

Lea Valley Guild of Spinners, Weavers
and Dyers

Threads



June 2019

Members of the Committee 2018/19

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Guild Website

leavalleyguildswd.weebly.com

Social Media



@weehgswd



weehgswd

Association AGM 2019

The Association AGM is held in Conway Hall, a rather nice old-fashioned brick building in tranquil, leafy Red Lion Square, a few yards north of High Holborn. (Conway Hall is the home of the Ethical Society, which began as a dissident congregation in 1787 in rebellion against the doctrine of eternal hell!)

Historically, it's been held in London every other year, with the alternate years attached to a Conference in a regional centre. However, from now on all AGMs will be held in London, with a Guilds Gathering in alternate years. The GPC has done its best to arrange a conference type meeting and the first such will be at the University of Worcester from 19-21 June 2020, called 'Colour – the Full Spectrum'. There will be keynote speakers, including: Margo Selby, Susan K Williams (CEO of the Royal School of Needlework), Alison Daykin, Caroline Nixon, Daniel Harris (London Cloth Company), practical sessions, talks and a Saturday evening dinner.

The 2020 National Exhibition will be held at Leigh Spinners Mill, Greater Manchester from 5-20 September. The theme for the juried section will be 'Coal, Cotton, Canals', and for the non-juried section 'Still Waters', a textile piece within a 6 inch ring.

Angela Colbridge, the Chairman, greeted all delegates at the door on arrival (a nice touch). The meeting started fairly promptly at 11.10, with 50 delegates present and a number of observers. Angela introduced our outgoing President, Jenny Balfour-Paul, who gave her usual enthusiastic and spirited address. She mentioned in particular the enormous amount of hard work done by the GPC, all of whom are volunteers, and praised the Guilds for the vast number of skills within their membership. She said that 'artisan' was now the buzz word, rather than 'craftsperson', and she had come to realise that the young wanted to get back to actually making things, although their tutors often didn't have the knowledge to teach them! She would continue

to be an ambassador for the Guilds and emphasised the need to use social media to engage the next generation. Jenny was presented with an absolutely beautiful fine silk shawl, handwoven (of course) and indigo-dyed.

Chairman's, Treasurer's and Secretary's Reports had been circulated in advance and were adopted, as were new appointments to the GPC and JEC. Various points of interest raised were:

Soo Coates (Hon.Sec.) said that the only details they keep are those of the Guilds' Secretaries. It is therefore important that Secretaries pass the request for affiliation fees on to their Treasurers for payment. Soo is working on a survey which will be for all members regarding future improvements.

Sue said Guild Secretaries received a monthly Newsletter from the Association to pass on to members, and members can also sign up for their own copy if they wish.

The Association is now on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, all of which are spreading the word.

The Journal had had a good year, with the 'Colour' theme proving popular.

Janet Crowther gave an update on the Certificate of Achievement and said that a new Certificate of Advanced Textile Studies had been introduced, on which one person was already working.

Janet Maher talked about the Foundation Certificate course, and wondered how many people were aware this existed. There are regional mentors who can help members and local guilds can offer practical and moral support. Interestingly, through social media and the website a lot of people who are not members are contacting the Association, keen to learn our skills.

Janet also said that the Textile Institute, the body which used to accredit City & Guilds courses, is also interested in working with the Association to build up accredited courses.

There were comments from the floor that people didn't know anything about the CoA or Foundation Certificate and it was generally agreed that Guilds needed to do more in publicising these initiatives to their members. Secretaries were asked to make sure their members knew about, and were able to access, the Web Information Point (WIP).

After lunch, Jennie Parry, the new President, opened the afternoon session with some background to her life in textiles. Her mother was a member of the London Guild in the 1950s and Jenny had her first loom when she was six. She too, was exercised by the huge gaps in the knowledge of graduating textile students, and encouraged us to help them as early as we can, saying that many will return to us later in their lives if these strong links are fostered. She suggested finding out about local Degree Shows and attending them to talk to the graduates. The Association should be a rich source of information to everyone and children of 7 upwards should be welcome with a parent to learn how to use all their fingers, not just their thumbs! She encouraged us to have events at least once a year where youngsters get the opportunity to learn.

After considerable discussion, both the propositions brought by the GPC were carried with a large majority. It amazed me that there were such long discussions about relatively tiny matters. Montgomeryshire Guild's two points for discussion were also thoroughly considered and answered.

Following a query, there was a general discussion about how various Guilds organised Guild outings, weekends away, etc.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m. All in all, an interesting day, and a good way to meet members of other Guilds and to get a feel for all the work done by the GPC on behalf of all the Guilds.

