Jim will verify that the images will work and confirm the speakers, giving them time to prepare their remarks by April, and letting us publicize the session's content in this newsletter.

Please consider volunteering: think of it as a chance for "fifteen minutes of fame" for both you and a favorite weaving type!

Jim Adelson

Rug and Textile Events

Auctions

Sept. 19, Wiesbaden, Rippon Boswell, General Rug Sale
Sept. 21, Vienna, Dorotheum, Carpets, Textiles & Tapestries
Sept. 26, Boston, Skinner, Fine Oriental Rugs & Carpets
Sept. 27, Boston, Grogan & Company, September Auction
Oct. 1, New York, Sotheby's, Carpets & Textiles from Distinguished Collections
Oct. 6, London, Christie's, Oriental Rugs & Carpets
Oct. 8, London, Christie's King St., Arts & Textiles of the Islamic & Indian Worlds
Oct. 14, New York, Christie's, Opulent Eye
Nov. 3, London, Sotheby's, Rugs & Carpets from Distinguished Collections

Exhibitions

Until Oct. 19, Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, "A Thirst for Riches: Carpets from the East in Paintings from the West"
Until Nov. 1, San Francisco, Asian Art Museum, "Woven Luxuries: Indian, Persian, and Turkish Velvets from the Indictor Collection"

Fairs

Oct. 15–18, San Francisco, Antique Rug & Textile Show (ARTS), Motel Capri

Future NERS Meetings

- November 21 (Saturday afternoon):
Kendra Weisbin, "Rugs and Other Islamic Arts in the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum."
GWVS Museum, Springfield
- February: Susan Lind-Sinanian,
"Armenian Orphan Rugs," ALMA, Watertown

Photo Credits

p. 1: Heather Ecker; p. 2: Ann Nicholas; pp. 4–6: Julia Bailey (figs. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7–9), Yon Bard (figs. 2, 6); p. 8: Julia Bailey (top, center), Jim Sampson (bottom); p. 9: Yon Bard (top and bottom rows, center row right), Jim Sampson (center row left); pp. 10–11: Şeref Özen (figs. 1, 3–5), Julia Bailey (fig. 2); pp. 12–15: Alberto Boralevi (fig. 1), David Hunt (fig. 2), ICOC (figs. 3, 4), *HALI* (figs. 5–7); p. 16: David Meikle; p. 17 (from top, l to r), row 1: Yon Bard, Julia Bailey, Yon Bard; row 2: Doug Bailey; row 3: Yon Bard; row 4: Ali Tuna, Yon Bard, Ali Tuna, Ali Tuna; row 5: Mike Tschbull, Mike Tschbull, Yon Bard, Mike Tschbull; row 6: Yon Bard

May 24 Meeting: Annual Picnic

On a summery Sunday, members and their guests arrived at the annual NERS picnic to find the lush Gore Place grounds newly refurbished and landscaped. Pre-lunch shopping opportunities included a table of bargain-priced books and a silent auction **(top)**, plus an array of moth-mart offerings—rugs, textiles, and even a painting **(center)**. After plenty of food and conversation, the picnickers shared rugs and textiles from their collections at an eclectic show and tell **(bottom and next page)**.



Top row: Caucasian sumak *sileh* panel; Karachoph Kazak fragment; Kuba prayer rug; Khamseh (SW Persian) pile band (detail).

Middle row: Afshar pile *khorrjin* and back; SE Anatolian kilim-woven fragment of a grain sack.

Bottom row: Chang Naga headhunter's wrap with cowrie shells, Nagaland; Berber woman's tie-dyed headscarf, Tunisia; child's embroidered top, Sumatra.



ARTS East, MAY 29–31, 2015

Anticipation ran high among New England collectors in late May, as ARTS East, the first Boston-area rug and textile show since ACOR 8, came to Dedham. The exhibitors—previous participants in the annual San Francisco Antique Rug and Textile Show (ARTS)—set up in the former auction galleries of Grogan & Company. The event also included an exhibition of privately owned Kazaks in the small entrance gallery (1); the larger rooms of the building were outfitted with twenty booths for the dealers.

