

SILKWORM

The Magazine Of Silk Painters International
Volume 25, Issue 1, 2018



**Tracing American Silk
Threads Back in Time:**

Interview with Denise Green
Director of Cornell's Fashion &
Textile Collection

**Len Brondum,
Master Silk Painter:**

Reclaiming the Visual Beauty of
Line-work in Silk and Enamels,
Liz Constable

Ten Pound Studio:

A Silk Painting Teaching
Studio in Gloucester, MA,
Susan Quateman

Frozen Mill Pond,
Estabrook Woods,
Lincoln, MA
Susan Quateman

IN THIS ISSUE

Volume 25, Issue 1, 2018

FEATURE ARTICLES

06 **Tracing American Silk Threads Back in Time:**
Interview with Denise Green
Director of Cornell's Fashion & Textile Collection
by Liz Constable

10 **Len Brondum, Master Silk Painter:**
Reclaiming the Visual Beauty of Line-work in Silk and Enamels
by Liz Constable

14 **Ten Pound Studio:**
A Silk Painting Teaching Studio in Gloucester, MA
by Susan Quateman



Beets Bleed into Bricks and Cobblestones by Liz Constable

DEPARTMENTS

03 **From the Editor's Desk**
Social Fibers
by Liz Constable

04 **Message from the President**
The Ties that Bind
by Kaki Steward

05 **The Creative Journey**
The Language of Art as Means of
Communication by Brecia Kralovic-Logan

18 **Tools and Techniques:**
Photo Silk-Screen by Jane Keddy

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Social Fibers

As I take over as Editor from Tunizia Abdur-Raheem, I want to communicate my abundant gratitude to Tunizia for years of generous and imaginative work as Editor. During this recent transition period, I have been indebted to Tunizia's help, advice, sense of humor, contagious laugh and patience. Good luck, Tunizia, with your future endeavors, and we look forward to featuring your own artwork soon!

Social Fibers. I selected this theme for our first issue of 2018 to foreground the strands that compose *Silkworm's* strengths, and to introduce future directions for the magazine.

First, for many readers, the magazine has provided connecting threads--artistic and social--that link people and practices, artists and art, across states and continents. I look forward to continuing and developing this role of the magazine, and encourage and welcome ideas, suggestions and feedback from all of you: editor@silkwormmagazine.com

Second, *Social Fibers* centers the educational function of the magazine as a social good. In coming issues, the SPIN Board and I aim to develop *Silkworm* to extend the community of artists to younger generations, and to integrate the art and perspectives of the college-age art, design, and professional writing students who are our future.

Third, *Social Fibers* emphasizes the importance of collective energies contributing to the magazine, and I am in the process of introducing an Advisory Board of members to work alongside the Editor. As part of this work-in-progress, I have introduced a new *Tools and Techniques* section as a regular feature. Jane Keddy has volunteered to serve as Contributing Editor soliciting contributions for that section. I encourage any of you interested in writing about a technique or tool you would like to share with readers to contact Jane Keddy directly: jkeddy@ymail.com

I'd like to introduce a Reviews section, *Out and About in Galleries and Museums*, as a regular feature. I invite any of you to share your review of an art exhibition, or of a single work of art at an exhibition, that you have visited, and to write about its significance for you and/or your own artistic practice. Susan Quateman has offered to serve as Contributing Editor soliciting contributions for this section, and I encourage you to contact her

directly with your ideas and proposals: susi-quateman@gmail.com

Finally, my theme of *Social Fibers* is deliberately expansive. *Silkworm* will embrace stories about places, people and movements of silk (the material), the exploration of histories and heritages (times) and cultures and places (spaces) associated with silk production, silk art (painting, printing, and fashion designing, costume making) and silk consumption (who's buying what and why?).

I hope you enjoy this first issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together. 2018 is a SPIN Festival Year, and so we have a glorious full-page announcement about the October Festival and future issues will feature the work of artists who are offering workshops there. Themes for the forthcoming issues of *Silkworm* are the following: 2. *Printing by Patterning and Dying*; 3. *Adapting, Appropriating and Transforming through Silk*; 4. *Flirtations with Diaphanous Silk (Silk Organza, Chiffon Silk)*.

I do encourage you to send suggestions, requests, and feedback to me at editor@silkwormmagazine.com



Elizabeth

Constable

SILKWORM CREDITS

Editor: Elizabeth Constable

Contributing Editors: Jane Keddy and Susan Quateman

Membership Database: Gloria Lanza-Bajo

Layout and Design: Rashell Choo

Please send Letters to the Editor. Stay in touch. We want you to be involved. If you have comments, complaints or suggestions, let us know. Send correspondence or photos to editor@silkwormmagazine.com.

If you have photographs of your art that you would like to have showcased in the *Silkworm*, send photos with your name and the name of the piece. The photo size should be minimum 5"x 7" and 300 dpi for best printing.

To become a member of SPIN or renew your membership, visit www.silkpainters.org/membership.html. Membership is \$50 US, \$55 North American and \$62 International.

Send change of address or questions about membership status to Gloria Lanza-Bajo - Membership Chair

Email: membership@silkpainters.org

Phone: 718 624-0313

Want to advertise in *Silkworm*?

Send for our media kit at editor@silkpainters.org.

Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/silkpainters/> All works presented in the magazine are the property of the artists.

KAKI'S KORNER: MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Ties That Bind

This is a photo of a memory quilt square started by my mom. She chose this bowtie pattern, from a quilting book published 1935. Her plan was to make the squares out of white linen and the bowties from remnants collected from dresses she made for my sister and me from grade school to my sister's wedding in 1965.

Mom was the first in her family to graduate from college. She owned and operated a pre-school in 1955. She sewed for us in the afternoons while the students were napping. She designed her own patterns, and sewed everything from summer outfits, to school clothes, and winter coats on her Pfaff machine. My sister and I loved to go to the dry goods store with mom; We would "ooh" and "ah" over patterns in the giant catalogs, picking out dresses we liked. Perched on those high stools we would choose very complicated designs with ruffles, and flouncy sleeves that were entirely beyond any practical use for school. Our mother's response was often "We'll see" which was code for "Nope". Once down in the aisles, I was first attracted to the rich colors of what seemed to be endless bolts of material. I loved running my hand over the cool polished cotton, the reassuring flannel, the scratchy wool and the quiet rustle of taffeta. If I was quick about it, I could gently touch velvet to my cheek before Mom caught me. I realize that these tactile experiences are tied directly to my love of silk.



