



## Contents

page

- |           |  |                            |
|-----------|--|----------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | Speaker's Letter                                 | Patricia Christy           |
| <b>2</b>  | Lisio News                                       | Eva Basile, Italy          |
| <b>3</b>  | Innovative New Course Model                      | Pamela Hardesty, Ireland   |
| <b>4</b>  | Cocooning with Creative Cloth                    | Patricia Black, Italy      |
| <b>6</b>  | European Workshop in Estonia                     | Birgit Vogler, Germany     |
| <b>7</b>  | "Tradition and Innovation" in Latvia             | Marianne Puschner, Austria |
| <b>8</b>  | Imperial Chinese Robes at the V&A                | Patricia Christy           |
| <b>10</b> | "Future Beauty"                                  |                            |
|           | 30 Years of Japanese Fashion                     | Patricia Christy           |
| <b>12</b> | Competition: The Handbag: necessary or accessory |                            |

## Letter from the Speaker

Dear Members of TEXERE

As the deadline for this newsletter got near I was worried that there would not be one as no articles had arrived. However at the last minute some members sent me some interesting items which I hope you will enjoy. So many thanks to them. It would be less of a worry if you don't leave it to the last minute in future please.

As we are an association for all levels of textiles education it is always good to have articles concerned with this subject, as well as other textiles events, as one of our aims is to exchange information about textiles education in different countries. Happily this time we have interesting information about Primary Education as well as Higher Education and Adult education.

Patricia Black, an Australian, has had experience of teaching school children in different countries and was living in Stockholm for a few years until last autumn when she moved to the warmer climes of Padua / Padova in Italy. So she has written about the differing styles of textiles design from children of different ethnic backgrounds. She has also written about an interesting establishment for sericulture research in Padova which she is taking her pupils to.

Erika Cohn from Hamburg, Germany, has translated an article about her friend's experience at a textile workshop in Estonia attended by people from several countries.

Pamela Hardesty who is a lecturer of textiles in Cork, Ireland, has introduced a new innovative part time course for people who cannot attend a full time textiles degree

course, which may give some of you ideas to develop similar courses yourselves.

Marianne Puschner, from Vienna in Austria, attended the Textiles Biennial in Riga, Latvia, last year where she exhibited her own work. It is good to hear what is happening in the Baltic States of Latvia and Estonia, as many of us will be experiencing the textiles of the third of these states, Lithuania, this year. It is always interesting to see what our members as individuals create as well as that of their pupils and Marianne's felt sculpture gives us food for thought about what some people do to their bodies for the sake of beauty.

I had the rare opportunity to see the Imperial Robes of China at the Victoria and Albert Museum recently, which were quite spectacular. It is the first time they have been shown outside of the Forbidden City of Beijing so they are well worth a visit if you should happen to be visiting London before the end of February. In stark contrast to these richly embroidered costumes I visited another exhibition "Future Beauty" 30 Years of Japanese Fashion at the Barbican which showed the stark but elegant simplicity of modern Japanese fashion. Maybe these exhibitions will travel to your museums later, if so I recommend them.

You will all have received the programme for the next ETN conference which will be held in Kaunas, Lithuania. It promises to be a very exciting event and I also look forward to exploring some other parts of the country during the excursions.

I am gradually receiving information about more members of TEXERE who wish to exhibit their own or their students' work during the conference. Initially we only had groups from Universities, a Post Graduate course and Adult Education and I had hoped that every level of edu-

cation would be represented. I am happy to say that now, all being well, we will also have work from Patricia Black's Primary school classes and Marianne Puschner's older secondary school pupils. It would also be nice to have work from a middle school class and any other school groups would be welcome. Of course more work from Higher education courses would also be welcome as every educational institution works differently and it would be good to have a wide variety of work. So please consider again if your students' work, at whatever level, would be of interest for this exhibition. The theme of Rewind is very wide so there are many kinds of work which would be suitable. If you read the information about Rewind past, present and future I am sure that you can find some way of fulfilling this brief.

I need to know by early March if you wish to contribute to it as the organisers have to plan the exhibition space. However the work does not need to be completed before the end of the summer term. Everyone who is submitting work must let me know how many works will be sent and their size with a brief description as soon as possible. The organisers would also like some photos of examples of finished work to help with the planning, so please send these to me as well, as soon as you can. I would also like some information about the work which can be displayed next to it in Kaunas.

