



View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



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September Meeting Preview: John Wertime on "Miniature Masterpieces" of NW Iran



Shahsavan *khordin*, 23" x 12", slit tapestry, sumak, and weft-float brocading, Famiglia Collection

September 13 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

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

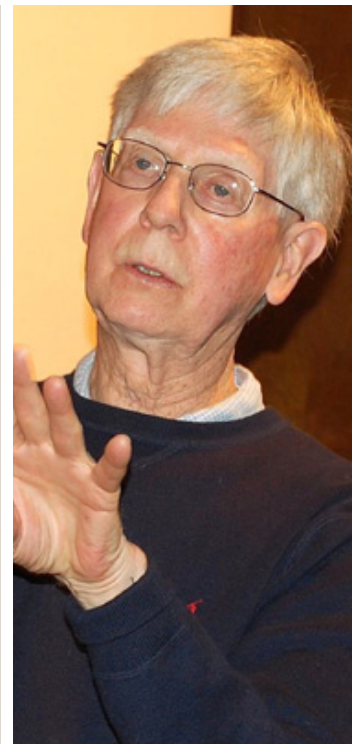
Directions: From Boston and east, take Mass Pike to exit 17 and follow signs for Boston/Newton Centre, making a U-turn over the Pike. At Newton Centre sign, go RIGHT on Centre St. for 0.1 miles. Go LEFT on Franklin St. for 0.3 miles. Turn RIGHT on Waverley and go 0.2 miles. House is on LEFT.

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 names begin with **A** through **G**. Please arrive before 6:45 to set up, and plan to stay afterwards to clean up.



John Wertime, speaking at the Textile Museum in 2014

Most pile rugs and flatwoven textiles come in large dimensions. In stark contrast to these in function, size, and artistry are the "miniatures" of the oriental-rug world. Consisting primarily of containers, mats, and covers that women and girls working at home or in local workshops made for family use, barter, or sale, the best of these small-format pieces have a concentrated graphic power and visual impact equal to or surpassing that of larger weavings. Many of the masterpieces of this art form were made by weavers in northwestern Iran, predominantly of Shahsavan Turkic origin in the eastern half, and Kurdish and Iranian origin in the western half. Outstanding examples from both areas will be pictured and discussed.

John Wertime has been involved with oriental rugs and textiles for over fifty years, first as a collector living

in Iran in the 1960s and '70s, and then as a writer, dealer, appraiser, lecturer, and curator based in Arlington, Virginia. He worked with the late Irene Emery, of the Textile Museum, on woven structures, about which he has written for many years; in addition, he has contributed numerous articles to *HALI* and other publications, co-authored *Caucasian Carpets and Covers*, and written *Sumak Bags of Northwest Persia & Transcaucasia* on his own. He received the Joseph V. McMullan Award in 1993 and curated the exhibition *Silk and Leather: Splendid Attire of Central Asia* at the Textile Museum. He is currently working on a book provisionally titled *An Art Apart: Women's Vision in Warp and Weft*.

Members are encouraged to bring small Northwest Persian weavings for a show-and-tell following John's talk.

October Meeting Preview: Cheri Hunter on Textiles, Costumes, and Carpets of the Eastern Grasslands of Tibet



Participants in the highland nomad costume-contest parade, Litang Horse Festival, Sichuan Province, Tibet

On October 4, Cheri Hunter will present “Festivals, Fairs, and Rituals: Textiles, Costumes, and Carpets of the Eastern Grasslands of Tibet.”

East of the official Tibetan Autonomous Region, Kham and Amdo are remote, isolated, and culturally Tibetan provinces in China. Their landscapes consist of snowy peaks and rolling grasslands on the Tibetan Plateau, where for centuries nomadic peoples have maintained grazing cultures with sheep and yaks. Just as Americans gather for county fairs and rodeos, Tibetans love to come together at colorful annual festivals and wild competitions of horsemanship. Tibetan Buddhist culture exists in regional and local monasteries throughout the grasslands and is often mixed with the local animistic shamanic practices; it too offers opportunities for seasonal celebrations.

In 2006, Cheri Hunter traversed the grasslands, photographing these festivals and rituals, several of which have since disappeared. Her article and photos were originally published in *HALI* 154. Her presentation will emphasize local and imported textiles and rugs in use throughout the

October 4 Meeting Details

Time: 7:00 p.m.

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

Directions: See page 1.

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

grasslands, as well as the shaman festivals and horse fairs, where the participants—including the horses—are dressed in their best.

A founding member of the Textile Museum Associates of Southern California, Program Chairman since 1999, two-time past President, and current 2018–19 President, Cheri has organized more than 235 speaker programs for TMA/SC, as well as innumerable multi-city ACOR Overseas Speaker tours. She graduated from UCLA in Art and Cinema and was a career film editor in Hollywood for nearly thirty years. She has been an avid still photographer since her teens, and since then has focused mostly on adventure-travel photography while enjoying rug and textile “culture” and textile-oriented world travel. She has written articles for *HALI* about her travels in Morocco, Myanmar, Tibet, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, and most recently Iran. Her presentation to NERS is a cultural travelogue, with an emphasis on textiles, costumes, and rugs.

Cheri invites NERS members to bring examples of Tibetan rugs and textiles for a show-and-tell after her presentation.



Cheri Hunter

October NERS Field Trip: The Shein Collection of Oriental Rugs and American Modernist Art

October 19 (Saturday) Trip Details

Time: 1–2:30 p.m.

Place: Seekonk, Mass.

Getting there: Attendees provide their own transportation

Directions: Will be sent to those attending

PLEASE NOTE: ATTENDANCE IS LIMITED TO 30; RSVP REQUIRED! Reply between September 2 and October 1 to Joel Greifinger (greifing@comcast.net). Should more than 30 members respond, attendees will be selected in order of response (with others put on a wait list).

In the early 1980s, Ed and Deborah Shein began collecting oriental rugs to put in their modernist home in Seekonk, Massachusetts. Among their holdings are a Star Kazak that is indeed stellar (it's on the cover of *HALI* 176), other Kazaks, a Khotan, and Sarouk and Heriz carpets.

The bold abstraction of their rugs helped change the course of the Sheins' parallel collecting of American paintings, leading them from turn-of-the-twentieth-century works to brighter, more original modernist paintings by Patrick Henry Bruce, Stuart Davis, Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, and Charles Sheeler.



