A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN TAPESTRY NETWORK by Barbara Heller

The Canadian Tapestry Network is a loose affiliation of members whose purpose is to provide a centre for the exchange of ideas and information about contemporary tapestry in Canada. Currently it is supported by a small subscription fee and the hours and hours of volunteer time put in by its co-editors, Barbara Heller and Madeleine Darling-Tung and its webmistress, Krystyna Szluinska-Sadej. Two to three times a year we produce a newsletter which is mailed out to about 150 members, both Canadian and American, complete with colour photos. As well there are periodic emailings of time-sensitive news and the Network also has a web presence (http://www.canadiantapestrynetwork.com).

Currently the big debate is whether or not to keep the paper edition as rising costs make it more financially difficult, but with the recent help of B.C. Stars (see below) we are committed to publishing an actual, as well as a virtual, newsletter as long as possible. There is nothing like curling up with a cup of coffee and enjoying the latest issue, red pencil in hand to circle items of interest and make notes of shows to see and to enter. Ixchel Suarez: Impressions in the Savannah. Tapestry. High warp Wool silk rafia, metallic threads linen synthetic bamboo, H 1.80 m X W 2.50 m.

The British Columbia Society of Tapestry Artists (B.C.Stars) is a non-profit society open to all those living in the province of British Columbia with an interest in tapestry. It was created in 1993 with a mandate to "promote the art of tapestry through exhibitions, lectures, classes, projects, symposia, publications, and other means". All events are open to the general public.

Krystyna Szluinska-Sadej: Meadow. Peice of Hope

B.C. Stars' first project was to hold an international symposium, attended by 110 delegates from 10 countries, called "Making a Place for Tapestry" (with help from the Canada Council) and publish a 106 page record of the proceedings. This document on contemporary issues in tapestry is now in major public institutions in North America and Europe, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Manufactory Gobelins in Paris, and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., as well as in libraries and art institutions across Canada.

In 1996 B.C.Stars completed a Community Tapestry project with the help of private donors and grants from various foundations. This large (6'x8') tapestry has been donated to the Dr. Peter AIDS Centre and Hospice. The tapestry was designed by five members of B.C.Stars and over forty weavers, professional and amateur, contributed to its weaving from June to November, 1996, at the downtown branch of the Vancouver Public Library. The Dr. Peter Tapestry is now installed at the permanent site of the Dr. Peter Centre in downtown Vancouver.

Monique Lehman "Hope" St. James Hospital, Pontiac, Illinois 7'×9'

During 1997 and 1998 the Dr. Peter tapestry travelled throughout the province in conjunction with "Weaving Between the Lines," an exhibition of contemporary tapestries by British Columbia artists. This exhibition was another project of B.C.Stars with the assistance of the B.C. Arts Council. In 2000, B.C. Stars produced a book entitled "Weaving between the Lines: B.C. Tapestry on the Edge" with the help of grants from the Canada Council. The book has articles on the history of tapestry in B.C., contemporary B.C tapestry, as well as community tapestry projects in B.C. and around the English speaking world. It also includes a catalogue of works in the 1997 exhibit of the same name.

Elaine Duncan Nature Designed: Arbutus Bark. 7 1/2″ w by 11 3/8″ high. It is woven of wool, cotton and silk. c2009.

Since its incorporation, B.C.Stars has organized slide lectures by visiting and local tapestry artists and tapestry shows of members' work. It has also sponsored weekend workshops and evening classes in tapestry weaving. CTN and B.C.Stars were part of the organizing committee for Convergence, the biennial convention of the Handweaver's Guild of North America, which was held in Vancouver in 2002. In conjunction with Convergence and the American Tapestry Alliance, they organized several tapestry exhibitions and hosted a panel discussion on the subject of contemporary tapestry.

CTN and B.C. Stars work closely with other arts organizations on a community, national and international level. Such cooperative ventures further our mandate of educating the arts and general communities about tapestry, and benefit all the participating organizations by introducing them to new and wider audiences.

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