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Fall 2018

# Textile Society of America Newsletter 30:2 — Fall 2018

Textile Society of America

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TEXTILE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

# Newsletter

VOLUME 30. NUMBER 2. FALL 2018

*"Fabric Three" With Silk for Valhalla by Åse Erikson  
from the Members' Exhibition at the 2018 TSA Symposium,  
"The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global."*



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## Our Mission

The Textile Society of America is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides an international forum for the exchange and dissemination of textile knowledge from artistic, cultural, economic, historic, political, social, and technical perspectives. Established in 1987, TSA is governed by a Board of Directors from museums and universities in North America. Our members worldwide include curators and conservators, scholars and educators, artists, designers, makers, collectors, and others interested in textiles. TSA organizes biennial symposia. The juried papers presented at each symposium are published in the Proceedings available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/textilesoc>. It also organizes day- and week-long programs in locations throughout North America and around the world that provide unique opportunities to learn about textiles in various contexts, to examine them up-close, and to meet colleagues with shared interests. TSA distributes a Newsletter and compiles a membership directory. These publications are included in TSA membership, and available on our website.

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## About the Newsletter

The Textile Society of America Newsletter is published two times a year as a member benefit and serves to announce and report on the Biennial Symposia. In addition, the newsletter reports on TSA programs, international textile news, and lists conferences, courses, exhibitions, grants, job postings, and tours. Advertising space is available. Details are at: <https://bit.ly/2RTuK58>

**Submissions** are welcome.

Recent newsletters can be downloaded from the TSA website as PDFs:

<http://textilesocietyofamerica.org/news/newsletters/>

Newsletters dating from 1989 through 2004 are available on Digital Commons:

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsanews/>

## Newsletter Submission Guidelines:

To submit content to the Editor please e-mail [newsletter@textilesociety.org](mailto:newsletter@textilesociety.org) with the subject line, "submission." Text should be sent as Microsoft Word files and images should be sent as individual JPEG files. Please include image captions and a one to three sentence author bio for reviews and articles. Please keep articles and reviews to 600 words.

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## Stay in Touch

eNews: In addition to the PDF newsletter, TSA distributes regular e-mails with up-to-date news of programs and opportunities. Subscribe at <http://textilesocietyofamerica.org/news/subscribe/> to keep up with program registration dates, scholarship and award opportunities, and news from the field.



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# Letter from the Editor

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE TSA NEWSLETTER, IDEAS CONVERGE. THE Newsletter acts as an intersection where multiple voices—celebratory and critical alike—meet, coincide, cross, and hopefully, help us to connect.

Like an internet connection, the Newsletter serves as an access point, a link to information. Like a bus connection, it serves as a transfer point, helping to move ideas from one place to another. But the Newsletter can also facilitate a more intangible type of connection: an affinity for each other's work, an identification with each other's stories, and a relationship to each other as a true, collaborative, interconnected Society.

This last type of connection seems daunting. After all, writing is active. Writers put something of themselves into their words and submit them here for us to read. Reading can be passive. Sometimes we see the words in front of us, but we don't absorb them. It's easy to take these words—and the people behind them—for granted.

To build connections, we, as readers, can try to think of ourselves as sponges. We let those words roll around in our heads, our hearts, our guts. And by thinking about and feeling and chewing on those words as they harmonize or clash with our own experiences and worldviews, we've responded to the writer. We've accepted a gift and we've reciprocated.

These are not my ideas. They are in response to Student & New Professional Awardee Jennifer Chen-su Huang's thoughtful review of her experience at the 2018 Symposium (page 19). In it, Jennifer encourages us to take "response-ability/responsibility" for respectfully sharing and co-contributing to our field. This was Jennifer's response to Sonja Dahl, a panelist at the Symposium, who herself was responding to Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992). Here, Morrison writes:

Writing and reading mean being aware of the writer's notions of risk and safety, the serene achievement of, or sweaty fight for, meaning and response-ability.... The imagination that produces work which bears and invites rereadings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, implies a shareable world.

This is how ideas converge.

Your response to this Newsletter is not required in writing, but we welcome and encourage your research, essays, opinions, critiques, reviews, letters, leads, and, especially, your news. You may notice that this issue does not include one of our most beloved features: Member News. We welcome you to submit news of your exhibition, book, article, lecture, award, or project using our online submission form (<https://textilesocietyofamerica.org/news/news-letters>). If you're not a forms person, send it by email. Or snail mail. We want to hear from you.



Natasha Thoreson



# Letter from the President

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AS I WRITE, WE ARE JUST A FEW weeks out from the wonderful 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial Symposium in Vancouver, Canada, and I am just beginning to absorb my experience. Looking back, I'm amazed at all the research and experiences presented and the questions and intense discussions that have arisen from the presentations and conversations. For me there were so many opportunities to learn, so many things to see and experience, and so many people I was thrilled to see again and meet for the first time. Thank you all—participants, attendees, and volunteers—for making this experience possible.

Symposia don't happen without a huge amount of work from volunteers. I want to especially thank the Symposium Organizing Committee—Jean Kares, Bettina Matzkuhn, Michele Hardy, and Ruth Scheuing—for their incredible vision and thousands of hours of work to make this symposium a reality. A special thank you also to their team of volunteers, many of whom you may have met as they registered us for the conference, answered our questions, and helped us find the presentation rooms. Thank you all.

For those of you who presented at the symposium, do not forget the January 30, 2019 deadline for submitting your papers to the proceedings. There is submission information at the back of your symposium program as well as on our website. You can submit your finished work to: <https://textilesociety.submittable.com/submit>. For questions, feel free to contact Lynn Tinley at [lynntinley@comcast.net](mailto:lynntinley@comcast.net).