The Shein Star Kazak, above Patrick Henry Bruce's ca. 1919 *Painting (Still Life)*

Shown in 2010 at the National Gallery, Washington, in an exhibition titled *American Modernism: The Shein Collection*, the paintings have eclipsed the rugs in renown. In the Shein home, however, rugs and paintings are complementary art forms.

As a special NERS event, on Saturday, October 19, the Sheins have generously invited us to Seekonk to view their collection. Due to space limitations, attendance is limited to thirty; those who wish to go must email Joel Griefinger between September 2 and October 1. If the event is oversubscribed, attendees will be picked on a first-come, first-served basis, with members given priority over guests. See the information box at top left for further details.



Deborah and Ed Shein

Chairman's Report for the 2018–19 Season

It has become my regular practice in advance of our Steering Committee meeting in June to spend some time going over the list of programs that NERS has presented since 1989. The richness and diversity of the offerings is inspiring, always providing a renewed challenge to explore new areas while searching for fresh angles on old favorites. And, as I wrote last year, it reminds me once again how fortunate we are to have a committed membership that has sustained this organization and allowed it to continue to program such high-quality presentations on a broad range of rug- and textile-related topics. Sadly, more than a few of the other rug societies that were also active during the last decades no longer exist. I'm grateful that we are not merely hanging in, but enthusiastically looking forward both to covering new ground and to reexamining established areas of interest.

Leadership

Functionally, the roles on the Steering Committee remain stable. Julia Bailey continues to edit and produce our widely acclaimed newsletter, which serves not only as a mechanism for communication but also as an informational and educational tool for the wider rug community. The lucid and detailed reports on speaker presentations by our Recording Secretary, Jim Adelson, allow the value of our meetings to spread far beyond the physical attendees. Jeff Spurr, Lloyd Kannenberg, and Yon Bard provide additional newsletter contributions. Yon is also our meeting photographer. Jim Sampson manages our finances, keeps the membership rolls, and distributes newsletters and other announcements of interest to the membership. Our newest Steering Committee member, Jean Hoffman, organized and moderated the "Whither the Market?" forum in March. Richard Belkin brings the lights and other equipment, and Richard Larkin supplies the coffee. Jeff posts upcoming meetings on RugRabbit.com. Included in my role as Chairman of NERS is managing the speaker program, arranging meeting venues, and, if necessary, operating the digital projection equipment. I also administer and update our Facebook page, which continues to attract new followers. Jeff and I alternate introducing speakers at the meetings. Ann Nicholas remains our representative on the board of ACOR. Our thanks again go to Martha Brooks for her ongoing administration of the NERS website.

Meetings and speakers, 2018–19

The season began in September with NERS member Mike Tschbull presenting on the collectability of warp-faced covers. To supplement the jajims from Mike's own collection, members brought an array of examples from several regions for show-and-tell. In October, the passion and enthusiasm of Ali Istalifi's ACOR-sponsored talk on suzanis was paired with the personal story of his family's project to revive their home village in Afghanistan. At November's meeting, NERS

member Gerard Paquin explored links between designs in Ottoman textiles and Turkish pile rugs.

After a winter hiatus, the March meeting featured a panel discussion by Lawrence Kearney, Peter Pap, and Alan Varteresian (all NERS members) that touched on many aspects of buying, selling, and collecting rugs over the last several decades. In April, we got a small helping of the collecting tastes of four Steering Committee members whose first names start with the letter *J* (i.e., Jim Adelson, Julia Bailey, Jim Sampson, and Jeff Spurr). For the May meeting, we had the good fortune to have Jim Opie ask if we would like him to come to Boston—with a large group of rugs from his own collection—to present his current views on South Persian tribal weavings. We were treated to an evening that combined erudition and reminiscence with engaging authenticity, followed by an excellent show-and-tell. Later in May, at Gore Place, we managed to wait out the rain that had us begin our picnic in the tent, and held a lively show-and-tell outside, in sunshine.

Finances and Membership

Our total membership edged up slightly, to 108, and we added seven new (or returning) members: Ali Istalifi, Omar al-Farisi, Tom Burns, Marilyn Denny, Brandon Henshaw, Richard Lerner, and Himal Mitra. We remain one of the largest and most active American rug societies. The great majority of our members hail from (all over) New England, but we continue to have members from New York, Texas, and the United Kingdom.

Special acknowledgment is due to our Supporting and Patron members, whose "above and beyond" generosity has helped maintain our financial health. Supporting members for 2018–19 were Donald Breyer, John Clift, Jeremy and Hanne Grantham, Jean Hoffman, Barbara Kaslow, Mitch Rudnick, Ann Nicholas and Richard Blumenthal, and Richard Larkin and Martha Brooks. Patron members, who support NERS at the highest level, are James Adelson and Debbie Sheetz, Julia and Doug Bailey, Richard Belkin, Louise and Buzz Dohanian, Ali Istalifi, Lloyd and Susan Kannenberg, Lena and Charles Nargozian, Peter Pap, Beau Ryan, Julian Taibi, Chuck and Theresa Wagner, and Alan Varteresian. Thanks to all.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Steering Committee, I'd like to extend to every NERS member our thanks for your continuing interest and support. I believe that our upcoming season features topics, programs, and speakers that will once again be both highly informative and aesthetically pleasurable. We hope that, during the year to come, you'll attend as many meetings as you can and perhaps encourage others, whether members or guests, to attend as well. I hope to see you in Newton on September 13, for an evening with John Wertime that will begin the 2019–20 season.

Joel Greifinger

April Meeting Review: What Four Steering-Committee Members Collect



1. Jim Adelson begins the program, as Julia Bailey and Jeff Spurr (front row, left and third from left) await their turns (and Jim Sampson, not shown, takes this photo)

On April 12, at First Parish, Lincoln, four Steering Committee members explained and showed examples of what they chose to collect.

Jim Adelson went first **(1)**; he titled his presentation “What Can a Modest-Budget Collector Do in Turkmen Shark-Infested Waters?” In choosing the name “shark,” he explained, he was not suggesting vicious or predatory behavior, but rather many hunters seeking excellent examples in competitive fashion.

Jim’s first “shark” contact was with New York-based Turkmen collector Marc Feldman, who, at his apartment, generously showed Jim stellar examples from his collection. The effect was discouraging, making Jim contemplate how difficult it might be to assemble his own collection. Marc’s advantages were many: a collecting head start, greater knowledge, disposable income, more sources, and the ability to travel to pursue pieces. And Marc was just one such collector; Jim knew several others by name and was sure there were plenty more whom he didn’t know. It took him a good six months to a year to get over this, and to begin

evolving an approach to collecting that would work for him.

