



# View from the Fringe

Newsletter of the New England Rug Society



Vol. 21 No. 1 September 2013

[www.ne-rugsociety.org](http://www.ne-rugsociety.org)

## September 6 Meeting: Walter Denny on Carpets in New Museum Galleries

Record auction prices notwithstanding, carpets in the world's great museum collections often face an uncertain future as times and fashions change. New Islamic museums and museum galleries provide both opportunities and challenges for the display of Islamic carpets. In an illustrated presentation, "Islamic Carpets and New Museums of Islamic Art: What's Happening?" Walter B. Denny will discuss the role of carpets in the recently reconstructed Islamic galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the display of carpets in other newly opened museum galleries in Paris, London, and Doha, and future prospects for scholarship on carpets in these and other collections.

Walter is Professor of Art History at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He also serves as Charles

Grant Ellis Research Associate in Oriental Carpets at the Textile Museum, and as Marshall and Marilyn Wolf Senior Consultant in the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum, where he spent much of the last six years doing research in Islamic carpets and textiles and preparing for the reopening of the Islamic galleries in October 2011. He has just completed a new catalog of the Ballard Collection in the St. Louis Art Museum and is finishing a volume, to be entitled *Reading Islamic Carpets*, for the Metropolitan. He received the George Hewitt Myers Award from the Textile Museum in 2012 and currently holds a Samuel F. Conti Faculty Fellowship for research at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.



**Walter Denny examines the sixteenth-century "Anhalt" Safavid carpet in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.**

### September 6 Meeting Details

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Place:** First Parish, Bedford Road, Lincoln

**Directions:**

*From Rt. 95 (128), take exit 28B, Trapelo Road West.*

*Proceed west about 2.5 miles to a stop sign at the five-way intersection in Lincoln (there's a white planter in the middle of the intersection). Go right on Bedford Road for 0.1 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on the right. First Parish is on your left.*

*From Rt. 2, take Bedford Road, Lincoln Center exit*

*(eastbound, turn right at the light; westbound, go through light, turn right, and circle 270° to cross Rt. 2 at the light). Proceed 0.9 mile to Bemis Hall, a large brick building on your left. First Parish is on your right.*

**Parking:**

*Park in the lot behind the parish house, along the street, or in front of Bemis Hall if that building is dark and not in use.*

## October 4 Meeting: Lawrence Kearney on Art Deco and Modernist Hooked Rugs



### Deco hooked rug

At our October 4 meeting, Lawrence Kearney, an NERS member and frequent speaker (see pp. 4–6), will explore a novel textile topic. His subject is the wonderfully appealing, literally homemade American hooked rugs of the 1920s through '60s that draw their inspiration from fine and decorative arts of the period, as well as from an eclectic mix of older textiles, including American quilts, coverlets, and oriental and Navaho rugs. In presenting the cultural and aesthetic context of these rugs, Lawrence will categorize their varied designs as Deco, “hybrid” Deco, and Modernist, and will illustrate his principles of classification with images and many actual examples from his own collection

An award-winning poet, Lawrence is now a full-time dealer of antique carpets and textiles, an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design, and the author of numerous articles for *Oriental Rug Review* and *HALL*.

### October 4 Meeting Details

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

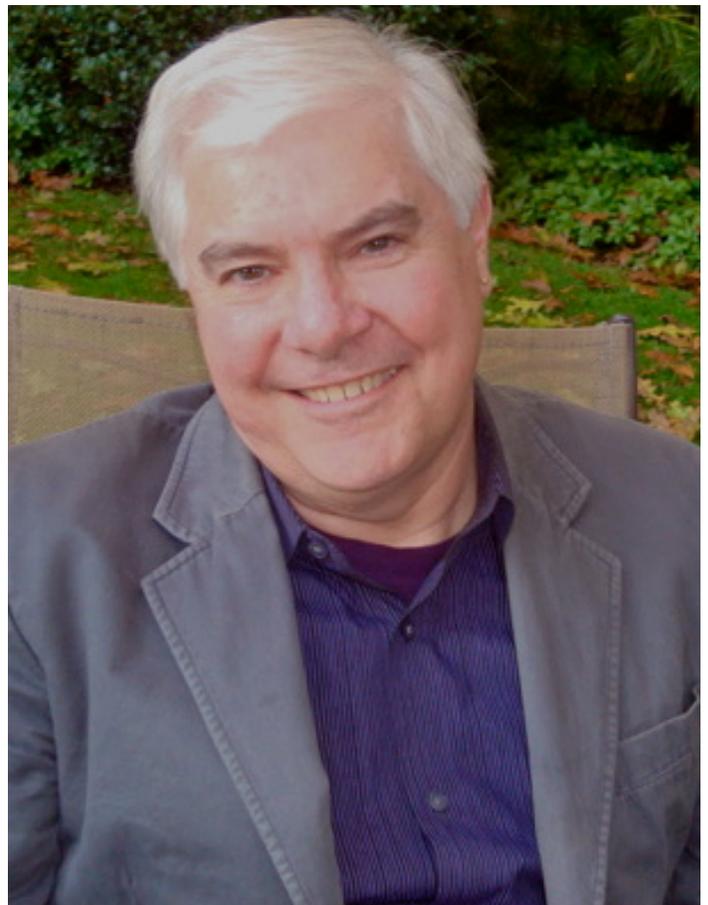
**Place:** Armenian Library and Museum of America  
65 Main Street, Watertown