As much as I loath to admit it, despite the intense sensory experiences from the fabrics in the store, my sister and I hated those yearly matching dresses and even the woolen coats with covered buttons. Why? Well, because they looked "homemade", not store-bought dresses from J. C. Penney's. We were smart enough to avoid openly expressing these thoughts to Mom. I particularly disliked my sister's hand-me-downs. And I was sure my teachers knew my entire family tree on the first day of school, simply because they recognized the dress. . .

I must have been in high school when my Mom started the quilt. I remember picking up a square of the quilt saying, "This was my first recital dress," or "The was my communion dress." Over the next few years, she had sewn enough squares to cover a twin size bed, but no further. Our busy lives got in the way and her passing stopped the quilt altogether. As a saver, I couldn't part with the pieces when we cleaned out Mom's stuff. My sister, a resolute non-saver, wanted no part of it. The only thing my sister ever saved

was her collection of Teddy bears. And yet, the bears came to play a crucial role in triggering further memories of ties that bind.

Every time we moved, I'd open a mystery bag only to discover Mom's quilt pieces again. Each time, I'd vow to do something with them only to forget.

We'd been in Virginia for several years when I took a sewing class on a early fall Saturday. As we went around the group introducing ourselves, the woman next to me said she made custom teddy bears. Bells and whistles went off in my head.

I noted her address and phone number and after class, rushed home to see if I could retrieve those quilt pieces. I did have them, only after I searched through several bags of saved fabrics and keepsakes to find them. As promised, two weeks later she presented me with my sister's Christmas present: the bear sitting about eight to ten inches tall, had been constructed with incredible skill and our remnants. Its arms, legs and body were patched with grade school dresses. Its eyes were buttons from blouses. Our winter coats became paws and ears.

That quilted bear held the top bear title for many years. These cherished memories were created by our clever Mom. As a child of the depression, she defined 'repurposing' out of

necessity. Even though the scraps never became a quilt or another bear, Mom's intention to create memories was more than successful. And yes, I still have the remaining quilt pieces.

When I think about our organization, I'm reminded that it is the love of silk that binds us together. Our members bring their disciplines, varied styles, and unusual willingness to share, from all corners of the world. We've successfully stitched a quilt of silk artists who continue to share their skills in our organization. We also preserve our memories via the Silkworm. We must continue to challenge one another to become part of our silk quilt For me these are the ties that bind.

Kaki Steward
President, SPIN

THE CREATIVE JOURNEY

The Language of Art as Means of Communication *by Brecia Kralovic-Logan*



"A cloth that has not been a cloth, but many separate threads, is now being woven together by the hands of artisans and creative personalities who have an understanding of the Earth as a unified organism."

- Katherine Josten, Founder of the Global Art Project for Peace

The *Global Art Project for Peace* is an art exchange that focuses attention on personal and global peace. www.globalartproject.org The *San Diego Silk Guild* decided to participate this year as a group, and I agreed to coordinate the project for the guild. Nadja Lancelot hosted a planning meeting with Karen Malin, Kira Coster and myself to focus on a community project that would be meaningful and engaging. Kira, who has been an art activist for years, founding the Posts for Peace project, www.postsforpeaceandjustice.org, had done a silk painting project with children from refugee families and suggested that we invite their moms to a workshop with the silk guild. She introduced us to Janice Raymond, a former teacher, and to Sue Geller, a former school principal, who founded *Welcome Home*, a program that helps refugee families in San Diego. They connected us to the group of women who are refugees from Syria, Iran, Iraq and Palestine.

Each piece of the puzzle fell into place. The site was the Chase Avenue Elementary school auditorium where the children of the refugee moms attended school. Three Silk Guild members volunteered to lead dyeing stations, with each doing a different shibori technique

in a specific color range so that the finished silk would create a color-blended banner. Guild members volunteered to be "Sisters in Silk" with the moms.

On the day of the event, the work stations were set up, the name tags and welcome activities were on the entry table, and the volunteers from the silk guild were milling about in anticipation of our guests. One by one the women arrived, most of them dropping their kids off at the designated child care before entering into the auditorium. Some smiled and spoke in English and others smiled and nodded while a translator greeted them in Farsi or Arabic. We gathered in a circle for introductions, a tentative, inquisitive group, curious about what the day would be like.

Once the "Silk Sisters" were paired up, the groups divided between the 3 different stations and the fun began. The language of art became our means of communication. Twisting, tying, clamping and dyeing the silk, each "Silk Sister" created a colorful scarf and dyed extra silk fabric for the group project. Messages of peace were written on ribbons in both English and Arabic and woven together with the fabric to create a colorful banner (45" x 65") for the *Global Art Project for Peace* art exchange in April.

When we gathered together to model our scarves and admire our collective weaving, it was clear by the laughter and chatter that a community of women was also being woven together. Each of us left that day with a connection to a new culture and a better understanding of the social and economic challenges that refugee families in our community face while trying to create a life in their new country. Seeds were planted for turning that understanding into action through the power of art.

Brecia Kralovic-Logan is a fiber artist, creativity champion, and the author of the Spiral of Creativity- Mastering the Art of a Spirited Life. Visit her at www.breciacreative.com or www.thespiralofcreativity.com



TRACING AMERICAN SILK THREADS BACK IN TIME:

Interview with Denise Green, Director of Cornell's Fashion & Textile Collection

by Liz Constable



Denise Green
Assistant Professor of Fiber Science and Apparel Design Cornell University, and Director of Cornell's Fashion and Textile Collection

Silk Mania at Auburn Prison. The talk's title immediately caught my attention when I noticed that a colleague and friend, Denise Green, was giving this talk at the national conference of the *Costume Society of America* in Fall 2017. Silk and prisons? The pairing of silk---invariably a luxury good in its pasts and present---with prisons struck me immediately as incongruous. And that incongruity made me very curious to find out more about the social fibers and cultural histories linking prison inmates to silk in Cayuga County, New York.

