

## **Transcript, Seventh Annual GFR Lecture, 2005**

### **Title:**

**Presented by Helena Hernmack**

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### **Introduction by Ann Hedlund**

Welcome, good evening, is the microphone working? Yes, glad to see you all, good evening. Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> annual, Gloria F. Ross lecture. I'm Ann Hedlund. I'm with the Center for Tapestry Studies here and we've held annual lectures in New York, Chicago, and Santa Fe, in Boulder and in Los Angeles, and never in our home headquarters of Tucson, Arizona. So it's delightful to be able to host this lecture here. I'm going to introduce, first of all, let me say first, that afterwards we hope you'll join us for our reception in the museum. The museum is just around the corner; hopefully many of you have already been there. I'd like to introduce my co-curator for the museum exhibition and the co-organizer of the symposium that's about to start at this very minute. This is Barbara Ornelas (applause)

### **Barbara Ornelas:**

*(Introducing herself in Navajo)* Ya'at'teeh. Shi ei Barbara Ornelas yiniche. Ta'baahi nishli, To'aaheedliini bashishchiin, Ha'naaga'ii da shinali, Clauschiini ei da shicheii. Dii dao adzaani nishli. Hi. My name is Barbara Teller Ornelas. I am Edge-water clan, born

for Water that Flows Together, and my grandparents' clans are One Who Walks Around and Red Bottom clan, and this is who I am.

It's been a real joy working with Ann and Bobbie here at the museum, putting the whole thing together. I want to welcome everybody here. I know some of you come from a long ways and I'm really glad you had a safe journey here. Can you hear me? For my 1<sup>st</sup> number, (laughter) yeah, I feel like singing you know so. Again, I just wanted to welcome everybody here and thank you for your interest in Navajo weaving and giving us the honor to be here to hear our, what we have to say. I just want to say that its' been a real privilege being apart of this and working with Ann has been a real privilege for me. I feel real honored that she, hey I can hear me too, and I feel real honored that she chose me to help her do this and we had a lot of fun. My kids and I really bonded really well when we put the exhibit together and you know, going from, looking at all those rugs and deciding which one is going to be in the collection was a lot of fun and I got to know my kids as people, instead of just my kids. I got to know them, that they had their own feelings about certain rugs and you know what their views was on different pieces and it was really neat to see. Just the fact that what they didn't know and what I know I've taught them and vice versa. So it's been a real joy to be here and I'm really happy and we're going to have a great time this weekend and were going to make Ruth cry so she doesn't get her money back. So anyways we just thank you for being here and were going to have a great time. (applause)

**Ann Hedlund:**

It's a real pleasure to introduce tonight's speaker. She is one of my ideals in the tapestry-weaving world, and I mean that worldwide indeed. Not only is she widely recognized for the beauty and the accomplishment, the technical accomplishment of her work. But for her professional bearing among architects and corporations, I've come also to know that Helena has an enormous capacity for curiosity for wonder and true human warmth, it's been a real pleasure working with you. Helena Hernmack was born in Sweden. She started weaving when she was 12. She studied at the University College of Arts & Craft in Design in Stockholm. She's operated her own weaving studio for 35 years first in Montréal in Canada, then in England, New York and currently in Connecticut. She specializes in designing and executing tapestries of truly monumental size for corporate lobbies use and other large spaces. She's received a steady stream of prestigious national and international awards for her work. Her one person exhibitions have been held in major art museums in New York, Los Angeles, Copenhagen, Stockholm and her work remains in permanent collections in many art museums as well, including the Metropolitan Museum and the Smithsonian. Even with these credentials, we have puzzled a few people about why we chose this year's speaker. First of all, she is not Navajo and were embarking on major Navajo symposium this weekend as I hope all of you know. Second, her complex technique is really quite fairly unique in the world of tapestry weaving; it's a variation and it's not a common form of traditional tapestry weaving it's something that she herself has developed. She'll be exploring both of these issues tonight, so I'm going to leave you with those puzzles until Helena herself unpacks them. For now I will say that Helena Hernmack and DY Begay, a Navajo weaver who lives just north of here in Phoenix and then even further north in Salina Springs on the

Navajo Nation. Helena and DY have shared ideas about weaving with each other for years. As individuals, they push the edges of their creative work and they provide sharp articulation about what they're doing, as you will see from Helena. We're sorry that DY could not be here tonight, this has come about because of some personal reasons. We hope to see her in other public form in the future. We at the center have always taken interest in stretching boundaries, in exploring artist identities, and underscoring in exceptions to the fussy old rules. Helena certainly stands for that and much, much more, so please welcome Helena Hernmack.

