Greetings all on this Halloween!

My spider costume is ready to wear, once again--why mess with a good thing? Thus far just one person has pointed out that spiders have eight legs, not six.

Garden clean-up is proceeding well, and I have observed something odd: it seems that each visit to the vegetable garden yields yet another pumpkin. In spite of adversity, and marauding deer, sheep, and rodents, there are at least 200 pounds of assorted types in the mud room awaiting processing into bread, pie, cake, butter, custard, yule logs, soup, cookies, and toasted seeds. And don't forget those already carved for Halloween.

So its back to Google to see whether anyone has worked out how to convert pumpkin into fiber.....

Sharon

Next meeting is on November 12th from 11am-3pm , we'll

Steampunk a Dealgan
Guild News:

Roc Day:

Tammy is asking for donations of old adult sized T-shirts she can rip into stripes for a rug-weaving project on Roc-Day. If you have T-shirts to donate, please, bring them along this or next meeting, so Tammy has time to prepare them.

Wayne is trying to line up a program of demonstrations for Roc Day, and hopes that some of you who have special fiber-related skills or interests will be willing to share them with us. They needn’t be limited to spinning--the more unusual, the better! If you think you might be interested, you should let you him know at the November meeting.

We are looking in particular for someone who would be willing to give a wool-combing demo.

Roc Day Competition news: Alison and Anne will be distributing the fiber to be spun for Roc Day at the November meeting, along with instructions, to all who will enter. If you cannot be there but intend to enter, you can contact Alison atreaster9600@gmail.com, Anne Furman ahfurman@yahoo.com, or Sharon sg39@cornell.edu.

Steampunking a Dealgan:

Lois has posted her video on how to make your own Scottish Dealgan from an industrial bobbin. Here are the links to her YouTube video https://youtu.be/kuEAl3iNk_8 and to her blog missingspindle.blogspot.com.

Wayne can bring his pile of industrial bobbins to the November meeting for distribution to members who want to try this out.
SARAH ANDERSON WORKSHOP
Sponsored by the Black Sheep Handspinners’ Guild

When: May 13 and May 14
Where: Lansing Community Center, 29 Auburn Road, Lansing, NY 14882
Time: 9 am to 4 pm
Fee: 1 Day $100  2 days $200

May 13 DRAFTING:
Drafting refers to the way the spinner manipulates or draws out the fiber so twist enters it to create yarn. Different drafting methods produce very different yarns even from the same fiber and different fibers may require different techniques. In this class we will work on drafting techniques that spinners of all skill levels will appreciate including diameter control, understanding twist, drafting for different types of yarn, producing yarn compatible to an existing yarn and finishing techniques.

May 14 PLYING:
This class follows and builds on the drafting class. Students learn to use different types of singles in plied yarns. The class begins with basic plying and then moves into more complex types of plying such as spiral, chain, cable, crepe, boucle and core yarns. We do as many as time permits.

Bring To Class: A wheel in working order, lazy kate, and 3 bobbins. If you have a flick or hand carders bring them too.

REGISTRATION
NAME_____________________________________________________
EMAIL_____________________________________________________
MAY 13_______$100
MAY 14 ________ $100

Make out check to Black Sheep Hand Spinners’ Guild
Mail check and form to  Marjorie Inana  41 W. Court Street, Cortland, NY 13045

Registration is non refundable and is due by Roc Day at which time registration is open to anyone.
Spinning and Waulking at the Celtic Festival

Several Guild Members demonstrated spinning at the Celtic Festival in Steward Park on October 8th. Some also took part in the traditional

Loom and Yarn Requests from the Community

"Any undyed yarn for sale?" This request was received by email: "We are looking for good quality hand spun skeins for natural dyeing (white or grey work best)....We need about 30 skeins but a smaller amount could work too...." If you are interested contact Lenore McGarry 607-591-7988

Request for a Loom-Loan by Carmen Coppola:

I'm writing on behalf of the Interfaith Crew and Cortland Nites at SUNY Cortland regarding our ninth annual Cortaca Mug night. Cortaca Mug is an alcohol and drug-free event hosted at the Interfaith Center the Friday before Cortaca Jug (11/11), and it provides a safe space for students, staff, and community members to come together to share hobbies, cultural traditions, and conversation. The 2015 Cortaca Mug saw 450 students spend all or part of their night in the Interfaith Center, choosing it as a safe alternative to off-campus activities.

One year we had a weaver come in and allow us to use her loom to create a unique piece of fabric that we still have in our Interfaith Center. We have since lost contact with her, and I am reaching out to Black Sheep Handspinner's Guild to see if anyone would be interested in lending their loom to us for the night. I am also a spinner, and I have attended your meetings before, so I understand that many people would be wary of lending their loom to an event like this. I can assure you that the last loom that was lent to us left in just as good condition as it arrived.

We are also open to any other suggestions for activities that members would be interested in facilitating for us. We love it when community members come and interact with the students in this uplifting and fun filled environment.

