

The **Nature**
of **Things**

Essays of a Tapestry Weaver

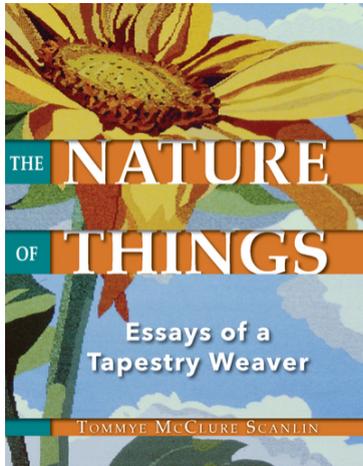
Tommye McClure Scanlin

September 15, 2020



UNG | UNIVERSITY of
NORTH GEORGIA™
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Nature of Things: Essays of a Tapestry Weaver



The Nature of Things: Essays of a Tapestry Weaver

By Tommye McClure Scanlin Foreword by Philis Alvic

THE NATURE OF THINGS weaves together a life full of happiness and sorrow. In these fourteen collected essays, Tommye McClure Scanlin reflects on her artistic journey and how crafting and life are interwoven, two threads that comprise a larger picture. Readers will find themselves lost in Scanlin's full-color tapestries and comforting writing style as they explore the natural fields and woods of southern Appalachia.

A final part of the book gives an overview of tapestry weaving basics with diagrams and descriptions for setting up a simple frame loom and weaving a small tapestry sampler. Glossary, simple pipe loom illustrations, and a resource list are included for reference.

978-1-940771-72-4

\$24.99

Memoir | Tapestry

8 x 10 inches | 232 pp

For media inquiries, contact:

University of North Georgia Press

ungpress@ung.edu

(706) 864-1556

Wholesalers may purchase copies from

Ingram Content Group:

Ingram Content Group

One Ingram Blvd.

La Vergne, TN 37086

(615) 793-5000

customerservice@ingramcontent.com

www.ingramcontent.com/retailers



Tommye Scanlin, author

www.scanlintapestry.com

[@bittersweettapestrystudio](https://twitter.com/bittersweettapestrystudio)



UNG

UNIVERSITY of
NORTH GEORGIA™
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The University of North Georgia Press, a scholarly, peer-reviewed press, is an extension of our sponsoring university, University of North Georgia. Our primary function is to promote education and research, with a special emphasis on innovative scholarship and pedagogy.



ung.edu/university-press



(706) 864-1556



ungpress@ung.edu

Tommye McClure Scanlin, Studio Artist and Former UNG Fine Arts Department Head, Publishes Debut Crafting Memoir

Jillian Murphy

706-864-1556

jillian.murphy@ung.edu

- Scanlin’s debut work explores life, art, and finding meaning through nature in Appalachia.
- Scanlin shares the lessons she learned from other artists, including Lillian E. Smith, Mary Frances Davidson, Archie Brennan, and Susan Martin Maffei.

Dahlonega, GA—The University of North Georgia (UNG) Press is pleased to announce our newest release: *The Nature of Things: Essays of a Tapestry Weaver* by Tommye McClure Scanlin. *The Nature of Things* releases September 15, 2020, and includes a forward by Philis Alvic.

The Nature of Things weaves together a life full of happiness and sorrow. In these fourteen collected essays, Tommye McClure Scanlin reflects on her artistic journey and how crafting and life are interwoven, two threads that comprise a larger picture. Readers will find themselves lost in Scanlin’s full-color tapestries and comforting writing style as they explore the natural fields and woods of southern Appalachia.

A final part of the book gives an overview of tapestry weaving basics with diagrams and descriptions for setting up a simple pipe loom and weaving a small tapestry sampler. Glossary, simple pipe loom illustrations, and a resource list are included for reference.

Tommye McClure Scanlin is an artist and art educator. She grew up in the countryside of rural north Georgia where her family has lived for several generations. Early on, she knew she wanted to be an artist although there was no formal art instruction available in the schools she attended at the time. Scanlin’s artistic spirit has led her through an inspiring career. She has taught at North Georgia College & State University, Arrowmont School of Crafts, John C. Campbell Folk School, and Penland School of Craft. Scanlin is a juried member of Southern Highland Craft Guild and Piedmont Craftsmen and a board member of the Lillian E. Smith Center and the John C. Campbell Folk School. Scanlin and her husband, Thomas, live in Dahlonega, Georgia, in Seven Oaks, the 1871 home built by the founder of North Georgia College, Col. William P. Price.

Philis Alvic is an artist, weaver, and writer. She has exhibited her complex woven wall textiles in over 300 juried and invitational exhibitions. Alvic has written *Weavers of the Southern Highlands*, *Crafts of Armenia*, and over 100 magazine articles. Alvic is a founding member of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association.

The Nature of Things (978-1-940771-72-4) costs \$24.99 and is an 8-by-10-inch perfect-bound paperback. Wholesalers can purchase copies from Ingram; individuals can purchase copies from their favorite independent bookstore and other major retailers. More details can be found at the UNG Press’s website.

