

Textile Arts Council

The Bay Area Forum for artists, aficionados & collectors of weaving, rugs & tapestries, baskets, costume & wearable art

January 2009

Volume XXIV, Number 1

Upcoming Programs and Announcements

All programs are held in the **Koret Auditorium** at the **de Young Museum** in Golden Gate Park, 50 Hagiwara Tea Drive, San Francisco. Admission to the programs is **FREE** to TAC members, \$10 for non-members, and \$5 for FAMSF members and students with I.D. No additional Museum admission fee is necessary. You may enter from the garage level or the main floor entrance between the main and side doors to the Museum.

Saturday, January 24, 2009, 10 a.m.

FABRIC AND FORM: CREATING COUTURE

With Robert Curry

In conjunction with the Yves St. Laurent exhibition, the Textile Arts Council presents a rare and unusual glimpse of the design processes at some of the world's foremost couture ateliers. Robert Curry will talk about his experience working



Designer Robert Curry creating a gown. Photo courtesy of Robert Curry.

with designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Bruce Oldfield, Julien Macdonald and Tristan Webber, creating showpieces and couture garments for the London and Paris catwalks, celebrity and private clientele. Jerry Hall, Liza Minelli, Kylie Minogue, Jennifer Lopez, and Queen Rania of Jordan are among those who have worn his gowns. His work is housed in the collections of museums worldwide, and has appeared on the covers of major fashion publications

including *Vogue*, *Elle*, and *Marie Claire*.

Robert will lead us through the stages of developing a design, and will illustrate the often dramatic changes that can take place during this process, using examples from his and other designers' work. He will also regale us with tales of the often temperamental design process and humorous anecdotes of life at the high end of the fashion industry.

After graduating from Leeds University, Robert worked for two years as an apprentice in Bruce

Oldfield's London couture atelier. For almost five years thereafter (1996 to 2001), he designed showpieces for the Paris collections and evening and bridal gowns for private clientele in the Vivienne Westwood couture atelier. In 2001 Robert became an independent designer, creating headline-grabbing showpieces for celebrity clientele and designer collections (especially those of Julien Macdonald and Tristan Webber). He also began teaching three-dimensional cut/design, at Middlesex and Westminster Universities and at the Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design in London. In 2006 Robert moved to San Francisco to teach at the Academy of Art University.

Robert's techniques and philosophy of design hail not only from the collected experience of his professional career, but from many years of analytical study of his idols: Madeleine Vionnet and Cristobal Balenciaga. His method of "sketching" ideas of form with the fabric, rather than drawing designs, produces endless design solutions in a matter of minutes, whereby the designs evolve and morph into their various final forms. Robert is currently working on a series of books illustrating his techniques of three-dimensional design.

Saturday, February 14, 2009, 10 a.m.

DRAGON COVERS: MYSTERIOUS ABERRATIONS OF THE LI OF HAINAN

With Lee J. Chinalai

More than a million people from the Li minority live on Hainan, a mountainous island off the southern coast of China. The Li began spinning, weaving, and dyeing in ancient times and over the centuries developed a reputation for the quality and beauty of their textiles. Although the clothing and textiles of the various Li sub-tribes span a range of style

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

de Young Legion of Honor

From the Chair

January 2009

Beloved Textilians,

It has been an honor and my great pleasure to serve as your board chair for the past three years. It is now time for me to step down and focus on the committee work I care most about. I am very glad to announce that Paul Ramsey has been elected by the Textile Arts Council board as your new board chair. Paul has served faithfully on the board for many years and has served as secretary and as vice chair already. I know he will do a terrific job as chair, and I invite you all to join me in congratulating him.

Best regards,
Laurel Sprigg

Programs continued from page 1

and design, all—with one exception—emanate from Li religion, culture, and tradition, sharing roots with other Daic-speaking groups.

Several years ago, embroidered panels appearing to date to the late Ming or early Qing dynasties, attributed to the Li but evocative of ceremonial hangings from the Imperial Palace, started to appear in public. These hangings are called *long bei*, or dragon covers. Intrigued, our speaker, Lee Chinalai, went to Hainan hoping to discover how and why such textiles could have originated from a fairly isolated tribal group. Through research and interviews, Lee concluded that the court in Peking had sent prototype drawings for the Li to copy as tapestries and send back as tribute. It appears that some Li also made dragon covers in secret and hid them away for their own use.