**Helena Hernmack:**

Can you hear me? (*introduces herself and DY Begay in Swedish*). My name is Helena Hernmack and I'm going to tell about my weavings and about my friendship with DY Begay. For that reason, I'm going to start by reading an introduction so that nothing is lost. Normally, I over speak off the cuff but in this case, since I am also representing another person I want to make sure that it works out. So, how DY Begay and I met; I lived in Ridgefield, Connecticut and DY lived in Woodcliff, New Jersey, and Katonah, New York was somewhere in between. Upon her arrival in 1984, in the east, DY started searching out any event relating to American Indian history. She had established a connection with the National Museum of American Indian in Manhattan and the Bronx, where she demonstrated weaving. She regularly scanned the New York Times for any interest in American Indian related event in that area. She decided to go to Katonah galley, which mounted an exhibition for *Navajo Weaving, Navajo Ways* in March of 1986.

Meanwhile, I have been living in Ridgefield since 1980 both my husband and I. He designs all his furniture and separately had our works shown in exhibitions at the Katonah gallery so we would go to most openings, and that is how our paths crossed with DY, with DY's path. It clicked at once, I said, "I'm a Swedish weaver", she said, "I've always been interested in Swedish weaving." So I said, "Why don't you come with me the next time I go to Sweden?" And she said, "I will!" And so she did.

Here's DY's description from her notes, our initial meeting was in Katonah, New York. Helena and I have mutual interest with included fiber, textiles, weaving and Navajo rugs. We spent the whole evening talking about the fiber world and in particular about our background. For me, meeting Helena, was like meeting a genie, I had so many questions. I was very fascinated by her type of weaving.

By this time I had already given several large commissions to a Swedish weaving studio called, Alice Lund Exterior. I had myself apprentice there, while at art school and the founder, Alice Lund, was my first and foremost mentor, who's example helped me recognize my calling at the age of 17 when I was taken there by my father for a visit. He was then, the head curator for the department decorative art at the National Museum in Stockholm. Around the same time in 1958, he let me help in an installation of an exhibition there on Swedish modern decorative arts. And so I was bitten by the bug twice and I never looked back. Designing and weaving tapestries and rugs was for me.

DY and I both knew we could not ignore the economic factor. One has to put one's self in the path of wider opportunities than had been sufficient for earlier generations. Quoting DY, "I learned weaving at a very young age and I was exposed to my mothers' daily habit of weaving and traveling to the trading post to sell her rug. I learned that her beautiful rugs didn't amount to much money. She traded her work of art for some flour, coffee and shortening. As a young girl watching, I thought this was not a good trade. Later I decided that my weavings were going to be purchased by special people who wanted to own a piece of art. Selling my rugs to the local trading post, in this case, Salina Springs was not an option. So I had to figure out how and where I was going to sell my weaving and therefore, my goal was to explore and learn about western marketing. Designing and weaving rugs was also for me and my marketing is based on the decision earlier I've not to use the classic French Goblin tapestry technique. I did not think the clients I needed would pay for, or wait for something that took so long to make. Anyhow, this was a time when American architects were intrigued by Swedish designs in all its' aspects and part of that was using textile art that was indigenous to Sweden. I had also started to do figurative images with this additional burden on time, it became even more essential for me to invent a way to weave 3 times as fast as for example the classic tapestry studios like Aubusson in France. The trip DY joined me on was in February of 1987, when "Waterfall," which you will see, was on the loom at Alice Lund's Exterior and here is the work I wanted to share with DY, and now were going to start the slides.

Now I know what I'm going to say about my slides but DY's slides are meant to read her comments about. All right so will the lights go down some more?

Alright, I'm going to give you a little bit of history and some from other Swedish weavers to begin with and you will see what your looking at here is called, ??? and it was found stuffed in the roofing of an old church about a 100 years ago but it was made by the Vikings in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. And so you see here they use Soumak technique. They have a linen background and a pattern stitch Soumak which they weave all these creatures with actually Sweden knows two or three pieces of that age, of course, compared to Peruvian weaving, that's nothing but for Sweden that's as old as it gets. And now we jump to the turn of the last century maybe a little later and an interesting Swedish or Finnish connection with the United States mainly Eliel Saarinen who created "Cranbrook," this was his home in Finland before he moved to America. And what I love about this picture is first of all it demonstrates the movement of art at the time, it was a national romantic movement and what I love is that here the textile is used as a carpet, as a furniture seat and as and art on the wall. In a way it has reflected how I work because I have made most of my tapestries to fit a certain room.