Mary Hicks

Tea Towel Weaving

I took part in the tea towel weaving workshop in February.

I had a fabulous day, everyone was sooo patient and helpful with a newbie.

With the aid of my partner I was able to warp up my loom ready to start weaving at home. A quick look and some useful iPad piccies of Carol at work with the pick up sticks and I was off home to start before I could forget what I had learnt. My first effort was far from perfect, but they are definitely teatowels, and they dry dishes!



When my daughter saw them, she immediately tried to “borrow” them. Flattered and inspired I went online, sourced what I thought might be a similar cotton yarn and started in a second set for her. Better edges and fewer mistakes this time!

I did prefer the linen cotton mix that Sue provided on the day and she kindly found me another batch which is now on the loom half completed. Thanks again Sue for running this workshop, and the guild for providing me with a loom, I have learnt something totally new and absorbing.

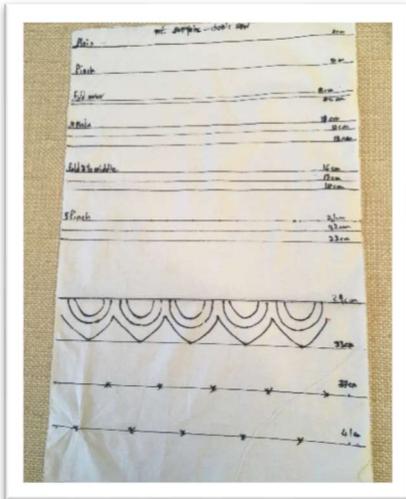
Teri Malakouna

Shibori Dyeing Workshop

At our March meeting, Michele Turner led a fascinating Shibori Resist Dyeing workshop. Shibori is the Japanese word for a variety of ways of embellishing textiles by shaping cloth and securing it before dyeing. The word comes from the verb root shiboru, "to wring, squeeze, press." The result is beautiful, unique fabrics that can be used for just

about any purpose. Our workshop used stitches to create hidden areas of the fabric that dye cannot reach (people are generally familiar with Tie-Dyeing; tie-dyeing is a form of Shibori Resist Dyeing.)

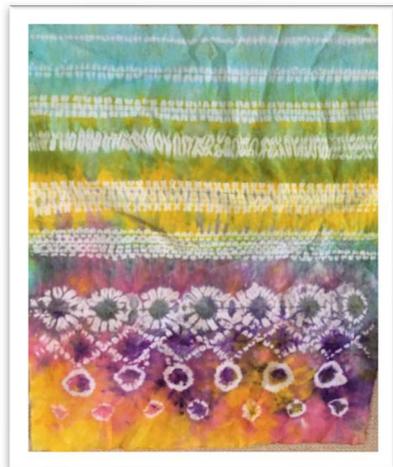
We started by transferring a sampler template to some cotton fabric using water- or air-soluble pens. This allowed us to see for ourselves how different stitch shapes and combinations produce different effects.



We then stitched each line on the template using running stitches and very strong thread. Each thread was secured with a bullion knot. In some places we used rubber bands around buttons to produce “bunched” areas. Once stitching was complete, the threads were pulled up very tightly indeed and knotted.



The next step was to soak the work in water before applying dye. We used direct dyes and pipettes to inject the dye onto the fabric with a certain amount of precision. This was great fun – with everyone using colours differently. Once our creativity had run its course, the pieces were wrapped and heated in slow cookers to set the dye. The final step was to rinse the work and snip away the running stitches to reveal the finished piece.



This workshop was a fabulous way to spend the day. I was very keen to try this technique at home and have since dyed tote bags and project bags with good results thanks to Michele's great teaching.

Michele also brought along a wonderful array of samples of her work, which were incredibly varied and inspirational.



Deb Cunningham

Anni Albers Exhibition – Tate Modern

I went to see the Anni Albers Exhibition at the Tate Modern shortly before it closed at the end of January 2019. It was a busy exhibition and a friend who tried to go a week later was unable to get tickets as it had sold out. The audience viewing the exhibition covered a variety of ages gender and nationalities. Walking through the exhibition, it was interesting overhearing conversations about “how did she get that bit there? - Oh, I see, it’s joined here” and people counting the number of ends in a piece. Not your usual gallery conversations.

They had pieces from early in her career, through the design process and items from her commercial furnishing work in a New York Hotel.

Anni Albers was born in Germany and studied at the Bauhaus. She took over as the Head of the Weaving Studio in 1931. After it closed in 1932 following pressure from the Nazi party, she and her husband fled to North Carolina and they taught at Black Mountain College.



Anni became the first textile designer to have a one person show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

This was the first piece to greet you on entering the exhibition and you can see that even Anni didn’t make straight edges.

