Greetings to all!

I am pleased to report that the last lambs of this season were born this week. Mornings and evenings in particular are quite boisterous as the wee ones look for mom among the many moms present. We still have a mountain of wool, which is a story in itself and one that I will probably share at the meeting in hopes of getting some advice from one of you more experienced wool producers.

We haven't had a good show and tell session in a long time, so come prepared to

1) show us what you have been up to,

2) vote for new officers, and

3) eat ice cream (to be provided; bring a topping if you wish) and

4) celebrate summer and the darn nice group of people that we are!

Sharon

Next meeting is on June 10th from 11am-3pm, and we’ll search for

New Guild Officers,

And Eat Ice-Cream

President Sharon Gombas
Vice President Sue Quick
Secretary Angelica St. Laurent
Treasurer Vickie Marsted
Newsletter Angelica St. Laurent
Membership Marjorie Inana
Programming Marjorie Inana
Webmaster Rosane Mordt

The Black Sheep meet from 11am - 3pm on the 2nd Saturday of each month at All Saints Church Parish Hall, Route 34B, in Lansing, NY. Exceptions are possible—see location changes in the latest newsletter!
Guild News:

Guild Officers:

This is it--time to step forward to be a guild officer. Check out the list of positions on the front of the newsletter and find one that sounds interesting to you. Current officers please let Sharon know whether you wish to continue in that position. We will have an election of officers at the June meeting. You may feel free to nominate someone you feel is right for the job; they of course may feel differently, but who knows?

Spinning Wheel Offer:

I live in the Interlaken area and I have a J. Farnham wheel that I'm looking to part with. I was wondering if someone in your organization might be interested in it?

I can provide pics if you would like.

Thanks, John <jbarkee@southseneca.org>

Request for Spinning Dog Fur:

Hello! I’m new to the Fingerlakes Region, living near Spencer. I am looking for a Spinner who might be interested in spinning some dog fur. I’ve heard that dog fur is somewhat challenging but also heard that fur from the Coton de Tulear breed was not so difficult. Is there anyone in your guild who would be interested in spinning this type of fur? I don’t have tons of it…about ½ of a paper grocery bag.

Madonna Stallmann, <madonnaoftheprairie@gmail.com>

NY-State Fair Competitions:

The NY-State Fair organizers call for submissions to their fiber arts competitions. The Fair will be held August 26th to September 9th in Syracuse NY. Deadlines for entry (that is when to send the organizers the filled out form in order to participate, actual items are due later) are July 3rd for Arts and Crafts (item due August 4th), July 17th for wool and fleeces (August 20th, or 23rd to 30th), July 19th for rabbits, and July 21st for sheep and llama.

All information on how to enter competitions can be found here: nysfair.ny.gov/competitions/how-to-enter

For questions, call the Entry Department at 315-487-7711 ext. 1337 or email us at maryellen.daino@agriculture.ny.gov

Upcoming BSHG Meetings:

June 10th, 11am-3pm
New Officers and Ice-Cream

Fiber Events:

16th Annual Maine Fiber Frolick
Saturday and Sunday, June 3rd and 4th, 9 am - 4 pm
Windsor Fairgrounds
Rt 32, Windsor, Maine
www.FiberFrolic.com

7th Annual CNY Fiber Arts Festival
Saturday and Sunday, June 10th and 11th, 10am-5pm
Butternut Hill Campground
6893 State Highway 20, Bouckville, NY, 13310

10th Annual Pleasant Mountain Fiber Workshop
Friday, June 23rd, to Sunday, June 25th
Denmark Municipal Building,
62 East Main Street,
Denmark, ME 04022
http://www.pleasantmtfiber.com/

Linda Cortright Presentation
Saturday, July 8th, 10am-2pm
Bement-Billings Farmstead Museum
9241 NY-38,
Newark Valley, NY 13811

NY-State Fair
Saturday, August 26th, to Saturday, September 9th, 10am-10pm
581 State Fair Boulevard, Syracuse, NY 13209
https://nysfair.ny.gov/
Recently Ellie May and Jean Currie went over to SUNY Cortland to see Carmen Coppola’s weaving titled Proverb 2017. What a treat! The weaving was a lovely example of a coverlet style pattern but she had done a clever thing with silk screening to darken parts of the weaving to give a moire (like watered silk) effect. The center part of the weaving had the proverb *Death is only the end if you assume the story is about you.* We were lucky to run into Jenn McNamara, Carmen’s professor, who praised Carmen and also let us into the weaving studio. We should all be so lucky to have access to such a wonderful place – dozens of looms and shelves and shelves of yarns arranged by color so the studio itself is a piece of art!

