

Fiber artist Janet Conner guest artist for 2010

PAINTING WITH WOOL: The Hooked Rugs of Janet Conner

Maine Fiber Artist Janet Conner, known for her original hand hooked rugs and mats, will be the Guest Artist at this year's Fryeburg Fair. The Fiber Center is open from 9 to 9 throughout fair week, Oct. 3-10, closing at 6 p.m. on the final Sunday.

Ms. Conner's work is considered primitive, or country Victorian, in style. All designs are original. The wool strips are cut by hand from recycled and heirloom fabrics and many of the colors are the result of natural dyes. The family tools she uses were inherited through three generations and her greatest influences have been the study of antique textiles and folk art, as well as the landscapes, museums and cultural experiences from her international travel.

Because of Ms. Conner's 30-year career as an elementary art teacher, she continues to enjoy her enthusiasm for teaching by providing various classes for beginning and experienced rug hookers in pattern design, dyeing for special color effects and Folk Art style rug hooking. She also offers advanced workshops in Van Gogh Inspired Rug Hooking and couture hooked bags.

Ms. Conner was selected in 2004 for her exceptional work as one of the 200 Best Traditional American Craftsmen by Early American Life Magazine's jury of Curators from Historic Williamsburg, Sturbridge Village and Shelburne Museum. Additionally, her work was exhibited that year at the Moore College of Art Alumnae juried exhibition in Philadelphia. In Maine, her work has been seen at the Brick Store Museum in Kennebunk as well as the Public Library and the Whimsical World Art Gallery in Portland and the Maine Fiber Arts Center in Topsham.

Fryeburg Fair has supported fiber education for more than 15 years and built a permanent fiber exhibition hall in 2004. The Fiber Center serves to educate the public about Fiber Arts featuring fiber art demonstrations throughout fair week. The Fiber Center features alternative gallery space to show fiber art like Ms. Conner each year during fair week.

Fiber Center Supt. Gale Bellew said that "This unique environment allows new eyes to see and understand the progression of natural fibers from function and craft to fiber art in a way that has never been possible in any other venue that we know of."