The Kazaks provided a powerful introduction to rug design and color (2). “I always wanted to do an exhibition of Kazaks,” curator Michael Grogan explained. “I love the spark and immediate bold language they provide. The exhibition has some outstanding pieces lent by area collectors.”

The dealers’ area was extensive, beautiful, and well-designed. The open booths and good lighting allowed the pieces on offer to take center stage (3, 4). In spite of unusually hot weather, more than a hundred people attended



1. Michael Grogan's exhibition of Kazaks borrowed from private collections



2. Exemplary Star Kazak



3. NERS Program Chair Joel Greifinger examines the offerings of Colorado dealer Michael Phillips. Rugs and textiles of Istanbul dealer Şeref Özen are displayed behind Joel and to his right.

the Friday opening, although traffic over the weekend was slower. The majority of attendees were from the New England area. The rugs and textiles for sale were of generally high quality and, considering the realities of the current marketplace, reasonably priced. The dealers reported mixed results: a few had a good show, and others did less well, although everyone sold some things.

Was ARTS East a success? It was a fine beginning, attracting twenty US and international dealers and a diversity

of good rugs and textiles. There was the Kazak exhibition, plentiful food (5), and an enthusiastic group of attendees. If ARTS East is to become an annual event, however, it must draw more customers from outside the New England area. Ben Banayan reports the participating dealers' consensus favoring another such show, and their sense of its potential. Efforts are already underway to find a suitable venue for next year and to identify ways to attract a wider audience.

Ann Nicholas



4. Browsers, including members Judy Smith and Rich Blumenthal, in the booth of Andy Lloyd (Bath, England)



5. Food and conversation among the rugs on opening day: members pictured include Arthur Mahfuz, Judy Smith, Ralph Bradburd, Doug Bailey, Erika Jorjorian, and Joel Greifinger.

ICOC XIII in Washington, August 6–9, 2015



1. *HALI* editor Ben Evans (center) interviews Marshall and Marilyn Wolf about their collection

The thirteenth International Conference on Oriental Carpets (ICOC), in Washington, DC, was scheduled to coincide with the final days of the inaugural exhibition at the newly constructed home of the Textile Museum (TM) on the campus of George Washington University (GWU). That exhibition, “Unraveling Identity: Our Textiles, Our Stories” (reviewed in the previous issue of *View from the Fringe*) and the TM’s financial footing and future plans were important elements in many of the conversations that took place among the relatively small group of presenters, dealers, and participants who gathered August 6–9 in Foggy Bottom.

A common lament at these sorts of conferences is that, with their simultaneous academic panels, poster presentations, and multiple supplementary exhibitions, it is impossible to attend everything. Such was not the case here. Unlike past ICOCs, which often had fourteen academic sessions over four days, here there were five **(1)**, plus a culminating show and tell on the third morning. On its website, ICOC mentions that “all conferences since 1986 have featured between six and eight exhibitions.” Counting the TM exhibition, this ICOC had four **(2)**. The “Carpet Fair” at the Hilton Garden Hotel featured the wares of fifteen dealers, whereas in 1996, at ICOC VIII in Philadelphia, there had been forty-three. At what was probably the high point of participation,

the 2007 conference in Istanbul had 700 registered participants. The last one in Stockholm in 2011 was reported to be a more subdued affair, with only about 500. From what I could glean from turnout at the two-thirds filled auditorium where the sessions were held, I would estimate that ICOC XIII had, at most, about 185. Organized and announced only months before the event, it was being referred to by the time it opened as “ICOC Lite,” when the larger rug community was referring to it at all. Nonetheless, for the “happy few,” a lot of what was on offer was well worth braving the storied humidity of DC in August.

Following greetings from ICOC Executive Committee Chair Wendel Swan, the first session of the program, titled “New Trends in Carpet Studies,” began. After an overview of older trends by Alberto Boralevi, there were more pointed papers by Elena Tsareva, John Wertime, Jim Ford, Heather Ecker, and Dennis Dodds. I found the last three to be particularly interesting, so will focus on two of them. (The third was Heather Ecker’s impeccably documented and argued presentation on a small group of fifteenth-century Spanish carpets, which NERS members will have the opportunity to hear in expanded form at our September 11 meeting.)