**Directions:**

Go to Watertown Square. (Out-of-towners, get off the Mass Pike at exit 17 and follow the signs.) Take Main Street (Rt. 20) westbound (left turn if coming from the Pike). Church Street is at the first traffic light, and the museum building is on the right-hand corner.

**Parking:**

Turn right on Church Street and enter the municipal lot on the right. Most meters are free after 6 p.m., but check to make sure!



**Lawrence Kearney**

## Please Take Note: New System for Refreshments!

For many years Lloyd Kannenberg and Gillian Richardson have provided refreshments for our meetings. Gillian has now retired from this role, and Lloyd is about to. Our thanks to both of them for their splendid job! In light of their departures, the Steering Committee has decided to adopt a refreshment system used by many other rug societies.

- NERS will provide coffee, water, plates, cups, and napkins.
- Members are asked to bring a snack, such as cake, cookies, fruit, or cheese, that can be eaten as finger food. It should be (1) on

a plate, (2) accompanied by any necessary serving utensil, and (3) ready to serve. Snack providers should arrive by 6:45 to help set up, and should stay to help clean up after the meeting, taking any leftovers home. The schedule for bringing snacks is:

- **September 6: Steering Committee members**
- **October 4: members with last names beginning A–G**
- **November 15: members with last names beginning H–P**
- **February meeting: members with last names beginning R–W**

## NERS Co-Chair Report for the 2012–13 Season

### Leadership

Ann Nicholas and Julia Bailey have completed their third season as co-chairs of NERS. Ann's major roles are managing the speaker program and arranging meeting venues. Julia edits and produces the newsletter and runs meetings. Other Steering Committee members who keep NERS going are Lloyd Kannenberg and Louise Dohanian, who have provided refreshments (but see the new food-and-beverage plans, above); Lloyd and Joel Greifinger, who with Rich Blumenthal handle the AV equipment; Jim Sampson, who manages our membership rolls and distributes newsletters and other announcements; Bob Alimi, our webmaster; newsletter writer Jim Adelson, who ably reports on speaker presentations; and other regular or occasional newsletter contributors Jeff Spurr and Ann. Jeff posts upcoming meetings on [www.rugrabbit.com](http://www.rugrabbit.com) and together with Jim Sampson produced a new brochure to publicize NERS. Also with Jim Sampson, Joel Greifinger devised, implemented, and tallied a member survey. Yon Bard has continued as Steering Committee advisor and photographer at meetings. Richard Larkin has just joined our ranks, and we welcome him.

### Meetings and speakers, 2012–13

In response to members' interests, the past season's meetings focused on rugs and textiles from the "rug belt." In September, at First Parish, Lincoln, David and Sue Richardson opened the season with a knowledgeable survey of textiles and rugs used in the construction and decoration of the Qaraqalpaq yurt. At the October meeting, at ALMA, Watertown, Jon Thompson hypothesized on the origin of Mamluk carpets. In November, at John Collins's Newburyport gallery, Ann Nicholas convened a panel of three NERS members—Ed Berkoff, Lloyd Kannenberg, and Richard Larkin—to discuss and display examples from their collections. DeWitt Mallary addressed the complexities of Baluch classification at First Parish in early March; later in the month, at the same venue, Sally Sherrill illustrated her lecture on Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i weaving with her own photos and documentation from the 1970s. In April, the ever-popular "Night at the MFA" featured superb rugs from the Caucasus

and beyond, collected by NERS members Rosalie and Mitch Rudnick and presented by Lawrence Kearney. Our May picnic, at Gore Place, Waltham, concluded the season with a moth mart and a lively post-lunch auction and show-and-tell (see pp. 8–9).