In this talk Lee Chinalai will compare *long bei* with a splendid array of other Li textiles, including a specific style of head cloth that serves as an example of the continued influence of Han culture on tribal textiles and may also represent a miniature transformation of the dragon cover. She will explore how the material and production of indigenous Li weavings paved the way for the creation and “adoption” of the dragon covers, how a basically foreign textile may have assumed a vital role in Li ceremonies, and how, in the mid-20th century, political events forced dragon covers into the open and eventually created yet another evolution in their purpose and function.

Lee J. Chinalai attended graduate school in Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and has authored or co-authored with her husband, Vichai Chinalai, a number of articles on textiles, published in a variety of journals. Titles include “Ceremonial Dragon Covers of the Li,” “Yao Lan Tan Shamans’ Robes,” “Bridal Blankets of the Maonan,” and “Yantra, Mystical Talismanic Cloths and Charms.” In 2007 Lee and Vichai curated “Cambodian Ikat Revealed—an Exploration,” an exhibition accompanying the Arts of Pacific Asia Show at Fort Mason and, in 2008, “Outer Garments – Inner Warmth: Power, Protection and Prestige” for the Tribal and Textile Arts show. They travel often and have lived and worked in Thailand and the Middle East. Please join us for this illuminating look into the hidden world of the Li people and their textiles.



Li dragon cover, long bei, Hainan, China, late Ming/early Qing period (17th/18th century). Embroidered silk on cotton. 4'0" x 7'1". Photo by Don Tuttle.

Saturday, March 28, 2009, 10:00 a.m.

ON THE TEXT IN TEXTILES: CULTURAL STORIES, UNFOLDING FASHIONS

With **Susan B. Kaiser**

The root word “text” in “textiles” reminds us that cultural meaning is central to the materials that people use and wear in everyday life. Like written texts, textiles tell stories, but the stories textiles tell are not linear. Rather, these are nonlinear, visual, tactile, and embodied stories that unfold in both an orderly and a disorderly fashion.

Drawing on a diverse ethnic and transnational array of case study materials, this talk explores how and why textiles and fashion *mean* so much to culture. The field of cultural studies has much to offer textile/fashion studies in the way of critical concepts and methods. What is often overlooked, however, are the ways in which the interrelated fields of textile studies and fashion studies can contribute to cultural studies. Textiles and fashion are vehicles through which culture articulates ambiguities, anxieties, and complex power relations (involving gender, social class, ethnicity, and sexuality, among other axes of identity) that might otherwise be difficult to express in words. Further, they bring to light the “disconnects,” such as those between production and consumption, wrought by global capitalism. In short, textiles and fashion both clarify and complicate the study of culture.

Through textiles and fashion, processes of fabrication, entanglement, and mixing and matching become the stuff of everyday life. This talk uses various two- and three-dimensional textiles from a wide range of trans-historical and cross-

cultural contexts to consider how cultural meaning is not merely something that *is*; but something that people *make* and *do*. Susan B. Kaiser is a professor of textiles and clothing at the University of California, Davis. She is also a professor in and the director of the Women and Gender Studies Program, and a member of the Cultural Studies Graduate Group at UC Davis. She is a fellow and past president of the International Textile and Apparel Association and serves on the editorial board of *Fashion Theory*.

Replica of a jacket found in the Wanli Emperor's tomb, Ming Dynasty (1573-1844) (Dingling Museum, Beijing). Embroidered and appliquéd quilted silk. The original belonged to the Empress Xiaojing, who was a daughter of a commander in the Imperial Guard. The title of Favorite Concubine was bestowed upon her in the 10th year of Wanli's reign (1572). This jacket, called the "Hundred Children Coat," is said to depict 100 children at play, a symbol of abundant fertility and good fortune. Photo by L. Matheson.