Carmen’s piece was part of an exhibit called Student Select 2017 that was juried, so kudos to Carmen!
Sarah Anderson Workshop

On Mother’s Day Weekend, our Guild hosted a workshop with Sarah Anderson on Drafting and Plying. Why would we need a workshop on Drafting and Plying? After all, every attendee has already been spinning for at least a couple of years, which did inevitably involve drafting fiber in one way or another and usually some plying as well. Turns out there was a lot to learn, even for those of us, who are already spinning for decades.

Sarah brought all the exciting yarns from her book for us to admire and touch. She also had a table full of 21 different yarns spun from the same colored top.

We started out practicing slub yarns. There was this trick of rolling in a little bit of twist with the fingers, that made all the difference to how the slubs turned out. Then tried our hands at flicking and spinning worsted and over the fold. Later on, we attempted making rolags (luckily, Sarah is a very nice teacher and nobody burst into tears.). Then we practiced supported woolen drafting. Again, with that little bit of twist added with the fingers.

The next day, we practiced plying. To make things easier, Sarah had brought low twist commercial singles we used as the base of our experiments. For an even ply, definitely make sure that no twist enters the singles, before they are all lined up beside each other—and then, there are exciting slub like features that happen, when the ply-twist is allowed to enter with the singles held like open scissors. We spiral plied, cabled, and produced bubble crepe (Be careful to wind on the crepe by hand, because it is so easily overplied.) We also practiced to repair plying mistakes. And then there were beehives, wolf yarns, chain plies, and all the other things we wanted to see. We sure were tired by the end of the workshop.

There was a lot to laugh and a lot to learn. As Marilee put it: It was a magical weekend.
Weaving, Tradition and Transformation in the Shadows of Volcanes Part 3:
Transformation as Tradition. Wayne Harbert

Back before the Spanish conquest, the town now called Santiago Atitlán was the capital of the kingdom of the Tz’utujil Maya, and the people who live there are still overwhelmingly Tz’utujiles, speakers of a language confined to the south shore of Lake Atitlán, the jewel of the Guatemalan highlands. Santiago is the largest town around the lake, but remoter than most, lying not on the lake itself, but at the edge of a little a little finger of water that pushes back between the towering volcanos that define its shore. It can be conveniently reached only by boat, since the roads connecting it to neighboring towns wind and meander their way around the backs of the volcanoes. Remoteness is relative, of course; in the cosmology of its inhabitants, Santiago is the center of the universe, and all creation radiates out from there. Its geographical isolation, and centuries of unhappy relations between the Tz’utujiles and their more numerous and powerful neighbors have helped to mute the effect of outside influences, leading to a certain conservatism. Most people in Santiago (Atitecos/-as, as they are known locally) still dress in traje—traditional Mayan clothes, made from cotton cloth handwoven on backstrap looms. Most women wear a po’t—an unfitted upper garment (known as a güipil in Central American Spanish, or huipil in Mexican Spanish) and an uuq (or corte), a wrap-around skirt. The majority of men wear a skaf—three-quarters length striped pants—rather than the blue jeans that prevail in other towns.

Besides dress, other community traditions remain remarkably robust, and are most dramatically on display during Semana Santa, Holy Week, as my daughter and I experienced while staying there over Easter weekend. On Good Friday, every street and road was closed to traffic in the morning—in a town of 33,000—and hundreds of people spent the day, from morning to dusk, filling block after block, street after street, throughout the town with elaborate alfombras—‘carpets’—elaborate ‘sand-paintings’ made with colored sawdust. They had no sooner finished these than the religious processions started through those same streets, the marchers and the ponderous floats they bore on their shoulders churning that vast collaborative outpouring of art into random swirls as they passed, little kids rushing in behind them to gather up bags of colored sawdust and take them home. By the next morning, the streets had been swept clean, as if by magic.

The books report that every Mayan town in Guatemala uses its own motifs and patterns in traditional clothing, making it possible to identify the hometown of someone who dresses in traje. It took me a while to understand, though, exactly in what sense that rule of thumb was true. I set out to buy a güipil “authentically” characteristic of Santiago, and I began by walking through the weekly market, making mental notes of the designs of the ones that the women were wearing. If
I had been expecting something on the order of a uniform, I was disappointed. Some wore very plain güipiles, white, with only vertical stripes of purple, and a bit of embroidery around the neck for ornament. On some, the white cloth between the purple stripes had become lavender, or pale blue. On some, the stripes of colored warp were intersected by narrower strips of distinctive weft, breaking the field into small squares for at least part of the length of the garment. In some, these squares were in turn filled with small, geometric renderings of birds in embroidery. In still others, the birds had become much larger and naturalistic, spilling exuberantly out of the cages of their stripes. (In still others, the embroidered ornament was flowers, not birds, though birds were by far the most abundant; I later surmised that this may be connected with the fact that the Tz’utujil name for Santiago translates as “House of Birds”.) The variety was striking. Some variation is found as well in men’s traje. The skaf is typically white with vertical stripes of purple, but some men sport pants whose lower part is filled with embroidery.