Thank you, Lynn, for coordinating this. We look forward to reading everyone's submissions.

For every event that TSA hosts, we know there is room to grow and learn. If you were able to attend the Symposium, we hope you filled out the conference questionnaire. TSA takes these opportunities for feedback very seriously, and we look

to you to help us better understand what we are excelling at and what we need to improve.

## Fall Fundraising

As always, access to symposia is a continuing focus for the organization. For this symposium, we were able to give fee waivers, scholarships, and merit awards to over 50 presenters and attendees. This number is an impressive increase compared to the support we have been able to give in the past. But we always wish we could offer more support. Scholarships are possible because of you, as well as our generous members and sponsors. Thank you all who donated to help make the symposium accessible for others.

With this in mind, please consider our Fall Fundraiser as you prepare for your year-end donations. This is an important event for TSA and helps not only keep the organization financially healthy but also creates access to programs. Keep an eye out in your mail—electronic and paper—for this year's letter and know you can always make a donation to TSA online at: <https://bit.ly/2zxdhbc>

You, our members, are TSA, and we appreciate your participation in any way you can.

## Future Get Togethers

We know that not everyone can make it to a symposium. So, between symposium years we try to provide opportunities for TSA members to get together for more local programs. In the coming year we will have a number of Textiles Close-Up (TCUs) programs. Chicago will host our first 2019 TCU, "Andean Meets Anni in Chicago," in early April. And for September, plans are underway for a program at the Detroit Institute of Arts, likely focusing on their African collection. In November, we hope to be back in Canada in Toronto. For each of these

programs, TSA provides one full scholarship. So please, think about attending a TCU near you and applying for a scholarship. For more information about past TCUs and announcements about future ones, please watch your email and see our website: <https://bit.ly/2DqyTuk>

As one symposium comes to a close, another is already being planned. We are very excited to announce that the 2020 TSA Symposium, *Women's Stories, Human Lives*, will be in Boston from October 14-18, 2020. We hope you will begin to make plans to attend. We can't wait to see you and hear your stories.

## Final Thoughts

As I start my journey as your TSA President, I want to say how grateful I am to all those TSA members from whom I have learned so much. I am especially grateful to the members of the TSA Board and want to thank those who have retired from the Board in Vancouver: Ruth Barnes, Dominique Cardon, Rowland Ricketts, and Lauren Whitley. I want to especially acknowledge and thank Wendy Weiss who will be stepping down as Director of Communications and Newsletter Editor but will be continuing her work with TSA as Senior Editor. And of course, a big thank you to Roxane Shaughnessy for her 10 years of leadership on the Board: 2006-2010 as recording secretary and 2012-2018 in her presidential commitment. Truly, we couldn't have done it without you! Thank you all.

Finally, a big warm welcome to the new TSA members who are joining the Board: Maggie D'Aversa, Kathrine Diuguid, Isaac Facio, Robin Muller, Wendy Roberts, and Melinda Watt. I look forward to working with each of you.



Lisa Kriner  
TSA President, 2018-2020

## Welcome New TSA Board Members

TSA Board of Directors are responsible for the stewardship of the organization: defining and refining its goals and mission as TSA grows and develops; establishing priorities while ensuring that the activities address the mission and core values of TSA; and supporting and strengthening the organization's structure, finances, and functionality for the future. They volunteer their time and energy to the organization and contribute their knowledge and skills in various ways, representing the diversity of TSA both geographically and professionally and serving as advocates for their specializations and regions.

The new Board members (2018-2020) began their term in October at the 2018 Symposium and join the standing Board members—Linda Eaton, Catharine Ellis, Karen Hampton, Lisa Kriner, Ann Peters, Vita Plume, Lesli Robertson, Owyn Ruck, and Lee Talbot.

Outgoing Board members include Ruth Barnes, Dominique Cardon, Rowland Ricketts, Roxane Shaughnessy, Wendy Weiss, and Lauren Whitley.

The new incoming Board members (2018-2020) are:

- Vice President/President  
Elect: Melinda Watt
- Director of Communications:  
Wendy Roberts
- Director at Large: Maggie D'Aversa
- Director at Large: Kat Diuguid
- Director at Large: Isaac Facio
- Director at Large: Robert Muller

## Our Focus on Diversity: Vision Statement

“The Textile Society of America, an international organization, recognizes the profound global reach of textiles. We are committed to developing leadership initiatives, membership, and programming rooted in the plurality of textile histories, producers, and purposes. With an eye toward expanding our voices and audience, we will focus on inclusion of underrepresented groups, and advocacy for robust diversity of our personal and professional viewpoints.”

Our aim is to be a truly inclusive organization with those involved in it to be as diverse as the textile communities that are served. This is fundamental to the future success of TSA and our ability to contribute to culture and society in the USA and internationally. The range of perspectives and experience diversity brings is an asset to our organization and we want to create an inclusive, welcoming environment for all those who work with us, attend our events, conferences, and workshops, and those who contribute to our journal and publications. We particularly encourage people from all groups currently under-represented in the cultural sector and in public discourse about textiles, social identities, and the creative process to be part of TSA's future. While recognizing that forms of English have predominated in our organization, we foster and promote dialogue about textiles enriched by diverse languages and ways of thinking about the world, and seek to create or connect with forums in other local, regional, or global languages.

We are developing programs to support our efforts as stated above. Please reach out to Karen Hampton at [outreach@textilesociety.org](mailto:outreach@textilesociety.org) to find out how you can become involved.