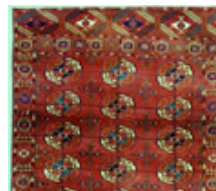
Jim chose three pieces from his collection to illustrate how he’d carried out the approach. All three were bought from knowledgeable dealers, and each one for the moderate sum of \$1,000 to \$2,000.

The first was a Yomud *chuval*, perhaps the single most common type of Turkmen weaving. For this piece and the others, Jim selected another example of the same type and similar age, then highlighted what made his own piece stand out. His Yomud *chuval* had outstanding color, less-common major and minor guls, a very atypical major-border motif, and even an unusual minor-border design **(2)**.

Turning to a Tekke small rug **(3)**, Jim explained how rugs in this format seem to be somewhat late. His was perhaps made in the early nineteenth century, and was as old as any he’d ever encountered. Although many such pieces take their design from Tekke main carpets, shrinking and simplifying key motifs, Jim’s example used a *chuval* gul as its main motif, rather than a diminutive rendition of the classic Tekke main-carpet gul. A very rare minor gul, early major-border motifs,



2. Jim Adelson's Yomud *chuval* (left) and a comparable example



3. Detail of Jim Adelson's Tekke small rug (right) and a comparable example





4. Jim Adelson's Chodor *chuval* (detail)

5. "Sawtooth" motifs on *elem* of a comparable example

and an undecorated *elem* further suggested this example's early position in the design evolution of Tekke small rugs.

Jim's final selection was a Chodor *chuval* with *chuval* guls, rather than the more usual *ertmen* guls, used as both major and minor elements (4). Whimsically inserted tertiary guls, chunky *kochanak* main-border motifs, and a hollow-diamond minor-border motif added to this *chuval*'s distinctiveness, in Jim's opinion. Finally, an *elem* whose *ashik* form featured a prominent central color blob stood out from more typical "sawtooth" renditions of the motif (5).

Jim concluded by outlining his guiding principles of collecting, first and foremost among which is the need to learn what's common, what's rare, and what's best-of-type. Since a "world-class" example carries a price tag five to ten (or more) times the cost of a "very good" one, he has found it more realistic to pursue the "best of the very good." Armed with that knowledge, he counseled, one can buy "publicly"—from dealers, internet offerings, and auctions—rather than having to comb out-of-the-mainstream spots in hopes of landing an undiscovered or unappreciated treasure. Finally, Jim encouraged collectors to buy what they enjoy, and enjoy what they buy. For him that means displaying his pieces so he can benefit and learn from them every day, rather than just thinking about them hidden away in storage.



6. *Ulugh Beg Attended*, detail of a manuscript frontispiece, Iran, ca. 1425–50, Freer/Sackler F1946.26

7. *Sheikhs Confer*, detail of a manuscript painting, Iran, ca. 1540, Harvard Art Museums 1958.75

In the next presentation, "Central Focus," Julia Bailey talked about underappreciated Persian "city" rugs, specifically those with central-medallion-and-corners format. With slides, she illustrated how this design scheme originated in small-scale manuscript bindings, and noted that textile and tile makers adapted it for large surfaces well before it was taken up by rug weavers. Around the sixteenth century, however, the idea of "how a rug should look" changed from a preference for geometric repeat units surrounded by "kufesque" borders (6) to one for medallion designs with flora—and sometimes fauna—in borders and fields (7). The new designs appeared in many variations on splendid court-commissioned carpets still in existence, and these eventually informed more modest products of the late nineteenth-century "Persian rug revival."

For these "revival" rugs, Julia turned to actual examples that she and her husband, Doug, had acquired over the years. The first was an "antique Sarouk" whose pendants had facial features, like the grotesque masks that sometimes appear on classical carpets (8). It was their earliest rug purchase, made (for \$50) at a neighborhood auction in northern Vermont in 1973, before they knew what they were buying. A frustrating search through their only two rug books marked the beginning of their library building as well as their rug collecting.



8 and 9. Julia Bailey's central-medallion "revival" rugs: Sarouk (left) and Kirman (right)

A "Mahal Sarouk" bought at a house sale two years later had far more brilliant colors and different mythical creatures—open-jawed dragons and bird-heads that Julia theorized represented phoenixes—similarly inherited from classical carpets. Finally, a Kirman medallion rug, bought in 1993 from a now-defunct Cambridge auction gallery, boasted a multi-hued "meadow" of semi-naturalistic flowers in its field (9). Not one of these rugs had been woven from a squared-paper pattern; all had design variations that, to Julia's mind, saved them from the mechanical appearance of which Persian "city" rugs are often accused. She of course enjoys their colors, creatures, and quirky irregularities, but as an art historian she additionally appreciates their individual echoing, in a distinctly vernacular idiom, of great weaving art of the past.

At the outset of his presentation, titled "The Bijar: It Doesn't Fly, but Who Cares?," **Jim Sampson** said he didn't consider himself a collector so much as simply a "rug guy." His primary rug-buying focus is on Kurdish Bijars, his fascination with them stemming from a 1966 stint as a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran, where he was first assigned to the small town of Bijar (now a city of 50,000). Of all the rugs he owns, his favorite is a Bijar that he purchased in 1976 in Natick, Mass. (10). For comparison, he showed another, similar Bijar he had bought just a month before from the same dealer. Both rugs had a standard format



10a, b, c. Jim Sampson's favored Bijar (above), with corner details (back and front) showing birds

of central medallion with corners on a Herati (or *mahi*, meaning "fish") field. Their borders were of floral rather than the commoner Herati (or what Jim called "samovar") design. Jim's second Bijar was older (circa 1920, he thought), and larger (5'2" x 8'9"); the one he purchased first, woven around 1960, measured 3'7" x 5'7".

Initially, Jim said, he liked both rugs, although he suspected his second Bijar was a bit more special. Over the years of living with them, however, he discovered flaws in the first one. One defect was a dip in the pile, where the knot ends had been trimmed too short all the way across the rug. It was mainly detectable by touch rather than sight, but once noticed it was impossible not to be aware of. Later there were color changes in the rug, and Jim recognized that its dyes and design execution by no means measured up to the standards of his second Bijar.