The UNG Press is a scholarly, peer-reviewed press that serves as an extension of our sponsoring university, the University of North Georgia. Our primary function is to promote education and research with a special emphasis on innovative scholarship and pedagogy. Through our partnership with Affordable Learning Georgia and eCore, the UNG Press is the leading press in Georgia for producing Open Educational Resources and Open Textbooks.###

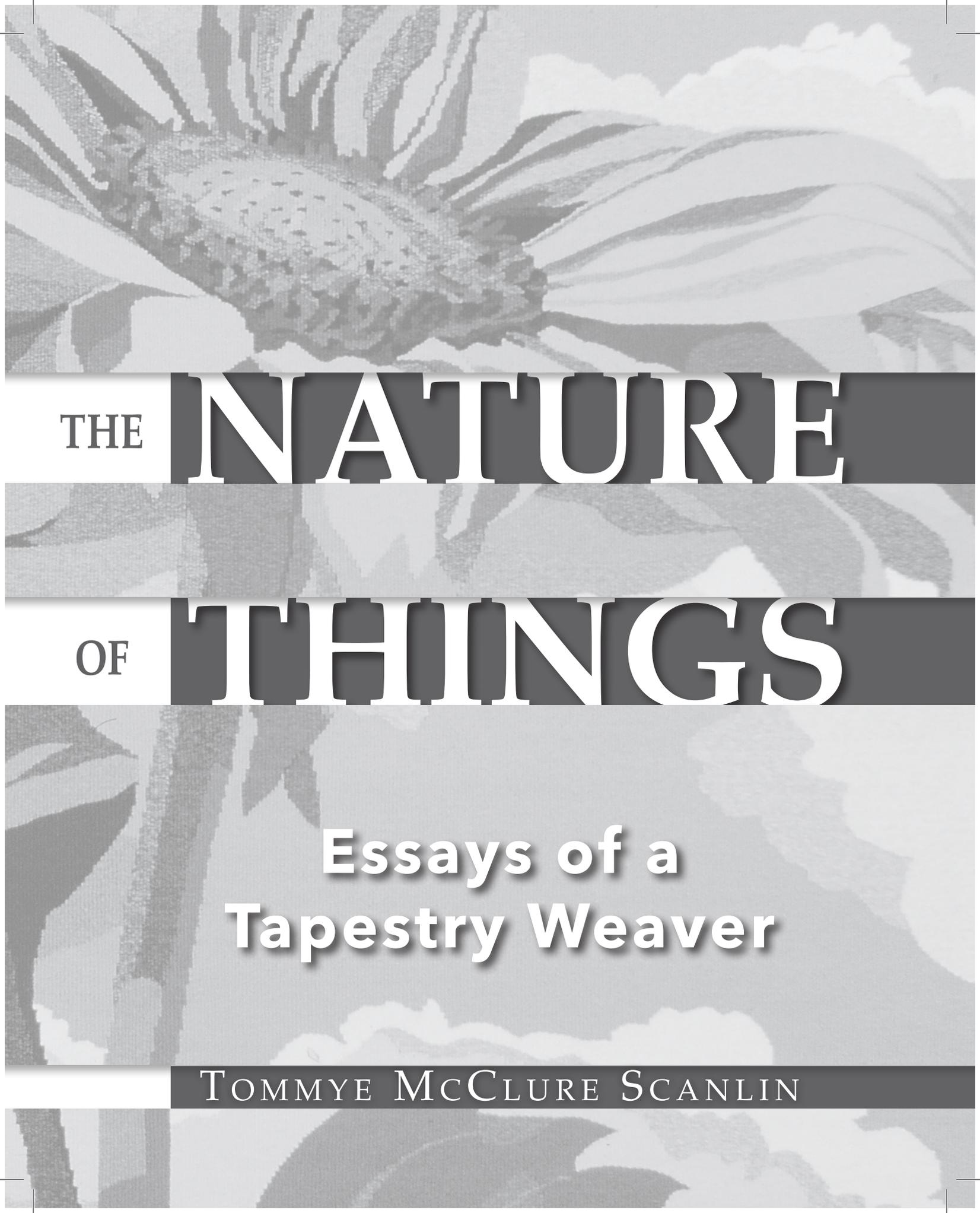
Contributor Biographies

Tommye McClure Scanlin

Tommye McClure Scanlin is an artist and art educator. She grew up in the countryside of rural north Georgia where her family has lived for several generations. Early on, she knew she wanted to be an artist although there was no formal art instruction available in the schools she attended at the time. Scanlin's artistic spirit has led her through an inspiring career. She has taught at North Georgia College & State University, Arrowmont School of Crafts, John C. Campbell Folk School, and Penland School of Craft. Scanlin is a juried member of Southern Highland Craft Guild and Piedmont Craftsmen and a board member of the Lillian E. Smith Center and the John C. Campbell Folk School. Scanlin and her husband, Thomas, live in Dahlonega, Georgia, in Seven Oaks, the 1871 home built by the founder of North Georgia College, Col. William P. Price.