*TSA Joint 2016-2018 & 2018-2020 Board Members*

*Front Row L-R: Lesli Robertson, Roxane Shaughnessy, Vita Plume (President 2016-2018), Maggie D'Aversa, Ruth Barnes, Karen Hampton, Lisa Kriner (President 2018-2020), Dominique Cardon, Caroline Charuk (TSA General Manager)*

*Back Row L-R: Lee Talbot, Isaac Facio, Wendy Weiss, Melinda Watt, Lauren Whitley, Wendy Roberts, Linda Eaton, Catharine Ellis, Rowland Ricketts*

*Not pictured: Owyn Ruck, Ann Peters, Robin Muller, Katherine Diuguid*



## R. L. Shep Ethnic Textile Book Award

By Sarah Fee

The Textile Society of America is pleased to announce the winner of the 2017 R. L. Shep Ethnic Textile Book award:

*Art, Honor, and Ridicule: Fante Asafo Flags from Southern Ghana*

Authors: Silvia Forni and Doran H. Ross

Published by: Royal Ontario Museum and  
Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2017. 304 p.

ISBN: 978-0-88854-516-9

*Art, Honor, and Ridicule: Fante Asafo Flags from Southern Ghana* makes outstanding scholarly contributions to a rich tradition of textile creativity in Africa, known mainly for iconographic imagery linked to oral knowledge and bold design executed in vivid colors. Based on decades of research, this book identifies and recognizes for the first time the individual artists and workshops who design and make the flags, the sensibilities and long history that inform their making and innovations to the present day, and the flags' deep cultural meanings for wider communities. At the same time, the compelling writing and beautiful production overall make the work highly appealing to broad audiences.

Twenty-three works were nominated for the 2017 R. L. Shep Award, representing the tremendous variety of textiles and textile approaches embraced by TSA and the growing passion for cloth across many fields. In addition to the winning book, the committee wishes to recognize two additional titles for their originality and scope of research:

*African-Print Fashion Now!*

Editors: Suzanne Gott, Kristyne S. Loughran,  
Betsy D. Quick, and Leslie W. Rabine

Published by: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2017. 304 p.  
ISBN: 978-0990762638

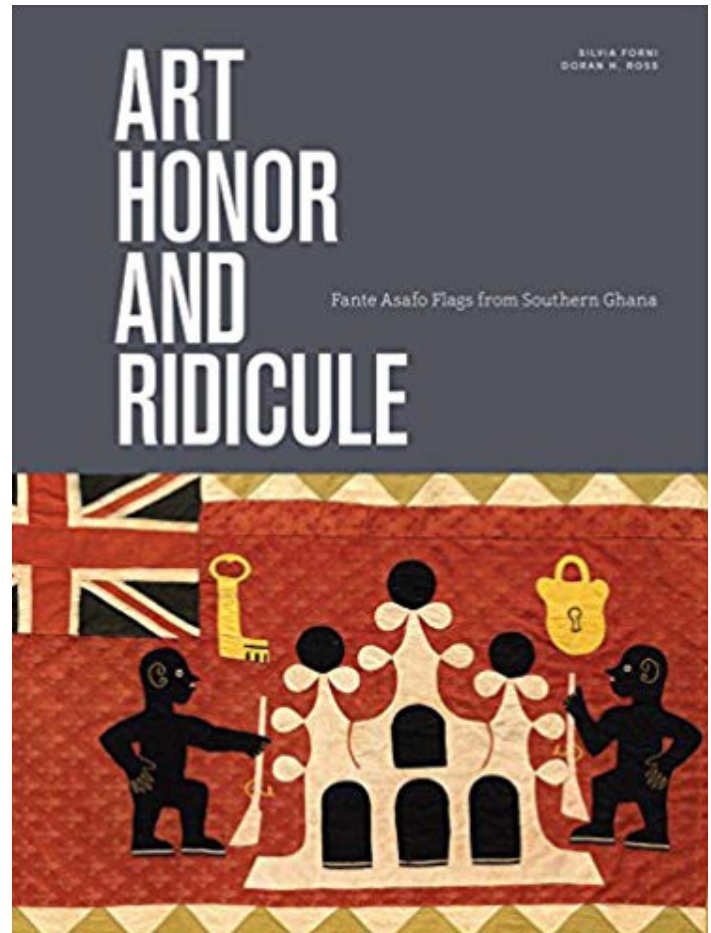
*Tibetan Dress: In Amdo and Kham*

Author: Gina Corrigan

Published by: Hali Publications, 2018. 240 p.  
ISBN: 978-1898113584

It was a challenging task to determine the winner among so many outstanding publications. Details of the nominated books were featured in the Spring 2018 TSA Newsletter. A review of *Art, Honor, and Ridicule* is included in this issue of the TSA Newsletter (page 23); the runners up will be reviewed in 2019.

Given annually to a publication judged to be the best book in the field of ethnic textile studies, the R. L. Shep Award consists of a cash prize funded by an endowment established by R. L. Shep in 2000. The purpose of this award is to encourage the



study and understanding of textile traditions by recognizing and rewarding exceptional scholarship.

For further information about the award or to nominate a book for the 2018 R. L. Shep Award, please visit: <https://textilesociety-ofamerica.org/programs/awards-scholarships/shep/>

*The 2017 R.L. Shep Ethnic Textile Book Award Committee:*

*Dr. Sarah Fee: 2017 Shep Committee Chair, Curator, Royal Ontario Museum*

*Dr. Eulanda A. Sanders: Professor and Chair, Donna R. Danielson Professor in Textiles and Clothing, Department of Apparel, Events and Hospitality Management, Iowa State University*

*Roy Hamilton: Research Associate and retired Curator, University of California*

## Diedrick Brackens Honored with 2018 Brandford/Elliott Award

By Pat Hickman

The Textile Society of America's Brandford/Elliott Award (B/EA) for Excellence in Fiber Art was established to honor the lives and work of the late and beloved fiber artists Joanne Segal Brandford and Lillian Elliott. The Award, formerly known as the Lillian Elliott Award, was established in 1995. The Award selection process is now presided over by a committee comprised of professionals from both TSA and B/EA boards. The Award is given to an outstanding emerging fiber artist whose work reflects a willingness to take creative risks.