This second, bigger Bijar, in contrast, has maintained its richly saturated colors in spite of forty years' use in a room exposed to bright sunlight. Its weave is finer (10b), and its pile more closely (and evenly) clipped. After comparing it with similar examples he has found in books and articles and at auctions, he realizes why it has become his favorite.

To his surprise, Jim noticed the representation of a bird in each of its corners (10b, c); he supposed these motifs were unique to this rug. But not so—he found that such bird-figures are relatively common Bijar elements. On whether



11. Photo by Angelo Turkoni of Kuba *nyim* (king) Kot a-Mbweeky III, soon after his accession in 1969

another motif represented a dragon, as a noted specialist had told him, Jim concluded after some study that it was just a crudely executed floral form, as found elsewhere on the rug.

Even with its primitive Kurdish elements, Jim added, his larger Bijar presents itself as an elegant rug—and one that is demonstrably “better-of-a-kind.” Given that conclusion, he admitted, he “might be a collector after all!”

As final speaker, **Jeff Spurr** turned to a textile tradition of Central Africa, far from the “rug belt.” In “Obscure and Unusual: Macramé in Important Old Ceremonial Objects from the Kuba Cultural Sphere,” he presented the thesis that certain distinctive materials and techniques within the Kuba tradition and others subordinate to it indicated royal status by evoking ancient tradition, and were restricted to exclusive ceremonial use related to kingship. Thus, he said, unusual techniques embodied in certain materials acted as both a relic of the past and an important statement employed through time for high social and cultural purposes, marking a profound connection to the existential and cosmological structures of the world and elite figures’ relationship to them.



12. Helmet mask of a Kuba royal diviner: raffia cloth and macramé cord, turtle shell, feathers, and trade cloth

The Kuba kingdom, Jeff explained, was already fully formed by the seventeenth century, and thus had several centuries to develop an unprecedentedly elaborate system of ceremonial dress, accompanied by a wide and varied range of costume paraphernalia for the king (*nyim*), the extended royal family, and the nobility. The kingdom comprised nineteen ethnic groups, who culturally and sometimes politically dominated other, neighboring groups. The matrilineal royal lineage was situated in the dominant Bushoong group.

Evidence from the earliest collected Kuba materials (late nineteenth century) reveals that elite Kuba dress featured the profuse use of European glass beads, which probably made their way into the Central Congo by the mid-nineteenth century, and cowries, which had arrived by the eighteenth. In illustration, Jeff showed a photograph of King Kot a-Mbweeky III, taken soon after the new *nyim*’s accession to the throne, in 1969 (11). The base material for his hat, clothing, and belt was raffia palm leaf fiber, as it was in almost all Kuba dress.

Despite widespread conversion to both Catholicism and Protestantism, Jeff continued, the Kuba people remained



13. Ndengese chief's shirt in an ancient style: openwork macramé lattice of raffia cord over barkcloth

animists, believing that the world of the spirits, great and small, governed human affairs and could be accessed and appealed to in various ways for various purposes. He then showed an ancient and exceedingly rare type of helmet mask specifically used by the Kuba royal diviner in the service of the *nyim*. It was a multimedia affair, with a foundation of thick raffia cloth, a face fashioned from turtle shell, a feather top-knot, and cheek covers made of red trade cloth of the sort found in early twentieth-century royal dress. Most conspicuous of all were its three overlaying macramé panels of thick raffia cord (12).

These features were echoed in a shirt and headdress once owned by the paramount chief of the Ndengese, a people residing north of the Kuba kingdom. Although the Ndengese had genuine political strength, Jeff explained, their visual culture was in most respects dependent on that of the Kuba.

The Kuba heir-apparent in the 1960s resided, as was customary, at a secondary capital in the north, and traded with the Ndengese paramount chief for the latter's historical dress of kingship. These items were not of the raffia-based Kuba type, but rather represented an ancient style, and had probably been used very rarely, such as for investitures. The shirt featured an openwork macramé lattice of heavy raffia cord over a barkcloth base (13). The more complicated headdress or crown included two kinds of cord netting over old, imported red cloth, with four rare and prestigious shells as protuberances (14). From the shell in the back hung a bell, its sounds meant to attract the spirits; it must have signified the special relationship of the paramount chief with the paranormal world.

Jim Adelson, Julia Bailey, Jim Sampson, and Jeff Spurr



14. Ndengese chief's crown (back view), with cord netting, shell protrusions, and a spirit-summoning bell

May Meeting Review: Jim Opie's Perspectives on South Persian Tribal Weavings



1. Khamseh pile rug with fish and bird motifs, held up behind Jim Opie's many other South Persian weavings

On May 3, Jim Opie shared observations on South Persian tribal weaving, a field he has studied for almost fifty years. To illustrate tribal attribution, design origin, weaving practices, and more, he deftly used slides, his own pieces, and the many show-and-tell items brought by NERS members.

Since the Durant-Kenrick House projector was temporarily malfunctioning, Jim began with five rugs he'd brought. The first was a Khamseh Confederacy pile rug **(1)** that included fish and bird motifs—the birds, in his opinion, tracing their origin to much earlier art of Mesopotamia.

His next example was an old—early or mid-nineteenth-century—mixed-technique Luri with horses and two-headed motifs in rows; Jim also cited these for their ancient roots. (The Lurs, along with the Bakhtiari and some members of the Khamseh Confederacy, are Persian speakers whose rug designs often have Central Asian origins, whereas, curiously, the Turkic-speaking Qashqa'i borrow many of their designs from Persian city rugs.) Structurally, the color of the Luri's wefts changed to match the face, thereby intensifying its hue.

The third item was a flatwoven Bakhtiari rug that included human figures **(2)**. According to Jim, it was made for local use



2. Flatwoven Bakhtiari rug made for local use rather than the market, and including human figures in the border

(he had acquired it from a Bakhtiari trader who offered gold and salt in exchange for rugs), distinguishing it from the “ninety-five percent” of Bakhtiari pieces made for the market. Next was a “Lur” gabbeh with a variety of designs. Jim noted that very few rugs are attributed to the Laks, several hundred thousand of whom live in the Zagros mountains near the Lurs. He felt that they too were weavers, and surmised that some pieces like this gabbeh could be their work. Jim's fifth example, a pile rug combining aspects of a gabbeh and a commercial rug, included a prominent human figure and a realistic pair of shears as well as two-headed animals.

The projector up and running, Jim next turned to his slides. He first illustrated a finely woven Qashqa'i central-medallion rug, its design borrowed from urban rugs; it was, he said, “tribal in name only.” An Afshar and a Bakhtiari followed, both also reflecting urban designs. Even a relatively rustic-looking gabbeh had, he said, been made for the market.