If interested contact carmen.coppola@cortland.edu
Weaving, Tradition and Transformation in the Shadows of Volcanoes, Part 1
By Wayne

The great caldera of Lake Atitlán in the highlands of Guatemala lies in a nest of mountains, an arc of looming volcanoes defining the line of its far shore. Many of the small towns around its edges are practically accessible from one another only by boat—a trip that can sometimes turn into an adventure when the xokomil, the notorious afternoon south wind, is churning the water. In part because of their mutual isolation, the towns are quite distinct from each other in character, culture and even language. The most visible badges of local identity, though, are the distinctive patterns and motifs woven into traditional Mayan clothing. Each town has its own style, and people who still wear traditional traje can be identified even at a distance as coming from San Juan, or San Antonio...

One might imagine that this is a cultural hallmark of great antiquity. Weaving is ancient in the highlands, after all, where legends hold that ancestral women wove the very framework of the world into being on backstrap looms. But according to one source, the clothing of ordinary people at least as far back as colonial times was quite plain, with no distinctive ornament at all, and the elaborate, locality-specific designs we associate with ‘traditional’ Mayan dress are claimed to be a relatively modern development that really began only in the post-colonial era. In this sense, they can perhaps be compared to the clan tartans of the Gaelic Highlanders of Scotland, whose institutionalization as declarations of family identity seems also to be a 19th century creation. In both cases, it is not a continuation of ancient custom so much as a reinvention—old symbols deployed in new ways as an answer to new cultural pressures. Weaving is still a robust cultural practice in the Guatemalan highlands, close to the heart of life in its indigenous communities, but one that is being borne along in the currents of a centuries-long transition. The capacity for renegotiation and adaptation is the difference between a vital tradition and an outmoded one.

My own encounter with the technique and culture of Mayan weaving, I should confess, has been very recent, accidental, brief and so far pretty superficial. My daughter, who has taken a job with a non-profit organization working with Mayan communities in the area of the lake, invited me to come visit her there this summer, and I did. Bringing only my interest in fiber arts and languages (I’ve been trying to learn the Mayan language they speak in the town where she lives), and a lively curiosity, I have returned home with a pocket full of general impressions, novice questions and a few new obsessions, as well as a basic understanding of tools and techniques. I’ll report on some of these in upcoming essays. At the same time, my curiosity has taken me on some other, more abstract, quests; I’ve busily been reading my way toward an understanding of what the tradition of backstrap weaving means in the highlands, to the communities in which it is practiced, its practitioners, and its consumers, and how those meanings have transformed over time. Of the things I’ve read, I recommend in particular Weaving Identities, by Carol Hendrickson (1995), as a thoughtful and challenging discussion of the social meaning of weaving in the Mayan communities of the highlands.

The changes have no simple trajectory. On the one hand, many of those who formerly wore traje as everyday dress no longer do so, opting instead for factory-made clothing of more cosmopolitan styles—including blue jeans, of course. But at the same time, the numbers of people engaged in backstrap loom weaving have perhaps not diminished, its economic importance to communities has grown, and its symbolic importance remains robust, if transformed; for weddings and other milestone events, even those who wear European style clothing in their everyday lives may still don an overblouse (ri’j po’t) lavishly hand woven from indigenous brown cotton, which can cost, according to Hendrickson, as much as an average year’s salary. As it re-
treats from daily life, the symbolic value of traje as a conscious declaration of personal and community identity looms the larger on occasions of high ceremony.

The technology remains much the same as in earlier centuries. Throughout Guatemala, the weavers—almost invariably women (hundreds of thousands of them)—continue to weave cotton in their homes on backstrap looms of ancient, rudimentary, ingenious design, whose components can be carried in a backpack or stored in a corner. The only more substantial pieces of equipment are yarn reels and long, low warping benches, like the one in the picture.

(Weaving wool is a foreign and more recent craft, done on foot-powered looms in the towns, almost exclusively by men.) There have been some concessions to efficiency. The yarn used is now mostly made in lowland factories from Old World white cotton, and spindles are for the most part only brought out to show how things used to be done. Commercial dyes are often used, though the natural ones are making a comeback as consumers become more informed and insistent on authenticity.

It is in the marketing of their crafts that the biggest changes are happening. Mayan weavings were a renowned article of commerce a thousand years ago, used, for example, as partial payment of tributes to their more powerful Aztec neighbors, but nowadays the large majority of it is intended for consumption outside the communities in which it is made. Increasingly in recent times, the market has been expanding to include a sophisticated international audience which values the work as art, high fashion, and cultural treasure—an outreach facilitated by the rise of the internet, and of organizations that assist artisans in exploiting its promise. Equally important, though, is the rising awareness that what they have of value is not just the products of their looms, but knowledge and cultural understanding.