Diedrick Brackens is originally from Mexia, Texas. He currently lives and works in Los Angeles California, where he is an assistant professor at California State University in Long Beach, CA. He received an MFA from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, and a BFA from the University of North Texas, Denton. He has shown his work in numerous group and solo exhibitions, most recently at the Ulrich Museum of Art in Wichita, Kansas, the Steve Turner Gallery and The Hammer Museum at UCLA in Los Angeles, and the McColl Center for Art + Innovation in Charlotte, North Carolina.



Diedrick Brackens with *The Cup Is a Cloud*

*Photo courtesy of the artist*



Diedrick Brackens, *The Bravest Sons*

*Photo courtesy of the artist*

According to Brackens: "As a weaver and an artist whose practice is materials-based, I have spent a long time searching for the right materials to imbue works with specific qualities...The key ingredient in my work is cotton. I admire this material for its physical properties but I also employ it for its place within American history. I feel tasked to use cotton for all its beauty as well as its brutal story which has been a part of in this country's history.... Could water then not be as important to a work as a title or a thread? A carrier of meaning. It is my aim, with the assistance of the Brandford/Elliott Award, to travel the country and collect water from sources relative to my investigations as they relate to the black experience. This water will be used in the production of woven and sculptural fiber works."

*Pat Hickman, Professor Emeritus of the Art Department, University of Hawaii, has a studio at the Garnerville Arts and Industrial Center, NY and lives in the Lower Hudson Valley. Hickman twice received NEA Individual Artist's Grants and was elected a Fellow of the American Craft Council in 2005. She is a longtime member of the Textile Society of America, serving as President from 2008 to 2010.*



## Featured Exhibitions

by Janis Jefferies

### *From Lausanne to Beijing*

A.C. Art Museum and Tsinghua University Art Museum  
Beijing, China  
October 15–November 16, 2018



Photo credit: [www.artmuseum.tsinghua.edu.cn](http://www.artmuseum.tsinghua.edu.cn)

*From Lausanne to Beijing* is an International Fiber Art Biennale that has organized ten exhibitions in eighteen years. Since 2000, it has aimed to embody academic and creative expression as well as embrace the characteristics of popularization and socialization. It is becoming an internationally renowned academic art brand and has developed into one of the most important platforms for academic exchange in fiber art in China.

The 10th Biennale, October 15–November 16, 2018, was awarded monies from China National Art Fund as a Dissemination, Propagation and Exchange Program. As the significant academic activity in Beijing International Design Week (2018), co-organized by The Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and the People's Government of Beijing Municipality, the 10th Biennale is a program with unique characteristics of cultural creativity and promotion at the national level. From Lausanne to Beijing has warmly welcomed participation and support from national and international artists, entrepreneurs, and academics.

Selected artworks by the domestic college and graduate students from China were exhibited in the A.C. Art Museum in Beijing. Lin Lecheng, Director of the Fiber Art Institution for the Faculty of Public Art at China's National Academy of Painting, along with colleagues from the Academy of Arts & Design at Tsinghua University, chose artists from forty-five countries to display their work in Tsinghua University Art Museum.

Lin Lecheng was disappointed at not being able to see a Lausanne Biennial when he visited the city in 1996. His response was to establish his own exhibition in China which would maintain the spirit of an international show of modern textile art. In response to my questions about the inception, organization, and significance of *From Lausanne to Beijing*, Lecheng responded:

"The exhibition title, *From Lausanne to Beijing*, expresses our appreciation and recognition of the historical and cultural significance of Lausanne. The exhibition serves as an academic



Deborah Corsini, *Storm Watch*

Photo credit: Janis Jefferies



platform for East-West cultural exchange; however, it is not organizationally affiliated with the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials. If there does exist any connection between the two, it is the culture and spirit of modern tapestry advocated by Jean Lurçat that has inspired us.”

## Anni Albers

TATE Modern  
London, United Kingdom  
October 11, 2018–January 27, 2019

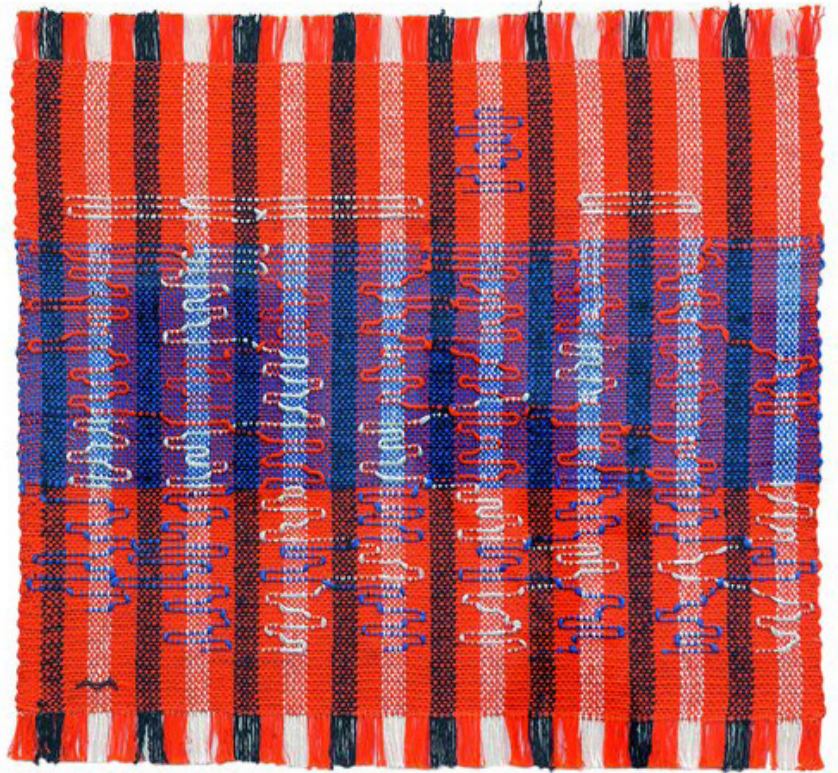
This stunning exhibition is co-organized by TATE Modern and Stiftung Kunstmuseum Nordein-Westflaen, Dusseldorf. It is brilliantly curated by Ann Coxon, International Art Curator for the Tate Modern and Professor Briony Fer of University College, London. It is the UK’s first major retrospective of Anni Albers (1899-1994) and is long overdue.