Philis Alvec

Philis Alvic is an artist, weaver, and writer. She has exhibited her complex woven wall textiles in over 300 juried and invitational exhibitions. Alvic has written *Weavers of the Southern Highlands* (University of Kentucky Press, 2003), *Crafts of Armenia* (USAID/IESC Armenia, 2003), and over 100 magazine articles. As a short-term consultant for crafts development and marketing, she has worked on projects in fourteen different countries. Alvic is a founding member of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association and is on the Board of Weave A Real Peace.



THE **NATURE**

OF **THINGS**

**Essays of a
Tapestry Weaver**

TOMMYE McCLURE SCANLIN

UNCORRECTED PROOF - NOT FOR RESALE

If any material is to be quoted, it should be checked against the bound book.

Title: The Nature of Things: Essays of a Tapestry Weaver

Author: Tommy McClure Scanlin

Publication Date: September 15, 2020

Format: perfect-bound paperback

ISBN: 978-1-940771-72-4

Retail Price: \$24.99 USD

Length: 213 pages

Trim: 8 x 10 inches



UNG | UNIVERSITY *of*
NORTH GEORGIA™
UNIVERSITY PRESS

82 College Circle, Dahlonega, GA 30597

For information, contact us at: ungpress@ung.edu

If you need this document in an alternate format for accessibility purposes

(e.g. Braille, large print, audio, etc.), please contact the UNG Press at

ungpress@ung.edu or 770-864-1556.

THE
NATURE
OF
THINGS

**Essays of a
Tapestry Weaver**

TOMMYE McCLURE SCANLIN

Copyright © 2020 by Tommye McClure Scanlin

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher, except by reviewers who may quote brief excerpts in connections with a review in newspaper, magazine, or electronic publications; nor may any part of this book be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or other, without the written permission from the publisher.

Published by:

University of North Georgia Press
Dahlonega, Georgia

Printing Support by:

Lightning Source Inc.
La Vergne, Tennessee

Book design by Corey Parson.

ISBN: 978-1-940771-72-4

Printed in the United States of America

For more information, please visit: <http://ung.edu/university-press>

Or e-mail: ungpress@ung.edu

To my husband, Thomas E. Scanlin.

I'm very grateful for his support and encouragement. Thomas dealt with the day-to-day realities of home responsibilities when I traveled to teach workshops, participated in artist residencies, attended conferences, or studied for months on end at Penland School of Craft and at West Dean College. Thomas has believed in me from the first time we met—and I am a better person (and artist) because of him.

After we have finished here,
the world will continue its quiet turning,
and the years will still transpire,
but now without their numbers,
and the days and months will pass
without the names of Norse and Roman gods.

Time will go by the way it did
before history, pure and unnoticed,
a mystery that arose between the sun and moon
before there was a word
for dawn or noon or midnight,

before there were names for the earth's
uncountable things,
when fruit hung anonymously
from scattered groves of trees,
light on the smooth green side,
shadow on the other.

—Billy Collins

Contents



Foreword	
by Philis Alvic	ix
Preface	xiii
Chapter One	
Once Upon a Time: An Introduction	1
Chapter Two	
The Making of a Teacher	5
Chapter Three	
Finding the Way to Tapestry	15
Chapter Four	
Tapestry: A Closer Look	25
Chapter Five	
Seeking Inspiration	35
Chapter Six	
Time Out to Take a Look	43
Chapter Seven	
Small Things	59

Chapter Eight	
Kudzu: Enveloping Green	71
Chapter Nine	
Spirals	81
Chapter Ten	
Feathers	95
Chapter Eleven	
Stones	113
Chapter Twelve	
Black Walnuts and Red Earth	125
Chapter Thirteen	
Coping with Reality	149
Chapter Fourteen	
Threads of Time	167
Chapter Fifteen	
Doubts and Decisions	179
Appendix A	
Tapestry Weaving Basics: A Primer	185
Appendix B	
Small Galvanized Pipe Loom	207
Appendix C	
Brief Glossary of Tapestry Terms	209
Appendix D	
Selected Resources for Tapestry	211

Foreword

by Philis Alvic



Tommye Scanlin is an artist who has chosen tapestry as her medium of expression. Why would an artist choose weaving in the first place, and then a technique that requires considerable advance planning and many hours of execution? Why would an artist not choose the faster process of painting the subject? Besides being much faster, the painter is allowed to easily change from the original idea as the work progresses. As a weaver myself, I understand the seduction of textiles. Light reacts much differently to the yarn surface than it does to paint. Light is absorbed by yarn, creating a richness and depth. With yarn, and particularly the wool that Scanlin uses, the colors are intensified.