If you are going to the conference you make take the work with you and collect it to return home afterwards. So the size of the works will be determined by how much you can carry. I suggested A3 size as a maximum for convenience but if you are transporting it the size is up to you. If you are posting it to the organisers then size and weight have to be considered because of the cost of postage. We will be allocated a liaison person who will be responsible for organising our exhibition which must be set up by the day before the conference. So please bear this in mind when planning your travelling arrangements to Kaunas. I will be arriving on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September in order to get the display started as I would like to go to Vilnius the next day.

If you wish to make a 10 minute presentation about your work during the conference you must inform Beatrijs Sterk about this as soon as possible to ensure that time will be allocated to you during that session.

Please note that the Texere General meeting will be held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> of September so I hope that you will be able to arrive in time for that. I look forward to seeing you then.

The deadline for the next Newsletter is May 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, but please send your articles anytime before that date and don't leave it until the last minute, as I will be going away in May for a while.

Best wishes,  
Patricia



## Lisio News By Eva Basile

The Lisio Foundation in Florence, Italy will be a partner in the juried exhibition *The Bag: A Necessary Accessory*, sponsored by the Italian Weavers Guild in collaboration with the city of Florence, the Florence Foundation for the Arts and Crafts and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, Belgium.

Submissions will be accepted until March 15, 2011. A jury composed of designers and experts will select 50 bags based on originality and design. On June 16 an exhibition of the selected works will open at the SAM gallery, a center for the arts and crafts sponsored by the city of Florence. The works will travel to Collegno (Turin) and Antwerp. A tri-lingual catalogue will document the project and exhibition.

## "Designing Your Dream Bag"

3 day workshop

February 4 to 6, 2011

Instructors: *Eva Basile, Julie Holyoke*

The Lisio Foundation's experience in the creation of object specific, bespoke textiles for high-fashion bags will be shared with weavers and designers during the course "Designing Your Dream Bag" from 4 to 6, February 2011 at the Foundation's school in Florence, Italy. Templates for classic purses will be used as models. During the three days workshop, participants will design and weave custom fabric for their personal creations on Lisio's digital Jacquard loom. The workshop is open to weavers and designers. For information and enrolment please contact [didat@fondazione-lisio.org](mailto:didat@fondazione-lisio.org) or [artigiani@tessereamano.it](mailto:artigiani@tessereamano.it)

# Innovative New Course Model: Fine Art Textiles, Cork

By **Pamela Hardesty**, Ireland

I am excited to report that a new Textiles course, Certificate in Fine Art Textiles, is currently underway at the Crawford College of Art and Design in Cork. I initiated this programme, and developed it last year along with Sarah Foster, Design Historian. We gained approval, with great support from our management, in late May, 2010; and chose, from interview, 14 students who are now moving into their second Semester of the curriculum.

The Course is part-time, composed of ½ day of Textiles History and Theory, with one full day of Textiles Studio per week for two years of 26 weeks each. At the end of these two years students will earn 30 credits applicable toward Degree, and a Level 8 (Honours Degree level) Certificate in Fine Art Textiles. This course makes use of facilities, modules, and staff already available in the College—but allows a new configuring of resources to answer a particular student need. It is also the first sign of expansion and I hope the first step toward a full department of Textiles in Cork.

For over 20 years I have taught Textiles as a Subsidiary element within the Fine Art Degree Course in the Crawford, and have lobbied to extend our Textiles offering in the College. Currently we do not have a fulltime Textiles Degree in any College in the southern region of Ireland. But we have a great deal of textiles interest. Cork Textiles Network, founded in 1997, is a very active voluntary group with a website [www.corktextiles.com](http://www.corktextiles.com), annual exhibitions and a high-profile annual Conference, that will this year host Diana Harrison from the UK. We also have a Level 6 one-year course in Creative Textiles taught at a Further Education College in Cork. For many years then I have been acutely aware of the demand for some form of third-level programme in Textiles for the Cork region.

Current participants in the Course provide a good illustration of the range



of the nature of demand: they include many who have gathered a rich base of textiles skills over many years through workshops, etc. but wish to explore concept and context; several from the Creative Textiles course who want a follow-on programme; several who have Fine Art degrees but are finding greater relevance for textiles in their developing art practice; several who have Textiles degrees but have not practised due to child-rearing or business for 20-odd years. For all of these women the part-time nature of the Course also means that they can maintain job and family commitments, but enjoy the stimulation and challenge of structured research, group interaction, exposure to a wide range of materials, techniques, and formats, and the context of the fine art College with its resources of photography, multimedia, glass, ceramics, metal and wood shops, print-making studios, and extensive library. The women bring a wide range of life experiences to the Course: one is a current Senior Clinical Psychologist; one runs a chicken farm. All of them are highly motivated, imbued with textiles enthusiasm and deep textiles sensibility. They are a joy and a challenge to teach!