A Luri-Bakhtiari mixed-technique double bag, in contrast, represented a genuinely tribal article; typically, it included sections of pile, weft-wrapped sumak, and kilim weave. Jim compared one of its two-headed motifs with a 2000-year-old



3. Khamseh pile rug with incomplete “Memling” gul, little botehs on a red ground, and wonky diamond medallions

Iranian bronze figurine. He noted that, for unknown reasons, birds represented on South Persian rugs often have sideways S-forms just above them.

Next he took up lion rugs, which, until the 1960s, were not made for the market. These creatures, too, had a long lineage in other media; as examples, Jim showed stone lions in a cemetery in Chahar Mahal, and an approximately 2500-year-old Achaemenid vase in the form of a lion.

Turning to rug motifs typically referred to as “latchhooks,” Jim pointed out that these are often clearly animal heads, with eyes and horns. In illustration he showed a set of Luri-Bakhtiari saddlebags, where these animal-head motifs were combined with endless knots without ancient precedent in Persian art.

He moved on to a rug whose design included lions, peacocks, and human figures. Despite its seeming design symmetry, he pointed out, all of its details were improvised.

Using bird rugs, Jim showed how the rendering of motifs and borders changed over time. On a Qashqa’i rug that he labeled his oldest—“maybe late eighteenth century”—the birds had elongated necks and sideways S-forms above them. The border system of this rug was simple, whereas that



4. Weaving as last will: 1920 Kuba pile rug depicting the Kaaba precinct and naming the rug-owner's heirs

of a somewhat later Qashqa’i had wider borders. Since actual dates on South Persian rugs are so rare, Jim said he uses clues like these to determine relative age.

He then returned to actual rugs, running quickly through the many examples—Luri, Qashqa’i, Bakhtiari, and Khamseh—that he had kindly brought with him. One of his more unusual pieces was a small Qashqa’i double bag, which he thought had been made as a dowry item. Another was a Khamseh rug that changed designs wildly, starting with “Memling” gul, switching to botehs, and ending with misshapen medallions (3). To Jim’s eyes, he said, “It’s a mess, but it’s wonderful.”

Turning from South Persia to the Caucasus, Jim then showed his most distinctive rug, a Kuba that depicted the Kaaba and surrounding Meccan pilgrimage sites, bordered by Arabic script (4). This rug actually constituted a man’s will, its text specifying how his estate was to be distributed—what percentage would go to each named heir.

Proving the popularity of South Persian weavings, NERS members supplied an impressive show-and-tell finale. The twenty-six pieces they brought represented all of the major South Persian weaving groups and more (5–10). Examining

and presenting these pieces gave Jim opportunities for other general comments. He noted, for instance, that the Khamseh, like the Qashqa'i, were a political entity rather than a specific ethnic group, and that the various tribes of the Khamseh Confederacy use different languages. He added that "names only matter up to a point," and that what the weaving was

made for— whether as a dowry item, for use, or for the market—was more important.

NERS is most grateful to Jim for bringing his decades' worth of observations, insights, and conclusions, as well as so many of his rugs, to our meeting!

Jim Adelson

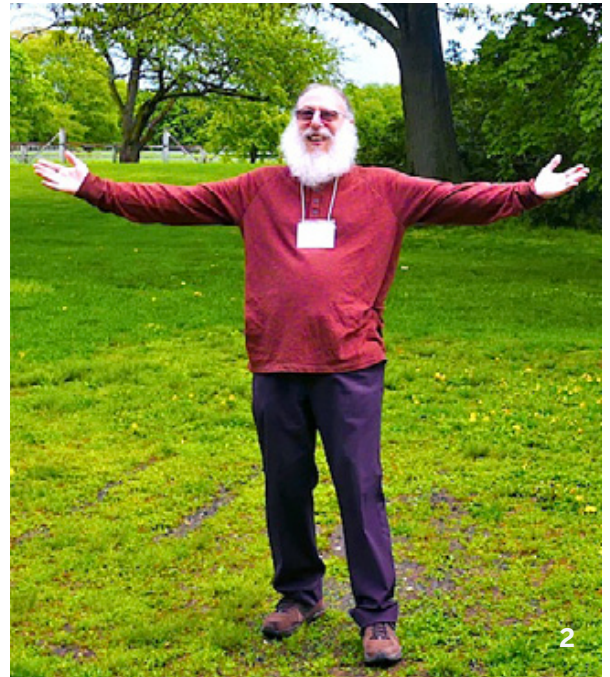


A selection of NERS members' South Persian weavings at the show-and-tell following Jim Opie's talk:

5. Afshar pile rug 6. Luri-Bakhtiari mixed-technique bag 7. South Persian pile rug with bird border 8. Qashquli pile bagface 9. Afshar (?) pile rug, Kirman area, depicting Sufi mystic Nur 'Ali Shah 10. South Persian pile saddle rug

May 19 Meeting in Pictures: Annual Picnic

The beginning was inauspicious: rain poured down, and arriving NERS picnickers gloomily sought shelter in the Gore Place tent. Their mood improved incrementally as they shopped the moth-mart offerings, ate their lunches, and fueled themselves with plentiful hot coffee (1). Then, *mirabile dictu*, the sky cleared and the temperature climbed (2). Members delightedly moved outside for a sunlit show-and-tell, with comments from Chairman Joel and the owner of each item displayed (3). Textiles included Andean tapestries, “sailor macramé,” Kuba-Kingdom raffia, and a contemporary Uzbek suzani; a range of Swedish, Turkish, Caucasian, Persian, and Turkmen pile and mixed-technique weaving followed. As an avian bonus, a Scarlet Tanager, his brilliance outdoing even the brightest rug, watched the proceedings from a nearby tree.