So, I contacted Denise Green, now Assistant Professor of Fiber Science and Apparel Design at Cornell University, and Director of Cornell's Fashion and Textile Collection. Denise graciously accepted to do an interview for *Silkworm* about the little-known pasts and presents of silk production in Auburn Prison, New York, and about sericulture (the cultivation of silkworms and their food source---mulberry bushes---to produce raw silk) in the New England and Mid-Atlantic States in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Before talking with Denise Green, I conducted my own preparatory research into sericulture in the past and present. Did you know that in the past and still today, here in the US and across the globe, "The silk industry has been employed as an index of economic development or as a creation of connection between different regions"? (Farrell, 11)¹. The first part of this statement---silk industry as an index of economic development---makes me think of the crucial role played by sericulture as a source of income and employment for women in rural areas of India. Indeed, sericulture is also central to development projects enhancing rural women's incomes across the globe, and projects are ongoing in several East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda).

Green shared with me the photos of her January 2018 trip with sixteen Cornell students to Jangaon, in the south of India where she visited the cocoon market---where farmers bring fresh cocoons to sell---the cocoonery and a modern industrial silk reeling facility, R.A. Silks. Green explained to me that at R.A. Silks, the wastewater from the reeling process irrigates the mulberry behind the factory, and then the pupa were sun-dried on the roof and sold to make fish food! Finally, the "bad" cocoons are used to make mats that were dried and exported to China for quilt batting. This provides further evidence that the industry functions as "a creation of connection between different regions." With this framework in mind, I turned to Denise Green to find out more about silk production in Auburn Prison.



THE SILK REELING FACILITY



WOMEN WORKING IN RA SILKS



SILK REELING



WOMEN WITH COCOONS

LIZ: What led you and your co-researcher Nancy Breen to investigate the silk production in Auburn Prison, Cayuga County, NY in the 1830s and early 1840s?

DENISE: As an anthropologist and historian, much of my research focuses on tracing threads back in time, and in researching connections between place/space and time and fashion. Tracing circuits of textile production and consumption is central to my research. I also have a personal connection because I grew up in Auburn, NY until the age of ten, and so I walked past the prison, which was renamed the *Auburn Correctional Facility* in 1970. The text on one of the blue historical marker signs intrigued me since it reads, "Convicts made sewing silk, 1841-1846. Here was principal cash market in U.S. for cocoons and raw silk." This was enough to pique my interest in this labor history, although as my research later uncovered, the period of silk production ended in 1844, rather than 1846.



AUBURN HISTORICAL MARKER

LIZ: Fascinating. Before moving to the prison production, what accounts for "silk mania" and the rapid growth of silk production in America in the 1820s and 1830s? I know that in colonial American, the British tried to establish sericulture in both Georgia and North Carolina to provide the London silk industry with raw materials, but both projects failed. And I learned that later in the eighteenth century, the state of Virginia imported significant quantities of "wrought silk" (e.g., figured, flowered) from London to clothe their emerging gentry.

DENISE: Various factors played key roles here. First, there was an increasing need for hand sewing threads in America at that time as industry and trade generated consumer demand. Then, silk production became a matter of national economic significance leading to a resolution to the US Treasury in 1826 to produce a manual on the growth and manufacture of silk to encourage people to take up sericulture.

The manual, known as the "Rush Manual," published in Washington in 1828, was soon followed by the publication of similar manuals in the 1830s. Around the same time, in 1826, a Flushing Nursery had introduced a fast-growing and hardy mulberry bush, the *Morus Multicaulis* whose productivity compared very favorably to the white mulberry. As a result, the cultivation of the *Morus Multicaulis* took off, and between 1835 and 1839, the price of young mulberry trees and cuttings shot up from three to five dollars, a hundred to five hundred dollars in some cases. There were fortunes to be made in selling and reselling mulberry bushes at the time!

Finally, in the 1830, several New England state legislatures offered bounties for silk producers, i.e., financial incentives for high cocoon production. State Fairs also offered rewards for silk production, and the 1830s saw Silk Conventions taking place in several New England states. As a result, a cottage industry of silk production emerged in the States of Ohio, Connecticut and Massachusetts during this period, with women and children doing a significant amount of the work as unpaid labor at home.

LIZ: And so, gendered labor and then prison labor played such a crucial role in silk production in the first decades of the nineteenth century! Moving to Auburn Prison, what prompted State Governor William Steward to establish silk production in the prison?

DENISE: In 1835, the NY State legislature ordered prisons to start silk production "as soon as it can conveniently be done." Auburn was a burgeoning manufacturing town at the time, and Steward introduced silk production at the prison because sericulture was not likely to compete with, or threaten, any of the other local manufacturers.

LIZ: How did you unearth the details of this little known story? What were you able to consult as primary sources on silk production in Auburn Prison?

DENISE: Not many primary materials exist, for sure. However, the prison punishment books were valuable primary sources, and so through studying these, we saw the records of prisoner punished with a cat 'o' nine tails for stealing silk or for wasting silk. Some researchers have argued that the sound of the machines allowed prisoners to talk among themselves without fear of being overheard, and that this activity may have prompted the prison staff to monitor and punish the prisoners working with the silk.

LIZ: What do we know about how the inmates at Auburn Prison learned about the cultivation of silkworms and about then how they learned about the techniques for the maceration of cocoons, brushing, reeling and throwing to transform the silk filaments into fabric?

DENISE: The prison inmates were not involved in cultivating the silkworms. Instead, they received the raw silk cocoons, and undertook the work from that stage onwards. So, working with a throwing mill, they reeled (or unwound) the single filaments into sewing thread, known as "twist," which was then dyed. And finally, the spools of sewing silk were sold to dressmakers for hand-sewn garments. Although the inmates were primarily self-taught, the prison received the advice of John Morrison, from Paisley, Scotland, a town better known, instead, for the woven Paisley shawls with their distinctive design. However, by 1842, Auburn Prison boasted ten throwing mills, and a dye house, and it was the principal cash market for raw silk in the entire country.

LIZ: This chapter of history provides such an interesting case-study of the social life of silk from production to consumption circuit. And yet, by 1844, silk production at the prison ended. What led to this? Related to this, what happens when the products of prison-work programs reach consumers? Some of us probably recall that in 2015, *Whole Foods* ended its contract with *Colorado Correctional Industries* in response to consumers' discomfort with the supermarket selling goat cheese and tilapia produced by inmate labor. Do we know anything about the responses and reactions of consumers purchasing the silk thread produced by inmates in Auburn Prison?

DENISE: For a while, the Auburn Prison Warden, Henry Polhemus, was a strong advocate in the State Assembly for the silk thread produced by the prisoners, touting its strength, brilliance and smoothness. However, when John Beardsley took over as

¹ Farrell, William. (2014) *Silk and Globalisation in Eighteenth-Century London: commodities, people, and connections, c. 1720 – 1800*, PhD Thesis, Birkbeck, London University.

