

# Making the 'Convergence' Decision by Beverly Weaver

If you have never attended a weaving conference, this might be the year to do it. The Handweavers Guild of America (HGA) will present Convergence, its international conference, in Albuquerque from July 18 to 25.

Convergence offers keynote speakers, a juried fashion show, exhibits, tours, a vendor area, seminars, and workshops. In addition to the HGA-sponsored juried exhibits, there will be other textile exhibits around the area. Tours are scheduled to visit Ghost Ranch and various museums and areas of interest to fiber artists. Workshops will be taught by well-known fiber artists and may be one, two or three days in length. Seminars usually last 2 or 4 hours. There will also be a large vendor area at Convergence. Some special interest groups have their own meetings during convergence, such as the 'rag rug show and tell', the American Tapestry Alliance (ATA), Complex Weavers, and TWIST (tablet weavers). ATA and Complex Weavers will also have their own conferences in a nearby location before or after Convergence.

I think most people attend Convergence or other fiber conferences for several reasons. First, you will see a lot of fiber art, including things you might not have a chance to see otherwise. This might be on a tour, at an exhibit, at the fashion show or just from things that people wear every day during the conference. Second, you get a chance to learn something new about fiber. This is normally by attending a seminar or workshop, but may happen in the vendor area or while talking with other attendees. Third, you see fiber artists whose articles you have read and whose work you have seen exhibited, whether during a keynote speech or by taking a seminar or workshop with the artist. Fourth, you meet other people who are learning about weaving, spinning, dyeing, or basketry and who are willing to share with you. Fifth, you can shop with vendors whose stores you might never be able to visit, sit at a loom you have been thinking about, see shuttles and spinning wheels, scan books, touch yarns, and generally surround yourself with fibers and fiber-related tools. This can be the most dangerous part of any conference if you are trying to watch your budget.

HGA has a link on their website ([www.weavespindye.org](http://www.weavespindye.org)) with suggestions for 'first timers': [http://www.weavespindye.org/pages/?p=convergence2010/first\\_timers.htm&loc=8-125-00](http://www.weavespindye.org/pages/?p=convergence2010/first_timers.htm&loc=8-125-00). If you want to limit your time and money investment for Convergence, you can buy a day pass that will allow you to visit the HGA-sponsored exhibits and visit the vendor area. You might also want to visit the fiber exhibits that are open during the same time period and that are sponsored by other groups or by individual galleries. Because of the historical significance of textiles in New Mexico, there are many other things to see in the area. For more information, see New Mexico Fiber Arts Trail at [www.nmfiberarts.org](http://www.nmfiberarts.org).

If you don't attend Convergence this year, you might consider going to a regional conference in the future. Most regional groups have their conferences in odd-numbered years in order to avoid conflict with Convergence. For example, Intermountain Weavers Conference will be held in Durango, Colorado in 2011. Each regional conference has its own theme and schedule, but most of them offer juried and un-juried exhibits, fashion shows, seminars and/or workshops, a keynote speaker, and a vendor area. Housing and food costs may be lower, because a regional conference is often held on a college campus.

Whenever you get a chance, you should attend a fiber conference in order to surround yourself with fiber and fiber artists for a few days and to become inspired.