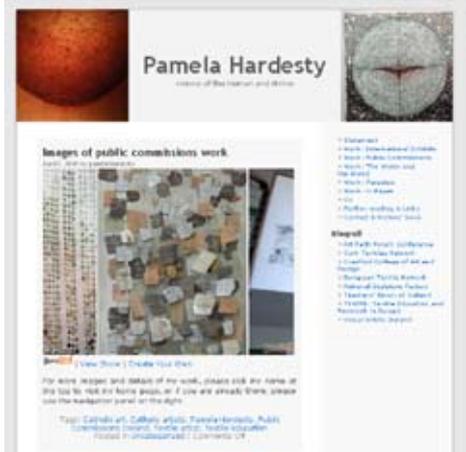
The course has a beginning website at [www.crawfordfinearttextiles.wordpress.com](http://www.crawfordfinearttextiles.wordpress.com). We would welcome

contact and exchange with any similar third-level groups out there for possible projects.

I include a photo of the November visit to our College of Mary Giehl, sculptor and textile artist from New York, who took my classes out into Cork to 'art-bomb' the city centre with impromptu textiles works.

Fine Art Textiles class, Crawford, with Mary Giehl (sunglasses) during our walk-around to view the art-bombing works. Sarah Foster, Academic Studies staff, is in the red coat. It was a frosty November day but great fun!

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# Cocooning the Creativity of Children with Cloth

By **Patricia Black**, Italy

Exposing school children to textile culture and appreciation is an exciting challenge-the only limit is time and resources as textiles are a low priority in the craft budget so recycling is a priority and resourcefulness a necessity. I taught children at an international school in Sweden for a few years until last summer and now I am teaching in Padua/Padova, Italy, so I have had the opportunity of teaching children from different cultures in recent years.

Children have a natural feeling for textiles as they relate to the world in a tactile way. In my classes I always provide an opportunity for felt-making as it involves squeezing, pressing and massaging soapy wool which is an activity which really engages them. Learning about where fibres are derived from is quite an abstract concept for the little ones, so concrete representations or, even better, the real thing in the form of sheep during a farm visit and silkworm-rearing are required for an 'authentic' learning pathway.

With the older groups I have printed their cartoons and artwork onto iron-on fabric giving them an opportunity to show their graphics on a bag or T-shirt. (photo 1)



We have made textile tunnels with a variety of textile patchwork tessellation to give a variety of textures and surface detail as well as knitting the ubiquitous circular-knitted snake that slowly takes shape during the year.

The other area which children naturally gravitate towards is pattern-making. It is interesting to note cultural differences in the types of patterns that children create, being influenced by the visual culture of their home environment.

Having taught a variety of different cultural backgrounds I would make a generalization that:- Middle East-

ern children do very finely detailed, delicate and convulsive patterns that echo Arabic script.

On the other hand, Swedish children make sparse bold statements of line and colour without decoration - the minimalist feel being a response to a sparse, snow filled landscape and a Norse ancestral memory!!!

Down in the Mediterranean neck-of-the-woods Italian children incorporate a lot of texture and detail, opting for fantastical themes and Baroque expressions - little wonder as every day they are exposed to gargoylesque creatures glaring alarmingly at them from their sentinel positions on historic facades on the way to school! Even the textures of the stone and the cobble street give a rich textural vocabulary to fuel creative psyches .



## Visiting a Sericulture Centre

By chance, I now live in Padua/Padova, a city that has a Sericulture research centre, specialising in silk farming, The Stazione Bacologica Sperimentale, in which silkworm eggs are available each year to interested silk makers like me. It was founded in 1871 by a decree of Vittorio Emanuele II, though the actual founder was Enrico Verson. It is a section of the Institute

for the Experimental Agrarian Zoology of Florence. The current director is Dr. Luciano Cappellozza and the Institute building is owned by the Provincial Administration of Padua, which has developed a museum with live collections of insects. This includes exhibitions on sericulture, apiculture and a general display of Lepidoptera. The sericulture part shows the silk collections of the section as well as old tools and machines used for the rearing of the silkworms and the reeling of the cocoon, which is ideal for the children to obtain first hand experience of these processes.

The institute is involved in scientific projects on sericulture and moriculture and contributes to the conservation of two germplasm banks of about 50 varieties of *Morus* spp and about 120 strains of *Bombyx mori*. The institution owns a mulberry field, also used for experiments, that provides the leaves necessary for the rearing and breeding of the various *Bombyx* strains.

