

Reflections of a judge in the 2013 show
Time Warps by Nancy Arthur Hoskins

Last week I had the privilege of being one of the two jurors for the Handweavers' Guild of Connecticut exhibit Time Warps: Textiles from Today's Weavers. I want to share some thoughts with you about the judging process from my perspective and about submitting work for the show. The online prospectus for this show outlined the entry requirements and the information provided for the jurors. The entries had all been unpacked by the assistant, laid out on the tables, organized by type of textiles (e.g.: rugs, clothing etc.) tagged with a number, a brief description and a few pertinent details (fiber, content, structure, hand dyed etc.). Was the weaver a novice or experienced? No names were visible for the jurors. The criteria for scoring the entries were available online for anyone submitting work. Considered were there four categories: Quality of Workmanship, Finishing and Presentation, Texture and Patterns, and Design. All aspects were evaluated, and points were given from 1 to 10. The two jurors worked independently without exchanging opinions or points on any item. Scribes assisted by recording the points granted and commenting concerning each piece.

Each piece was isolated on a table, laid on the floor if a rug or hung by silent assistance while being evaluated to simulate --as best as possible -- how it would display in an exhibit. First impressions are quickly formed about overall design, effective use of color, and creative interpretation. Finishing details and technical expertise were then closely examined front and back, inside and out. Points were assigned under the four categories stated above and the points were totaled. One thing that made judging this exhibit different from many is that we were not obligated to reject items and all entries were in the show. I hope that the comments and overall scoring were accepted by each weaver as either a compliment or as a critique that would help them improve. Some of you may go on to submit a piece to the exhibit that does not accept and reject items. So, I am going to add some suggestions for the future. Rejection is hard, I know. One must consider entering a show as a learning experience. Ask an honest weaver/artist/friend to critique the piece with you following the criteria cited.

If it is a garment, was the fabric suitable?
Was the rug durable, well designed and woven?
Does the fabric hang or drape well?
Is the framing appropriate?
Was the finishing meticulous?
Did you know when to quit?

Sometimes a piece suffers from the overabundance of creativity. Embellishments, such as beads, feathers and buttons must coordinate and complement the color, texture, and style of the woven item above all, consider the design and craftsmanship. Be proud of your work and give yourself a pat on the back for the courage to create and for the courage to present it to the public. Most of the entries of this exhibit were functional rather than art fabrics, but I am going to add some suggestions in case it will be helpful for the future exhibit. A common problem is that mounting your work to display it as a hanging. Rods, dowels, sticks, driftwood, plexiglass,

cords -anything that is used to suspend a textile should be compatible to the size, color, texture, and theme of the work. A coordinated, covered, padded hanger adds a certain panache to a garment. A stand for the hat or a neckpiece should not distract from the item. If you're going to frame a piece, first mount it properly. Here are some suggestions: cover either an acid free matboard, foam core, or a canvas stretcher with cotton cloth sewn like a pillow case. Slip a rigid board or frame inside and stitch the top closed. I then hand stitch the weaving to the covered board or frame. Please! No staples, nails, or tacks! Select a simple frame and accents that in the next woven creation.

Wall hangings can be lined on the back with cotton T-shirt weight fabrics. They come in many colors and have the elasticity to conform to the weaving without distortion. This lining is hand stitched to the weaving. There are some good methods for rugs and other items to be hung for display. If a casing is used at the top, hand stitch the turn back, cover the mounting board with cotton cloth, (wood shouldn't be right next to your fabric). Drill a hole in the mounting board near both ends. Make buttonholes on the back of the casing in the same position near both ends. To attach to the wall, slip the casing back, put the nails through the drilled holes and buttonholes and you have a secure, but visible mounting board. Another way to hang a textile is with Velcro. Hand stitch the soft Velcro to the top of the weaving. Staple the hooked Velcro to the cloth covered mounting stick. Nail the stick to the wall. Attach the top of the soft Velcro to the hooked Velcro on the stick. Some art fabrics look better if the piece is tensioned at the bottom with either a casing and rod or the Velcro type mounting. Finishing and mounting details, when not well done, will detract from the otherwise successful textile. The final phase of our jury obligation was to select the award winners. Both jurors considered the textiles for each award and their score. This was an opportunity for us to discuss the merits of a particular piece. Choosing was difficult but being able to present a prize was a pleasure. I was delighted when I walked into the exhibit on Saturday afternoon to see all the wonderful pieces so artfully displayed. I think that the Handweavers' Guild of Connecticut can be very proud of their Time Warps exhibit.