Anni Albers in her weaving studio at Black Mountain College, 1937.

Photo credit: Helen M. Post, Western Regional Archives, State Archives of North Carolina.

This lavish and comprehensive exhibition takes the viewer from the Bauhaus to Black Mountain College to Yale—from a very particular European modernism to postwar America. Berlin-born in 1899, Anni Albers began her studies at the Bauhaus in 1922. However, disciplines are porous and interconnected, and few more so than textiles. As Julia Bryan-Wilson points out in her recent book *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), “Just as textiles have stretched between art, craft and industry, they have also oscillated between being defined



Anni Albers, *Intersection*, 1962. Pictorial weaving, cotton and rayon, Josef Albers Museum Quadrat Bottrop.

Photo credit: Werner J. Hannappel

as leisure and as labor.” There are textiles everywhere in our lives, our history, our cultures, our politics.

As Adrian Searle, an art critic for *The Guardian* has enthusiastically written in his October 9, 2018 review of the exhibition, “Albers’ textiles give pleasure to a room, to a wall, a bed, a floor, to the spaces in between. Things are framed on walls, hang freely in space, are lain flat. The Tate exhibition goes from room to room, and in spaces created using walls of stretched translucent scrim, to outline not just her development but also her processes, her thinking, her prints and her writings. Her drawings from pinpricks through paper and prints from nothing more than the embossment of abstract shapes on heavy white paper are amongst some of my most favorite works.”

As you move around these prints, light catches the ridges and depressions, first this way, then that, gleaming against whiteness. Albers’ handwoven art is a lesson in color and geometry, method and singularity—tactile and optical, spatial and utilitarian. Her work is exciting and stimulating, but it also reaffirms Albers’ respect for Pre-Hispanic and Andean textiles, Bauhaus exercises, and diagrammatic drawings of different techniques that inspired her to explore various types of open and double weave.

From her studies of Peruvian textiles, she also developed double- and multiply weaves, in which she could create areas of solid color, rather than having to hide the fixed warp with colored weft. The different possibilities of the intersection between warp and weft, textiles as a portable and durable form of communication, textiles as part of an architectural heritage, and respect for the rich history of textile art of the local ancient indigenous cultures.



Albers made textiles on its own terms. It is an unmissable exhibition.

The catalogue is an additional must with contributions from Nicholas Fox Weber, the director of the Albers Foundation, and new essays by Briony Fer and T'ai Smith. Significantly, Smith's contribution extends and carefully considers the implications of Albers' *On Weaving* (1965). It provides a framework for understanding how the book relates to the rest of Albers' career, shedding a critical eye on Albers' life as an artist, writer, and critical thinker. It forms the brain of the exhibition just as Albers' textiles are part of a larger reconsideration of abstract modernism in the 20th century.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art  
Brisbane, Australia  
November 24, 2018–April 28, 2019



Plain and decorated Biriko and the dried leaves of the black palm. Photo credit: Kay Lawrence



Kay Lawrence, *Here We Are Sisters* (details), created in the Bougainville workshop based on a comment by Adelaide Makea Aniona: "Here we are not wives, we are not mothers or grandmothers, we are just women doing what we love to do. Here we are sisters." Photo credit: Kay Lawrence

The hugely ambitious APT series returns to QAGOMA this summer, bringing significant art from across the Asia Pacific to Brisbane. Overflowing with color and life, this free contemporary art exhibition presents a unique mix of creativity and cross-cultural insight.

Featuring more than eighty artists and groups from over thirty countries, APT9 challenges conventional definitions of contemporary art by asking us to consider its relationship to shifting social structures across the region. Explore a number of never-before-seen installations, paintings, sculptures, photographs, and video from emerging and senior artists, together with leading works from Indigenous communities and artists.

Over the past two years the Gallery and co-curators Sana Balai and Ruth McDougall have been working with artists and communities in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and neighbors in the Solomon Islands archipelago, and four artists from Australia on a major project focused on women's contemporary creative practice. While lacking contemporary art infrastructure, new expressions of customary practice from weaving to body adornment are alive in these Pacific islands.



Adelaide Mekea Aniona from Kieta holding a Biriko (a conical fan shaped shelter used for covering children or food) which she has stitched from dried Black Palm leaves. Photo credit: Kay Lawrence





Left:  
Iwasaki Takahiro, *Out of Disorder (In flux)*, 2018,  
Commissioned by Centre for Heritage, Arts and  
Textile  
《混亂以外（變遷）》·岩崎貴  
宏·CHAT六廠紡織文化藝術館委約  
作品·2018

Below:  
2018年7月開幕前活動  
「盛夏手作：來建紡織村」開幕日  
July 2018 Pre-opening Programme, CHAT GO! Let's  
Build a Textile Village Opening Reception

Photo credit: 六廠紡織文化藝術館  
Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile (CHAT)

## Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile (CHAT)

by Janis Jefferies

CHAT is an amazing organization in Hong Kong. I am very proud and honored to be on their international advisory board.