Italy has been one of the main centres of silk production in the world since the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was third in importance after China and Japan. The Como region of Italy has always been the main centre of silk production, but the Veneto area has also been very important and from medieval times the Venetian traders flourished from the production and trading of silk cloth. The sericulture industry was still a vital moneymaking practice for the farm people in Veneto a century ago. There was an Octogenarian who struck up a conversation

when they saw us gathering mulberry leaves who remembered the small lean-tos attached to the houses where silkworms were reared, a room of their own - needing warmth at night to survive.

The variety of colours of the cocoons which are genetic variants of *bombyx mori* is remarkable and not due to feeding the creatures different leaves (see photo). The frequency of groves of mulberry trees in Northern Italy is the only indication these days of the silk-rearing industry which provided income a hundred years ago thanks to the industrious and short lived life cycle of *Bombyx* whose cocoons were consigned to Como where industrial mills produced silk for ties, clothing and scarves for the middle classes. Another use was silk for upholstery and jacquards which are still being woven at Fondazione Lisio ([www.fondazione-lisio.org](http://www.fondazione-lisio.org))

As part of our curriculum programme for Spring we are taking the children on a visit to this Sericulture Centre (Bachicoltura) where they can see at first hand the specially humidified rooms which house trays of burgeoning silkworms. We will visit when the silkworms grow to their maximum size. At that stage they have voracious appetites and the sound of them munching away is really loud. The children will experience Nature's burst of energy which that metamorphosis unleashes. They are often initially alarmed by their similarity to worms, but their curiosity usually overcomes these initial fears and they eventually take delight in having the



worms crawling up their arms and rearing their heads like horseback riders—cavallieri—hence their nickname.

The pedagogical challenge is to illustrate the process starting with the cocoon fibre and the finished textile. Certainly we can utilize a small weaving loom and show the process of fibres to fabric. We may weave the cocoons and incorporate them into a sculpture or use the cocoons to make jewellery - the children always come up with novel ideas once they are engaged in a process of discovery. So I look forward to seeing their results.

Footnote: On the butterfly theme- an inspiring book called *Chrysalis* by Kim Todd, documents *Sybilla Merian*, a Dutch artist living 3 centuries ago, who at the age of 52, documented the butterfly species of Guyana at first hand- living in a steaming jungle for 2 years! Her botanical drawings were made into a book of exquisite and famous engravings shown at a recent exhibition of her works in Amsterdam.





By **Birgit Vogler**, Germany  
(translated by Erika Cohn)

The district of Plön (Northern Germany) maintains an active partnership with the district Lääne Virumaa in Estonia.

I had heard about some programmes for schools, financially supported by the EU commission and early in September 2009 I received information about a Grundvig Workshop in Haljala, Estonia. The programme, named after the Däne Grundvig (1783-1872) the founder of the HEIMVOLKSSCHULE, is for life – long learning and supports grown-ups of different ages.

The programme "Linen and Wool" met my interests and the time in July also suited me. There were participants from several countries; Ömer and Adiviye from Turkey, Edite and Jewa from Latvia, Carmen and Cristina from Spain, Kriszta from Hungary, Sabina from Slovene, Anne from Ireland and me from Germany. The age of the members lay between twenty and sixty. Marge, the fashion teacher and Kille, responsible for felting, com-

pleted the group.

We met on July 4<sup>th</sup> in Tallinn, made a tour through the old town and then drove in a minibus about 100 kilometres eastward to Haljala to Marges house near a wood. We stayed in four guest rooms, a bit crowded, but very cosy.

We learned and worked from nine to twelve in the morning and from three p.m. to nine p.m. in the afternoon. It pleased me that we could learn the offered skills and could deepen our knowledge as we liked. We were weaving on three looms in the house and were felting in the garden. The hot weather was interrupted by short thunderstorms but without any cooling.

For lunch we went to different restaurants, met the mayor of the community and the manager of the Folk School of the Juhan Kunderi Society, responsible for the workshop. We visited a breeding farm for trout and a sheep breeder, a factory for linen and the textile collection of the museum in Rakvere. Other excursions included a visit to the mansion Sagadi, a wood museum and a picnic at the beach af-

ter which we attended a concert in a small church nearby.

The evenings were something special: everybody introduced herself and her country. We looked at the maps, saw films and photos, listened to music and tried titbits, typical for the countries.

I was touched by these very personal impressions and I experienced the workshop as a piece of a United Europe.