The common thread that unites them all is the presence of the purple stripes. It turns out that even these are not an ancient hallmark, but an innovation—or rather an imposition. In the times before the conquest, ordinary folk dressed in clothes without ornament. Their new Spanish masters, it is claimed, imposed on the natives the requirement that inhabitants of different towns start wearing clothing with different colored stripes, as a way of identifying, and therefore controlling them. In Santiago, for example, the color was purple—originally derived from purple mollusks. So they were, in effect, prison stripes. In time, though, the local folk took ownership of this symbol of oppression and turned it into a badge of community identity, elaborating it over time in a wealth of ways.

The process did take time; even a fancy a ceremonial güipil from Santiago in the early 20th century, like this one now hanging in the museum of the women’s weaving cooperative (Cojolya), has only the stripes for ornament, and a bit of embroidery around the magenta silk collar—triangles representing stylized volcanoes, indicating that the owner was an Atiteca.

¹ [Website: Santiago: Around the Lake].
Starting around 1910 we see, in addition to these ornaments, the addition of stylized birds, as in the following example. This extra element was perhaps introduced in imitation of supplementary weft designs from other towns.

In the 1940s, the warp stripes became exclusively purple, and wider, and the birds became more fluid and naturalistic, often spilling out of the confines of the stripes.

Brocade, as well as embroidery, was used traditionally as a design element, using a technique unique to the Atitecas. The very informative website “Santiago Atitlán” tells us that:

“Techniques of brocade- cuxaq - were known in Santiago, but these were unlike any others in Guatemala — not done by hand, as in other villages, but prearranged with string heddles and pattern shed sticks, called chacoy. The earliest were simple and had more to do with the texture of the fabric; plain weft lines laid down in white (known as sak cuxaq, ‘white cuxaq’) that would, with the coming of predyed threads, develop with increasing complexity. Another technique, known as pop cuxaq (‘mat cuxaq’), contemporary with the sak cuxaq and possibly older, is not a weft design at all and involves the raising up of the warp to create a woven mat texture….Though the average woman will wear a [gü]ipil woven with 4 to 9 different chacoy, some weavings have had up to 32.”

[Website: Santiago: Weaving]
Innovation has continued apace. The 80’s brought brightly colored polyester thread to the embroidery, and now, according to the website, “the styles of new güipils change with the season, according to popular whim.” Below is a picture of a güipil in the modern style that I bought in Santiago.

My own observation suggests that as a general rule of thumb, older women may wear more conservative designs than younger ones, but this is by no means a hard and fast rule. The ceremonial nim po’i, ‘great güipil’, which is worn as an overgarment on occasions of high ceremony, are more conservative in design, like those in fashion in the early twentieth century. But for everyday wear, the degree of flamboyance seems to be very much a matter of personal taste.

So amid all this variation and elaboration, what is “authentic”? What is “traditional?” Where do you draw the line? At length, I decided that perhaps qualms like these are the burden of someone like me who has been raised in a place where creating cloth in the home has died out as a general cultural practice. In our culture, many of those who practice such “traditional” arts are consciously undertaking to recreate the past, and historical authenticity takes on a particular, perhaps exaggerated, significance. But the weaving of cloth on backstrap looms, and the making of güipiles, in the Mayan communities of Guatemala, is a tradition of another order—a robustly living tradition, continuously passed on from mother to daughter in hundreds of thousands of households for millennia, and still central to the economy and cultural identity of the people who practice it, and to their communities. In such a setting, it may well be that the distinction between what is old and what is new is of lesser importance, that attempting to separate out ‘tradition’ from transformation and innovation an artificial exercise, and that it is its ability to transform that gives tradition the legs it needs to stride robustly into the future.

Note: Some of the pictures here were taken in the museum of the Cojolya Women’s Weaving Cooperative in Santiago. The website santiagoatitlan.com contains interesting information about the local weaving tradition. Also highly recommended for general reading is:

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, 6 Circle Drive, Cortland, NY 13045
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, 6 Circle Drive, 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.