Opening in March 2019, the Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile (CHAT) is a part of the heritage conservation project of The Mills, the former cotton spinning mills of Nan Fung Textiles in Tsuen Wan. Through its own curated multi-faceted programs, which include exhibitions and co-learning programs, CHAT invites visitors to experience the spirit of the innovative legacy of Hong Kong's textile industry and engage in new dialogues and inspirational journeys that interweave contemporary art, design, science, heritage, community, and craftsmanship.

CHAT is delighted to announce details of a vibrant series of Winter Pre-Opening



Programs that will take place from December 1, 2018 to January 6, 2019 at CHAT's permanent home in The Mills, offering members of the public a preview of what is to come at CHAT when it officially opens. This year, the third edition of CHAT's successful annual TECHSTYLE Series, titled *TECHSTYLE Series 3.0 Textile Legacies: Now and Future*, is launched to examine the past, present, and future of textile legacies in Hong Kong and beyond. The diverse and interactive winter programs will bring together a range of artists, curators, makers, and designers and will include co-learning discussion forums, public art projects, a virtual-reality experience, workshops, and various other hands-on activities. Concurrently, CHAT welcomes Filipino visual artist Alma Quinto to its fourth Artist-in-Residence.



## Opportunity

by Janis Jefferies

I will be joint Editor in Chief on the new *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Global Textiles* starting in January 2019. It is a five-year project. We assume that the *Encyclopedia* will be ten volumes, and will consist of approximately 700 articles with an average 4,000 words per article, seventy articles per volume. My colleague from Goldsmiths—Vivienne Richmond, Head of History and co-editor of the *Journal of Textile History*—and I will be searching for museum-based historians and theorists, writers and curators, practitioners, and those from material culture and archaeology backgrounds to make submissions for consideration by an editor per volume though we will be guiding submissions for peer review. I list below the rough draft of the volume headings.

1. **Raw Materials:** natural fibers, synthetic filaments, threads, and yarns; this volume will include an introductory encyclopedic perspective on textile worlds by the Editor-in-Chiefs
2. **Cloth Cultures—Wovens:** woven structures, techniques, and technologies in the history of weave
3. **Cloth Cultures—Non-Wovens:** history, technology, formation, and use
4. **Color:** dyeing, dyes, and the application of color to fibers and fabrics

5. **Embellished:** finishing, printing, patterning, embroidery, and new technology applications informing the design, aesthetics, and qualities of textile substrates
6. **Trade and Industry:** global circulation of local manufacture, and the migration and consumption of textile products
7. **Function and the Everyday:** textiles in the spheres of domesticity and duty
8. **Politics and Power:** textiles as global signifiers of status, wealth, national identity, and global influence
9. **Sacred and Ceremonial:** the role and meaning of textiles in world ritual, religions, ceremonies, and celebrations
10. **Textile Futures:** textile environmental impacts and proposals for new ecologies of textile production, consumption, and disposal.

Vivienne will lead on “Function and the Everyday” and I will lead on “Textile Futures” with a colleague from Hong Kong. We are particularly keen to get young scholars, early career researchers, and those from ethnic and diverse communities involved in this unique project.

In the first instance, please send an expression of interest in English, a 300 word abstract and a short CV which includes institutional affiliation or independent status by December 1, 2018 in a pdf file to: Janis Jefferies, [j.jefferies@gold.ac.uk](mailto:j.jefferies@gold.ac.uk) and Vivienne Richmond, [v.richmond@gold.ac.uk](mailto:v.richmond@gold.ac.uk).

## The University of North Texas to close Fibers Program by Spring 2019

In August 2018, Dean Greg Watts announced that the University of North Texas (UNT) will be closing its Fibers Program after more than sixty years of existence. UNT alumni and the most recent Brandford/Elliott Award recipient, Diedrick Brackens, stressed the positive impact fibers programs have had on their career and their concern that UNT decided to close its program.

The Textile Society of America stands in support of the UNT Fibers program and acknowledges its relevance and contribution to contemporary fiber art, research, and education. The closure of any Fiber Arts program negatively impacts our international field and we encourage our members to voice their thoughts and observations on the need to continue programs like these.



If you would like to write to the UNT administration regarding this decision, please send your letters via email to Dean Watts at [greg.watts@unt.edu](mailto:greg.watts@unt.edu) and CC the following faculty and administrators: Fibers Professor Amie Adelman: [amie.adelman@unt.edu](mailto:amie.adelman@unt.edu); President: [neal.smatresk@unt.edu](mailto:neal.smatresk@unt.edu); Chancellor: [lesa.roe@unt.edu](mailto:lesa.roe@unt.edu); Provost: [Jennifer.cowley@unt.edu](mailto:Jennifer.cowley@unt.edu); and Associate Dean: [denise.baxter@unt.edu](mailto:denise.baxter@unt.edu).



## **UZBEKISTAN 2019**

textiles, architecture and traditions

**May 5 - May 19**

**Fergana Valley, Tashkent,  
Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva**

**\$3450 double occupancy \$450 single supplement  
half board - with Salom Travel. Bukhara**

**for more information contact  
[christinelillianmartens@gmail.com](mailto:christinelillianmartens@gmail.com)**

Our tour includes museums, all aspects of ikat weaving in the Fergana Valley (feeding of silk worms, silk spinning, binding and dyeing), felt making, embroidery and ceramics, as well as visits to ateliers of artisans and designers. We will visit bazaars, and the legendary cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, where local scholars will speak of the history and culture of the regions.