### Finances and Membership

Our finances have remained sound; we again ended the season with a budget surplus, due to the generosity of local speakers and meeting hosts and to Gillian Richardson's donation of rugs, textiles, and periodicals to benefit NERS. In contrast to past seasons, total NERS membership increased—from 124 to 131—and we welcomed fifteen new members. We continue to be one of the largest and most active American rug societies. True to our name, the majority of our members hail from New England (with every state represented). But a few of us are from further away: New York (2), Florida (2), Indiana (1), Illinois (1), and Texas (1), plus an international member from Austria.

Special acknowledgment is due to our Supporting and Patron members, whose "above and beyond" generosity has helped maintain our financial health. Supporting members for 2012–13 are **John Cliff, Doug Currie, Jeremy and Hanne Grantham, Gail Homer, Phillip and Sharon Lichtman, Barbara and Ken Matheson, Ann Nicholas and Richard Blumenthal, Gillian Richardson, Tim and Nina Rose, Klaudia Shepard, and Steve and Harmony Sponberg**. Patron members, who support NERS at the highest level, are **Jim Adelson and Debbie Sheetz, Doug and Julia Bailey, Richard Belkin, John Collins, Louise and Armen (Buzz) Dohanian, Michael and Nancy Grogan, Lloyd and Susan Kannenberg, Lena and Charles Nargozian, Rosalie and Mitch Rudnick, Beau Ryan, and Alan Varteresian**. Thank you all.

In conclusion, we the co-chairs extend to every NERS member our warm thanks for your support during the past season. We hope that, in the forthcoming months, you'll continue to offer the encouragement, enthusiasm, and constructive ideas so necessary in keeping our society vital and rewarding.

*Julia Bailey and Ann Nicholas*

# April Meeting Review: A Night at the MFA, with Rugs from the Rudnick Collection



## 1. MFA lenders Rosalie and Mitch Rudnick

First, a disclaimer: I am no Jim Adelson. For many years now, Jim has sat in the front row of our meetings, studiously taking notes for the newsletter reviews, which have received numerous compliments for their informative thoroughness. Alas, Jim could not attend our April 12 meeting at the Museum of Fine Arts. I was drafted to write the article and soon realized it isn't as easy as Jim makes it seem to listen to the speaker and admire splendid rugs while writing copious notes.

The April meeting combined the annual "Night at the MFA" with our Collector Series by celebrating the Caucasian rug collection of NERS founders Mitch and Rosalie Rudnick (1). It began with a wine-and-edibles reception in the Upper Colonnade Gallery of the Upper Rotunda, where thirty-foot neoclassical columns and ceiling paintings by John Singer Sargent provided an imposing setting for the current MFA



## 2. Lawrence Kearney begins his commentary.

exhibition, "Caucasian Rugs from the Rudnick Collection." Nearly a hundred attendees, including a number from out of state, enjoyed talking with fellow rug enthusiasts and admiring the Rudnicks' carpets.

The rugs on exhibition were selected by NERS member Lauren Whitley, a curator in the MFA's Department of Textiles and Fashion Arts. "It was difficult to choose only six," Lauren explained. "In the end I picked pieces that I hoped would provide an introduction to the beauty of Caucasian carpets while reflecting the taste and vision of the Rudnicks." The clear colors, wonderful wool quality, and striking designs of the three Kazak pieces, two Moghans, and a Kuba prayer rug were a joy to behold.

After the wine and socializing, Lawrence Kearney (2) explained that the Rudnicks began collecting twenty-nine years ago, when a water pipe burst in their suburban home and ruined the wall-to-wall carpeting. Rosalie decided to replace the broadloom with an oriental carpet. "Isn't that wonderful?" Lawrence mused, "The impulse for forming one of the great rug collections in this country began for the most mundane of reasons: they had a plumbing problem and needed to put something new on the floor."

Lawrence then led us through the exhibition, discussing each piece in his usual poetic style. I was soon enthralled with the rugs' commanding presence, Lawrence's lyrical descriptions, Mitch's tales of acquiring them, and the grand Beaux Arts-style setting in which they hung, but writing things down became the farthestmost thing in my mind. I therefore offer special thanks to Lawrence for providing his speaking notes!



## 3. Lauren Whitley is delighted by a Shabsavan bagface.

A stunning star Kazak featured large deep-blue eight-pointed stars and bright red latchhook medallions. The spacious white background, Lawrence pointed out, allowed these emphatic design elements “to breathe within an envelope of space.”