Tapestry is a weaving process where the design is built up row-by-row, inserting yarn for short distances across the row as the image dictates. Scanlin uses a traditional approach where she makes a cartoon—a detailed drawing of her subject—which is mounted behind the warp or upright threads on the loom. In her essays she describes in detail how she comes to the images she uses in her work. The preparation for her tapestry work builds on her love of walking in the woods and perceiving the small things in her surrounding that combine to make it a fulfilling experience. She photographs and draws her subject. The photograph is the reference, while the drawing is a method of understanding the dynamics of the item and the relationship of its parts and to the ground or space behind the item. Drawing is an aid to seeing. Only through drawing with repeated capturing of the image does an artist come to know why there was initial attraction. From her writings, we learn that Scanlin enjoys this process of becoming acquainted with her subject before she even begins to develop a composition for her piece.



Occasionally she will test an image by producing a small tapestry. While these are finished works in themselves, it allows for further understanding of the object and a trial of yarns and color.

Composition is how objects relate to one another within the frame of the piece. The artist is conscious of the viewer and how the eye will travel over the work. Scanlin is particularly interested in how the figure floats above the ground and the negative shapes created when the ground is outlined by the edge of the object. Often the ground is not a single surface, but made up of shapes itself that either echoes the object or contrast with it. None of this happens by chance, but is worked out in successive drawings until the design is deemed complete. Then it is transferred to a detailed drawing, which is the cartoon.

All the time when working on the composition, the artist is aware of how color will interact with the shapes and the special dynamics as different colors find different planes within the composition space. A tapestry artist, even one who dyes her own yarn, is limited by yarn colors. This is a challenge that a skilled artist like Scanlin meets by sometimes combining two different colors—using them as one thread—and sometimes by actual weaving techniques.

While most elements of the composition are fixed, any weaver is very aware of what happens during the weaving process. Are edges of the figures coming together properly? Are colors in the correct intensity and proportion? Is the surface tension consistent to insure a flat finished piece? And the multitude of questions that the artist and the craftsman deal with in construction. For the most part, these are not issues that come from a checklist, but from experience gathered over time. An artist understands when things are working and adjusts when needed.

The work of an artist is solitary for the most part. Especially for a tapestry weaver, constructing a piece involves many hours alone. Those of us who choose this path know that there is a certain gratification in the repetitive work, where the body develops a rhythm in the sequence of tasks. However, there are many other requirements in the life of an artist. Finishing pieces after they are cut from the loom, applying for exhibitions, keeping up a webpage, shipping or transporting work to shows, teaching opportunities—to mention just a few of the things that take a weaver away from the loom. One often wonders at the time it takes to manage a career in relationship to the time of actually producing the work. Years ago, I saw a documentary about the sculptor, Henry Moore. The major fact that I took away from it was that he had a personal curator. Unfortunately, for most of us in the arts, we are our own curator, secretary, publicist, packer, social media manager, equipment maintainer, and general all around repairperson.

I keep an extensive calendar to manage the different parts of my life and to prove to myself that I've actually accomplished something during the day. Several years ago, Scanlin came up with the idea of weaving a calendar. Really, it was weaving something each day as a way of centering herself as a weaver, when other chores consumed most of the day. Over subsequent years and more calendars, she has imposed more structure with a view to the final outcome.

Many artists are very bad at articulating what they do and why they do it. The slow process of weaving provides lots of opportunity for thought. In this collection of essays, Scanlin lets us into the thought process that she goes through in investigating a visual idea, and then developing it into a woven tapestry. She shows unusual insight into her own process.

Phillis Alvic is an artist, weaver, and writer. She has exhibited her complex woven wall textiles in over 300 juried and invitational exhibitions. Alvic has written *Weavers of the Southern Highlands* (University Press of Kentucky, 2003), *Crafts of Armenia* (USAID/IESC Armenia, 2003), and over 100 magazine articles. As a short-term consultant for crafts development and marketing, she has worked on projects in fourteen different countries. Alvic is a founding member of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association and is on the Board of Weave A Real Peace.

Preface



A few years ago as I was preparing a presentation about my work, it occurred to me that my primary source for inspiration has always been found in the world in which I grew up—the fields and valleys of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. I credit my mother, Hazel Teague McClure, for being my first guide to the beauty these surroundings hold. She would often describe the latest wildflower found on an afternoon walk. After she died, the flower identification book I'd given her came back to me. In it, I found her notes sprinkled throughout the margins of the pages, noting where and when she'd spotted particular flowers.

Both my sister and I were raised with her expectation to simply do the best we could in whatever we wanted to pursue, and each accomplishment was celebrated with us. My sister and I chose different paths, both in the teaching field. She loved sports and became an early childhood physical education teacher. I loved art and became an art teacher. Mother was proud of both of us.

My journey to becoming an artist began simply and has taken modest paths. I haven't traveled extensively to experience a wider world. Most of my years have been spent close to the mountains where I grew up. Every day, I still find something to see and wonder about and to respond to in a visual way, maybe in a photograph, a sketch, a painting, or a tapestry. There is a beauty in the limits of place and time. Maybe Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* said it best: "There's no place like home." And so I wanted to write to describe the small things that I've found where I've lived for almost my whole life and the artworks that came from those observations.