Her current research focuses on the interplay between fashion theory and feminist cultural studies, with a particular focus on the production-consumption interface in textile/apparel systems and (re)constructions of masculinities through style and fashion. She is the author of *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context* (Fairchild, 1997) and approximately 90 manuscripts published in textiles/fashion, sociological, semiotic, and cultural studies journals and edited volumes.

Dr. Kaiser has presented her work internationally, including in lectures in Germany, Italy, England, France, Croatia, South Korea, Finland, Sweden, and Russia.



Closeup of replica of the "Hundred Children Jacket" worn by the Wanli Empress Xiaojing, Ming Dynasty (1573-1844) (Dingling Museum, Beijing). Embroidery on quilted silk. Photo by L. Matheson.

Textile Conservation Lab Completes 12-year Effort

The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco is fortunate to have one of the four most highly rated collections of monumental European tapestries in the U.S. and the best west of the Mississippi. In the collection are three tapestries from the series titled “The Triumph of the Seven Virtues”: *The Triumph of Fortitude*, *The Triumph of Justice*, and *The Triumph of Prudence*.

Woven in Belgium during the early 16th century, each of these tapestries depicts one of the Christian virtues surrounded by allegorical and historical figures that exemplify them. Versions of Faith, Hope, and Charity are held in 16 other collections worldwide. All versions of Temperance have been lost to time. The three tapestries owned by the FAM were given by two donors: Fortitude and Justice by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation in 1957 and Prudence by the Provident Security Company in 1962. Today, thanks to generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Institute of Museum and Library Services over the last 12 years, all three have been conserved. The museum now hopes to work with other institutions to arrange an exhibition of the six extant tapestries.

Such an exhibition is likely to arrange the tapestries as historians believe they were originally displayed. Tapestry historian Genevieve Souchal notes that the orientation of the human figures representing each virtue indicates they were designed for a large hall. Charity, Justice, and Fortitude look to the right and Hope and Prudence to the left. Temperance is also believed to face left. Faith is depicted in the center of the tapestry looking forward, and therefore would have been displayed on the back wall.

The Triumphs are chock full of figures; the small amount of landscape depicted is high up at the top edge of the main field. Biblical and classical human figures

are included, as well as symbolic animals, both real and allegorical, such as lions, unicorns, and multi-headed dragons. Each tapestry was interpreted in detail by curator emeritus Anna G. Bennett in the 1976 FAM publication, *The Five Centuries of Tapestry*, which has become a standard reference in the field.

Two of the special characteristics of these tapestries, other than their age and subject, are their great size and fragility. Averaging 15 x 18 feet and woven from one side to another, they are actually constructed so that they must be hung from their weakest side, causing stress and strain damage from display itself. Characteristics such as these require that conservators who are specialists in their field be engaged to do any preservation work. The two-year-plus conservation programs for Fortitude and Prudence, completed in the late 1990s, were organized by two English tapestry conservators on temporary contract from the Hampton Court Studios, where the tapestries belonging to England’s Queen Elizabeth 2nd are conserved. Conserving tapestries is very labor intensive and consistent treatment over the long term is vital to their preservation.

Using a theory put forth by Tom Campbell, a tapestry specialist and the new director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, we can estimate that Fortitude and Justice each took three weavers a year and a half to complete. Prudence is finer and contains more silk, so it probably took a bit longer. According to their Brabants, or weaver’s marks, which are included in the very edge of each tapestry, Prudence was woven at a different workshop.

The conservation treatments on each of the FAM’s *Triumph* tapestries took between two and a half and five years to

complete. Each tapestry has been supported with a thin linen scrim, or lining, which acts as a second skin to hold the tapestry together. Each has been improved aesthetically and the design made easier to “read” by the replacement of old, disfiguring repairs. All yarns and fabrics used in such a conservation effort must be lightfast and often require custom dyeing to exactly match the hue needed. The scrims and meticulous repairs also make the tapestries more stable physically, so that now they may be hung safely. The



treatments should not be considered complete, however, as the dark lines that outline each figure and that are characteristic of early tapestries, were not replaced due to time constraints.