A Kazak medallion carpet with architectural and figural elements, including fancy peacocks, birds in trees, and stylized fish, was “full of barbaric splendor.”

A Kazak prayer rug, one of the best-known carpets in the collection (see *Collector’s Eye*, cat. 14), had sublime colors; in print, Lawrence once described its red field as a “luminous, deep watermelon red...intense and clear and mellow, all at the same time.” Confessing to us that it was one of his favorite rugs in the whole world, he said, “It just makes me smile.”

The finely knotted Kuba prayer rug, dated 1860, had a green mihrab surrounded by “little stick-figure trees” with an ivory field full of repeating, multicolored hooked diamonds. One Moghan long carpet displayed a masterful balance of geometric shapes in vibrant colors on a golden-



4. Fragmentary South Caucasian gallery-carpet

yellow field. Lawrence reminded us, “There are only three things you need to know about Caucasian rugs—color, color, color. And this carpet certainly embodies that.”

The weaver of the other Moghan long carpet had made more sublime color choices, using a “watercolor palette” for the large-scale “Memling gul” design that floated on an ivory field.

After viewing the six carpets in the exhibition, we moved to the spacious Riley Seminar Room to see ten more stellar Rudnick pieces, chosen by Lawrence and Julia Bailey. There was a Shahsavan soumak bagface with fabulous deep colors covered with a “parade of heraldic birds and dragon-like beasts” (3); a classical Marasali prayer rug with brilliantly colored *botehs* on a midnight-blue background, “a wonderful combination of austerity and whimsy”; and a positively hypnotic eighteenth-century South Caucasian gallery-carpet fragment with a simple camel-colored field and a large-scale trefoil border, “the epitome of artistic restraint” (4).

More great carpets appeared: a gold-field prayer rug, perhaps of Turkish origin (*Collector’s Eye*, cat. 15); a striped Caucasian prayer rug “packed with sweet idiosyncrasies”; a Kazak with a bold, geometricized medallion; a red-field Karabagh prayer rug, dated 1833, with glossy wool and precise drawing; and a white-field, blue-medallion Kuba that “packed an extraordinary amount of power in a small space” (5).



5. White-field Kuba

People began to edge forward in their seats. Had they become bored with this abundance of great rugs? The two final pieces were a long, narrow, red-field Talish and a bold Gendje with a navy field. Then Lawrence concluded, "There is more to the collection we celebrated this evening than just great colors, striking designs, and fabulous wool quality. It has coherence, scope, soulfulness, and moments of real magic that is both palpable and hard to define. Creating a collection of great rugs is an artistic endeavor, and the Rudnick collection is among the best, reflecting their talent and devotion and good fortune." After he finished, it became quite clear that people weren't bored in the least; they were positioning themselves to leap over to the table of rugs (6). They couldn't wait to touch, examine, and admire these extraordinary pieces for themselves!

Ann Nicholas

*Author's note:* For more about the Rudnicks and their collection, see:

"Profile: Mitch and Rosalie Rudnick," by NERS member Carl Strock, *HAL* 125 (2002): 173.

"Caucasian Rugs from the Rudnick Collection: a Kind of Meta-Art," by Lawrence Kearney, *HAL* 152 (2007): 62–71.

"Six of the Best," exhibition review by Ann Nicholas, *HAL* 175 (2013): 114–15.

*Through the Collector's Eye: Oriental Rugs from New England Private Collections*, by Julia Bailey and Mark Hopkins (1991): cats. 14–21, 23, 25, 26.



**6. What they were waiting for: attendees enjoy a close look at the Rudnick carpets brought in for the evening.**

## Rug and Textile Events

### Auctions of rugs and related arts

Dedham: Oct. 13, Grogan, October Sale

London: Oct. 8, Christie's, Oriental Rugs & Carpets

Oct. 8, Bohnam's, Islamic & Indian Art

Oct. 9, Sotheby's, Arts of the Islamic World

Oct. 10, Christie's, Arts of Indian & Islamic World

Oct. 11, Christie's So. Ken., Islamic & Indian Art and  
Textiles

Philadelphia: Sept. 1, Material Culture, Antique, Decorative &  
Tribal Carpets

Oct. 9, Freeman's, Oriental Rugs & Carpets

Oct. 20, Material Culture, Antique Carpets,  
Textiles & Ethnographic Art

Vienna, Sept. 24, Dorotheum, Oriental Carpets, Textiles

Wiesbaden, Sept. 28, Rippon Boswell, General Carpet Sale

### Current exhibitions

Boston, MFA: "Caucasian Rugs from the Rudnick Collection,"  
to Nov. (see pp. 4–6)