On the last day we presented all our objects and enjoyed the party.

The Grundvig Workshops are published in September for the coming year. Information via internet under [www.na-bibb.de](http://www.na-bibb.de)



# 4th Riga International Triennial of Textile and Fibre Art

# Tradition & Innovation

## in Latvia. August 2010



By **Marianne Puschner**,  
Austria

Ms. Velta Raudzepa, Deputy Director of the Museum of Decorative Art and Design of Riga writes in the catalogue: "The main idea of the exhibition, "GLOBAL INTRIGUE", was to develop different aspects of globalization in connection with new problems and challenges in our contemporary world." It was a juried exhibition and the art-works of 68 artists from 23 countries were arranged well in a large exhibition hall.

The exhibits were constructed using many different techniques such as the Jacquard loom, classical weaving, contemporary lace, embroidery, shibori, felting, drawing effects, shaping and forming textiles, use of recycled materials...etc.

The pieces of art-work which were displayed expressed very different themes and views. Some works dealt with the human body and feeling, global health problems like breast cancer, influenza, female beauty and plastic surgery. Others were inspired by social and political aspects like in-

tegration, social values, conflicts in the world and amongst people. Further themes were ecological and economic problems, the fast speed of life, global warming, terrorism and the egotism of human beings. Some artists were interested in interactive textiles and objects.

There is a very good catalogue, in which every artist and his/her work is introduced on two pages. I was happy to have the possibility of showing my art piece "Beauty Uniform- Uniform Beauty" in this exhibition. I addressed the theme of beauty ideals and beauty operations. The following article from the catalogue gives details of my work. In my work I focus on the global problem of cosmetic operations and the ideal of beauty which seems to have become the same all over the world. A whole-body uniform is the result, a kind of skin garment.

I use wool as part of the skin. The wool has been felted onto a shop window mannequin. When removed from the doll the felt forms a hollow



shell of grey skin that is stiff like a corset. This

grey uniform was embroidered with red cross-stitches and I felted them in. The embroidery is on the parts of the body which are often operated for aesthetic reasons (eyes, nose, breast, vagina, etc.....). In former days the embroidery was an embellishment of the traditional costume, so now it is under the skin. The use of the cross-stitches emphasizes the fact that the skin is sewn after operations. It reminds us of the pain arising from it.

The former corset is now inside the body. The back, arms and legs laced together point to this fact and remind you of the stripes of a uniform.

The color red stands for blood (life and death). Like the whole-body uniform it points to the problem of the performance of our body: On the one side all seems to be feasible: we are free to design our body. On the other side there is our dependence on the ideal of beauty and economic factors.

# Imperial Chinese Robes exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum

7 December 2010 -27 February 2011

By Patricia Christy

The exhibition of the Imperial Chinese Robes at the Victoria and Albert Museum is an historic event as it is the first time that the Palace Museum in Beijing, the official residence of Chinese Emperors for over 500 years, has loaned its large costume collection of robes worn by the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). It is normally hidden behind the scenes in the Forbidden City and is rarely on view to visitors.

In 2008 the Chinese ambassador was invited to the "Magnificence of the Tsars" exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, which greatly impressed her and she immediately suggested that she may organise an exchange of exhibitions between the Palace Museum and the V&A. As a result fifty robes and accessories (including shoes, socks, pen cases, mirrors and spectacles) as well as textiles arrived which gives an idea of Chinese court life under ten successive rulers from 1644-1911.

In the large complex of palaces, audience halls, shrines, living quarters of the imperial family etc. every aspect of life was subject to regulation. There was a thick manual which detailed the dress codes for different ranks. So a person's place in the hierarchy was revealed by the variations of materials, colours and motifs on the costumes. In imperial dress there were five categories of formal wear: official, festive, regular, travelling and military, all designed to suit the tasks performed by the emperor and empress, their relations and courtiers.

The most elaborate outfits were reserved for receiving guests or ministers, travelling or inspecting troops. For observing important rituals the colours were symbolic of the natural forces or seasons: blue for the Altar of Heaven, yellow for the Altar of



***Empresses's festive headress***

Earth, red for sacrifices at the Altar of the Sun, pale blue for the Altar of the Moon. The women of the Palace rarely ventured outside the Forbidden City, (apart from the Empresses annual pilgrimage to the Altar of the Silkworm) so they often wore more informal outfits, even so though these were very sumptuous by normal standards.

Only four people in China were allowed to wear a specific shade of bright yellow, the Emperor, his wife, the Dowager Duchess and the Imperial Concubine of the First Rank. The heir apparent could only wear apricot yellow while the Emperor's other sons wore golden yellow and lesser princes wore pale blue.