The FAM’s conservation efforts made some important discoveries that have deepened our understanding of the tapestries. Figures in tapestries frequently have their names woven into their garments to identify them for viewers. These names may become obliterated over time from light damage and wear. But because conservators work so closely with the woven structure to remove old repairs and to support weak areas and holes, it was they who discovered that the name of a figure thought to be Cloelia in the *Triumph of Fortitude* was actually spelled Chloelia. Similarly, while working on the *Triumph of Justice*, a previously unnamed figure was identified as Yosef when a faint name band came to light under old repairs.

But the repair with by far the most dramatic effect is that of the eagle's wing in the center of Fortitude. Originally planned to be left undisturbed, a large, old repair in the wing was removed, which uncovered a bigger than expected hole. In order to replace the feather pattern accurately, images were obtained of another version of Fortitude, this one owned by the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, U.K. These images were then enlarged to match the scale of the eagle here at the FAM and the various brown-toned repair yarns carefully placed to match the feather pattern.



This type of design infill was not possible when working on Justice because no other version exists.

Without the support of funding bodies such as the NEA and IMLS, large, long-term conservation treatment projects on tapestries are out of reach for the Fine Arts Museums. But thanks to these institutions' generosity, three beautiful and important 500-year-old tapestries are now able to be displayed and enjoyed safely. Other donors who made this effort possible included the Textile Arts Council, the FAMSF Auxiliary, and David and Cynthia Bogolub.

Sarah Gates

Head of Textile Conservation, FAMSF
Yadin Larochette
 Consulting Tapestry Specialist

Obituary

In early October I received an e-mail forwarded from Jason Collingwood that stated: "Sadly my father, Peter Collingwood, died unexpectedly yesterday afternoon, 9th October 2008. He died in the place he loved, his workshop."

Peter Collingwood's books have become ubiquitous sources of inspiration and technique in the libraries of weavers, designers, engineers, and architects since 1968 when he first published *The Techniques of Rug Weaving*, followed by *The Techniques of Sprang* in 1974, *The Techniques of Tablet Weaving* in 1982, and so on. This short bio is adapted from one of my favorite Collingwood books, *The Maker's Hand: A Close Look at Textile Structures*, in which his consuming interest in structure probes the intricacies of more than 90 beautiful objects from around the world.

Trained by some of the finest British weavers of the mid 20th century, Collingwood produced handmade rugs that sold at Liberty's and Heal's beginning in 1952. He taught in art schools from 1954 and held annual workshops in the United States starting in 1962. He was the first living weaver to be given an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum and his awards are numerous. His iconic shaft switching rugs and airy macrogauzes are widely imitated. And his authority on the subjects of tablet weaving, sprang, and ply-splitting is not disputed. I saw his huge architectural woven stainless steel macrogauze in Japan. He was generous with his knowledge and above all, loved what he did. He was the consummate hand weaver and an inspiration to us all.

Barbara Shapiro

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

February 16, 2009
 Please send your copy to the TAC office at tac@famsf.org

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Yves Saint Laurent at the de Young

The YSL symposium *Yves Saint Laurent: Eternal Style* held in November was an instant sell-out. Thanks to our “early warning,” many of those attending were TAC members. Unfortunately, it was impossible to accommodate all those who wanted to participate. However, if you weren’t able to attend the symposium, you haven’t missed it. You can view the event, in its entirety, on line by visiting FORA.tv

This wonderful exhibition runs until April 5th, and the Textile Arts Council is planning to conduct one or more tours of the galleries for our members. You will receive notice as soon as we can formalize the arrangements.