Warden in 1843, the following State Assembly report shifted from praise to focus instead on imperfections in the twist and the dye of the thread. Ultimately, the 1843 report presented the prison silk as unsaleable. At the time, responsibility for the lower quality of the silk thread was attributed to the awkwardness of men's hands working the threads, as compared to the "nimble fingers" of women and children. The process of reeling entails working with silk filaments from several cocoons, sensing when the filaments may break and adding in a filament to strengthen the thread. Skill, experience and deft hand movements create a smooth, strong thread. But, yes, the prison origins of the silk thread also did carry a social stigma in contemporary consumers' minds, adding another contributory factor to the rapid decline of Auburn Prison's silk production.

LIZ: Even if silk production ended at Auburn Prison in 1844, it continued to flourish elsewhere in Auburn after that. I remember you mentioning that the silk for dresses at President Benjamin Harrison's Inauguration in 1889 came from Auburn. Tell us that story.



First Lady Caroline Harrison's Inaugural Dress, 1889
The National History Museum of American History

DENISE: Yes, Auburn Prison is just one part of a large local history of fabric production. The *Logan Silk Mills* in Auburn operated in the late nineteenth century. At President Benjamin Harrison's Inauguration--incidentally, the Presidency notorious for wastefulness of the Billion-Dollar Congress--his wife, Caroline Harris and daughter both wore silk dresses made from silk produced in Auburn at the Logan Silk Mills. President Benjamin Harrison is remembered for high tariffs and interest in protecting domestic manufacture -- hence the need for his wife and daughter to wear inaugural gowns of locally produced silk fabric.

LIZ: Thank you so much for sharing this history of American silk threads with our readers. If people want to find out more about the history of the silk industry in America, where should they turn?

DENISE: *American Silk, 1830 - 1930: Entrepreneurs and Artifacts*, by Jacqueline Field, Marjorie Senechal, and Madelyn Shaw (Texas Tech University Press, 2007), one of the *Costume Society of America Series* of books is the place to go. Nancy Breen and I will be publishing our research on silk manufacture in the Auburn Prison soon, so please stay tuned!

Transcendent Silk...Beyond the Ordinary

Shaman's Dream III with Moon & Butterfly by Herman Van Roey

2018

Spin Festival

Art Show
Fashion Show
Seminars
Workshops
Vendor Expo

For More information
WWW.SILKPAINTERS.ORG/FESTIVAL.PHP

SILK PAINTERS INTERNATIONAL

Arrowmont School of Arts & Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN
October 5th thru 12th, 2018

Resistad

WATER-BASED GUTTA
MEDIUM CONCENTRATE

The world's top performing water-based gutta resist
Now available from **Jacquard**

- Concentrated for maximum control & flexibility
 - Easily tailor viscosity to method of application
 - Tint with dye for full strength color without compromising performance
- Superior hydrophobicity & unparalleled resisting properties
- Quick wash-out in warm water
 - Fabric retains soft feel, drape and luster
- Easy clean-up, non-toxic and no fumes

Jacquard Products
The Fabric Art Experts!
www.jacquardproducts.com
800.442.0455

LEN BRONDUM, MASTER SILK PAINTER:

Reclaiming the Visual Beauty of Line-work in Silk and Enamels

by Liz Constable

Highly accomplished, self-taught, and widely exhibited, silk painter in the North East and nationwide. Check. Award-winning enamel artist and silk painter. Check. Experienced surface designer. Check. Fiber artist. Check. Mentor and promoter of fellow artists. Check. Teacher, nurse midwife and mother. Check. Widely traveled and widely read artist. Check.

At the age of 84, Len Brondum's artistic range, scope, and rare achievements testify to a lifetime's dedication to the arts, a passion for history--particularly Sumerian history--and an indomitable energy in translating mythological, religious, and cultural motifs and symbols, into striking and distinctive contemporary art. Her works also bear witness to her fostering of inter-arts connections between silk and enamel, two mediums that seem, at first sight, so utterly distinct. Or maybe not, as my understanding of Len's artwork came to teach me. And, for all these reasons, it is no surprise that as this issue of *Silkworm* goes to press, Len's Collected Works are being celebrated in an exhibition in the *Williams-Insalco Gallery 34* at *The Finger Lakes Community College*, NY until April 20th. First-hand reports confirm that the Opening Reception was packed!

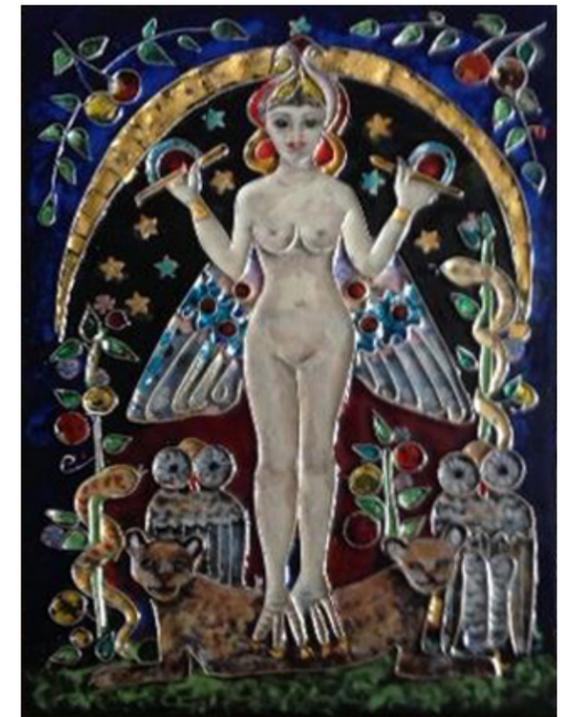
When Len and I talked together, we quickly discovered common threads in our lives since Len and I have each spent formative periods of our lives in Africa: in Len's case, South Africa and then East Africa (in Kenya, Tanganyika--now Tanzania--and Uganda) and in my case, Ghana, in West Africa. As you study the range of Len's artistic work, you may glimpse the influence of her time in Africa through the appearance of animals who would more at home in *The Serengeti National Park* in Tanzania than in New York state. In the enamel below, as you look closely, you find a zebra peeking in, then an amiable-looking leopard, and an elephant sporting elegant finery. But then, a whimsical, winged, and owl-like feline at the bottom of the image sweeps us deeper into a fantasy world and we realize the background teems with protective turquoise-blue amulets to ward off "the Evil Eye." As in many of Len's artworks, reality and fantasy intermingle, past and present jostle each other, and religion and mythology converse.



