

Exhibition Review by Ellen Ramsey
Dialogues: Tapestry and
Human/Nature

July 5 - August 20, 2010
South Broadway Cultural Center Gallery
Albuquerque, New Mexico

The “Dialogues” exhibition of the Tapestry 3-2-1 Artists turned out to be the “must see” independent show at Convergence 2010. The show presented a superb collection of work in a well-lit and spacious gallery. (If you attended Convergence you know just how rare such an experience was this year.) The exhibition also served as an example of the possibilities that can emerge from a sustained artistic dialogue between like-minded artists.

Comprised of three Americans from Albuquerque and Santa Fe, NM (Elizabeth Buckley, Katherine Perkins, and Lany Eila), two Canadians (Elaine Duncan and Linda Wallace), and one Australian (Dorothy Clews), the 3-2-1 Artists are the product of the globalization allowed by the Internet. This international contingent initially “clicked” amidst the chat on the Tapestry List. Two group projects, *Finding Home* (Canada/Australia. See “Past Web Gallery Shows” on the ATA website) and *Doors, Gates, and Windows* (Canada/New Mexico. See TT article Fall 2008) further fueled their artistic friendship. Their participation in the first of Dorothy Clews’ online critique groups cemented their aesthetic chemistry. Via years of idea sharing and critiques, they influenced and encouraged each other’s work in subtle and wonderful ways. As a result, their exhibition was harmonious despite some drastic differences in style and technique among the six. The theme Human/Nature evolved organically from their interactions.

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Group photo of the Tapestry 3-2-1 Artists from L to R Linda Wallace, Elizabeth Buckley, Lany Eila, Katherine Perkins, Elaine Duncan. Australian Dorothy Clews was unable to be at the opening. Her "Field Trials" hang on the wall behind the group.

The centerpiece of the show was the first ever combo presentation of Linda Wallace and Dorothy Clews' famous "compost" work. Much has been written about the *Infertility Series: Diminishment of Hope* tapestries by Linda Wallace and the *Field Trials* series by Dorothy Clews (See "Doors, Pathways, Journeys, Seeds" TT vol. 32 no. 2, Summer 2006 and "Earthly Aesthetics" by Mary Lane, "Fiberarts" magazine, Summer 2010), so it was truly special to see these bodies of work together and in their entirety. Having seen two of Linda Wallace's *Non Gravid* pieces in a previous show, I knew seeing the entire series of eight tapestries together would be especially moving. As the tapestries disintegrate over time, from the relatively intact *Non Gravid 4 April* to the utterly obliterated *Non Gravid 28 August*, the gradual deterioration conveys the powerful sadness behind her conceptual take on the burial process. Clews' *Field Trials* are completely different in approach and display and are also surprisingly colorful.



Dorothy Clews, Pulse Panel series (detail), 2008, handmade paper, seine twine, artificial silk, hemp, sun, rain, earth, micro-organisms, time, 46 cm x 1.6 m. Collection of the artist.



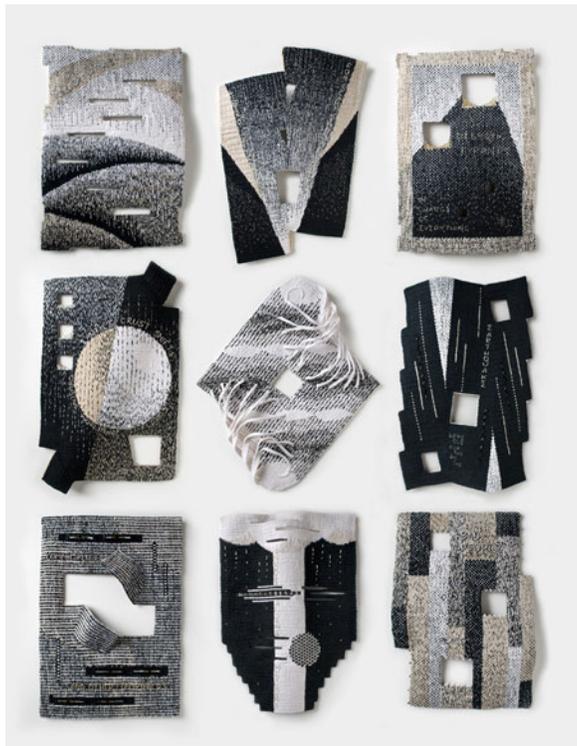
Dorothy Clews, Pulse Panel series (detail), 2008, handmade paper, seine twine, artificial silk, hemp, sun, rain, earth, micro-organisms, time, 46 cm x 1.6 m. Collection of the artist.