Figure 0.1
Brasstown valley, a few miles from home.

Along my way, many people have been my guides. There are several to whom I am especially grateful for what they shared with me. I owe much to Bob Owens, my first art teacher, and, later, colleague at North Georgia College. Edwina Bringle, my first weaving teacher at Penland School of Crafts, nudged me along for years. Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei are my tapestry gurus.

Noel Thurner and Patrick Horan have shown me how to see and be part of the natural world in ways I never imagined. Their dedication to preserving many hundreds of acres in Western North Carolina for posterity through conservation efforts is inspiring.

Authors Nancy Peacock and Carol Polsgrove read my drafts and gave insightful suggestions about my attempts to describe what I experience in the natural world and hope to represent

in my artwork. Tapestry artists and writers Molly Elkind, Sarah Swett, and Pat Williams read later versions and made kind comments. Sharon Hall, wonderful writer and friend, gave great advice. Fran Porter and Beth Rickert, whom I've known since early college days, have also read my assorted essays along the way and encouraged me to keep on with it. I thank them all for their support.

Photographs of inspiration sources leading to the making of tapestries are important in this book. I've made most of the nature photos with either a point-and-shoot camera or a smart phone. Tim Barnwell has photographed my completed tapestries for many years. I'm grateful to Christopher Dant, Assistant Professor of Photography in the Department of Visual Art at the University of North Georgia, for working closely with me during the last stages of pulling this book together. His photographs of the visual research I've done for several bodies of work have been helpful to document the multiple directions I sometimes take ideas before winding up at the end with a tapestry.

I've had guidance and encouragement as my ideas came together from Jillian Murphy, Assistant Managing Editor, and Bonnie (BJ) Robinson, Ph.D., Director, of University of North Georgia Press. It was a chance meeting between Jillian and Philis Alvic at an Appalachian Studies Association conference that led to my asking Philis to write the Foreword. Philis Alvic's writings about weaving have informed me for decades and I'm honored that she's contributed words to this book.



Figure 1.1
Tommye—second grade photo
(photographer unknown)

1

Once Upon a Time An Introduction

Once upon a time I wanted to be an artist. Along the way from there to now I found my way to tapestry weaving.

As long as I can remember, I've wanted to draw pictures. As a child, I heard others say I was the "class artist," and that encouraged me to think I could be a real artist when I grew up. What I thought an artist did was pretty limited since there wasn't an art program in the rural North Georgia schools I attended. Even so, kids in our class happily cut out stenciled holiday decorations for each season that we then colored with crayons and taped to windows and doors. We drew with pencils on our lined notebook paper to illustrate reports. And in our spare time, several of us girls drew horses and pretty dresses while some of the boys filled pages with elaborate battle scenes between cowboys and Indians.



Figure 1.2
Paint by numbers horse
(photo by Christopher Dant)

One Christmas, under the tree I found the Jon Gnagy (1907–1981) *Learn to Draw* kit that included a pad of manila paper, some sticks of charcoal, and the book of art lessons. I drew every example in the book many times over and used notebook paper once the drawing paper ran out. The next year, Santa brought a couple of paint-by-number sets, and how exciting those were! I loved to fill in the printed outlines on the canvas board with a brush loaded with that juicy, heady smelling oil paint. Drawing with charcoal and painting with oil paint—those

were things an artist did, I decided.

I received encouragement for my artistic “talent” from family, friends, and teachers all through my early years in spite of no art classes being offered at school. By high school, the idea that I might actually become an artist had a strong hold on me. I was even offered a modest art scholarship at a private college. As tempting as that offer was, because of the family’s limited financial means, it wasn’t enough. Instead, after high school graduation, I enrolled at North Georgia College (NGC) in Dahlonega where



Figure 1.3
Early drawing: John Kennedy
(photo by Christopher Dant)



Figure 1.4
Early drawing: Janie
(photo by Christopher Dant)

I was given a scholarship with the provision that I would major in education and agree to teach for several years in a public school in Georgia. Being enrolled in an education degree program was not at all my first choice since I'd held dreams of studying art in college. But the reality was that I needed financial assistance to attend school.

As it turned out, one of the prerequisites for the elementary education major at NGC was an art education class. In that course, I encountered Bob Owens (1939–2004) who became my first art teacher, unofficial advisor, and mentor. Bob had been at NGC for just a few years and was teaching several studio, art history, and art education courses. His dream was to establish an art degree program at the college, a goal he accomplished in 1971 when the Department of Fine Arts was formed, with Bob as the first head.

