

Janet Stollnitz – Passionate About Fiber

By Nan Crawford

Janet Stollnitz's love for fibers began as child in Rhode Island where the textile industry was prevalent. Her first spark with the fiber world occurred while taking children's painting classes at the Rhode Island School of Design as a young child. During the morning breaks, Janet would walk upstairs and gaze with fascination at the room full of looms poised waiting for the college students. Janet started her youthful weaving interest by making potholders and weaving them together for doll blankets.

As an adult, Janet moved to the DC area in the early 1970s where she took an 8-session weaving class from Judith Arness for \$75 which included using a table loom and all materials. Before the end of the eighth session, Janet had ordered a 4-shaft floor loom. Before the loom arrived, she ordered still another loom with ten shafts.

Upon completion of the weaving course, Janet joined the Potomac Craftsmen where she participated in the Warped Minds Study Group. Later she joined the Northern Virginia Dye Study Group that later became a Clothing Study Group. In more recent years she joined the First Thursday Clothing Study Group and the Multishaft Study Group. In the late 1980s Janet began dyeing her own fibers. Other fiber enthusiasts were excited with Janet's work and creativity, and asked her to dye yarns for them as well. When asked what sparks her passions for weaving and dyeing, she replies, "It's magic to see the end result."

Janet has won numerous awards for her dyeing and weaving works locally and nationally; among them are: Complex Weaver Award, MAFA Conference, 1999; Penland School of Crafts Award and the Complex Weaver Award, Blue Ridge Handweaving Show, 2004; Pro-Chemical Award, Convergence 2004, and many more. Janet also has a piece of her work in the permanent collection of the Asheville School in Asheville, North Carolina.

Janet is active in and has held elected positions in numerous local and national fiber guilds. She is currently the Potomac Craftsmen Guild representative to the Handweavers Guild of America (HGA). She served on the HGA Board, and also as Facilities Chair for Convergence 1992 held in Washington, DC. Over the years she has served in various Guild positions, representative to MAFA and the Creative Crafts Council. She is currently Education Co-chair for Complex Weavers Seminars 2008. Janet is a member of the Handweavers Guild of America, Complex Weavers, Surface Design Association, Weavers Guild of Greater Baltimore, Seattle Weavers Guild. She is also a member of the Potomac Craftsmen Gallery in the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Old Town Alexandria.

Janet currently lives and has a studio in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she continues her love for weaving and dyeing, and shares the hand-dyed yarn business, Dyed Dreams, with Roz Houseknecht. Janet teaches workshops locally and passes on her passions to others as well as her grandchildren. Her favorite fiber to weave is silk and loves to dye silk and rayon fibers; and, her favorite items in her current fiber “stash” are silk yarns. Janet most enjoys creating woven scarves which she sees as full-sized samples. She has replaced the looms purchased in her early weaving years with 24-shaft and 40-shaft computerized looms. Now she can design with unlimited treadles!

When asked about Janet, Roz Houseknecht says, “I have known Janet for more than 30 years and we have been dyeing partners for 15 years, and spend a lot of time chatting while working. Janet is definitely a local, if not national textile resource. She is involved in many groups and since the advent of e-mail she has been in contact with textile artists around the world and visited many guilds around this country. Whenever there is a guild event or local textile organizational need, Janet is always available to lend her expertise. She especially loves to create clear, well written support documents for shows, Potomac Craftsmen Gallery and the Potomac Craftsmen Guild. Janet is a “go to” person and always gets the job done.”

When she is not busy with weaving and dyeing or guild activities, Janet enjoys knitting, felting, surface design and sewing, as well as theater, music, art, and being with family and friends.