ENAMEL 1

Len's expert eye adapts and re-purposes techniques from one medium to another. In the enamel below, Len weaves and swirls the cloisonné lines to generate multiple perspectives, and many worlds, within the frame. As a result, we are not quite sure if the zebra peeks in from the same world as the elephant, but we remain intrigued, and look further. This depth, that Len creates through the circular interior frames that intersect and overlap, move the eye around to explore these worlds.

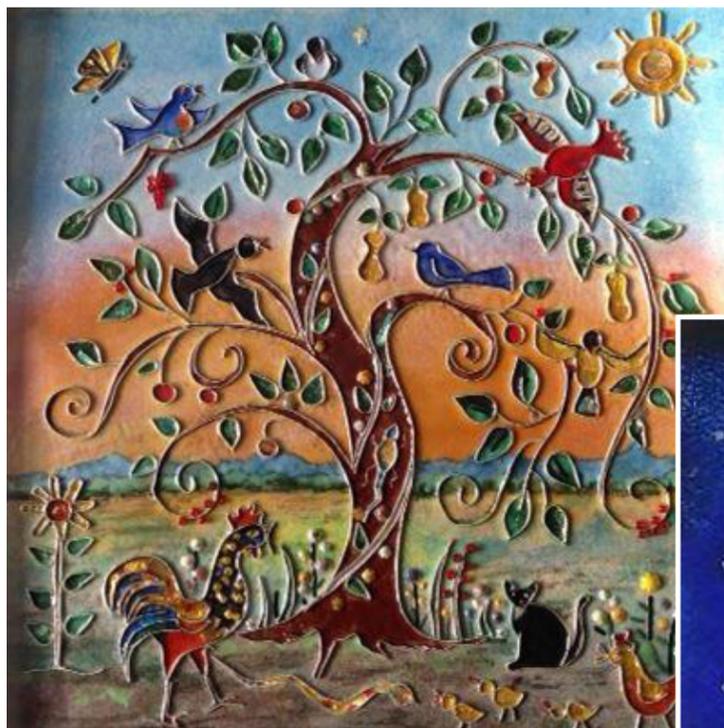
As you see in Len's magnificent and unusual enamels, she adapts the enamel artist's technique of cloisonné to create intricately and lushly dense designs. The term cloisonné comes from the French term, *une cloison*, meaning a partition. The enamel artist lays down the design shapes in thin copper or bronze wire before filling in the shapes with the grains of colored glass that are fired to produce the enamel. Clearly, design and composition are one of the many areas where Len excels. *Cloisonné* originates in the Near East, before spreading through the Byzantine Empire, and then via *The Silk Road*, the technique arrives in China where it takes root from the 14th century onwards. In Len's enamel work, her blend of fantasy and reality takes the viewer's eye on a journey into realities that invariably transcend our earthly ones. And we're grateful for that vision and erudition. Part of this effect stems from her passion for history that emerges as one of the most unusual and distinctive sources of inspiration in her artwork. No doubt, her time living in the United Kingdom gave her opportunities to visit *The British Museum's* collections. Her fascination with Sumerian history finds inspiration in a clay relief panel, *Queen of the Night* (produced in Babylonia, eighteenth to nineteenth centuries B.C., and excavated in present-day South Iraq, Museum # 2003 0718.1). With consummate skill, Len creates her Lilith enamel below.



Indeed, a brief virtual visit of the *British Museum's* online catalog of Sumerian and Babylonian art indicates how profoundly this period shapes Len's artwork. Below is another artefact dating from 2600 – 2400 B.C., a circular greenish-gray chlorite box produced in the area of contemporary Iran, and excavated in Iraq (Museum #128887). The stylized mythological scene depicts a female figure holding two dragon-headed serpents, wide open mouths, and spotted bodies, plus two lions facing away from each other. Intense. Dynamic. Exquisitely decorative and aesthetically balanced in its composition. These qualities are ones we find throughout Len Brondum's artworks.



One of the themes Len revisits in her enamels---due to popular demand, she tells me---is the *Tree of Life*. Just as the first enamel we discussed creates a world of interdependence of all beings, Len's *Tree of Life* motifs foreground interconnectedness and abound with enchanting creatures: cats meet roosters, rabbits talk to owls, and herons and egrets (with brilliantly lustrous plumage) pose alongside tortoises. Although the reproductions do not do justice to the enamels' luster and shimmer or their metallic glints, the mood of exuberant joy in life and in the interdependence of all beings is palpable in her work. Below is one of Len's irresistible enamels of a *Starry Night* with glittering gold stars.



Len's fine mastery of line, the energy that bursts from her tight and intricate line-work, and the profusion of color and life itself, turn out to be one of the common threads linking her enamel art to her silk painting. When you study "Fantasy Flowers," or "Irises," you paintings that teem with an intensity of life and color. Len's silk paintings demonstrate a beauty in form created through Len's skillful composition that integrates balance, symmetry and repetition. Through the balance of an abundance of color and shapes with meticulous attention to composition, Len's silk paintings pull your eye into her worlds. As a result, we explore, and walk into the gardens that she creates, rather than seeing a painted garden. It is also undeniable that these two gardens in both "Fantasy Flowers" and "Irises" have lively and indomitable personalities: the flowers are very busy growing, competing for light, and pushing out fresh blossoms. They are certainly not going to be constrained by a frame, or worry about us. As viewers, we feel privileged to have gained this peek into such explosive and joyful growth that is going to continue whether we, viewers, are there to observe it.



Len's silk paintings have been featured in Diane Tuckman and Jan Janas' two books, *The Complete Book of Silk Painting* (1992), and *The Best of Silk Painting* (1997). Susan Louise Moyer's *Silk Painting for Fashion and Fine Art: Techniques for Making Ties, Scarves, Dresses, Decorative Pillows and Fine Art Paintings* (2004) has also feature Len's work. And the *Surface Design Association's Journal* Volume 20, Issue Number 3, featured Len's artwork.

My own introduction to Len's artwork came, at Len's suggestion, via *Grains of Glass: An (online) Open Studio for Enamel Artists Worldwide*, and I encourage you all to visit the website too.