So we bring in here a first faced chief's blanket, which is at the National Museum of the American Indian, from about the same time of the last slide you saw, just to tie the threads a little bit here. DY tells us it is adorned with two large buttons, one of brass lined with lead, and the other a German silver which are attached with porcupine quail wrapped hide cords and red horse hair, can you imagine? Made around 1840 to 50.

So then we go back to what the Sweden's are up to, and there was a real famous illustrator by the name of Carl Larshen, some of you might be aware of his work, his wife Karen was also a painter, but after they married she switched to weaving, so it's not to compete with her husband. So she has done these two textiles that you see here which is at their home in Sun Bourne, which is now a museum run by the family, it's a very fabulous place to visit. And see the door hanging is partially transparent, as you see and it was quite popular at that time to weave translucent weaves like this that you would hang in the doorway and also the bedspread is by her, Karen Larshen.

There, in my opinion the greatest tapestry weaver that Scandinavia has produced is called, Hannah Riggin. She was born in Sweden in ??? in about 1870 I'm guessing and she then moved and lived her life in Norway. Why? She has her own sheep and she spun and dyed her own yarn and she wove her own tapestries straight up with no cartoons and her husband was, when the Nazi's were occupying Norway, he ended up behind bars so she also was brave enough to weave a political protest. But this black and white slide doesn't tell you the color, now your going to see it detailed, which I admire very much. I think this is a beautiful expression of the tapestry technique, how she has woven that hand, being stuck in the???. So this is Hannah Riggin, she came to visit my art school when I was there, she had this show actually at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, and I guess it must have been '63 and she showed once here in America, but in ??? Norway, there is a whole museum dedicated to her so if your anywhere near ???, go and see it because it's a very beautiful collection.

Moving on to Edna Martin, who was my teacher at Tekniska Skolan, the University College of Arts, Craft & Design, it's called now. Edna Martin was, when DY came with me to Sweden, we visited Edna and so this first of all is her tapestry that she had hanging in the dining room when DY came to lunch.

And these are DY's comments: Some of the highlights were, some of the highlights of the trip to Sweden were getting to meet and talk with Edna Martin. I thought she was so elegant and a great storyteller. I was amazed and totally impressed by the size of the weavings hanging on her walls, this is about 2 by 2 meters, its' like 2 ½, it's like 10 by 10 feet, she opened my eyes to appreciate creativity in weaving. I remember thinking about the colors and images in her weavings and told myself that, that is considered weaving. I enjoyed the side trip to Carl Lashen's house, which gave me a wonderful impression of Swedish homes and slowly meeting the Roistered??? family and you will see the Roistered family shortly. And I felt very comfortable on the farm because I was surrounded by sheep, wool, colors, dyes, weaving equipment etc.

This is DY's piece it's called "The Ute Style" and it's a current blanket woven to remember the classic beautiful blankets of the 1800's.

This is Swedish weaver by the name of Maria ???, and it's called, "Field of Rye" and I think its one of the cutest pictures I know with her sitting there with her baby. But the colors, areas, fields are perfectly beautifully done, I think Maria ???.

Here we talk about wedge weaving; this is DY's piece. Wedge weave was short little technique used by the Navajo weavers. It never became popular but I'm very interested in this style so I have to do several small weavings using the technique. I found it very exciting because there's a lot of an unrestricted behavior in the design. I actually brought a loom with the wedge weave piece on it of DY's to show you here later on.

One of my friends in Sweden, her name is Veronica ???, she admired Navajo weaving and actually corresponded with DY about wedge weaving so this is her wedge weaving, it's called, "Single and Double Combat," and I think it's quite extraordinary, I got this slide from her at the last minute, but Veronica wishes she was here and sends her best greetings to you because we talk back and forth quite a lot. And here's another piece of hers that has an interesting version of wedge weaving, she calls it "Avante Three." It's quite, quite beautiful I think. Okay, were now going to have a black slide because were moving onto the next chapter.