Boston, MFA: "Hippie Chic," through Nov. 11 (see pp. 10–13)

Washington, DC, Sackler and Freer Galleries: "Nomads and  
Networks: Ancient Arts of Kazakhstan,"  
through Nov. 12

### Fairs

New York: Oct. 6–8, International Carpet Show, Metropolitan  
Pavilion

New York: Oct. 25–31, International Fine Art & Antique  
Dealers Show, Park Avenue Armory

San Francisco: Oct. 17–20, Antique Rug & Textile Show,  
Motel Capri

## A Flying Carpet at Sotheby's

A knotted-pile carpet now holds the record as the most expensive item of Islamic art ever sold at auction. A smallish (8' 9" x 6' 5") vase-technique carpet, made in seventeenth-century Iran (probably in Kirman) and known as the Clark sickle-leaf rug, realized a whopping \$30 million (\$33,765,000 with buyer's premium) at a June 5 sale at Sotheby's, New York. The auction also included twenty-four other antique carpets, likewise consigned by the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC. All had been bequeathed to the gallery by Montana copper baron and U.S. senator William A. Clark (1839–1925). The buyer of the sickle-leaf rug is purportedly the new Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar.

Why was this particular rug so hotly contested? Its condition and rarity of course helped, and its modest size, perfect for wall display, didn't hurt. Provenance figured in: Clark's carpets have long been esteemed by scholars and collectors of antique rugs, even if the Corcoran, whose main focus is American painting, hardly ever exhibited them. But the deciding factor was surely that thrilling union of splendid color and inventive design—with a trace of disquieting imbalance thrown in—that constitutes carpet beauty.

Mercifully, over the years the Corcoran was willing to lend the sickle-leaf rug to carpet-friendly venues (including the Hayward Gallery, London, where the stellar exhibition "The Eastern Carpet in the Western World" was the highlight of the 1983 ICOC).

In 2003, as guest curator of "The World at Our Feet: A Selection of Carpets from the Corcoran Gallery of Art," at Washington's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, I myself got to befriend the sickle-leaf rug and write an exhibition label for it—which, by Sackler fiat, had to be short and not too effusive. I'm quoting from that label here, as tribute and valedictory:

Brilliant palmettes ascend this rug or bend in the swirling embrace of long, curved leaves. Glimpsed through the exhilarating thicket are gentler flowering shrubs and trees, some of them growing upwards and others inverted. Two cypresses, for example, dangle vertiginously when the rug is displayed pile downwards. Scholars have proposed that the pattern used to weave the rug was meant to be doubled, yielding a longer carpet with three center medallions (seen halved at the top of the field) and two more cypress trees growing upward...Among vase carpets, this rug is drafted with marvelous fluidity. In his *Survey of Persian Art*, Arthur Upham Pope praised it with understandable enthusiasm for its "symphonic splendor" and "magical potency."

*Julia Bailey*



**The Clark sickle-leaf rug, Iran (probably Kirman), 17th century. Sold at Sotheby's, New York, for \$30 million plus buyer's premium.**

### Future NERS Meetings

- November 15, Durant-Kenrick House, Newton: **Koos de Young, "Saddle Rugs from China and Beyond"** (New meeting place!—directions in the November *View*.)
- February, date and place TBA: **Michael Grogan, "Twenty-Five Years in Oriental Rugs"**

### Photo Credits

p. 1, Walter Denny; p. 2, Lawrence Kearney; pp. 4–6, Yon Bard; p. 7, Julia Bailey; pp. 8–9, Jim Sampson (figs. 1, 2, 7, 10) and Yon Bard (figs. 3–6, 8–9, 11); pp. 10–12, MFA, Boston; p. 13, Monique Lehner.

## May Meeting: Annual Picnic

About thirty-five members and guests attended the May 19 NERS picnic, again held on the grounds of Gore Place, Waltham. Noting that Canada geese had left unwelcome evidence of their presence on the grass of our customary space, we moved activities closer to the parking area, under large trees whose cooling shade was initially welcome. But as clouds rolled in and the temperature rapidly dropped,

attendees donned sweaters and coats for the post-lunch program. Despite these setbacks, the moth mart attracted the usual attention **(1)**, the six rugs and textiles consigned by Gillian Richardson sold to enthusiastic bidders **(2)**, and the quality of show-and-tell pieces **(e.g., 3–11)** was high, keeping shivering diehards in their seats until the last item was held up.