TEN POUND STUDIO

A Silk Painting Teaching Studio in Gloucester, MA

by Susan Quateman

How does a working studio for amateur and aspiring professional silk artists get off the ground? And what does it take to sustain a studio for a group of silk artists? *Ten Pound Studio*—named after a local island off the coast of the harbor city of Gloucester, MA—was opened in 2010 by Kate Seidman, textile and ceramics artist, together with her therapist and carpenter husband, Mitch Cohen. The studio is located on the top floor of an historic brick building, in a 500 sq. ft. room used variously for printing the *Gloucester Daily Times*, as a dance studio for Ina Hahn and the *Windhover Center for Performing Arts*, and for 25 years for *Artspace*, a local children’s art program. Located in the heart of downtown Gloucester, the studio belongs to a city that has provided inspiration and a living to an eclectic mix of both fishermen and artists through its history. Nineteenth-century marine painter, Fitz Henry Lane, and twentieth-century sculptor, Walker Hancock, are two of Gloucester’s best-known artists. The building itself also has a long history of renting

affordable space to art, sound and dance studios, therapy offices, a restaurant and a boutique of ‘art-inspired’ one-of-a-kind clothing.

A silk painting program at the YMCA, a few doors down Center Street, led by Kate in 2007 served as the incubator for the Studio. Adult silk students shared cramped space with a YMCA day-care program. After one too many instance of silk stretcher frames and brushes unwittingly purloined by day-care workers or their charges, Kate brought the silk painting class to the third floor of One Center St, with its 15’ high ceilings, expanses of window space, and sparkling views of Gloucester Harbor. In that move, *Ten Pound Studio* established a unique volunteer-led silk painting ‘school’ for adult students. Sadly, shortly after starting the Studio, Mitch suddenly passed away. Tragedy forced big changes. Together with Candace Wheeler, who shares my professional history of city and environmental planning, our friendship with Kate motivated us to serve as volunteer Studio Administrators in order to keep the Studio alive. Then, good fortune meant that a recently retired artist/musician who had moved to Cape Ann, Stephen Bates, volunteered to become the silk painting teacher.

Eight years later, as I look back on the turbulent beginning of *Ten Pound Studio*, I have enormous pride in our collaborative creation and maintenance of this silk painting teaching Studio. From my participation in two SPIN Festivals in Santa Fe, I understand that many silk painters without a *SPIN Silk Guild* or Chapter in their area, work in isolation in their own studios, kitchens or dining rooms, only meeting other silk painters at the bi-annual SPIN Festival, crafts fairs, galleries, classes or SPIN group events. At *Ten Pound Studio* we now have 10 – 12 committed adult silk painting students/artists, working on large studio tables, sharing a steamer, with shelf spaces for their supplies. Stephen, who first worked with silk dying in 1966, provides unique art instruction and inspiration, drawing in part on his experiences as a professional clarinetist with the *Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra* in DC. His ‘synesthesia’ (he hears music and then sees colors and shapes in space) is a sensory response he shares with musicians from Frantz Liszt to Duke Ellington, and one that lends an unusual artistic perspective to his instruction. As a teacher, he complements this with his wide-ranging art history knowledge from many visits and talks with the former curator of *The Phillips Collection* in Washington D.C., a collection housing over 4000 artworks by modernist and contemporary artists.



LEE STEELE



Stephen commented: “The desire to paint on silk is the driving force for all the participants of *Ten Pound Studio*. The studio is made up mostly of middle-aged people which means that members have rich life experience which they call upon. I have found that it is best to encourage a direction stylistically toward which each is leaning. This way my role is to offer some technique, as well as offering artistic perspective by showing examples of the work of great artists that I have studied all my life. Now in retirement, I am delighted to be able to play a role in the life of artists on silk.

I am astounded by the results of the work of our silk painters, which is a testament to their courage, skill, experimentation and sheer joy that all have shown in this endeavor. There is also a personal openness that I think has been enhanced by the atmosphere of creativity in the space.”

Each artist member of *Ten Pound Studio* pays a small monthly fee of \$125 that goes towards the rental of the space, basic supplies including *Synthrapol* and butcher block paper used for steaming. No one has dedicated workspace, however. Members must be prepared to be very flexible, considerate and kind with one another, as well as open to teaching new skills to fellow members. Territoriality—artistic, intellectual or space—just does not work within our structure. As a result, we have created a special artist community of silk painters, who have found us after a variety of careers, including nursing, speech therapy, city planning and administration. One of our members is Lee Steele, a 92-year-old former member of the *Folly Cove Designers*, an important Gloucester-based group of textile block designers and printers, now exhibited at the Cape Ann Museum in Gloucester. She delights in the creative freedom offered by silk painting after decades of tightly designed and executed block printing.



FOLLY COVE BLOCK AND PRINTS



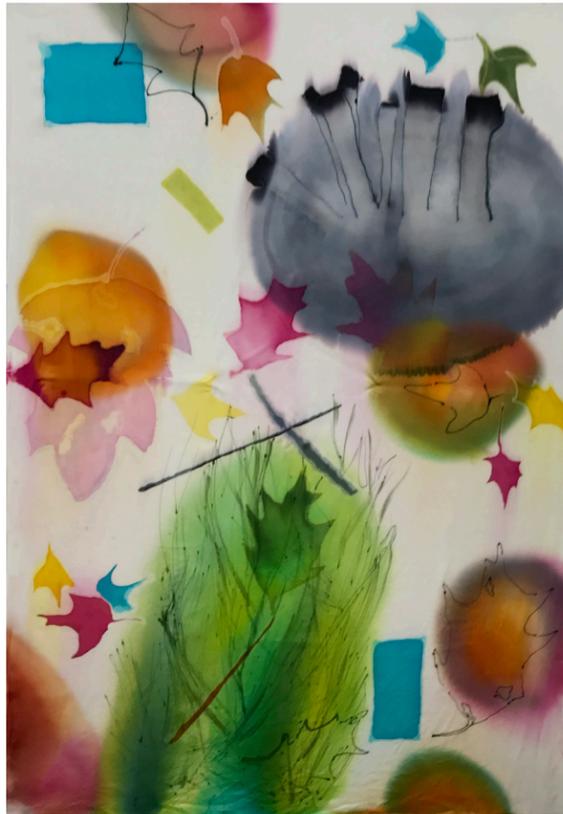
Another voice is Candace Wheeler’s, financial whiz of the studio, and 2010 founding co-Administrator:

“I grew up surrounded by wonderful textiles designed more than a century ago by my grandmother’s Aunt, Candace Wheeler (after whom I was named,) so it felt like coming home to start painting textiles at *Ten Pound Studio*. For me, the best part of the experience is seeing and learning from the varied approaches to silk painting around the room, as I conjure up my own visions to try. Experimenting is welcome at *Ten Pound Studio*, and each painter’s unique “voice” is truly appreciated.”