The Ford and Dodds presentations formed an interesting contrast in that they represented two quite different



2. Conference attendees enjoy the International Hajji Baba Society exhibition at David Zahirpour's gallery

approaches to carpet studies. Ford's paper, "The Birth of the Persian Carpet," challenged Arthur Upham Pope's characterization of early Persian medallion carpets as having been woven either at the court center in Tabriz or anywhere else in Northwest Persia. His thesis was tightly argued and methodologically modest, emphasizing the need to move from clearly demonstrable evidence to specific conclusions, in this case the origin of these carpets in the provincial capital Shiraz.

In counterpoint, the scope and speculative foray of the Dodds presentation, "Kufesque *Lam-Alif* Inscriptions: Hidden Messages in Rug Designs," seemed to harken back to the earlier era of rug commentators that Boralevi had surveyed. Identifying myriad and far-flung variations on *lam-alif* "tall-short-tall" patterns in Islamic rugs across eras and regions, Dodds concluded that the weavers of early Kufic-bordered carpets shared with their later counterparts who wove Lesghi stars into Caucasian rugs in the nineteenth century an awareness that by marking their products with the name of Allah in hidden script, they were imbuing them with *baraka*, or sacredness. While he traversed a wide range of design variations and inversions plausibly based on the *lam-alif* configuration, Dodds's imputing consciousness of its spiritual significance to weavers in all of the eras,

societies, and cultures represented seemed a large leap beyond the evidence.

The next session, "Carpet Museology in the Last Fifteen Years," featured reports on various new museums devoted to carpets and textiles, as well as on the re-presentation of the Islamic art collections of the Metropolitan Museum, the Louvre, and the V&A, among others. Roya Taghiyeva's talk, "The New Baku Carpet Museum," included a brief video, which made for an interesting cross-cultural look at museum marketing. Suzan Bayraktaroğlu gave a survey of existing Vakıflar carpet exhibitions (including, in Istanbul, the display in the renovated soup kitchen of Hagia Sophia), and of ones planned in other locations throughout Turkey. Walter Denny (who spoke to NERS on a similar topic in September 2013) gave a wide-ranging and, as always, witty and critically insightful talk on the centrality of "curatorial advocacy" to the success of even those museum ventures that can meet other crucial requirements of budget, space, conservation, and scholarship. If there aren't curators effectively speaking in the interests of the particular artifacts, such ventures can, as he illustrated, come out badly.

The other speakers in this session represented the Textile Museum, and in some ways it felt as if their presentations addressed a critical concern of many in the rug community,

particularly in the US. The title of Bruce Baganz's talk, "The Textile Museum: Sustainability Assured," telegraphed that it was meant to allay concerns and criticisms of the affiliation between the TM and GWU. Beginning in a somewhat defensive tone, Baganz, the President of the TM Board of Trustees, argued that minutes from board meetings with founder George Hewitt Myers showed his regular insistence that the TM could only survive if it found a larger institution to affiliate with. Baganz spelled out the terms of the GWU affiliation and tried to show that they leave the TM's collection intact and well cared for, even in the event of a sundering of the arrangement. On that encouraging note, Senior Curator Sumru Belger Krody spoke about TM plans to increase opportunities for scholarship and research in conjunction with a wide range of departments and programs at GWU.

Upstairs from the auditorium, housed (unfortunately) in a series of glass cases, was the exhibition "Common Threads: Cushions from Central Asia to Sweden," which included Anatolian *yastiks* (3), Baluch *balishts*, and Swedish sitting and carriage cushions (4). There were outstanding examples of each of these types, but perhaps because they were largely unfamiliar to me, I found the Swedish pieces particularly captivating. Many were dated, mostly from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and they were wonderfully direct and vivid.