The art education course I took in the fall of 1966 was my first opportunity to have art instruction, and I was so ready for it. I began to discover a world of art making that was more complex and wonderful than I had imagined. Being in that class confirmed for me that making art must indeed be part of my life. After the required art education class was finished, I continued to fill my electives with the other assorted classes Bob offered. He soon learned I was disappointed to be locked into the field of elementary education

by financial necessity and that I really wanted to study art. Bob recommended I consider transferring to another school to major in art education—an option I didn't even know existed when I entered college—and continue to fulfill the scholarship requirements that way. His advice opened a new path for me. I transferred to the University of Georgia (UGA) and in 1969 completed an undergraduate degree for teaching art at elementary, middle, and high school levels.



Figure 1.6
Bob Owens
(photo by Hank Margeson)

After graduation, I began teaching high school art classes and, in the first summer break, immediately began working toward a Master of Art Education from UGA. Although I would have preferred a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree program with more concentrated studio time, I was given a grant that covered some of the tuition costs by the school system where I was employed. Still, I loved it all. Art filled my life. I found myself in my early twenties teaching high school art classes, taking art courses in the art education graduate program during summers, and making art.

I enjoyed my years of teaching middle and high school art classes, and I was thrilled when Bob invited me to apply as a faculty member in the new Fine Arts Department at NGC. Thus, in 1972, I became his colleague at the college and continued for decades to benefit from his insightful mentoring about

both the making and teaching of art.

Once I was employed at NGC, my desire to seek an MFA came back into the picture. Indeed, it was a required degree if one wished to move up the promotion and tenure ladder at the college. The program I chose was at East Tennessee State University where there was a strong tradition in weaving instruction. I attended ETSU in the summers of 1976 to 1979 and taught at NGC during the academic years between. In 1979–80, I was given a leave of absence from NGC to complete the required year of residence at ETSU and completed the MFA in 1980.

I'm forever grateful for the circumstances that allowed me to meet the man who became my mentor when I was nineteen years old and that I was willing to take his advice for my future path in the field of art education.

2

The Making of a Teacher

I guess it's ironic that someone who said she didn't want to be an education major in college spent the better part of a lifetime going into classrooms and standing in front of students. Young ones, old ones, and all ages in-between.

Although I didn't know it at the time, it wasn't really teaching that I was resisting when I entered college as an elementary education major. Instead, I feared that making art wasn't going to be part of my future. Yes, I now know that one can be an artist while occupied with another job for their livelihood. At the time, I just couldn't see how that was possible.

The art education program at UGA that Bob guided me to opened the way to be intimately connected to the making side of art. Not only were art education theory and practice courses part of the curriculum but also studio classes were required. Those were most important to me.

The three years I spent in middle and high school art classrooms right after graduation offered many pieces of the larger teaching puzzle I began putting together. Each day,

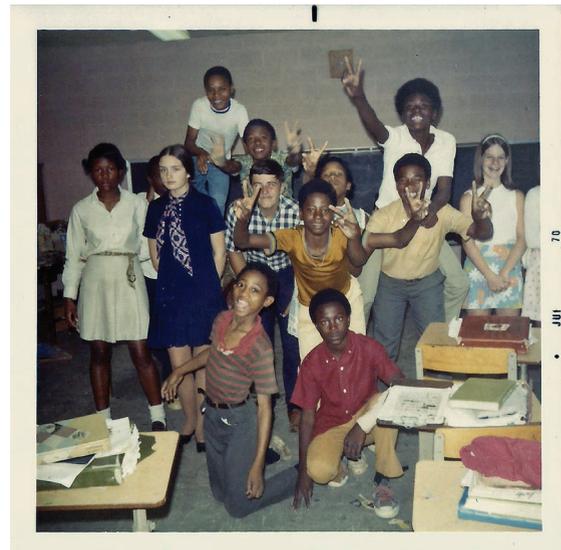


Figure 2.1
Fair Street School, 7th grade art students, 1970

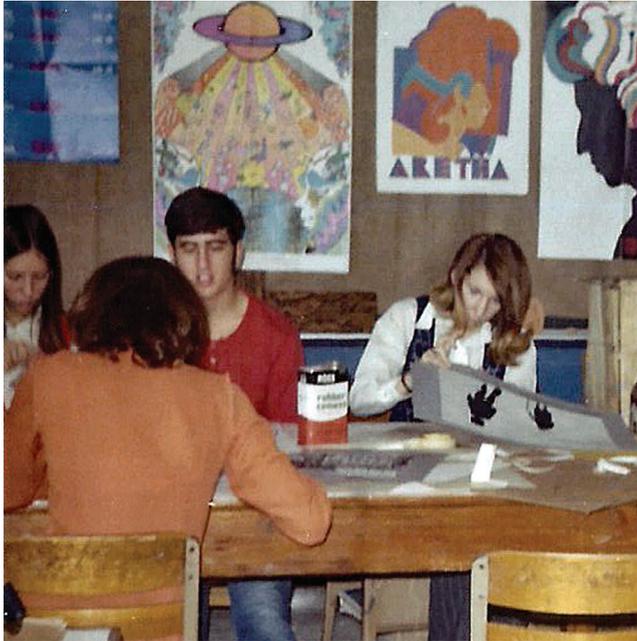


Figure 2.2
Gainesville High School art class, 1970



Figure 2.3
Gainesville High School art student, 1970



Figure 2.4
Penland sign, 1975

I faced teenage students who were either eager to jump into art making or unsure and afraid to try things. Then there were the few goof-offs, the kids who were putting up with the system while they did as little as they could to get by.