We are open for silk painting classes on Tuesday and Wednesdays, from 10:30 am to 2 pm. Outside of these hours, we encourage other artists to teach classes on drawing, painting, printing, and silk painting techniques including indigo dyeing. These classes are often open to the community outside *Ten Pound Studio*. In the past we have scheduled free artist talks in the Studio with local artist friends. Our goal is to build a caring, artist community of silk painters who can learn from one another and from artists working in other mediums such as oils, acrylics, and watercolor among others. Some of us have become ‘professional’ silk painters, with shows in local galleries, while others make wearable art for friends and family. My own work is focused on environmental themes, usually around climate change, while collaborating with a local photographer, Les Bartlett. The important aspect is that we all treat both professional and amateur approaches to the work within *Ten Pound Studio* equally respectfully. I think it helps that we are no longer in our twenties and just starting out!

TEN POUND STUDIO

The silk work in the Studio is as varied as the artists. Some artists are very careful with their resist work and create scarves of astonishing exactitude. Others are loose, abstract and experimental. Some revel in employing multi-media techniques, marrying silk-screen printing (using colored resist or alginates as the silk paints) with painterly brush application of silk dyes. Some are mostly drawn to painting flowers; others are drawn to compositions of geometry and patterns. Some artists have a commercial agenda, while others have no thoughts of commerce or marketing. Some work huge, covering two tables with silk; others work on 11" X 14" *babotai* scarves. All approaches are respected, with the understanding that no one 'owns' table space.



Frozen Mill Pond, Estabrook Woods, Lincoln, MA

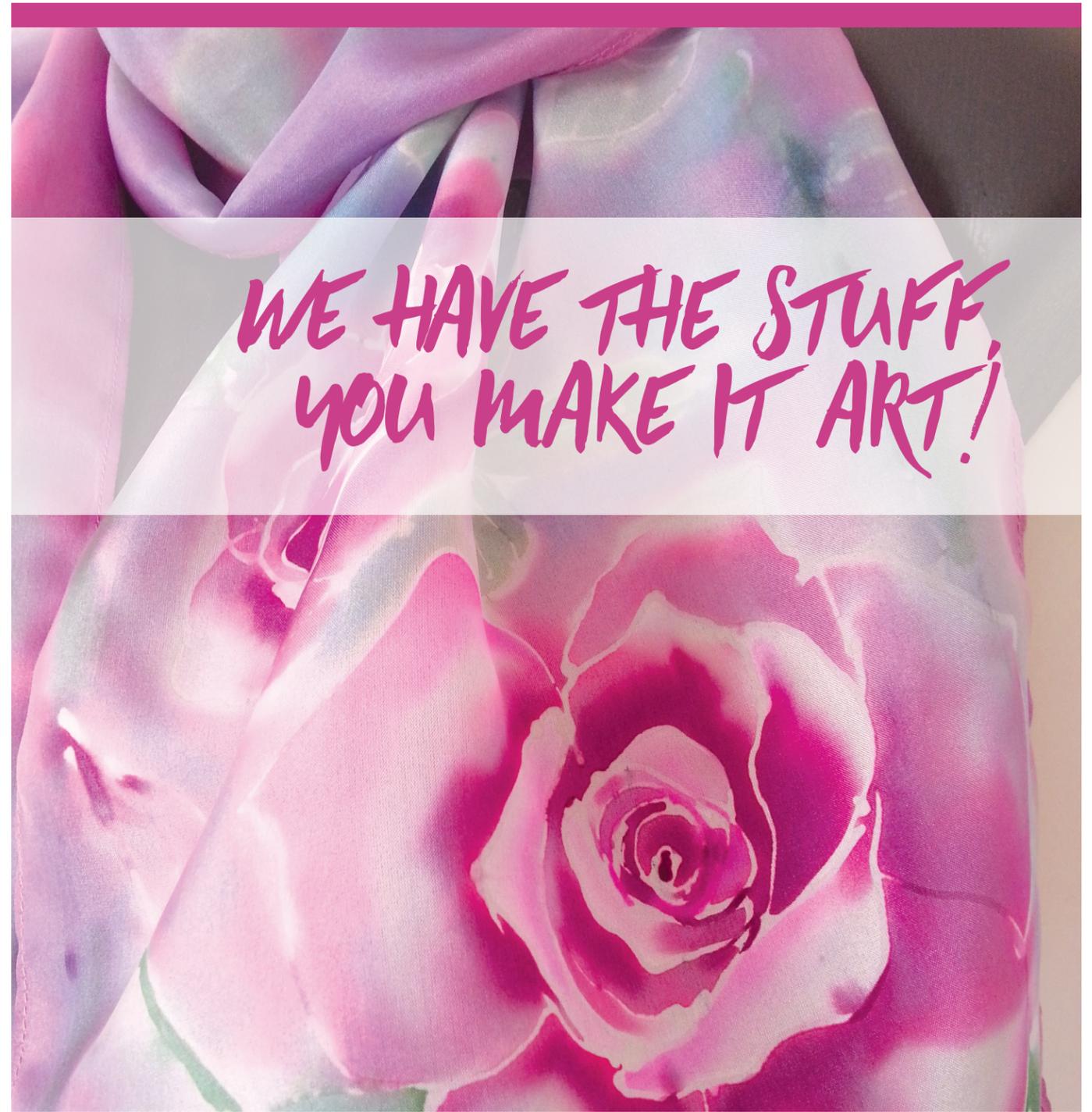


Ghost of Thoreau

Chris Kelly, a silk artist who has exhibited at *SPIN* explains her approach: "Silk painting has freed me as an artist. I love this most unpredictable art form. Every piece is an experience that only improves by letting the piece lead me as it creates itself. My work is about openness, expansion, movement, and it reflects our fabulous studio in which we work."

So far this Studio philosophy of letting people flourish as individual artists has generally worked well. Our members have been with us for between 3 – 10 years, and, as of time of writing, appear committed to maintaining this silk artist community. One of our newest artists commented: "As a retired teacher, creating a supportive and positive classroom community has always been important to me. From the moment I walked into *Ten Pound Studio*, I could feel that the sense of community is the basis of the culture there. The atmosphere is one of kind and open support as we all explore a variety of techniques and expressions. We are constantly learning from one another.