1. Members take to the tent for the moth mart, lunch, coffee, and an advance look at show-and-tell items
2. The rain lets up, the sun comes out, and NERS Chairman Joel Greifinger exults
3. The show-and-tell moves outside
4. Color, color, color: a male Scarlet Tanager keeps an eye on the show-and-tell

Top row: Two Peruvian eccentric-weft “burial chest-pieces,” 1st–4th century; American (?) “sailor’s macramé,” 19th century (?); Kuba Kingdom openwork raffia mat with added fringes, early 20th century
Middle row: Contemporary Uzbek suzani, Bukhara; Baluch rug with large botehs; another Baluch rug
Bottom row: Two Yomud *asmalyks*; Yomud pile trapping or mat (not a bagface)



Top row: Afshar *sofreh*; enormous Bakhtiari *khorjin*; Fereghan Sarouk "city" rug

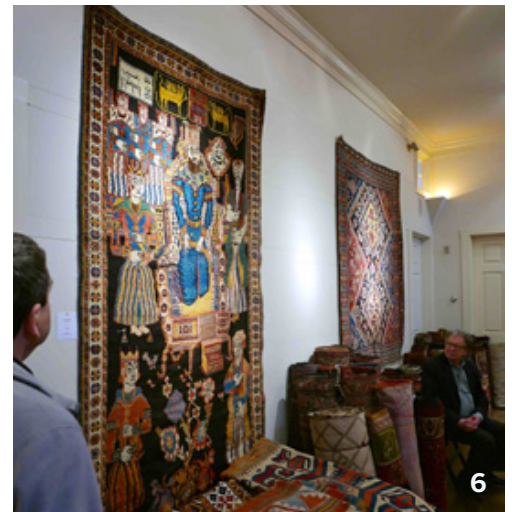
Middle row: Seychour (Kuba) rug with two distinct designs; sumak long rug

Bottom row: Konya rug; two western Anatolian *yastıks*; Swedish *agedyna* (cushion cover) with piled areas



Peter Pap Hosts NERS Members, with Jim Opie Leading Exhibition Tour

On May 5, following Jim Opie's NERS presentation, Peter Pap hosted a gathering of members and other guests at his Dublin gallery, where he had mounted a show of South Persian and other weavings from various collections. Peter explained what to look for in the different tribal and village pieces represented, and Jim addressed their ethnographic origins. Jim's additional comments about specific pieces, emailed to photographer Jim Sampson after the event, appear as captions.



1. "Afshar bags. This pattern is also found in Kurdish bags, so the question of 'origin' appears: did the pattern flow from Kurds to Afshars or the other way? Several pieces in this collection reveal a more complete rendering of the design than I have ever seen, so it's tempting to view this as truly an 'Afshar' design."

2. "Here a 'cradle' identified by the previous owner as Afshar receives a new attribution: Khamseh Confederacy. I saw, and purchased, such pieces in the Shiraz bazaar, where they were given more precise names, commonly 'Arab Khamseh'—that is, Arab-speakers comprising one of the five Khamseh Confederacy tribes."

3. "A quite unusual Khamseh Confederacy bagface. The same borders appear in Khamseh 'bird bags,' and this medallion-centered piece is unfamiliar to me. Many tribal weavers are competent artisans. Occasionally, as suggested here, one of them is an artist."

4. "An ivory-ground Khamseh rug, probably from the Baharlu tribe. We discussed the fish motifs in the center panel. This rare and wonderful rug belongs on a wall, and if I looked at it any longer perhaps the putative 'wall' would be my own. A wonderful rug!"

5. "Both Peter and I attribute this rug to an Armenian source, from an uncertain village in western Iran. There were many Armenians in Isfahan, numbers living in villages in nominally Bakhtiari country in the Chahar Mahal, but there also were Armenians living farther west, including around Hamadan."

6. "A pictorial Qashqa'i rug. Peter identified the royal figure as Nadir Shah. I related that it was he who moved 100 Persian Jewish families (in Iran from the time of the Babylonian exile) from their homes elsewhere in Iran to Mashhad. They were to manage Nadir Shah's wealth and develop wealth of their own. This ultimately led to the presence of many Jewish rug dealers, originally from Mashhad, now working in the New York rug market (with co-religionists in London and Milan)."

HALI's Happy Birthday: Five NERS Attendees Report on the London Celebration

Judy Smith leads off

To celebrate forty years and two hundred issues, *HALI* orchestrated a weeklong festival in London that included a two-day symposium, a series of special events and talks, a screening of the film *Grass*, visits to museum archives and private collections, and the *HALI* Dealer Fair. For those staying an extra week *HALI* organized "Great British Collections"—a private tour with exclusive access to outstanding rugs and textiles. Some highlights for me:

—A visit to the archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum for a close look at some of the museum's treasures and conservation workshop.

—An evening reception at Francesca Galloway's gallery for her exhibition *Textile Splendours from the East* (1), which included a magnificent Sogdian costume, a delicate Ming-period needle-loop embroidery, and Indian chintzes for domestic and export markets. It was a huge treat to be exposed to such rare and exquisite textiles.

—A show-and-tell in which four collectors brought items to pass around to the thirty of us lucky enough to have tickets. We gained personal insights into the tastes, enthusiasms, and knowledge of four collectors who brought material that we got to handle at close range. Robert Bell, a British collector, showed saddle rugs featuring fine workmanship, lustrous pile, saturated colors, and interesting design features; Danny Shaffer, Executive Editor of *HALI*, shared his personal collection of Baluch rugs (2); Fred Mushkat presented warp-faced Persian bands; and Elena Tsareva, textile research specialist from St. Petersburg, brought Turkmen rugs from the Neville Kingston Collection.

—A classic silent film, *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life*, made in 1925 by three Americans who traveled across Turkey

and Iraq to meet the Bakhtiari and document a way of life that has since rapidly declined.

—An all-day visit to the private estate of Karun Thakar to view his eclectic and highly personal collection, which included fourteenth-century Indian trade-cloth; folk textiles and costumes from Central Asia, Japan, Bhutan, and Afghanistan; narrow-loom weavings from Ghana, Nigeria, and other West African countries; and North African embroideries, veils, and haiks from Morocco and Tunisia. This trip, about an hour outside London, included an Indian lunch for the twenty-five of us, spread out on the expansive lawns.

—The *HALI* Fair, with choice offerings from twenty select dealers, including David Sorgato, James Cohen, Joss Graham, Brian Macdonald, Alberto Levi, Seref Ozen, Clive Rogers, and more (but none from the U.S.).

—Conversations and discussions with knowledgeable people: the Curator of Textiles at a Swedish museum, a curator from the V&A, a major Turkish collector, the Curator of Oriental Collections from the Georgian National Museum, *HALI* staff, etc.

In summary, I was grateful for the opportunity to be immersed for a whole week in the rug/textile world, with outstanding pieces to view and touch, and with deeply knowledgeable people. I was exposed to new material and new collecting categories and had a chance to reconnect with old friends and form new relationships. Plus, on the last night, we went to the Red Sox/Yankees game in the London Olympic Stadium. It was a sporting disaster but a huge, fun farewell to a wonderful week in London.