I began to see that almost anyone could become motivated to make something in the art class, depending on the approach I used when presenting the project. I also realized that I needed to say the same thing in different ways. Some students could easily see what to do with a demonstration. Others had to have both demo and verbal instructions. A few only needed to refer to a

handout. Some would rather plunge right in and try their own way.

I learned how to plan on the fly to quickly explain or show in different ways. Soon, I wasn't afraid to adapt and to be patient. I figured out how to be attentive to the whole room, even if it seemed I was only watching or listening to one person.

Looking back on my teaching style, I realize that most of it didn't come from the classes in art education in the university degree program. Instead, much of what I understand about teaching came from having a few exceptional teachers as my role models. Each of those had calm, patient



Figure 2.5
Penland-Lily Loom House, 1975

others in equally life-changing decisions.

I saw how he approached any situation, often coming up with solutions that were most beneficial for everyone concerned. I also began to appreciate how Bob could dream—how he could envision the arts enhancing the lives of the larger community of north Georgia and beyond—and how hard he worked toward that goal.

Maybe what I gained most from Bob was confidence. He always thought I could do it, whatever the “it” happened to be. Even when I was uncertain of my abilities, his unwavering belief that I would work hard and get the job done often gave me the push needed to begin and then to follow through to the end of the task. His faith in me helped me realize I had persistence. Under his guidance and encouragement, I grew in self-reliance and self-confidence in my art making abilities and my teaching skills.

I was fortunate to encounter another remarkable teacher early in my career when I enrolled in a three-week weaving class at Penland School of Craft in the summer of 1975, knowing only that it was open to all skill levels. The instructor was Edwina Bringle (b. 1939). The class included those who had been weaving for many years. Other classmates were totally new to it. Several were like me, mostly self-taught weavers with some knowledge we’d cobbled together from here and there. Edwina was able to direct

each of us in various weaving techniques to fit our needs.

In my case, I was curious about weaving drafts. Those are the shorthand notations that can be used to create diagrams for the patterns that will happen when a loom is set up in different ways.

To help me understand weaving drafts Edwina pointed out a classic book that I hadn’t encountered before: Marguerite Porter



Figure 2.8
Penland–Scanlin weaving: double weave sculptural hanging, 1975



Figure 2.9
Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei,
photo during Penland Concentration, 2000

Davison's (1887–1953) *The Handweaver's Pattern Book* (1950); she also showed me how to read the code contained in the drafts. In that 1944 book and with Edwina's guidance, I discovered for the first time traditional, and seemingly complicated, patterns called overshot. With this weaving method the weft threads could float across the surface of the warp in places, to be stitched down with a background thread that was woven almost simultaneously. I thought this technique offered amazing freedom at the loom. In the class, I made two weavings from overshot threading drafts, using a wide variety of colors and textures rather than the traditional materials associated with the method.



Figure 2.10
North Georgia College & State University, weaving class, Fall 2007



Figure 2.11
Appalachian Center for Art and Craft, Norris, TN, weaving workshop 2016

She also suggested how to set up the loom to allow for weaving in multiple layers, one on top of the other. Magic? So it seemed as I experimented with methods of double weave to create tubes and interchanged layers of the fabric.

The three weeks at Penland under Edwin's guidance were transformative. She provided not only sound weaving instruction but also an example of a master teacher who could lead each person in different ways. For those who needed specific guidance in selecting projects to weave, she gave them that. Others had their own agenda for what

they wanted to weave, and she listened, watched, and let these students be, helping if needed. And for those like me who wanted to go in lots of directions, seeking new things to learn about the structure and possibilities of weaving, she led the way to the resources we'd need to figure things out on our own. And she always answered any questions along the way for anyone.

Two others whom I consider as teaching mentors are Archie Brennan (b. 1931–d. 2019) and Susan Martin Maffei (b. 1947). I've had many accomplished tapestry instructors, but it's the guidance of Archie and Susan that

I follow most in my tapestry making. I met them in 1994 at Harrisville, New Hampshire when they led a weekend retreat sponsored by the Tapestry Weavers of New England. They expertly answered questions about tapestry technique, and both gave individual attention to every student several times each day. Archie had an illuminating way of discussing tapestry as a process, and his thoughtful musings about the reasons for both historical and contemporary tapestry making gave me much to think about. That

initial workshop experience with Archie and Susan convinced me I needed to study with them whenever possible, and so I have many times over the past decades.