I soon learned how rare it was to have a community of silk painters under one roof. Most silk artists work in isolation. I feel so fortunate to have found such a community so close to my home and heart."



WE HAVE THE STUFF,
YOU MAKE IT ART!



Dharma Trading Co.

FIBER ART SUPPLIES & CLOTHING BLANKS SINCE 1969

www.dharmatrading.com

(800) 542-5227

Dharma Trading Co. is your one stop shop for all of your silk art needs. We are the nation's largest supplier of blank silk and offer hundreds of styles of silk scarves. We stock a full line of dyes, a massive selection of silk painting supplies for every project, and provide top notch support every step of the way.

FEATURED ARTIST: KAY SUTHERLEY

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES: Photo Silk-Screen *by Jane Keddy*

I was introduced to silk painting through a chance encounter while gallery sitting at the *Rocky Neck Cultural Center* in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Susan Quateman came to view *Rocky Neck Now*, the Spring members' exhibition, where one of my silkscreen prints was on display. We got to talking about our interests, and agreed to barter our knowledge: hers in silk painting and mine in silkscreening. Thus began a mutually beneficial partnership and friendship.



Art Sanctuary, Autumn by Jane Keddy

As a result, I joined the group at *Ten Pound Studio*, a light-filled space with distant views of Gloucester harbor, to learn the skills and techniques of silk painting. I was immediately entranced with the luminescence of the colors and the fluidity of the dyes as they migrated across the silk. This new method freed up my creative expression and allowed me to step out of the more rigid parameters of screen printing. I had originally started my journey into creative expression with batik back in the 1970s. Then, a desire to expand my knowledge of the textile arts led me to explore block printing and then screen printing. And now---although a detour into printmaking on paper took me away from textiles for a while---I have returned to my true passion with textiles.

Screen printing offers the advantages of controlling and repeating a design while experimenting with various colorways. You can achieve such interesting effects on silk by using the same screen with different colors of dye/printing inks, overprinting and layering the design. At *Ten Pound Studio*, we have explored hand-cut stencils (paper and lacquer film), the block-out method and photo-silkscreen. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages, as I'll outline below.

CUT-PAPER AND LACQUER FILM STENCILS

The simplest method is to use a cut-paper (or contact paper) stencil. Once you position the stencil on the back of the screen, printing can begin. This offers a quick setup---a great advantage---but of course is only temporary. When you finish printing, you need to discard the stencil, and clean the screen. Stencils created with lacquer film are more durable. Lacquer film consists of a thin layer of lacquer on an acetate backing (*Ulano 535* is the brand I use). The lacquer is cut away from the backing using an X-acto knife and then the stencil is adhered to the back side of the screen using lacquer thinner. You need to do this in a well-ventilated space! A lacquer stencil is similar to a cut-paper stencil, but presents that advantage of remaining permanently

affixed to the screen. As a result, this type of stencil will last for unlimited impressions. When done printing, you wash the ink from the screen but the stencil remains. Finally, if you want reclaim the screen by removing the stencil, you'll need to dissolve the stencil with lacquer thinner.

PHOTO-SILK SCREEN

The most recent technique I've been teaching is photo-silk-screen. First, the screen is coated with a light-sensitive emulsion (*Ulano* or *Speedball* are common brands) and then must be dried in the dark. At the studio we improvised, and constructed a mini darkroom in the darkest area of the space by covering a bookcase with a blanket. A professional darkroom is not necessary! Next, you create a film positive using transparency film that you can print with your home computer. To be effective, the photo and then the transparency must be a solid black and white image with sharp contrasts, and as few grays as possible. *Photoshop* is a very helpful tool for creating a film positive from a photograph, but you can also draw or paint directly on the transparency with opaque black ink or a *Sharpie*.



Original Photo



Film Positive

Once you create the transparency, tape it to the back side of the dried screen where a light is used to expose the image onto the screen. We use a 250 watt photo-flood bulb in a clip-on

lamp, positioned 12 inches from the screen and exposed for 10 minutes. All the black areas will remain unexposed whereas the light will expose the clear areas. Then, when you wash the screen with warm water, the unexposed parts will wash out, creating the stencil.



COATING THE SCREEN



EXPOSING THE SCREEN

With the photo stencil on the screen, you are ready to print. If printing on cotton, you can use water-based textile printing inks (most often used for printing T-shirts) from suppliers such as *Speedball* or *Dick Blick*. These inks are semi-opaque and sit on the surface of the fabrics. They are also pre-mixed, and ready to use out of the jar. Because they sit on the surface, rather than penetrating the fibers, they tend to be a little stiff on the fabric when dry. However, the fabric does soften up with washing. The finished products must be heat-set using either by an iron or in the dryer on high for 30 minutes.



If printing on silk, you can proceed in two different ways: either, you can print with a clear print paste (using a sodium alginate-based paste, *Jacquard* resist or *Resistad*); or you can add color to the print paste using a brand of Procion dye or liquid silk dyes. Either way, after the printed resist has dried, you can paint around and in the image with silk dyes. You will need to steam these items to set the dye and rinse them to remove the resist, but the final fabric will have a very soft hand.

The advantages of adding the silkscreen techniques to your toolbox are many. They open up the possibility of re-working and re-interpreting designs multiple times. Once you make the screen, if properly cared for, it will last for hundreds of impressions. Integrating silkscreen techniques also allows you to add photographic images to your textiles, and to enhance the depth and complexity of designs through the layering. Finally, these techniques also enable the printing of yardage that you can then make into garments and decorative items for the home. Incorporating such techniques into the silk painting process will open up avenues of expression thus far untapped and broaden your creative skills.



GHOST OF THOREAU

by Susan Quateman

SILKWORM

www.silkpainters.org

SILKWORM (ISSN 2162-8505) is the quarterly magazine of SPIN -- Silk Painters International -- a nonprofit organization of silk artists, painters, practitioners, and educators. SPIN provides its members opportunities to network with kindred spirits and to grow through workshops, conferences, juried competitions, and gallery exhibitions. Material contained in The Silkworm belongs exclusively to The Silkworm and/or the artist. Do not reprint without written permission.

P.O. Box 585, Eastpoint, FL 32328, USA