**1. Members mull offerings at the moth mart.**



**2. Auctioneer Julia exhorts bids on a French shawl end.**



**3. Kuba pile rug**



**4. Afshar pile *khorjin* face**



**5. Kirman pile "vase carpet" fragment**



6. Shavsavan soumak *mafrash* (bedding-bag) panel



7. Altai Kazakh embroidered panel

8. Baluch pile *khorjin* face



8

9. Mahal *wagireh*



9

10. Georgian embroidered dress, ca. 1920

11. Chodor pile *chuval* face



10



11

## Other than Carpets: “Hippie Chic” at the MFA



### 1. “Trippy Hippie”: Chariot Cosmic Couture’s tunic dress.

NERS member Lauren Whitley has curated “Hippie Chic,” a wonderful new fashion show at the MFA. Given the mean demographic of our membership, I imagine most of us can remember the cultural revolution and confrontational politics of the later 1960s, whether or not we were actual participants in the movements of those heady days. I was an eighteen-year-old entering college in 1966. It so happens that that and the year following marked the threshold for many of these profound changes. For example, Jefferson Airplane’s *Surrealistic Pillow* debuted in early 1967. Though it featured one of the last of the bland covers, the music was anything but, vividly capturing the cultural moment, particularly with “White Rabbit.” The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released that June, just as we were finishing finals. I, and everyone I knew, went totally apeshit over it; each had to have an album. I brought mine directly home, to the acute alarm of my parents. On its heels came Jimi Hendrix’s incomparable *Are You Experienced*. The covers of both albums—especially the latter with its neo-Art Nouveau style combined with Fauve colors—reflected the new visual expressiveness of the era. Together with long hair, flowing garments went perfectly with disporting oneself in grassy parks, and with dancing to strobe lights and light shows that one would see not just at the Fillmore but also at local dance venues. Granny dresses, bell bottoms—many custom made at home from jeans with added gussets and hand embroidery—fringed jackets (soft suede vastly preferred over regular leather), tie-dyed shirts and other garments, whether made by more artistic friends or bought



### 2. For “trippy” men: John Pearse’s jacket and velvet suit.

from local vendors: these clothes seemed generally to express the new assertion of personal freedom of the era. Men’s shirts either had amazing collars, or, like the colorful “Nehru” jackets popularized by the Beatles, scarcely any. My hair ended up halfway down my back, but I tended to dress relatively soberly (even if I sometimes attended classes at Chicago’s Oriental Institute barefoot); however, I did have some memorable shirts: two with paisley patterns, sporting the impressive collars unique to that era (but which seem a bit laughable now); one in burnt orange with a Native American theme; and one a tie-dyed T-shirt. Such gear was perfectly suited to the Be-Ins that I attended in spring 1967 in Chicago, modeled after the first one ever, held that January in San Francisco. At one of these events, I acted as “guide” to a friend on her first acid trip, while we made (and wore) dandelion garlands, accompanied by young Black bongo players chanting “ungawah, flowah powah.” The new culture traveled fast, at least between major cities.

These changes in popular visual culture and dress were fully underway in 1966–67, but what “Hippie Chic” actually addresses is the way clothing trends emerging from the counterculture were appropriated by fashion designers in London, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco for both ready-to-wear and couture markets, mainly between 1968 and the early 1970s. I really didn’t know what to expect, and whether I would like such less spontaneous and more formal expressions of culture, but I was delighted by what I encountered. I realized that some of what I was seeing at the MFA represented the extravagant clothing that the likes of

Hendrix, Janice Joplin, the Beatles, the Stones, etc., were actually wearing. While the Grateful Dead and others might stick to folk garb, many of our Rock heroes did not. *Somebody* had to make their “threads.”

Lauren and her designer collaborators present the show lucidly and dramatically, as befits the subject. The exhibition is relatively small, fitting into one gallery, but that is good, since the visitor can readily take in the contrasts and correlations Lauren is making, and she still manages to be nearly encyclopedic in her coverage. There is much that is stimulating and fun to see. A visitor can walk through the show in fifteen minutes, or spend an hour or more looking closely at everything and reading the very well-crafted and informative wall texts and labels.