1. Reception at Francesca Galloway's gallery



2. Show-and-tell: Danny Shaffer shares a wonderful old Baluch

Jean Hoffman comments

HALI's celebration provided an opportunity to connect with many rug stars and see many star rugs. Among my personal highlights:

—The Girdlers' Carpet, a stunningly bright Mughal rug still in the Girdlers' guild hall, with its uniquely British history. In case you too were wondering, the Girdlers made fancy leather-and-brass belts, or girdles.

—The HALI Symposium—two days of lectures. On Day 1, Walter Denny's talk on rethinking the methodology of authenticity was, in this age of many fakes, thought provoking and well delivered. Anna Beselin, Textile Conservator from the Staatliche Museen Berlin, gave a talk on Safavid carpet-making techniques from which I took away the theme of looking for exceptions in carpets and learning from those observations. Fuchsia Hart, Iran Research Assistant at the V&A, spoke about a group of silk carpets donated to a Safavid Shrine in Qum. A fragment of one of them was at the V&A storage facility, so we could peer at it in person (3). Her co-researcher in Iran, Turaj Zhuleh, could not attend the conference, but it was good to see collaboration with an Iranian scholar. On Day 2, I especially appreciated Stefano Ionescu's combined love for and scholarship about Transylvanian rugs. One of the ones he showed, from the Black Church, was offered by David Sorgato at the HALI Fair—such a treat to be able to contemplate and pet that spectacular carpet in pristine condition, even though I'm not a fan of Transylvanians. Jon Thompson's observations

on color in carpets were illuminating, and NERS-member Raoul Tschebull did a wonderful presentation on the evolution of two nineteenth-century Transcaucasian pile-rug designs (4).

—The show-and-tell. More interesting to me than the objects (none of which matched my collecting interests) were the people and their feelings for and knowledge of their collections. Seeing the varied saddle covers, great Baluch examples, tent bands, and Turkmen weavings was to be immersed in the essence of why rugs are so fascinating and why people collect.

—The HALI Fair. It lived up to its promise, and I was not the only NERS member to make purchases there.

On the symposium, Julia Bailey adds

Hearing the papers—especially those in the first day's "Carpets in Iran, 1400–1700"—topped my reasons for going to HALI London (putting me, I suspect, in a distinct minority). Gratifyingly, the speakers proved to be competent and informative, and some were standouts. Moya Carey, now curator at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, opened the program with a terrific interpretation of how the Ardabil carpets—"mega-beasts of Islamic art history," as she put it—reflected the mystical self-image and artistic leanings of their royal patron, Shah Tahmasp. Walter Denny rehabilitated the Metropolitan Museum's Anhalt Carpet, refuting the damning "nineteenth-century copy" label given it by Charles Grant Ellis. (To his credit, Walter did obey Uncle Charlie's purported command to a past speaker: "Louder! . . . and funnier!")



3. Doug and Julia Bailey, with HALI's Ben Evans, view one of the Qum shrine rugs and other textiles in the V&A archives



4. Speaker Mike Tschebull discusses the evolution of the "cypress tree" design on Transcaucasian pile rugs

There were enlightening talks on Khorasan “Portuguese” carpets and Safavid-era carpets in actual Portuguese collections. Michael Franses surveyed tapestry-woven silk rugs, focusing on late-sixteenth-century examples—fifty-seven of them!—which he variously assigned to Kashan, Kirman, or Tabriz/Hamadan.

The next day’s session (“Collecting and Collections”) included an able overview by Rosemary Crill of the Indian export textiles in the TAPI Collection, Surat. Jon Thompson mercifully came out of retirement to explore how color works (or emphatically doesn’t) in rugs; his was the most interactive presentation, with his audience startled to see colors so altered by whatever hues were currently nearby or had been recently stared at. Even in synopsis, Ali Riza Tuna’s theory of Anatolian kilim aesthetics was too long for his allotted twenty minutes and too abstruse for many in his audience, but his exploration of defining forms and figure-ground relationships in these weavings merits full exposition in print.

Symposium presenter Mike Tschebull keeps it brief

Many of the lectures were good, but I especially enjoyed those by Walter Denny, Jon Thompson, and Rosemary Crill. At the *HALI* Fair, I was sorely tempted to buy an Upper Volta cotton textile, and tried to get a friend to buy it so I didn’t have to. On one stand there was a version of the cypress-tree Transcaucasian-rug design that was featured in my talk (4).



5. At the *HALI* Fair, Gerard Paquin heeds the siren call

And Gerard Paquin verifies that Jean wasn’t the only NERS buyer at the *HALI* Fair

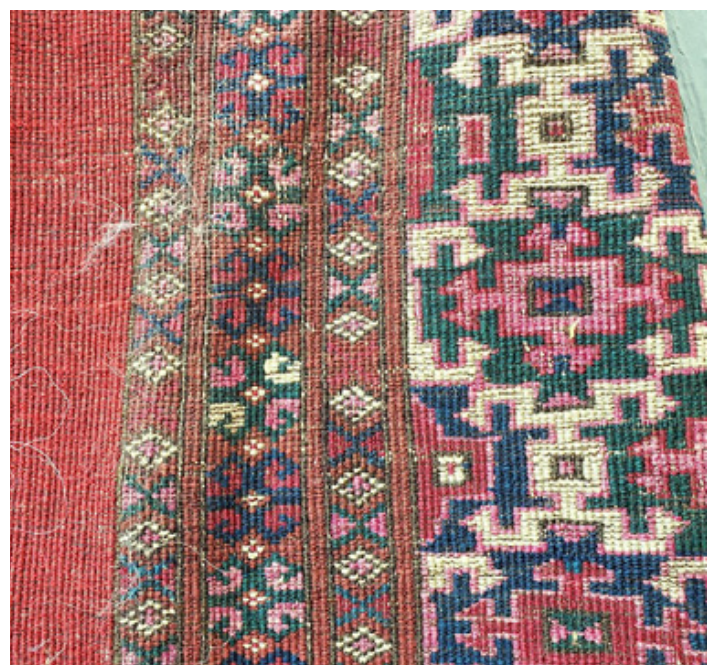
Although I decided to forgo the academic lectures and various museum visits, I could not ignore the siren call of the fair. The quality of the material there seemed very high; one dealer remarked that it was the best he had ever seen.