I spent three years teaching art in high school and the next twenty-eight years at North Georgia College (later North Georgia College & State University) as a professor in the Fine Arts Department. I carried the examples of *how* to teach from Bob, Edwina, Archie, and Susan with me every day when I stood before students.



Figure 2.12
John C. Campbell Weaving Studio, 2017

After retiring from full-time employment at the institution that is now the University of North Georgia, I've continued to be a workshop instructor for weavers' groups and at craft schools. I walk into each new teaching experience filled with a sense of

anticipation about where the journey we're about to embark upon will take us—even if it's only a few days we'll be spending together, immersed in the wonders of image making and tapestry weaving.



Figure 2.13
Weavers of Orlando workshop, Winter Park, Florida, 2018

C

Brief Glossary of Tapestry Terms

Beater—used to pack in weft. A kitchen fork can serve as a beater.

Cartoon—design from which tapestry is woven, often drawn on paper and attached behind the warp.

Foundation picks—these are three picks, each in alternate paths across the warp, firmly woven across the bottom before starting the tapestry.

Hatching—horizontal lines that are made between two areas of weft when two passes (four picks) of each meet and separate in uneven lengths.

Header—beginning area, approximately one-half inch high, used to aid warp spacing. This is removed at the end.

High or Low—the two positions a weft yarn will take as it makes a turn around a warp on the second pick of a pass.

Loom—device to hold warp threads as weft is woven.

Meet and separate—method in which wefts travel in opposite directions in the same row or pick.

Overhand knot—a simple knot used to secure ends of the warps upon finishing the tapestry.

Pass—two pick of weft, each one in successive rows, both needed to complete a sequence of plain weave.

Pick—a single trip of weft in a row. It will alternately go over and then under each warp in turn.

Plain weave—simplest weave in which weft goes over one warp and then under the next in each pick.

Sett—number of warp ends used in each inch of the weaving.

Soumak—a method of adding a supplemental yarn, as the weaving is under way. It may be done horizontally along the rows or may move diagonally or vertically.

Warp—the thread on the loom; needs to be strong for the tension of the warp for tapestry.

Weft—the yarn or thread used for weaving into the warp.

D

Selected Resources for Tapestry

Books and Video:

Glasbrook, Kirsten. *Tapestry Weaving*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent, UK: Search Press Limited, 2002.

Harvey, Nancy. *Tapestry Weaving: A Comprehensive Study Guide*. Fort Collins, Colorado: Interweave Press, 1991.

Mezoff, Rebecca. *The Art of Tapestry Weaving*. North Adams, Massachusetts: Storey Publishing, 2020.

Russell, Carol. *The Tapestry Handbook: The Next Generation*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing, 2007.

Soroka, Joanne. *Tapestry Weaving: Design and Technique*. Ramsbury, Wiltshire, UK: The Crowood Press, 2011.

Todd-Hooker, Kathe. *Tapestry 101*. Albany, Oregon: Fine Fiber Press, 2007.

A Weaverly Path: The Tapestry Life of Silvia Heyden (DVD), a documentary film by Kenny Dalsheimer, <http://aweaverlypath.com/>

Woven Tapestry Techniques with Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei, instructional videos available for streaming, produced by Gary Benson, <http://www.brennan-maffei.com/>

Victorian Video Productions, Nancy Harvey tapestry videos, plus many other craft instructional videos and DVDs, <http://www.yarnbarn-ks.com/>, Yarn Barn, P.O. Box 334, Lawrence, KS 66044

Online:

The American Tapestry Alliance has a website that gives a wide variety of tapestry information, including educational articles, artist pages, information about current and upcoming exhibitions, and excerpts of past ATA newsletters, among other things: <http://www.americantapestryalliance.org/>

Tapestry artists and teachers, Archie Brennan and Susan Martin Maffei. There are links to diagrams of pipe looms of several sizes at this website: <http://www.brennan-maffei.com/>

My blogs are *Works in Progress* at <http://tapestry13.blogspot.com> and *Tapestry Share* <http://tapestryshare.blogspot.com>. I have links to a number of other tapestry weavers' blogs listed there.

Rebecca Mezoff offers several online learning courses for tapestry: <https://rebeccamezoff.com/online-learning>

Tapestry Instruction:

The American Tapestry Alliance offers a mentoring program. More information is available at the website: <https://americantapestryalliance.org/tapestry-education/tapestry-weaving-instruction-mentoring-program/>

Tapestry Organizations:

American Tapestry Alliance (ATA), <http://americantapestryalliance.org>

Tapestry Weavers South (TWS) membership@tapestryweaverssouth.org

Other regional groups in the USA include: Tapestry Weavers West (TWW) and Tapestry Weavers in New England (TWiNE). Contact information about those may be found at the ATA website: <http://americantapestryalliance.org/NandR/Links.html>

British Tapestry Group and Canadian Tapestry Network are also open to membership from around the world.

British Tapestry Group: <http://www.thebritishtapestrygroup.co.uk/>

Canadian Tapestry Network: <http://www.canadiantapestrynetwork.com/>