The next day started with a session titled "New Trends in Collecting Carpets and/or Textiles." In "Descending Olympus," Koos de Jong (who spoke to NERS about Chinese saddle rugs in November 2014) described how he has had custom conservation and exhibition apparatus designed to store and display his personal collection. Presumably he intended to show that this could be done by other collectors, but the takeaway for me was "don't try this at home"—not,

at least, if you don't have Koos's connections and resources as a former museum director. Following this were two presentations by figures well known to the rug community: Wendel Swan talked about how his collecting took a turn into Swedish textiles, and Marshall and Marilyn Wolf, prompted by *HALI*'s Ben Evans, shared some very amusing stories while chronicling how they have amassed the 5,200 pieces stored or rotated for display in their apartment. As they spoke, images of items from their astoundingly beautiful and varied collection flashed on the screen behind them (see fig. 1, p. 12). They finished by explaining the various iterations of instructions in their will for the dispersal of the collection.

The session "The Virtual Carpet: Internet and Social Media, Their Roles for Carpet Studies and Collecting" was as sprawling and unfocused as its title suggests. Tom Cole spoke rather pointedly and dismissively on the image quality of rugs shown online, particularly by other dealers. John Howe explained the evolution of his online presentations of the TM's Rug Morning sessions, from his early "Salon" postings on turkotek.com to his own "Textiles and Text" blog. Francesca Fiorentino began by saying that she was not a collector and was new to rug studies, but that her blog, "Knotted Thoughts," provided a social outlet for her research and writing about textiles that "move" her. Independent art historian Lauren Arnold has posted "Renaissance Carpets: 1420–1520," a compendium on flickr.com of all the paintings of the period that depict elements of oriental carpets. She began by calling herself an outsider at ICOC and saying that, given the Internet focus of the panel, she would not discuss the more controversial aspect of her work: her contention that the earliest of these carpets were woven and brought to Italy by eastern Christians. (She has presented this thesis in a seven-part lecture series posted on YouTube.) At the finish of her short talk she took a straw poll of the audience on a number of questions. In answer to one, "How many of you



3. Dazkırı yastik, ca. 1800



4. Swedish carriage cushion, ca. 1810

have ever bought a rug or textile from the Internet?" about ten percent of the audience raised their hands. Was this seemingly meager response partly a result of what one ICOC veteran, speaking from the floor, called "the elephant in the room": that, at age 64, he was one of the youngest people at the conference?

The "Virtual Carpet" session was billed as a panel discussion, but as participant Steve Price pointed out, when panelists arrived they were told that they instead were each to give a fifteen-to-twenty-minute presentation, thus using up all the time allotted. Some, flash drive in hand, had come fully prepared. Others not. Oddly, this served to highlight what the other sessions had also been missing: time set aside for discussion, either among speakers or with members of the audience. Even the most controversial papers were left uncontested by public dialogue.

I can't report on the final panel, "Carpets and Textiles in Contemporary Art," because I played hooky and walked to the Susan Calloway gallery in Georgetown to see the "Finding Your Niche" exhibition of niche-format (aka "prayer") rugs. Lining the walls of a single room, the pieces were made in a variety of techniques and ranged from Baluch pile rugs to Anatolian (5) and Manistir (6) kilims to Lakai silk suzanis, to name only a few.

That evening the Washington-based International Hajji Baba Society (IHBS) held a reception at David Zahirpour's gallery, the site of a juried exhibition of over sixty pieces from members' collections. The rooms were jammed by revelers enjoying all of the well-chosen attractions: hors d'oeuvres, wines, and of course rugs (see fig. 2, p. 13). The quality was very high and the representation of types and traditions impressively wide. Enthusiasts of diverse textile traditions, often with smartphone cameras in hand, gathered in many clumps in front of their chosen highlights (7). There was little doubt that the textile treasures of the Washington area are not only to be found in its cultural institutions. A well-photographed and annotated publication of this exhibition would be most welcome.

On the final morning of the conference, Wendel Swan presided over an enjoyable two-and-a-half-hour "mystery rug" and show-and-tell session. There were many unusual pieces, and various ICOC stalwarts and generally game dealers were put on the spot for attributions. Paul Ramsey's sly quote from a "Chinese philosopher" (perhaps Zhuangzi?), "Life is limited, but knowledge to be gained is unlimited," became the oft-used, amusing refrain of the morning.