This chapters called, "Spinning, Dying and Weaving." And these are the most Churro sheep heading into the watering hole at Salina. That's a great photograph, love it how the way their all walking together, coming down the hill; now for a complete switch, the Swedish sheep (laughter). These are the lamb dross ??? as you can see they go out of doors, year round, poor things, but it means they grow a very long lustrous fiber.

And I'm not going to tell you about the Roistered, Roistered family a little bit here is a picture of them to begin with. Lisa and Anna, Lisa has the checkered shirt and Anna

leaning on the column. It was Lisa's father who started this and is started by refining the breed of sheep again because he found that people had, it had been mixed too much so he started purifying the breed because he wanted to reintroduce this particular fiber that had been used in the earlier weavings. We had some apprentices, that guy in the program is an American. It was a very international place, unfortunately both Lisa and Anna have now departed us and now the guys sitting at the top of the ??? and his brother and sister own the business and continue it. The little guy in the red hat, he's now about 30 years old, and that's my brother, sitting behind between the columns. They're all into music, this where we live, this is what it looks like, I thought you should see that; and the river is called "???" as it flows right by the farm and Lisa made this pond' in the foreground to regulate the water because they have river water and well water, and you know you can use one for one thing and one for the other.

This is DY's tapestry and it's called, "Going to Boston." It's an example of DY's connections with other parts of the country, she was traveling to Boston to give a talk and she was thinking of that when she wove it, but its' a traveling piece. So I have a traveling piece called, "Journey" and this one was made for the AID association for Lutherans in Wisconsin in 1977. Its 50 feet long and you will see a few pictures of us making the yarn for this. Yea, there's a little rowing boat in the middle, but otherwise it's, to me was a spiritual landscape, almost biblical and of course, they, my first meeting with the vice president they all told me their religious feelings of what they wanted in the tapestry. So that was a tall order to satisfy but I decided in the end that I was just going to think about the shape, it's such an extraordinary thing to weave something 10 times longer than it is

high and I've helped a horizon is the thing to have; and so it became this landscape and they accepted it.

Here's ?? and we got this, the design lining in front of him and we have traced the design on tracing paper and we weighed the whole piece of the paper and then we capped, capped off the sky and the rocks and the water and thus figured out about how many pounds of wool we needed for each color. So that's how we did that; and then the wool growers arrived, the Roistered family at the time did not have their own sheep, because you need more than one herd so the farmers around Sweden are interested in retaining the high quality wool, would have a place to sell it at ????. And if you look at the whole chain of event, from the sheep to my corporate tapestry, the weak link is the wool growers because they are not compensated for the extra effort they put into this idea that they should produce a very fine raw product. They don't get any extra money for that so it has to deal with that they believe in it and so it's the situation to this day.

But meanwhile, Lisa and I use to mostly blend all ready dyed wool before we spun it, we dye before we spun it because we wanted to make blends. So I'd look at my design and we said maybe their guessing more or less 15 families of colors in this that we then can mix with each other and mix black and white to reach a much, much higher number of tones, and in fact 15 colors would end up being 80 or 90 colors by the time your through. So this is part of the process here and this fine scale were making test threads, and Lisa on his bicycle, that's spinning wheel, he built everything. You'll see the spinning machine in a while that he made and we had such fun doing these things. Every time I had a big

job, I'd go there and start by spending the time to make the yarn and it's almost like the tail wagging the dog, I would get the job in order to sit and have fun with Lisa. These are the test threads, now these are hand-spun and they are washed and dried in an apple juice ???, but then later on we and really see how long the fiber is and you'll almost see how shiny it is too. It's really remarkable, this sheen. And there are the sacks with the wool that have been dyed more or less in the right quantity, we sort of estimated how much before we start mixing them and of course we spin some of it as is and some we mixed. This is the spinning machine that has been in operation now with it's really a museum piece, it's probably 30's or 20's and Lisa would rebuild it regularly have the machine shop. I could come there and design a thread even to a point where they could machine new parts to the machine to achieve what I wanted. I mean that's really service, but they have a more a somewhat more modern situation now. This young man you see is now married to the daughter so he is now one of the co-owner, his name is ???