We will be invited by families to eat in private homes.

Chris Martens began researching the textile and traditions of Uzbekistan in 2001. Yearly trips continued in the Central Asian republics, Mongolia and Xinjiang, supported in part as a Fulbright Scholar, IREX recipient and Asia Cultural Council grantee, and research grants from the International Quilt Study Center & Museum.



# TSA Symposium



Above right: Museum of Anthropology Opening Reception, from left to right: Deboarh Sparrow, Vita Plume, Jean Kares. Photo credit: Wendy Roberts



Above left: 2018 Brandford Elliott Award winner Diedrick Brackens with Olivia Valentine (left) and Pat Hickman (right). Photo credit: Jade Svenson



Left: Panel from session 10A "Color Choices in Global Contexts," from left to right: Dai Fujiwara, Penny Dransart, Dominique Cardon, Elena Phipps. Photo credit: Vita Plume



Jean Kares addressing the audience

Photo credit: Jade Svenson





Museum of Anthropology Opening Reception Fashion Show.  
Photo Credit, Jade Svenson



Audience for Session 7B, Warp Speed. Photo credit: Vita Plume



Founding Presidents Award recipients Trish FitzSimons  
and Madelyn Shaw. Photo credit: Jade Svenson



Opening Plenary First Nations welcome from Xwalactkun (Rick Harry).  
Photo Credit: Jade Svenson



Student and New Professional Awardees, from left to right: Magali An Berthon, Ruth Clifford,  
Jennifer Hoover, Arielle Winnick, Jennifer Chen-su Huang | 黃謙 Photo credit: Jade Svenson



Founding Presidents Award winner Rachel Silbestein with Roxane  
Shaughnessy. Photo Credit: Jade Svenson



Museum of Anthropology Opening Reception Fashion Show. Photo Credit, Jade Svenson



Audience for session 8C, Material as Identity. Photo credit: Vita Plume



# TSA Members' Exhibition

By Ruth Scheuing and Catharine Ellis

Member exhibitions of contemporary artwork are relatively new to TSA. These visual displays have come as a response to the increased numbers of textile artists who are currently TSA members, and are now an important addition to the symposium.

The 2010 organizing committee developed an extensive range of exhibitions, including many shows that included TSA members and past Brandford/Elliott Awardees. In 2014, there was a single juried show, *New Directions: Examining the Past, Creating the Future* at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles. In 2016 in Savannah, the symposium organizers took a very different approach. Potential curators submitted proposals. They committed to organize individual exhibitions and select the participating artists (all of whom were TSA members). Because of Savannah's unique exhibition spaces, seven shows were hung around the city. Many of these exhibitions related to symposium presentations and panels.

The Organizing Committee in Vancouver took a new approach to the 2018 members' exhibition. In relation to the symposium theme "The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global," members were invited to submit a small-scale original textile inspired by a specific landmark or textile-related object sourced from their local community or a museum. Collaborations between artists and researchers were encouraged.

This exhibition was an opportunity for our textile artist members to contribute to the visual impact of the symposium and to collaborate with someone from a different discipline. The potential for partnerships between artists, scholars, curators, and members of other disciplines is what makes TSA unique and relevant.

We received forty-four proposals from which we selected thirty-eight works



Above: ONE SUITCASE I remember my mother wrapping A blanket around me . . . . Families were made to move. . . Abandoning everything . . . . by Maggie Tchir.

Below: Felt, Shrink to Fit: III (Weld, Sappanwood, Madder, Indigo) by Jorie Johnson.

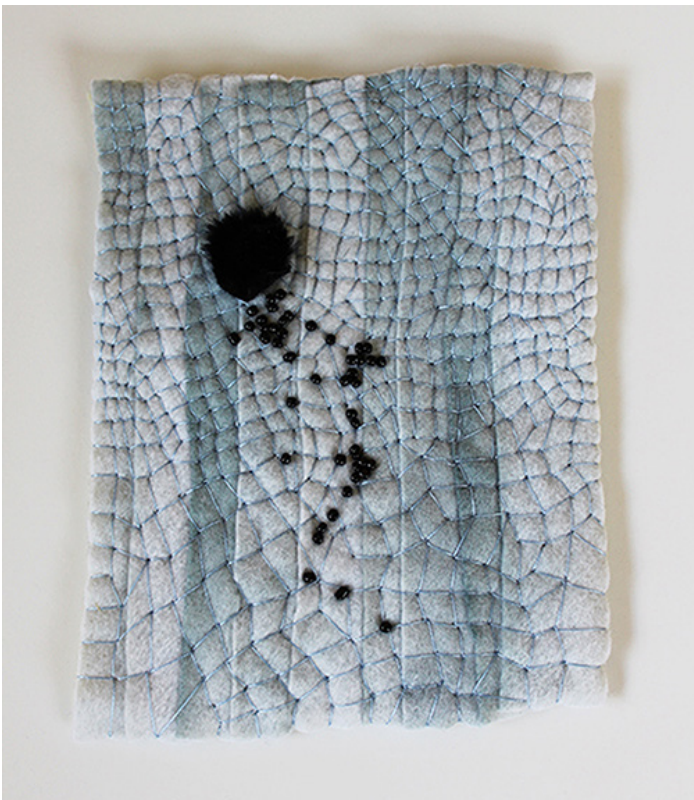






Above: Eons Exposed, Inspired by the Stratigraphic Walls of the Grand Canyon by Janice Arnold.

