



## AT THE ARTS

### Travellers' Yarns and Social Fabric on South Shore

Lynne Millman

The beautiful silk weaving produced by women from villages in Northeast Thailand has inspired a pair of Nova Scotia women to bring their work to the province. Textile aficionados Ellen Agger and Alleson Kase spent four months in Thailand and Laos last year, where they had the opportunity to visit local villages and spend time with the weavers working and living in them. With the assistance of a board member as interpreter and guide, they visited villages associated with two fair-trade cooperatives, Prea Pan and Panmai.

Agger was astounded to learn about the amount of work expended to create the finished fabric. It begins with raising and feeding silkworms, which are then boiled in order to remove the waxy resins. (The worms themselves are eaten - they are high in protein.) The fine threads are collected, dyed naturally using local bark and berries, and eventually spun into skeins on large

wheels. It takes about two months just to get to the loom. "The actual weaving is the quickest part of the process," she jokes.

Agger and Kase held group sessions in the villages that allowed the weavers to ask the pair questions about their Canadian customers, and to learn more about life here. They were fascinated to hear about our winter and the need for warm clothing, as well as to see and handle sheep's wool, comparing it to the cotton and silk fibres which they use. "They were very interested in growing as artists," Kase observes.

Kase actually lived in Thailand for close to eight years, and came back to Canada to take a degree in international development at St. Mary's in Halifax. She therefore has an appreciation for the kind of life these women are committed to living.

"In Southeast Asia especially there is a real emphasis on harmony," Kase explains. People there don't divide work and home life as we tend to do, for instance. "It's all

pretty seamless." Working as weavers from their homes fits well into the village cycle of growing rice and provides supplemental income as well. It allows these women to "stay in their villages where there is that seamless quality of life," and not have to live in a dormitory in a large city doing factory work.

Both Agger and Kase are deeply committed to the fair trade principles and practices which have proven so effective for commodities such as coffee and sugar. As Kase explains it, the concept replaces charity with a model for development that is controlled by the people who are affected. The people who grow or make the products set a fair price for what they produce, then use the profits to build their own schools and hospitals, rather than being provided

with what outside agencies think they need or should have.

There are two opportunities to catch the slideshow and talk, Travellers' Yarns: Wednesday, Sept. 26, Lunenburg Library at 7 p.m., and Friday, Sept. 28, Mahone Bay Centre at 7:30 p.m.

Social Fabric, the display and sale of Aggers' photos, takes place at the Mahone Bay Centre on Friday, Sept. 28, from 7 to 10 p.m. and Saturday, Sept. 29 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

A display and sale of fairly traded silk and cotton scarves, bags and shawls produced by the Thai weavers is on Saturday only, from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Centre. To find out more go to: [www.luckyduckwebdesign.com/include/luckyPals.htm](http://www.luckyduckwebdesign.com/include/luckyPals.htm).

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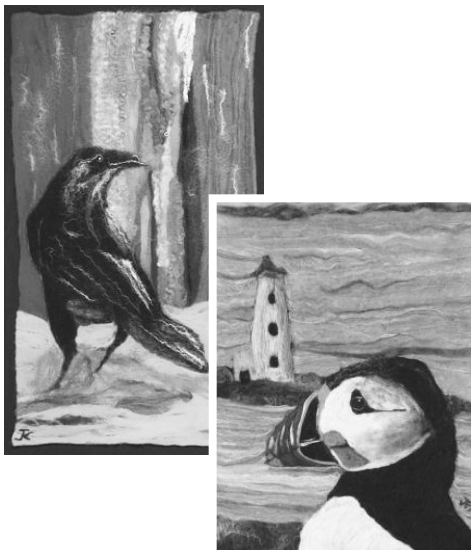


Ellen Agger photo

WORKING IN HARMONY. Two South Shore residents have brought the story of Thai and Laotian women's silk-weaving co-operatives to Nova Scotia with a talk, a photographic exhibit and a show and sale of the work. Pictured here is Loek Khonfudee, 26, member of the Panmai Weaving Co-operative, Thailand, who told the women: "We love weaving. We don't make much money, but what we do make let's us stay in the village with our families. I feel in harmony with this work."

Lynne Millman is an artist and freelance writer in Blandford

## Entertainment Notes



Contributed photo

Justine Kerr's felt pictures Crow at Golden Lake. Puffin

A show of artist Justine Kerr's stone carvings, felt pictures and mixed media drawings opens Sept. 20 at 7 p.m. at the Mahone Bay Centre in the second floor gallery, and runs Sept. 21 - 23 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Get a preview at [www.justinekerr.com](http://www.justinekerr.com)

Music at the Three Churches will close the 2007 season with a concert by one of Nova Scotia's favourite choirs on Friday, Sept. 21. The Aeolian Singers, a 40-voice women's choir, will perform a program of beautiful melodies and folk songs from Canadian songwriters and arrangers. The concert will begin at 8 p.m., Saint John's Lutheran Church, Mahone Bay. Tickets are available at the door, in advance at Kinburn PharmaSave, Mahone Bay. For reservations call 531-2248 or e-mail [threechurches@hotmail.com](mailto:threechurches@hotmail.com)

The Unicorn Theatre invites boys and girls in grades 2-12 to audition for its new musical production,

"Seussical, Jr." The auditions, which are by appointment only, will be held at the Bay Community Centre, Sept. 22 and 23. Director Brenna Meagher is looking for creative young performers with imaginative ideas for this ensemble cast of approximately 28 people.

Inspired by the stories of Dr. Seuss, "Seussical Jr." is a musical adventure that takes place inside the imagination of a young boy named Jojo and involves such famous Seussian characters as the Cat in the Hat, Horton the Elephant, Gertrude McFuzz, Mayzie La Bird, and the citizens of both Whoville and the Jungle of Nool.

Rehearsals will be at the Bay Community Centre from 6-8 pm every Tuesday and Thursday, starting on September 27. The play will be performed at the end of November/ beginning of December.

Parents are required to sign up to help with costumes, sets or props or technical. To book an audition, actors or their parents should call the theatre at 857-2121. [www.unicorntheatre.ca](http://www.unicorntheatre.ca).

## TRELLIS CAFE

### The Aeolian Singers

Beautiful Melodies and Folksongs from Canadian Songwriters and arrangers  
September 21, 2007 - 8 pm  
St. John's Lutheran Church,  
Mahone Bay

Adult \$15 • 12 and under Free

Tickets at Fulton's Pharmacy, Lunenburg; Kinburn PharmaSave, Mahone Bay; or at the door

Music  
at the Three  
Churches

For information: 531-2248  
[www.threechurches.com](http://www.threechurches.com)

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