The ensembles included a court robe, hat, belt and boots. The emperor wore a royal coat over these and in winter months a fur coat for warmth. Many of the robes have distinctive cuffs in the shape of a horse's hoof.

As the Qing were originally a nomadic people from Manchuria in north east China, this was one of several symbols which reminded them of their Manchu heritage.

The Emperor's formal robes were decorated with an elaborate set of symbols such as the sun, the moon and constellations (indicating the Emperor's harmony with the heavens) mountains, dragons (representing things on earth), flowery creatures,

axe heads, sacrificial vessels (objects for ancestor worship), waterweed, flames and grains (representing three of the five elements). For festive occasions the emperor wore the dragon robe on which only he could have nine dragons. Other members of the royal family were allowed fewer dragons according to their rank. The dragon robes were for happy occasions such as weddings, birthdays, festivals and imperial banquets. They were also for meeting foreign ambassadors.

The empress could choose to wear other symbolic patterns as well as the dragon robe. At imperial banquets the empress dowager, the empress, imperial concubines, princesses and wives and daughters of Manchu noblemen would sit at tables away from the men and would wear their prettiest outfits. They had far fewer official duties to perform so wore informal robes most of the time. The changyi, a loose fitting outer gown was a particular favourite of the Empress Dowager Cixi. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the 'riding jacket' became extremely popular for both men and women, even when not on horseback. The travelling robe was designed to allow movement on horseback. The Emperor wore it when he went hunting, or visited other parts of the empire. This was a major undertaking with a four month tour which could

require 3000 people, 6000 horses and 1000 boats. He inspected his troops regularly for which he wore ceremonial armour. The jacket and apron are padded with cotton instead of the protective iron strips used for battle uniform. The sleeves are banded in closely sewn strips of gold thread to resemble shining metal.

When he was alone or enjoying family life the Emperor wore informal robes for which there were no regulations so he could then wear whatever styles and colours he chose. The last Emperor, although he still lived in the imperial Palace after his deposition in 1911, preferred to wear western style clothes, so the elaborate history of imperial robes ended with the fall of the dynasty.

The production of clothing for the Imperial family was managed by the Imperial Household Department. The silk fabrics were produced in the imperial factories in southern China, in the cities of Nanjing, Suzhou and Hangzhou. These were weaving mills with centuries of experience and supplied exclusively to the court, regardless of cost, so they could devote all their resources to creating exquisite materials of the highest quality. The finished textiles and clothing were sent to the capital where they were tailored and embroidered into the garments in specialised workshops within the Forbidden City complex. The court also received silks as tribute from the other Chinese cities and subordinate states. The mechanised loom reached China in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and 'western' fabrics were welcomed as a novelty.



**Emperor's winter court robe**



**Wedding robe of Empress Jing Xiao Xiaoding 1889**

**Empresses's informal robe**



**Emperor's ceremonial armour**



# 30 years of Japanese Fashion

Barbican Gallery,  
London

15 October 2010 - 6  
February 2011

By **Patricia Christy**

"Future Beauty: 30 years of Japanese Fashion" is the first exhibition in Europe to comprehensively survey avant-garde Japanese fashion, from the early 1980's to the present day. It was curated by the eminent fashion historian Akiko Fukai, Director and Chief Curator of the Kyoto Costume Institute. It explores the unique sensibility of Japanese design and its sense of beauty embodied in clothing.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century designers such as Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto redefined the very basis of fashion and challenged the established notions of beauty into modernism, turning fashion into art through their radical formal language, intellectual approach and ingenious reinterpretation of tradition. They influenced the next generation of Japanese designers including Junja Watanebe, Jun Takahashi, Tao Kurihara, Matohu, and Akira Naka whose radical concepts defy convention and have reinvented the ways of clothing the body.

The first area reveals the interaction between East and West, historic and contemporary and identifies the characteristics which have come to define Japanese fashion. They show inventive experimentation with materials and the cut of clothes, known as *'wabi-sabi'* which is the Japanese principle of beauty in modesty and imperfection. The monochrome exhibits in black and white show works which are torn, deliberately unfinished or aged. Some garments showed the use of abundant material enveloping the human figure creating dynamic potent spaces between the body and the cloth, which shows the unique special concept of *'ma'*. With their sophisticated exposure and displacement of clothing component parts, the garments introduced a language of de-



construction to international fashion, which changed its course forever.