Okay, and when its all said and done some I buy one ply and some of it I ply 2 of them together, so I get that difference too, because the yarn looks totally different if it has a twist in it or not, how it reflects the light. Before I go there, I decide do I want the tapestry to have feeling of more plyed yarn, single ply do I want it to be shiny or do I want it to be more from the stomach of the shape, which is softer yarn, all that I can decide before hand of how I want it. My clients are absolutely amazed that I go into this background in detail, its called tri-mixing? The house in the background is the original homestead and the studio of the workshop is over on behind us here, and that's ???

married to ????. It is a plan, its 7 generations which is very unusual to, for Swedish society

to have a family business like that. When it's all done, and I have the yarn, I drive an hour down the road to Bollinger, the town of Bollinger where the weaving studio is.

The two businesses are not related and never will be related. But I use both and here's my "String Time" tapestry on the table divided into three because it was so big; it was 32 feet long and was woven in three parts, going from below, going out and that's why and I'm getting ready to talk to the weavers.

Here, now my paths separates from the Navajo tradition completely because I use the cartoon behind the warp and I also do not make them reversible of the back you cannot turn around. The two interesting things about this picture, one is here you see 400 square feet of total confusion and it was before we made the blow up in color for the same price, we had to separate the green from the pink in all that. The other thing we should look at is the weavings up there hanging on the wall; they were the work of Alice Lund. And cause she was operating the circus 30's, 40's, 50's and into the 60's and its' a different esthetic look than what I'm doing. It's more restrained, more simple and her work was often fabric, hand woven fabric that could be a background in an empty area. The would not necessarily be the work of art, she also did some designs that were more to be as a work of art and she had 25 weavers, weaving by hand, you can do that in those years, you could afford it; it was amazing, so that's why there was so much weaving going on in Sweden. There was three firms like that and not to mention everyone else was weaving it was really very common.

But in 1963 when I graduated I could already then see the handwriting on the wall, there was no way I was going to start life by being responsible for 25 salaries. And also the movement was in glass as well, that the craft-man and the artist started to be the same person and so my generation did that. I'm my best weaver and I have great weavers but I'm my best. Here is, ??? the woman in the middle she has made tapestries for me since 1975, that's 30 years. And to give you some interesting statistics, they've done 10% in a number of pieces in my work but they've done 35% in the area, which we'll lay them all together and measure the area because I give them the big jobs and the reason I do that is that they work 5 days a week, 8 hours a day and we can keep a certain pace and we can deliver on time. I have always in my whole life had to deliver things on time, and had that pressure like you got to do so many inches a day. This is what you see when your close to the loom, it totally abstract in my technique. So how do you know what your doing?

Well, you take a pair of binoculars, you climb up on the loom, you turn the binoculars backwards and you look at it. And then what you'll see, you see it works. So this piece is now in Atlanta, where it has been. Oh yea, this shot, this is the other big difference, I have count my yarn all the time, I've count warp ends, I have all the count wefts? And I admire the Navajo who never count their threads; but this is the total opposite and so on the back we trim it to be about an inch long so that it doesn't come out on the front, but you will see later how I keep it all in place. I'll show you more about the weaving. Here it is, in place, the only thing that I regret at this point is that we didn't hang it way down by the black line because then it would have felt like you could walk into it. But there was a security problem, the desk is around the corner, it's not all the time looked at but its so controlled the lobby so it could have gone down and when I told him to do it, he said,

“Where in the world are we going to make these holes in the marble?” (laughter) And that was that.

Okay, new chapter, weavers at work. This is my studio in Ridgefield, Connecticut and it is this magnificent because of my husband, he designed it. And I have this wall of yarn, which is world famous, I have 2-3 thousand pounds of yarn in 2000 colors, I think. And it stock that we use so we replace it, it changes. It's my Chinese assistant, Hannah, working at one loom, I have them back to back like that so we can add the wool table, the yarn table in the middle and it's a beautiful space to work in and I'm extremely lucky to have this world to live in.

My first corporate commission was, “Rainforest” for the Weyerhaeuser Company in Seattle. In fact, they got 2 tapestries that hang opposite of each other on this executive floor. And I had gotten to know the ?? Office in San Francisco because I had actually twice I decided I couldn't just sit in Montreal and wait for the world come to me, so in 1967 and 1972, I traveled down the United States and visited architects and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> time I drove in my car for three months and went around the whole country in a circle and saw 124 offices. Now but I should add something interesting, um, it was really only four, five or six of the biggest architects offices, who ever bought anything because they had the budgets to consider and they also had the ear of the CEO's in those days and said, “look what you want is a tapestry.” And they say, “Yes, sir, yes, sir.” But of course the clients don't obey their architects quite the same way anymore, and also what happened was that a name, architect would get the whole building, the 50 foot tower, and all he

needed to do to pay for my tapestry was change the doorknobs on 50 floors to something slightly cheaper. In other words, it was only thanks to the architect that got the work. Whenever there was an interior designer involved, I did not get the work because they would have a certain body that they wanted to many things with, much of by one thing, so I had no chance there. In fact, I've never got a job from interior designing. I've got to start from art consultants but that's later. But in these years I worked only with top architects and it was wonderful and this was done in 1970.