Joel Greifinger



5, 6. Anatolian and Manistir kilims exhibited in "Finding Your Niche"

7. Sauj Bulagh rug (detail) in IHBS show

In Memoriam: Wendy Klodt, 1946–2015

For many years, Wendy Klodt was a dedicated member of NERS, commuting long distances to attend and participate in meetings, and generously lending Central Asian textiles from her collection to Jeff Spurr's 2006 ACOR 8 exhibition, "Unusual and Overlooked." Despite failing health, she maintained her spirited interest in rugs and NERS until the last: she left absentee bids on two silent-auction lots at the May 24 picnic. When I emailed her that both pieces were hers, she wrote back, "Great news . . . a check will be a bit delayed as it is coming from Florida . . . I won't be back for two more weeks. Can't wait to see the little mat: I was instantly smitten." Her purchases went to her home in Maine, but she probably never got to enjoy them. She was still in Florida when she died, on June 13.

As a tribute to Wendy, and as a reminder that many NERS members lead exceptional lives, I'm reproducing the whole of this captivating obituary, written by Wendy's partner, David Meikle, and published in seacoastonline.com on June 20. *Julia Bailey*

CAPE NEDDICK, ME—Wendy Lynne Klodt, 68, of Cape Neddick, ME, died in hospice in Naples, FL, on Saturday, June 13, 2015, after giving the cancer god a hard run for the money. She was born in San Bernardino, CA, on October 3, 1946, to Beth (Bowen) and Gordon R. Klodt. She spent her childhood in Southern California and always considered herself a Western girl. After moving to Abington, PA, during high school, Wendy attended Antioch College (much to her father's chagrin) and following graduation set out for a career in musical theater.

But the Silk Road beckoned, and Wendy spent most of the '70s commuting to Afghanistan, manufacturing hippie frocks in Kabul to sell in the East Village (and later to Bloomingdales). Her only respite from this grueling work was a year as a guest of the shah in the women's prison at Mashhad, Iran, after being ratted out crossing the border from Herat while "doing a favor for a friend." She spent the year knitting and learning Farsi, and was released in December 1974, possibly with the help of Kissinger and CIA director Richard Helms on behalf of her father, Gordon, by then president of Merck Canada.

Wendy moved to Maine in the late '70s, after catching a ride to Cape Neddick during a solo hitchhiking trip to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Thus began the Fair Skies chapter, first a succession of ephemeral shops selling eclectic women's clothing in Kennebunkport and Ogunquit, then Wendy's own building in Perkins Cove in 1978, followed by a second building in Portsmouth in 1983, and for fourteen years a third store on Main Street in Ogunquit. Textiles were her passion and her livelihood, the inspiration for travel and collecting and the source of the means to make that possible. Seventy hours a week in season and not much less off season meant very little spare time, but singing with the Portsmouth Women's Chorus and the a cappella group King's Revels kept alive a love of singing and performing that stretched back to high-school drama club. A high point was singing with the Surry (ME) Opera Company in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1995.

In 1994 Wendy met David Meikle, who for twenty years did his best to convince her that the boss doesn't have



Wendy in Italian garden of Hever Castle, Kent, summer 2014

to be in every store every day, especially in February. The result was an unconventional relationship, and a lot of midwinter travel; a ten-below-zero day at an outdoor livestock fair in rural Romania made for many trips to Spain and Portugal in the years that followed. Three trips to Japan focused an appreciation for ceramics and woodblock prints that brought serenity during her final months.

In 1999 Wendy bought two acres of woods along the cove of the Cape Neddick River, where she could worship the trees and rocks and try to keep the deer from eating the hosta. The beauty of the earth and its creatures (including most people) was the source of Wendy's deep well of strength.

Wendy is survived by her life partner, David Meikle; his daughter, Mollie, of Brooklyn and Staatsburg, NY; cousins in Idaho, Arizona, Utah, and Ohio; and numerous friends on the seacoast and around the world.

RearView Mirror: Last Season's Speaker Program

(see p. 3, **Meetings and speakers, 2014–15**, for identification)



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If you haven't already done so, please renew your NERS membership now! You can pay online using a credit card: go to www.ne-rugsociety.org/NERS-paypal.htm and follow directions. Alternatively, you can mail your check, payable to NERS, to our Holliston address (see the box opposite).

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 6125, Holliston, MA 01746; or by contacting Jim Sampson at jahome22@gmail.com.



The New England Rug Society

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