In 1980 the pioneering designers Kenzo Takada and Issey Miyake showed their designs "In Praise of Shadows" which was entirely different to the opulent fashions of the West. They were joined soon after by Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, who formed the design team of Comme Des Garçons, showing for the first time in Paris in 1981, with asymmetric, deconstructed and artfully ripped garments. They avoided colour, only using the monochromatic palettes in sharp contrast to the West. Rather than making revealing clothes like the west their clothes concealed and the styles were subtle and understated. One of

their design features was the use of a loose swathe of fabric which could be arranged around the body in different ways to form unisex garments which could allow freedom or constriction of movement, emphasising the body, the materials and motion.

In 1988 these became pleated versions which were configured in dramatic geometric shapes, creating extraordinary outlines. An oversized garment would be created and then put through a high temperature pleating machine which pleated the fabric in different directions, which was a reversal of the conventional pleating process. Another section showed large photographs on the wall of garment panels laid flat and the mannequins in



front wore the garments with the panels arranged in different ways.

As one walked into the next section there was a shock to the senses as one moved from the stark monochrome and simplicity to vivid technicolour and exotic shapes. In this section the collaboration between designer and textile manufacturer was shown. They create textiles using new weaving and dyeing techniques and synthetic textile construction processes to suit the designers' fantasies. Some were art orientated forms using extraordinary patterns and materials such as dried seaweed and coils of rope, woven strips of leather, polyester wadding etc. Hand knitted cable knit fabrics were fused to sections of worsted material to give interesting detail in a suit. There were voluminous flounces of polyester organza pleated to resemble ruffs, spiralling around the body and many other unique innovative designs.

The most fascinating exhibit for me was Issey Miyake's rolls of knitted tubes of double knit fabric, made on computer controlled looms with mesh type patterns and yarns, linked in a fine mesh of chain stitches outlining a garment shape incorporated in the construction. The customer can buy a length of the fabric, cut along the lines of holes, and wear the garment

instantly. The cut edge shrinks and seals immediately so that the fabric does not unravel. In this way the weaving and garment construction are integrated at the point of manufacture. Some lines of holes were uncut forming a pattern in the fabric.

This ground floor section finished with designs from their most recent designers of youth street fashion, 'Cool Japan'. Groups of youths or 'Zoku', meaning tribe, have opened independent shops selling street fashion in the Harajuki district. Today Tokyo has a global reputation of being a hot spot for youth fashion with a multitude of influences and references. Ohija and Zucca favour the simpler more iconic use of 'manga' characters such as 'Hello Kitty' and Astro Boy. Jun Takahashi brings a harder punk and gothic edge to the catwalk while other street styles are influenced by magazines e.g. CUTE and Fruits. These looks are typified by young girls' predilection for everything cute and a child like sensibility expressed in Victorian and Rococo fancy dress costume.

On the First floor some of these designers have been given an individual space to show a selection of their work, with videos of their catwalk shows playing on the back wall, four of which I describe below, ending with a group of the most recent up coming new designers.

Rei Kawakubo's collection challenged the pre-conception of how women and men like to dress which resulted in the formation of Comme Des Garçons. There are examples from his 1997 collection "Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body" for which garments were padded in extreme unconventional ways, e.g. on one shoulder, on the back, on one hip, etc. and others were made up of sections of material seamed at odd angles to create unusual shapes.

Issey Miyake retired in 1996 to concentrate on more experimental projects. His area showed his newest venture,

132 5, which are a series of folded origami style polygons made from sustainable recycled PET (polyethylene terephthalate) which, when worn on the body, form interesting garments. A single 1d flat piece of PET turned into a 3d structure, with the addition of folding lines it adds 2d shapes which when worn become 5d, representing the interchange between garment and wearer.

Yohji Yamamoto combined European couture, work wear and men's tailoring with the traditional Japanese aesthetic.

Jun Takahashi's used a variety of fabrics, prints and weaves dyed to the same colours and then embellished with embroidery and beads.

The whole exhibition was so inspiring and gave me many new ideas about the use of materials and construction of clothing.





Firenze, October 2010

Coordinamento Tessitori in collaboration with the Florence Foundation for the Arts and Crafts and the City of Florence, are promoting a touring exhibition/competition for 2011 entitled: "THE HANDBAG: necessary or accessory."

Artists and craftsmen may participate both individually or as part of a group.

Each individual entrant may submit one original piece which has not previously been exhibited. The participation of groups or associations is also permitted and they can submit just one collective work.

There will also be a special category for schools open to both public and private fashion and design courses.

The Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp (Belgium), as special guest, will have its own section, where it will present the work of its students. The Academy will also be a venue for the touring exhibition.

The work, which should be accompanied by comprehensive technical information, should be functional and may be realised using any technique or material, provided they have an explicit link to weaving and related practices (straw, felt, baskets, prints, patchwork).

The entries must be handmade by the competitor (but not prior to January 2011) and should be sent anonymously for selection. A copy of the application, duly completed and signed, must be sent along with the artifact in a sealed envelope. The entries along with supporting documents should be sent to: Sam / Arts and Crafts via Giano della Bella 20/1, 50124 Florence and must arrive no later than March 15, 2011.

Notification of the jury's decision will be sent by March 31, 2011

Postage will be at the expense of the participant. The packaging will be used to return the work after the event and should be robust and so designed as to be easily reusable. Work will be returned to participants after the event at their expense unless otherwise indicated. Similarly, incomplete entries or entries that do not respect the rules of participation will be considered null and void and the work will be returned to sender at their expense.

The selected pieces will be returned to participants after the completion of the tour/exhibition. The theme of the handbag, in terms of "accessory", may be developed in different ways: as an item, sculpture, or jewel, provided that it comes from an expression of research and creativity. The main criteria for selection will be the quality of craftsmanship, use of materials and, most importantly, innovation.

The winner will be chosen by a jury of specifically selected professionals. The decision of the jury is final.

The creator of the winning piece in the main category will be given a special space in the exhibition.

The winner of the schools category will be awarded an internship with company in the industry.

The selected works will be displayed at Sam/Arts and Crafts Centre, Florence with the official opening in mid-June 2011.

The exhibition will be documented by a publication in three languages (English, Italian, Flemish) which will be printed by the organization. The editors will oversee the photography and presentation of the pieces.

The pieces will be presented to the press and will appear in various publications and/or web communications.

A fee of €28 applies per entry. €16 euro for participants under 30 years of age and €35 for associations and groups.

The fee should be lodged in postal account 41186479 and be made payable to: Coordinamento Tessitori, CP 543 Fi Centro, 50123 Florence.

The entry fee gives the applicant the right to a reduction in costs of workshops related to the initiative and 4 copies of "tessereAmano" the official newsletter of Coordinamento Tessitori which contains an extensive amount of supporting material related to hand-weaving and other textile arts including: professional, artistic, recreational, educational and therapeutic aspects.

Members of Coordinamento Tessitori for the year 2011 may enter the competition free of charge, as the association itself is sponsoring the project.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Workshops - Meetings

26/27 November 2010: "Workshop on the design of handbags" led by Luigi Mulas Debois

November 2010 - January 15, 2011: Meetings

4/6 February 2011: "The Jeweled Handbag", A workshop in computerised Jacquard weaving at Fondazione Lisio, Florence.

March 15, 2011: Closing date for entries with attached technical sheet.

March 31, 2011: Notification of winning entries.

June 16 2011: Inauguration of the exhibition and winner's presentation at spazio SAM, Florence.

23/24/25 September 2011: Exhibition at Collegno Villaggio Leuman, Turin as part of the annual event: 'Filo lungo filo, un nodo si farà'.

Late autumn: Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp (Belgium)

First half of 2012: Returning of work to entrants.

## The bag necessary or accessory

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Artist

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Title

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Address

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Phone

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E-mail

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For the catalogue - max 400 digits

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Materials

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Technique

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Description of the creative process

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I consent to my work being presented in the touring exhibition at the discretion of the organizers. I enclose the equipment (i.e. hangers, wire, etc.) and instructions (i.e. drawings or photos, layout information) for mounting and presentation.

The pieces will be treated with the utmost care and will be returned at the conclusion of the event, via registered fast-post with payment on delivery charged to the entrants, unless otherwise indicated by the same.

At the conclusion of the program of exhibitions the artists will be contacted to arrange the return of their work. The work will be handed over to the entrants or their chosen representatives, or posted to the entrants at their expense. The work must be submitted in sturdy packaging which will be used for its return.

The pieces will be retained by the organizers between exhibitions. Every care will be taken to ensure that the works are delivered safely and presented in best condition, but the organisation accepts no responsibility for any theft, fire or damage of any nature to the pieces that may occur during each stage of the event. It is the responsibility of the artists themselves to insure their work if they so wish.

I accept the conditions set by the organizing secretary,

Date

Signature

Coordinamento Tessitori, tel/fax. +39055/224941 - +39338/6769055 or +39340/3611592.  
e.mail artigiani@tessereamano.it