The notations on the designs, which could be an artwork in themselves, were used by Anni to calculate the number and colours of warp threads they would need to set up the loom. These methodical and grid-like designs were painted in watercolour or gouache in four or more different tones and were exercises in colour theory. When produced as large-scale weavings, only three colours of thread would be used, red, white and black. The mid-pink and grey colours would be made using a red weft on a white warp.



There are many more images on our website at:
<https://leavalleyguildswd.weebly.com/blog/anni-albers-exhibition-tate-modern>

Audrey McNeill

Swinging London

The Fashion and Textile Museum: Swinging London: A Lifestyle revolution

Terence Conran and Mary Quant

I came of age in the sixties. This was my era so my visit to this museum in Bermondsey Street was more than a little tinged with nostalgia.



I had grown up under rationing so my family home was one of make and mend. Even our Christmas presents were recycled from ones my father had fashioned previously. My middle brother searched in vain for his old wooden steam engine. It had become a fire engine for our younger brother. I learned to sew at a very young age; so young in fact that I was accused of lying when I took some doll's clothes in to show my needlework teacher.

My mother bought printed cotton fabrics in Romford Market and I was allowed to make my dresses. The fifties styles had plenty of full skirts,

which ate up the material and didn't suit my shape at all.

Therefore Mary Quant, with her short skirts and simple shifts came at a perfect time in my life. At college, I had the latest fashions in my wardrobe at a fraction of the cost, which suited my meagre finances. Quant's Butterick patterns were a godsend. I could buy the fabric in the morning, cut it out and hand sew it in the afternoon and wear it in the evening.



The exhibition focused on Mary Quant and Terence Conran, but also featured Mary's husband Alexander Plunkett Greene, Eduardo Paolozzi and the Ashleys; Bernard and Laura. These made up the 'Independent Group', whose designs for fashion and the home changed styles so radically. High streets were places for the young with their rash of coffee bars, trattorias and bistros. Cookery and travel writer Elizabeth David and artist and illustrator John Minton were also part of this movement.

Mary Quant set up her 'Ginger Group' in 1963 with Conran opening his first 'Habitat' the following year. Most of the exhibits reflected this era as you can see by the photographs.

Quant even started to develop a range of make up to give ordinary women the opportunity to share the same look as the fashion models. Recently, I found a little box of eye shadow in yellow, lime and olive, with the familiar white flower on the lid. How long must I have had that! She even experimented with man-made fabrics such as PVC. I made a white coat, which was hideous to sew.



No mistakes were allowed; the stitches had to be long to avoid ripping the material and left a line of holes if you had to undo it. What we did for fashion's sake!

This was a most satisfying exhibition. There was plenty to see with good labels plus a little booklet to keep. It is always worth keeping an eye on their website for future exhibitions, talks and workshops.

Lesley Ottewell

Tartans

A recent programme on BBC attempted to dispel the myths surrounding this colourful fabric.

I have loved tartan since I was a young child. My dad had broken his ankle very badly and was sent to occupational therapy, where he was taught to weave on a table loom. He produced a beautiful scarf in the Dress Stuart tartan and it was my pride and joy until it was stolen at school. When I saw another child wearing it, no-one would believe that my dad had woven it.

Later, I found books on the history of tartans and even learned to recognise some of them. At the Visitor Centre at Culloden, they were selling items based on the tartans found after the battle in 1745.

The association of individual tartans with different clans is apparently a nineteenth century invention. Two brothers, the Sobieski Stuarts, who claimed a family connection with Bonnie Prince Charlie, produced a richly illustrated compendium of tartans. They used known patterns where they existed and invented many more for the families, who were without such definition of clansmanship.

Before that, most highlanders wore tartans produced by their local weaver, who was most likely to have woven just one pattern. So, there were different tartans but they were regional rather than a badge of family.

The programme tracked the history of tartan and showed portraits of high society when it was the height of fashion to wear tartan. Now there are strict rules governing the wearing of tartan with new designs being created for family and corporate wear alike. These then have to be submitted for official approval.

Lesley Ottewell

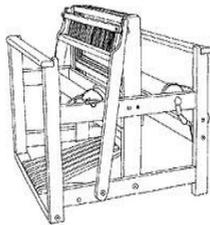
Threads

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of Threads or would like to add some information to our website, please contact us through the contact page on the website.

Lead Workshops will need to be booked through our Treasurer and paid for in advance.

If you would like to propose a speaker or workshop or would like us to come and demonstrate, please contact our Programme Secretary.

To borrow equipment from the Guild please contact a member of the committee.



Monthly meetings in Roydon village.
Please see website for up to date details.