Lauren has divided the exhibition into five sub-styles, largely based on the trends in popular dress that influenced them, or, as she puts it, “trickled up”: “Trippy Hippie,” “Ethnic Hippie,” “Crafty Hippie,” “Fantasy Hippie,” and “Retro Hippie.” Unsurprisingly, “Trippy Hippie” takes center stage, the clothing (mainly women’s, as throughout the show), exhibiting the brilliant, sometimes neon colors (Lauren twice calls them “lurid”); the oft-times floral, sometimes cosmic, frequently hallucinogenic imagery; and the floor length, full-sleeved forms and Art Nouveaux-inspired styles we expect. The mannequins rest on five brightly colored circular platforms, two of which revolve; the adjacent labels are coded by appropriately colored dots. Pride of place goes to Chariot Cosmic Couture’s tunic dress (Los Angeles, 1970), with its astral symbolism and long, wide rainbow-colored tie-dyed sleeves, although it is uncharacteristically short, worn over turquoise tights and shoes (1). At least as iconic is the long dress employing fabric designed by Peter Max (1970), which fuses the style of Mucha, psychedelic colors, and kaleidoscopic optics.

As the curator states, men’s clothing opts for the look of the Edwardian dandy (London fashions play a strong role throughout the show). For instance, a 1967 jacket designed by John Pearse for London’s *Granny Takes a Trip*—which used a radiating mushroom logo for its labels—employs William Morris’s “Bachelor Buttons” fabric. Another Pearse creation, a 1969 suit, features rich, figured purple velvet (2). (My one true nod to the peacock was a plainer but still dramatic black velvet suit acquired in the early 1970s).

“Ethnic Hippie” addresses the rage for exotic, ethnic garb at the start of that era when young people began to travel the world and engage foreign cultures, exemplified by the Beatles’ embrace of India and Transcendental Meditation in 1968. These often-extravagant items, with their



**3. Suzani bodice of a Thea Porter dress, in “Ethnic Hippie.”**

appropriation of foreign textiles and design ideas, may particularly appeal to NERS members. Here caftans and burnouses rub shoulders with more conventional dresses and coats. India predominates, but one bodice is fashioned from a Central Asian suzani (3), while Native American hide and beadwork is reflected in an extravagantly fringed jacket designed by Norman Stubbs for the East West Musical Instrument Company (San Francisco, late 1960s), and a Great Lakes woman’s dress (which would have employed trade cloth and silk ribbons) provided the inspiration for a 1970 Giorgio di Sant’Angelo dress for Bonwit Teller.

A wool-on-wool embroidered cover that would have been made by one of Iraq’s Marsh Arabs (mistakenly described as “nomadic”) is transformed into a splendid coat. Tragically, when thousands of rebelling Shi’ite Iraqis took refuge with them from Saddam Hussein’s 1991 crackdown after their rebellion, the tyrant diverted the waters away from the marshes and destroyed a unique, millennia-old way of life that included the production of such textiles. Coloristically uncharacteristic of the clothing gathered under the “Ethnic Hippie” label (it features black silk appliquéd on black wool) but stunning is John Bate’s Moroccan-themed djellabah. Dating from 1976, it marks the temporal limit for items in this show.



**4. “Crafty Hippie,” including a green tie-dyed suit by Halston and, behind it, a Saint Laurent dress in luxe patchwork.**

“Crafty Hippie” (4) is just what one would expect, showing fashions responsive to the great craft revival of the era, the efforts of local, “folk” clothing producers to employ tie-dye, appliqué, piecework, worked leather, and the like in creative ways. Here the designers have either used those methods or emulated them with patterned fabric. Noteworthy is Halston’s pantsuit of ca. 1969, fashioned completely of tie-dyed silk velvet in greens and yellows, made for him by Will and Eileen Richardson of Up-Tied. (My own humble tie-dyed cotton T-shirt could have been modeled after a swatch of that fancy velvet material, or vice-versa). As Lauren comments, “patchwork at its most rarified and most expensive” was created by Andrée Brossin de Méré from over two hundred pieces of printed silk and velvet for an Yves Saint Laurent-designed dress (1969), truly one of the most attractive items in the show. The exhibition texts and Lauren’s published catalogue feature many apt quotations. One, appropriate for this dress, will suffice; it’s from a 1971 article in *Time* magazine: “Long ago—perhaps as far back as the early 1960s—patches on worn or torn clothing were a mark of poverty, or at least thrift. The patchwork has come a long way since then. Today, it is colorful, clever, artistic, and even ideological.”

“Fantasy Hippie” reveals clothing responsive to a wide variety of influences not readily covered in other categories,

while continuing the theme of flowing forms and long, full sleeves. So it includes rather exalted back-to-nature floral imagery, historicizing “prairie” dresses, the “Gypsy” look in a wild garment by di Sant’Angelo (1971), and another by him seemingly inspired by Sandro Botticelli’s great Renaissance painting *Allegory of Spring (La Primavera)*.