And in 1976, I did the same rug for the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston. But here I was confronted by an art dealer, who was in on a meeting and he was trying to beat my price down, which wasn't very much to begin with, let me tell you; but he had researched what Weyerhaeuser had paid me and said, "Well they only paid you so much, we should...and what about creep," he said. I said, "Creep?" I had no idea what he was talking about. It turned out he was afraid the weft would sink down on the warp threads, but that's called creep. So I was almost beside myself, I was so insulted. Anyhow, he did later apologize to me and said the tapestry was fine. It's sewn together up the middle, and so was the trees because in those days I had smaller; actually the tree was sewn together then because my loom then was 7 feet wide, now I have an 11 foot loom and I could've woven it from the other direction but I wanted the water to be, the stitches to be horizontal in this case.

Later on I wove on the vertical water just to see, just to compare but moving on to this job, which I got because of the sailing boat, and this was 1981 in Houston, Texas Commerce Bank. It's 42 foot long and it's the "Six Flags of Texas" and what I took from

sailing boat and continued here was the idea of movement, that you can capture movement.

But now, let me show you some close ups. So this is a close up from the tapestry itself and the next slide is the close up from my study and here you see that I decided not to use a white warp, it showed up too much so the tapestry has a gray warp. Otherwise, its', you see here how I'm working the lights and the shadow because that's the hallmark of my work, is how I capture, how the light and the shadows fall on the forms.

My latest tapestry is 19 feet long and 5 feet tall and is going to a hospital in New Jersey. We just finished it, its' in one piece, woven from the side, which was done in Sweden; it's the best one they've ever did for me. Here you see a detail, which shows that they really know their stuff. I'm very impressed. So, because the building is delayed, first of all we got the opportunity to hang it here at all months in this museum in Sweden. A museum we are hoping that we will commission the tapestry for their lobby, so this is good opportunity. Lets' hope it works. Back in my studio, you'll see the tulips are now hanging on the wooden wall in the background there because I have it still until July. But meanwhile my I decided to try and do make a little sibling to it, just to have for myself. So were reading the "Yellow Tulip," this time in focus and the other one is out of focus. So I'm only showing a little bit about the crosses here.

But I also want to show you DY's studio here while we at it, that's her loom and that's her beautiful piece that's now in the American Indian Museum in Washington. I love that

piece. Her loom is vertical and my loom is horizontal, you all know that. And now here, I'm drawing on this enlargement and when some of these are quite small I do it on Color Laser Copies, they are taped together, and that's by far the cheapest to blow something up. So there are 8 and you know 17 by 11 feet that I print to sectional get it upsized, but that wasn't drawn yet though, because I need to be able to see through the warp when I'm weaving. And then I have to mix my butterflies which I call "dolls," because we call them dolls in Swedish.

But I'm going to show you how my plain weaves is divided into 2 halves. So making one of the halves there, and here now I'm usually used to the pointing. Okay, there's one, and there's the other half and there in the same shed, so that's one row of plain weave but I roll them around each other so I get a light one up when I wanted and the dark one up when I wanted. So that slows me down a little bit but that's an extra sort of trick we been using for some years. That gives us 3 opportunities to say something and either those colors or with the pattern stitch which I'll show next.

And to give a comparison, here's DY weaving hard, another nice picture. And of course, I was going to tell you what firms up my weaves since everything is rather thick and can't beat in so well but when I shuttle in linen every half inch, that's real linen and there's real linen between these, that going back and forth that packs it in and holds it in place so that it becomes sturdy. I also draw your attention to my warp, this is warp. Every time I have used my old Norwegian spinning wheel for this, I applied together 4 different colors of

Swedish linen 16-2, and that's my warp thread so I picked the colors to match the tapestry and I'll re-comment on that later on in another picture.