As a collector who has spent forty years searching and has quite a few pieces at home, I try to be selective in what I acquire. But I also like a wide range of objects, so I have to be careful and discipline myself to say no. I fell off the wagon in London—but there is a story explaining why.

When I went to the London ICOC in 1983, I was very impressed by a small exhibition of collector rugs, pieces then published in Jon Thompson’s book *Carpet Magic*. I was particularly taken by a small Salor bagface, and asked Thompson how one could find such things to buy. He said, “You tell your friends, and keep looking. Once your interest becomes known, you create a force field, and things begin to find you.”

Since then I have never had the opportunity, desire, or available money all at the same time to buy a real Salor piece. At the *HALI* Fair one appeared, and it called to me (5). It is very beautiful: capturing the glow of the silk or the alternation of the green and blue colors in a photo is impossible, but you can imagine the effect by reference to a close-up of the back (6).

So, it took me thirty-six years to get my London Salor piece! You never know when opportunity will present itself in the rug world. You need patience and luck, and you need to be ready—your force field active.



6. Back detail of Gerard’s long-awaited Salor

Skinner Fall Rug Sale

NERS member and Skinner Fine Rugs and Carpets Director Lawrence Kearney proclaims the upcoming auction (in Boston, Sunday noon, October 27), “the best we’ve ever had.” It includes Chinese and East Turkestan rugs, Anatolian kilims, and early Caucasian rugs from three noted collections, other collectible rugs and textiles, and (again in Lawrence’s words) “many terrific decorative carpets.” Four representatives are pictured here.



Bakhshaish niche rug



Bijar Garrus small rug

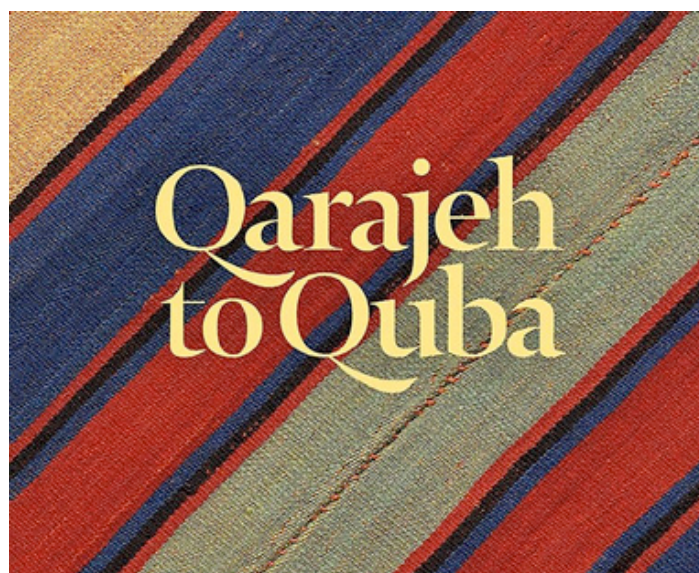


Small (nim) susani



Ningxia small rug

New Book by an NERS Member



Dust jacket detail of Mike Tschbull's new book

HALI Publications has just published Raoul “Mike” Tschbull’s *Qarajeh to Quba*. In its 224 pages, Mike considers and gorgeously illustrates (with photographs by Don Tuttle) 63 nineteenth-century pile and flatwoven rugs from Northwest Iran and the Transcaucasus. The book is (or will soon be) available from rug-book sellers and Amazon.

Other Rug, Textile, and Related Events

Auctions

Sept. 10, Vienna, Dorotheum, Carpets, Textiles, Tapestries
 Sept. 17, Stuttgart, Nagel, Rugs & Carpets, Textiles & Islamic Art
 Sept. 28, Vienna, Austria Auction, The Sailer Collection
 Oct. 24, London, Christie’s, Art of the Islamic and Indian World
 including Oriental Rugs and Carpets
 Oct. 27, Boston, Skinner, Fine Oriental Rugs & Carpets (see above)
 Oct. TBA, Vienna, Austria Auction, More Azadi-Collection Pieces

Exhibitions and Fairs

Oct. 18–20, San Francisco, Greenwich Inn, Antique Rug and Textile Show (ARTS)
 Oct. 31–Nov. 3, Turin, Satirana Textile Show
 Until Jan. 5, 2020, Washington, GWU Textile Museum, Woven Interiors: Furnishing Early Medieval Egypt

Future NERS Meetings

- November 1: Shiv Sikri, “Markings in Oriental Rugs”
- March 20: Collector Session: Jeff Spurr
- April 17: Joel Greifinger, “Kurdish Weaving from Three Regions”
- May 8: Mete Mutlu on Anatolian village rugs
- May 17: Annual picnic, moth mart, and show-and-tell

Photo Credits p. 1: John Wertime p. 2: Cheri Hunter (top), rugidea.com (bottom) p. 3: HALI 176 pp. 5–9: Jim Sampson (figs. 1, 10), Jim Adelson (figs. 2–5), Julia Bailey (figs. 6, 7), Doug Bailey (figs. 8, 9, 11–14) pp. 10–12: Julia Bailey (figs. 1, 4–7, 9, 10), Jim Sampson (figs. 2, 3, 8) p. 13: Jim Sampson (figs. 1–3), Doug Bailey (fig. 4) p. 14 (left to right), top row: Yon Bard, Julia Bailey, Yon Bard, Yon Bard; middle row: Yon Bard, Yon Bard, Julia Bailey; bottom row: Julia Bailey, Yon Bard p. 15 (left to right), top row: Yon Bard, Yon Bard, Julia Bailey; middle row: Yon Bard, Jim Sampson; bottom row: Jim Sampson, Yon Bard, Yon Bard, Yon Bard p. 16: Jim Sampson pp. 17–19: Julia Bailey (figs. 1, 4), Jean Hoffman (figs. 2, 3, 5), Gerard Paquin (fig. 6) p. 20: Skinner (top row), Amazon p. 21, row 1: Jim Sampson (left), Mike Tschbull (center, right); row 2: Julia Bailey (left), Jim Sampson (center, right); row 3: Gerard Paquin (textile details), Jim Sampson (meeting); row 4: Jim Sampson (left), Julia Bailey (right); row 5: Jim Sampson (left, center), Doug Bailey (speakers); row 6: Jim Sampson

Rear View Mirror: Last Season's Speaker Program

(See p. 4, **Meetings and speakers, 2018–19**, as well as pp. 5–12, for identification)



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



The New England Rug Society

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