Clews' work looks at the end product of composting the tapestries under various conditions and soil types. Each piece is a record of how, in the end, the woven work becomes so intertwined into the fabric of nature that it becomes almost plantlike in appearance. Colorful threads are used to stitch down the fibers on handmade banana paper, so the tapestry fragments come to resemble drawings. I loved that they were not framed and were instead allowed to float freely off the wall. Her *Pulse Panel Series* carries the couched threads from piece to piece across the wall through space to create a more monumental impact.

The unexpected pleasure of seeing Lany Eila's *Any Time Now: One Family's Soft-book Primer of Anticipated Catastrophes* helped to mitigate my disappointment that the *Biennial* was absent from Albuquerque. There was enough visual "meat" in this collection of nine small tapestries to sustain me for a very long time. The more you look, the more techniques you find: textbook examples of classical hachuring and demi duite, pulled warp shaping, clever open space and warp manipulations, embroidered text, and even little seed beads here and there. They bend and float off the wall with no visible means of support. Amazing! The poignant sub plot of children coping with a parent's



Linda Wallace, "Non Gravid 28 August" from the Infertility Series: Diminishment of Hope, and detail view. 2009, linen warp/wool and linen weft, 20" x 16" x 1.5". Collection of the artist. Photo by Tony Bounsall.



Lany Eila, "Any Time Now: One Family's Soft-book Primer of Anticipated Catastrophes" 2009, linen, cotton, beads, metallic thread, supports, 42 x 32 x 2". Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.



Lany Eila, "Any Time Now" (detail), 2009, Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.

irrational fears shares a heavy-hearted element of introspection with Wallace's *Diminishment of Hope* tapestries.

Elizabeth Buckley, Katherine Perkins, and Elaine Duncan presented work that bordered on abstraction and vibrated with brilliant color. Their work complimented the monochromatic pieces and managed to fit in with the adjacent work because of sub-

tle commonalities to how all the work was approached and presented. Again, series work took center stage. Elaine Duncan showed eight 8 x 8 inch abstracted details from nature in beautiful maple frames. Katherine Perkins captures birds-eye views of nature in works like "Winter's Edge". Notably, the view is made more intricate and interesting by the addition of delicate embroidered threads on top of the tapestry. This embellishment related visually to Clews' nearby celebration of thread. Nearly two thirds of the work in the show included some stitching. These simple touches added up to more than the sum of their parts. I especially liked Elizabeth Buckley's "Window and Web" as an example of how the addition of a few simple stitched lines can give a 1 x 7 inch tapestry the impact of much larger work.

Among the many lessons I learned by seeing this wonderful exhibition: don't be afraid to stitch, work in series, think outside the box when mounting small work, be true to your heart, and above all, find your aesthetic soul mates in order to create group shows that sing like "Dialogues: Tapestry and Human/Nature."



Elizabeth J. Buckley, "Window and Web" 2008, mothproofed wool, pearl cotton and silk on cotton warp, 1 x 7". Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.



Katherine Perkins, "Winter's Edge" 2010, Hand dyed wool on cotton warp with surface design in silk, 8 x 11". Collection of the artist. Photo by Lany Eila.