And here I'm coming through with a pattern stitch, you see here; and then doing a Soumak so sometimes I want this to cover the background and sometimes I want the background to show and when I want the background to show up, the plain weave then I just travel ??? for this butterfly and come up every so often for air, every 6 sheds so it comes out to, so that the texture always remains equally thick. When I let half of that tabby, travel up into the dark under the round dark of the halves so that the linen part doesn't ever become too harsh because that's what makes it look realistic is that you can sense of that air in between the thing in the foreground and the thing in the background and that's totally opposite thinking too, to the French, the modern French Gobblin weaving where you want it to be a hard edge against a hard edge. I'm more struggling to do the exact opposite and for that reason I'm bringing that half of the tabby further out than the light half and the dark half one stops here and one goes all the way and sort of covers, but you can glimpse that there's something light behind that gives the sense of transparency.

Okay now we are all where you all know. So DY just points out what she wrote that Spider Rock is a very important to the sacred element in Navajo weaving history and that she has a lot of respect for the place and I was there weaving; we were both photographing this at the same time in a pouring rain storm, believe it or not it was quite exciting. The waterfall was coming down the sides of the mesa. DY this is a sample of

the bigger piece that she intends to do. I have this with me so you can see it when we go out and she, I've tried to learn to say Tsegi instead of Canyon De Chelly. I'm not very good at, but one tries. Okay that's page 5, I'm getting mixed up here. 6, okay I'm going to smaller commissions I've had because I have the samples with me and both of them have water in them and this was done for a hotel in Stockholm, so it's the swans on the water of the big shadow in the background that's actually the royal palace in Stockholm. And the water is called "Streaming" and there's lots of swans so I have the samples with me.

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## SIDE B

So then I'm going to start talking about some of my abstract work that did I with color and how I'd like to weave how, what it looks like when watercolor dries on paper. So this is called, "Color Phases of One," it's in detail and here we see that it actually has carpet that goes with it, called the "Splatter Carpet" and what I did was I just let the colors fall down into the carpet so these constitute a pair. And I have done that in a couple occasions one private commission was a tapestry and a carpet together. But essentially what you see here is I've painted on watercolor there's really no sense of shadow. This is what happens when I introduce shadow into this. I've painted the different pieces of paper and then I put the two squares in the foreground up on little matchboxes and then I lay it on a yellow piece of paper then I photograph it from the bottom and then I weave. And what I want to point out here talking about warps is if you look up in the blue corner up there but I love it when you see the complementary color peaking out in the warp, an autumn leaf, I don't think another connection here but I've made the warp green and red so that the green part of the warp shows up in the red part of the tapestry and vice versa so you always see the

complementary color and I have a theory that you make the color even stronger if you put a tiny little hint of the complementary color in it. Try that and see what you think; just one little thin line of the complementary color. So were going to, for a complete different thing, but this one that I made for Peabody Coal Company represents a black and white design for me. I actually, when I went to see them I said your lobby needs to be a big colorful tapestry. And they said to me, “Coal is black you know.” It was one of the most; you know working with clients you get exposed interesting things. They took me to a strip mining operation and I saw what it was like when they removed 90 feet of dirt to get to that one strip of coal and the bulldozer they used was so big that it has an elevator inside the middle and we went up four floors inside the bulldozer and the scoop was as big that you that a greyhound bus could drive in it. And the guy who was running this piece of machinery was a happiest person I ever met as you can imagine. Anyhow, this is an example of black and white and how strong it is now.

DY has a good example too, which I think is extremely strong and lets see, she calls it, “The Cheyenne Style” and quoting her, “I wanted to use a lot of contrasting colors and some geometric patterns so people can see how colors join and the design develops. It’s difficult to do the diagonals, I know that. So I’m moving into something new I’m trying to make my things stand up on their own and this says okay in signal flags. You know the signal flag language is a visual version of the alphabet so it’s very tempting to play with it, so I’m being tempted. And so this is very new to me to do something like this but as I look at it I think maybe I should weave portraits that can stand up like this on desks, more interesting.

So and meanwhile, DY has done this, very extraordinary. I wanted to look at it as a horizontal but she said it was vertical. I think its very interesting, so that is called, “Unexpected Inspiration” and it is DY’s most recent unexpected design.

