

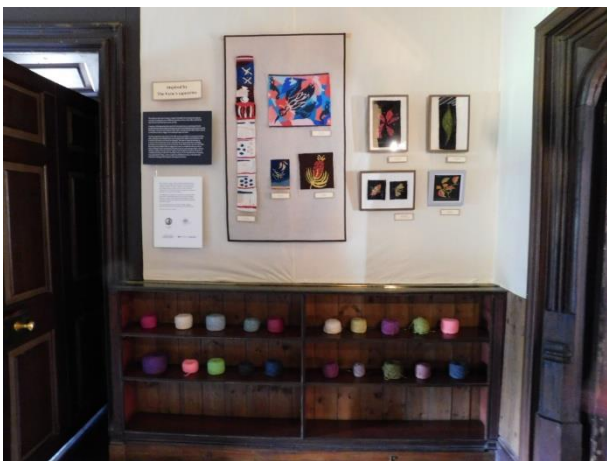
# BTG Tapestries at Vyne House, Hampshire

Lorna Goldsmith

[The Vyne, a National Trust house in Hampshire](#), holds an important historical tapestry collection. Several years ago, the tapestries were damaged while the house was being renovated. They were removed for conservation and the tapestry room was cleared of furniture leaving the room free for a display.

In the summer of 2019, I proposed an exhibition of contemporary tapestries, along with a narrative on 18th century tapestry, and a programme of weaving demonstrations to engage the public. Our project would run in parallel with an audio-visual display installed by the house. The aim of our project was to raise awareness of the tapestry conservation project and to keep the room alive. Following presentations to BTG South-East, and local Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, a number of groups and individuals volunteered to help.

For the contemporary exhibition we collected tapestries from BTG SE members. The National Trust generously gave us access to images of the historical tapestries: Oriental motifs of animals, plants and people inspired by Chinese, Indian and Turkish themes, woven as individual vignettes on a dark background following the fashion for japanned objects in the 18th century. These images inspired a group of weavings by BTG members: exquisite butterflies and chunky leaves; flowers and birds woven in silk and wool; abstractions from costume details in the tapestries. Some were woven in vegetable-dyed, hand-spun yarn, others in commercially spun and dyed worsteds.



*Display of historically themed tapestries.  
Photo © Lorna C Goldsmith*

The historical section focused on tapestry weaving from the 18th century, the period of the Vyne tapestries. We displayed text panels with images from [Diderot's Encyclopedia](#), narratives on dyeing, and technical samples.

In addition, the wider BTG display showed the broad span and diversity of tapestry weaving today together



*A Vyne Soho tapestry. Image courtesy of The Vyne, National Trust, © National Trust Images/Daniel Lewis* with the range of individual expression in tapestry weaving, and how 21st century tapestry art differs from the 18th century work. To demonstrate this we included a have-a-go weaving frame in the room and demonstrations of spinning and weaving.

Our exhibition took place over the summer, 2019, and a large number of people passed through the house. Several days saw more than 300 people visiting the house, discussing the weaving and spinning, and being fascinated by the pre-industrial process from wool preparation to dyeing and weaving – and how long the entire process took.

The project was a success, and the house extended the loan of the display pieces until November. A number of small samples were woven by the public, and many visitors picked up leaflets and took their time to learn about tapestry weaving and its sister discipline, hand-spinning.

The Vyne staff and I want to thank everyone who volunteered, lent objects and samples and generally spent time to help. I would also like to thank [weaversbazaar](#) for their generous donation and equipment loan that helped to enhance the display.

*[Edith A Standen, English Tapestries "After the Indian Manner"](#)*

*[Metropolitan Museum Journal, Vol. 15, 1980, pp. 119-142](#)*

*[Edith A Standen, "Renaissance to Modern Tapestries in The Metropolitan Museum of Art": The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, v. 44, no. 4 \(Spring, 1987\)](#)*