Welcome to Our New Members

Through October 22,
2008

Deirdre Anderson
Stephanie Blythe
Helena Chenn
Eunice Childs
Christina Conklin
Eileen Conlan
Jamy Coulson
Gloria Davis
Sandi Deckinger
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Karen Powers
Bea Roberts
Kate Ruddle
Helen Scully
Ginger Takahashi
Yatsuko Wooster
Nancy Zerella

GENERAL CALENDAR

ONGOING

Until Jan. 25 *Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, www.asianart.org

Until Jan. 25 *Recent Works by Four Masters of Contemporary Fiber*, San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, 408 971-0323
www.sjqmusem.org

Until Feb. 21 *Gothic: Dark Glamour*, The Museum at FIT, New York City, www.fitnyc.edu/museum

Until Feb. 22 *The Shape of Things: Paper Traditions and Transformations*, Museum of Craft & Folk Art, Yerba Buena Lane, San Francisco, 415 227-4888
www.mocfa.org

Until Spring 2009 *Hello! Fashion: Kansai Yamamoto, 1971 – 1973*, Philadelphia Museum of Art
www.philamuseum.org

Until March 1 *She Made It! The Tradition of Women*, historic and contemporary textile-based objects, including *After the Gold Rush* by Linda Gass, Pasetta House, History San Jose 408 287-2290

Until March 8 *Timbuktu to Tibet: Rugs and Textiles of the Hajji Babas*, Textile Museum, Washington, DC,
www.textilemuseum.org

Until March 22 *The Essential Art of African textiles: Design Without End*, Rockefeller Wing, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
www.metmuseum.org

Until April 5 *Yves Saint Laurent*, Textile Gallery, de Young Museum, San Francisco, www.thinker.org

Until June 16 *Seduction, A Chronological Exploration of the Role of Sexuality in Fashion*, The Museum at FIT, New York City, www.fitnyc.edu/museum

Until June 21 *And so to Bed: Indian Bed Curtains from a Stately English Home*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, www.mfa.org

Until September *Traje de la Vida: Maya Textiles of Guatemala*, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, www.hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu

JANUARY

Jan. 15 – March 1 Ana Lisa Hedstrom: Solo Online Exhibition, www.FiberScene.com
Go to the Virtual Gallery page.

Jan. 21 – May 25 *Craft in America: Expanding Traditions*, a multi-media survey including work by Judith Content, Candace Kling, and Kay Sekimachi. Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA

FEBRUARY

Feb. 3 – April 26 *Changing Landscapes: Contemporary Chinese Fiber Art*, San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, www.sjqmusem.org

Feb. 13 –15 *San Francisco Tribal & Textile Arts Show*, Fort Mason Center, Festival Pavillion. Benefits the galleries for Textiles and for the art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at the de Young Museum, www.caskeylees.com

MARCH

March 1 – April 15 Adela Akers: Solo Online Exhibition, www.FiberScene.com
Go to the Virtual Gallery page.

March 6 – Jan. 3, 2010 *Recent Acquisitions*, Textile Museum, Washington, DC
www.textilemuseum.org

March 7-8 *Symphony of Color, Quilt Show 2009*, San Francisco Quilters Guild, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Concourse Exhibition Center, 635 Eighth St., San Francisco, www.sfquiltersguild.org

March 20 – Sept. 7 *Fashioning Felt*, Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York City
www.cooperhewitt.org

APRIL AND BEYOND

April 4 – Aug. 16 *Constructed Color: Amish Quilts*, Textile Museum, Washington DC
www.textilemuseum.org

May 28-31 *Off the Grid: 2009 International Surface Design Association Conference*, Kansas City, MO. Workshops, exhibitions, speakers, and vendors. Speakers include Gerhard Knodel, Harmony Susalla, and Victoria Rivers
www surfacedesign.org

January
2009

Textile Arts Council

Don't miss these exciting TAC events!

■ **Fabric and Form: Creating Couture**
With Robert Curry

Saturday, January 24
Koret Auditorium
de Young Museum

■ **Dragon Covers: Mysterious Aberrations of the Li of Hainan**
With Lee J. Chinalai

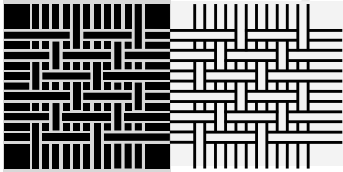
Saturday, February 14
Koret Auditorium
de Young Museum

■ **On the Text in Textiles: Cultural Stories, Unfolding Fashions**
With Susan B. Kaiser

Saturday, March 28
Koret Auditorium
de Young Museum

Fine Arts
Museums of
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Textile Arts Council

de Young Museum

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January
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