“Retro Hippie” was the only category that posed problems for me. It picks up on the new vogue for wearing garb of the ’30s and ’40s found in thrift shops, but the subdued colors and strong Deco forms that predominate are completely out of synch with the other clothes in the exhibition, acting more as a foil than simply a complement to them. True, they were made at the time and are thematically correct to a degree, but they lack the spirit of everything else in the room.

Considering my visual associations with the era, I noted (in the “Ethnic Hippie” section) only one paisley motif, and that not from a Western fabric designer: a tiny feature by a Gujarati embroiderer, in a much more complex textile also employing brocade, sequins, and tie-dye, itself adapted as part of a piecework creation by London designer Thea Porter to form a woman’s caftan (1969).

The exhibition includes some wonderful period accessories, such as granny glasses, star-shaped sunglasses, and the ca. 1969 “astrology patched boot” (in

*“Hippie Chic” review, cont.*

this instance covered with stars) by Gohill shoemakers for Granny Takes a Trip. Further adding to the dazzling display of fashions are noteworthy period pieces: a splendid 1967 Bob Dylan poster *Mr. Tambourine Man* or *Blowin’ in the Mind*, by Martin Sharp, an Australian artist working in London; and a jukebox featuring music of the era. Though a few of the artists are long forgotten, most are mainstays, prominently including the Doors, Jimi Hendrix, the Who, Janis Ian, Janice Joplin, the Rolling Stones, and the Grateful Dead. Notably absent is Jefferson Airplane. Not only did someone in the museum have to procure the jukebox and purchase every 45 rpm record for it on eBay, but permission had to be elicited for each song. For use of the Airplane’s songs, the fee would have been \$5,000, so they were left

out. A museum designer has perfectly crafted a period look for artwork on the jukebox’s display board—altogether neat. Apt photos and the like are placed here and there next to labels, but are way too tiny for my aging eyes to fully appreciate.

This show is “far out,” and took me back to memorable times. I derived a great deal more pleasure and insight from it than from the jarring and dismal “Punk: Chaos to Couture,” presently at the Metropolitan Museum. “Hippie Chic” has already set attendance records for the gallery, and it deserves your attention. I hope that it will travel and delight other audiences as well.

*Jeff Spurr*

## In Memoriam: Philip Lehner

The co-chairs have belatedly learned of the passing, on January 5, 2013, of a longtime NERS member, Philip Lehner, who died at the age of 88 at his Hingham, MA, home.

Born in Boston, Philip interrupted his Harvard College education to enlist in the Navy, where he learned Japanese and served during World War II as an exceptionally youthful intelligence officer. After graduation from Harvard, he joined his father in building the largest textile and fiber reprocessing business in the country, Leigh Fibers, originally based in Boston and later relocated to Spartanburg, NC. Buying waste from fiber, carpet, and clothing mills, the company treated and transformed what would otherwise have been destined for landfills into material for myriad industrial uses. In the 1970s, Philip also pioneered ecologically responsible businesses in Central America, including a cottonseed-oil mill in Nicaragua and a coffee farm in Costa Rica.

Linguistically adept—he spoke German, French, and Spanish as well as Japanese—Philip traveled extensively for business. Returning from a transatlantic trip aboard the Queen Elizabeth in 1948, he met Monique Brancart of Belgium, who was traveling from Cairo to attend Smith College. They married in 1951. Monique became an architectural historian, preparing surveys of the historical districts in towns around Boston. She often hosted Philip’s international colleagues at their Hingham house. She, too, has long been a carpet lover and NERS member.

In addition to Monique, Philip is survived by his brother, Peter, and by five children, fifteen grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. We extend our condolences to

Monique, thank her for providing a treasured photograph of her late husband, and hope that she will continue to join us at NERS meetings.



**Philip Lehner, 1924–2013**

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**The New England Rug Society** is an informal, non-profit organization of people interested in enriching their knowledge and appreciation of antique oriental rugs and textiles. Our meetings are held seven or more times a year. Membership levels and annual dues are: Single \$45, Couple \$65, Supporting \$90, Patron \$120, Student \$25. Membership information and renewal forms are available on our website, [www.ne-rugsociety.org](http://www.ne-rugsociety.org); by writing to the New England Rug Society, P.O. Box 290393, Charlestown, MA 02129; or by contacting Jim Sampson at [jahome22@gmail.com](mailto:jahome22@gmail.com).



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