Okay we’re going to wind up with just 3 more slide which are more as a, as a comic relief. I have woven this portrait for the University Library at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. And it’s a portrait of Mr. Young and Storm Cat. He knew nothing about tapestries at all but his architect, who designed the library, had started by buying a lot of Kentucky quilts to hang on the top floor. And after they were installed he said, “Any other art in this building should be textile,” so Mr. Young said, “Oh yeah?” And so then he, he also a good sport he’s past away now, but he was the most wonderful person. He then finally took the time and travel and went to Atlanta to look at my 3 big tapestries in Atlanta. And after he had seen them, he wrote and said, “Now I see you can do anything,” So I was going to weave him his horse, this is the most valuable stallion in America, he owns half a million dollars per fold, he’s a very fancy animal. And so we had to really do a good job on it and it was actually composite of three photographs, cause I took the landscape, a very professional horse photographer photographed him running and I wanted the horse to run from the right to the left and that was a big to do too that anyone should have the gall to ask the horse to run a little bit and so the trainer had some sort of bag of oats but I was only allowed to do it once cause we were not going to upset this horse. And we see animals most game for everything here’s the detail of his head and the eye, yes I made the big effort here. Of course, the horse people are extremely traditional

in their tastes so it looks very traditional. But I think I caught something from there anyway and my last slide is of my favorite cat.

Are the tapestries too high up, oh god can we lower it please because this space, he's walking in space. This "Space Tapestry" was made for CBS, for lobby. And when it came out a little loom Thomas went to lie on it so he would always leave his orange hairs and everything, so that's the story between Thomas and the Space Man. I will tell you something though that I think is pertinent to think about and that is after CBS had used this tapestry for a few years the Space Man was no longer the latest thing and they threw it out. Now I've had 3 tapestries that I know of that have been thrown away they have not been my best so it doesn't even matter that much but this is where an organization, the Gloria Ross Center we have to start thinking about how to save things. And of course, one person said, "Why don't you put a radio controlled device on it" so that you always know where it is. I used to think that if I'd traveled around and put my phone number on all of them and of course, the files of paper always disappeared, the person who bought it is long gone, nobody knows what it is. The best example is my "Front Pages" tapestry, which was owned by Newsday, Long Island. And it was moved around the building and finally one day there was no more wall for it and so the maintenance man was told, "Get rid of it," and somebody said, "Maybe you should call a Catholic charity maybe or the American Craft Museum, maybe?" So he called the American Craft Museum and they got in the car immediately and ran and got it off the loading dock and they now have a good piece, but that's what happens when you make your life with commission work is that you know they get overlooked, people don't know what it is because they end up in

the basement, they end up in cardboard boxes, forgotten for 10 years, one that is in Detroit Institute of Art was in a box in a closet in England for 10 years, until I asked for it and then they had to find one person in the company who'd been with the company for twenty five years, who remembered it and who started looking for it, so that's interesting. Anyhow, on that fascinating note let's end.

(applause)

**Ann Hedlund:**

Are you willing to take a few questions?

**Helena Hernmack:**

Sure.

**Ann Hedlund:**

I think we have time for 2.

**QUESTION:** ??? Couldn't understand the question.???.How big are your stand alone pieces (maybe)?

**Helena Hernmack:**

It is about 11 by 14 inches. I can't make it stand up, how ??? because what I use is, is a material I've used you may be aware of it, the plastic strips that are left over you make sequins. It's a honeycomb thing with holes in it and I bend it several times and until I use

it as a web and that's so stiff that if I then use it in the vertical it will stand up only up to a certain height. I've just started to play with it so we shall see. Yes?

**QUESTION:** What breed of sheep for the wool did you use?

**Helena Hernmack:**

Well, I've never known to translate it, it's called the lambtros? in Swedish. It's not any of the typical English breeds it's a particular Swedish breed that most commonly used and the Norwegians make a yarn called, ??? wool, which is quite stiff, it's stiff, it's small course in a way, but it also has this long fiber and they use the same sheep. And the Gotland sheep, you know what we've hit something interesting in the Lord of the Rings series they were writing about the cloak that Frodo wore was woven New Zealand by Gotland wool. I haven't followed up on this but something's going on. Yes?

**QUESTION:** Your piece that was 50 feet wide and 5 feet tall was that woven from the side or was it in one piece?

**Helena Hernmack:**

Two pieces, it was started in the middle and we wove towards the ends. But it's, the flags' was done the same way, it's not efficient to have narrow a piece on the wide loom. It's much better to have a wide piece on a short length. It's faster because you're working the patterns only. So, are you satisfied? (applause). Thank you for coming.