One has to go a bit off the beaten path to experience these. The great regional markets, like the one in Chichicastenango, where I spent the better part of a day, are awash in handwoven articles, offered for sale in booth after booth for dozens of square blocks, in an abundance that simply overwhelms the senses, but without much by way of contextualization that might help to steer the novice toward insight or understanding. Far more rewarding on that front were our visits to the small town of San Juan la Laguna at the base of one of those volcanoes across the lake. Like most towns in the region, its inhabitants are overwhelmingly indigenous, 95% of them speaking Tz’utujil, the main Mayan language on the south shore, as their first language. Even to the casual visitor, it is a place that radiates awareness of and pride in its identity and community. The cobbled streets are lined with murals depicting the myth and history of the region, and most of the women still wear traditional clothing. I saw no market stalls while I was there. Instead, the local craftspeople offer their products in cultural cooperative centers, which double as workshops, museums and community centers where as much emphasis is placed on providing visitors with knowledge and insight as on selling. According to Kroth (see below), there are 35 cooperatives, in a town of 6000 residents. In these centers, there
were always demonstrations of spinning, weaving and natural dyeing going on. In the first center we visited we were greeted at the door by a docent who gave us a little lecture about the idea of the co-op, who its artisans are, and how the continued practice of the traditional arts on display helps to sustain the local community culturally and economically, before we were set loose to browse the wares. This model turns out to make economic sense. Besides not having to carry their bundled weavings on arduous, hours-long treks to markets like the one in Chichicastenango, or turn their goods over to middlemen at a cost, the craftspeople associated with San Juan cooperatives receive 90% of the proceeds for articles sold there.

Knowing of my interests, my daughter had arranged a weaving tour in San Juan one morning. These tours are mediated by a non-profit organization called the Maya Traditions Foundation, whose main mission is to help communities of Mayan women develop new ways to market their craft. We met Claire, the organization’s community tourism director, at the dock, and accompanied her in a launch across the lake, where she introduced us to members of the weaving cooperative with which Maya Traditions works in San Juan. Our gracious hosts then took us on an informative tour of the community’s garden of dye plants and traditional medicinal herbs, and then to the house of one of the members, in whose courtyard we were treated to a demonstration of natural dyeing, warping, and weaving on a backstrap loom. The courtyard was festooned with items woven by members of the cooperative. As in other cooperatives we visited, each had a handwritten note attached to it naming the woman who made it. The demonstrations were very much hands-on; we were each expected to try our clumsy hands at every skill.

This picture shows my daughter taking her turn at the backstrap loom. (Cecilia, the woman to her right, made a trip to the Smithsonian later in the summer to take part as a presenter in a program entitled “Unlocking Silent Histories”.) The pattern visible in the warp threads in this picture is the created by an intricate and demanding process called jaspe-dyeing, in which selected sections of the warp are wrapped tightly with thread to resist the dye—a process that can take up to a week for a single shawl. (We were asked to try our hands at that wrapping process too). Through it all, they patiently answered the questions I posed in my fifty year old Spanish, and at the end they served us a delicious home cooked lunch.

More extended weaving classes are also available, but there wasn’t time for them on my brief visit. Brimming with inspiration, though, as soon as I got home I went out to my willow thicket and assembled the components of my own backstrap loom. I have since been struggling to learn it on my own, from the little library of backstrap weaving books I’ve assembled. I will report on these efforts, as well as sundry other techniques and lore, in due course. In the meantime, you might want to give the Maya Traditions Foundation webpage a look, at mayatraditions.com, and read about some of our fellow artisans. You might also want to check out another report on the hands-on weavers’ tour experience in San Juan, which was published last year:

Kroth, Maya. “Guatemalan Textiles, Straight from the Weaver’s Hands To Yours”, The Washington Post, July 2, 2015 (available online)
Name__________________________________________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________


Preferred email: PRINT NEATLY __________________________________________________

Phone # ____________________________________________________

This information will be shared with registered guild members. If you wish to remain anonymous, please let Vicki Marsted know.

Please list your wheel(s) __________________________________________________________

Do you spindle spin? Yes or No (circle)

Do you Knit? Weave? Crochet? Dye? (Natural or Chemical?):

Would you be willing to share your skills with other members (ie: teach beginners, present a meeting topic, demo to the public, etc?)

If you raise fiber animals, please list them here________________________________________

We need your help on committee(s). If you would like to volunteer, let Sharon Gombas, our president, know!!!

Roc Day
Programming
Newsletter
Membership
Website
Outreach
Treasurer

Our newsletter is distributed electronically. If this is a problem, please contact Sharon Gombas. Please fill this out and either bring it to a meeting or mail it with your check for $20 to: Vickie Marsted, 29 Lincoln St, Cortland, NY 13045

In an effort to reduce my personal stash, I’d like to sell cotton warp, loop mohair, rug wools, fine wools, rayon and rayon chenille and other interesting stuff at prices ranging from low to ridiculous. I also have a Hansen e-spinner with woolee winder, two bobbins and kate for sale. Contact Karey Solomon at threads@empacc.net.

For Sale from my happy sheep and rabbits in Trumansburg: Navajo Churro roving in a variety of colors and white Angora Rabbit wool. Contact Sharon Berger 607- 592-4649

To place an ad

The cost for ads is $5.00 per month for non-members. Current members may submit one business-card sized classified ad per month for free. Send a check made out to BSHG to our treasurer, Vickie Marsted, 29 Lincoln Ave, Cortland, NY 13045. Send the ad in digital form to the newsletter editor, angelika@simonstl.com. Black & white business cards are published free for current members.