Below: Casting for Blue Fur by Laura Mongiovi.



through a blind jury process. The judging criteria was similar to that used for judging symposium abstracts. We chose the small format to allow a large number of artists to be represented with a wide variety of concepts and constructions, and chose the conference site as the venue to allow for high visibility and accessibility. A representative panel was selected for a round table discussion from the artists whose work was accepted. This panel took place on Friday during the lunch break and focused on collaboration and related creative processes and research. Images featured in this article are all works by the panelists.

### TSA Members' Exhibition List of Artists

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Janice Arnold              | Yongmin Lee          |
| Polly Barton               | Avy Loftus           |
| Marcelyn Bennett Carpenter | Patricia Malarcher   |
| Judith Bird                | Laura Mongiovi       |
| Lisa Brown                 | Judy Newland         |
| Sonja Dahl                 | Gabriela Nirino      |
| Katy Dolk-Ellis            | Kay Noele            |
| Åse Eriksen                | Sara Petit           |
| Julia Feldman              | Gail Rothshield      |
| Charlotte Hamlin           | Barbara Shapiro      |
| Peggy Hart                 | Barbara Sloan        |
| Emma Hoch                  | Bobbi Sue Smith      |
| Jennifer Huang             | Kathryn Tarleton     |
| Jorie Johnson              | Cameron Taylor-Brown |
| Ruth Jones                 | Maggie Tchir         |
| Jean Kares                 | Annie Toole          |
| Mirka Knaster              | Liz Williamson       |
| Ashley Kubley              | Wendy Weiss          |

We wish to acknowledge the generous support of Robin Muller, who helped with the detail work.



Sonoran Souls by Judy Newland.



# Reports from Student & New Professional Awardees

## *The Future of Textiles: Disruption and Collaboration*

By Magali An Berthon

On the first day of the 16<sup>th</sup> Textile Society of America symposium “The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global,” I attended the panel “The Future of Textiles: Disruption and Collaboration” organized by the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum. Matilda McQuaid, Deputy Director and Head of Textiles, and Susan Brown, Associate Curator in Textiles, invited five creative minds to share their projects pushing the boundaries of textile production: Abby George-Erikson and Salem van der Swaagh, project manager and textile designer for Eileen Fisher; David Breslauer, co-founder of Bolt Threads; Suzanne Lee, Chief Creative Officer at Modern Meadow; and Anais Missakian, Department Head of Textiles at the Rhode Island School of Design and designer in residence of Advanced Functional Fabrics of America.

In her opening remarks, Susan Brown reminded the audience that the fashion and textile industry is the second most polluting sector in the world. Quoting the US Environmental Protection Agency, she stressed that 85% of discarded garments eventually end up in landfills and pollute the soil, which calls for a necessary change towards eco-conscious processes. The panelists then presented their work which provided a range of innovative solutions to tackle the environmental cost of the clothing industry.

David Breslauer from Bolt Threads enthusiastically shared his concept of engineered spider silk, a protein-based fiber which remains difficult to obtain artisanally. In the labs of his start-up company located in Emeryville, CA, engineers have developed a technology which replicates spider silk and its invaluable properties such as strength, shine, and elasticity. These bio-engineered fibers are spun, knit, and woven into fabrics and garments. Breslauer also presented the company's new venture



Dress in engineered spider silk Bolt Threads for Stella McCartney.

Photo credit: Bolt Threads  
[boltthreads.com](http://boltthreads.com)

called Mylo, a leather-like material obtained from mycelium mushrooms.

In a similar endeavor, Suzanne Lee shared the fascinating experiments at Modern Meadow and its brand Zoa where *haute couture* meets biotechnology. She showed a range of projects which rethink the production of protein-based materials including a precious textile sample with sprayed leather “like a mist on silk.”

Anais Missakian then explained the role of Advanced Functional Fabrics of America (AFFOA), a non-profit organization based in Cambridge, MA, which was founded in 2016 and gathers institutions and textile industrialists to spark innovation in fiber-based products with a specific focus on smart textiles. And finally, Abby George-Erikson and Salem van der Swaagh presented DesignWork,

an upcycling project using worn garments collected from Eileen Fisher's customers to create a new line of wall hangings, blankets, and pillows. Working closely with New York-based artist, Sigi Ahl, and DesignWork's creative director, the two panelists explained the challenges of elevating scrap fabrics and playing with color combinations in line with Eileen Fisher's aesthetic. They passed a series of textile samples to the audience which showcased soft felted and tufted textures in delicate subdued tones.



In the round table discussion, Matilda McQuaid emphasized the disruptive nature of each of these projects which challenge the common codes of a wasteful industry by developing holistic processes. The presenters also expressed the need to implement partnerships to ensure their success. By combining collaboration and forward-thinking approaches, these lab and studio-based experiments have the potential to reshape the future of the textile industry.

*Magali An Berthon is a London-based textile researcher of French and Vietnamese origins. She currently is a PhD candidate in History of Design at the Royal College of Art in London focusing on the dynamics of silk heritage in post-conflict Cambodia. After earning a Master of Fine Arts degree in textile design at the National School of Decorative Arts of Paris, she studied textile history and museum practices at the Fashion Institute of Technology of New York (FIT) on a Fulbright Fellowship in 2014-2015. She continued with one year as a research fellow at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institute in New York on the Curatorial Textile Department. Magali An Berthon focuses on Southeast Asian textiles, local craft cultures, and sustainable processes. She also produces the web documentary platform "Tissus & artisans du monde" (World Textiles and Artisans), an online multimedia journey combining film, photography, and essays showcasing highly-skilled textile artisans, especially from mainland South-east Asia.*

## "Embroidery in Action" and "Closing Plenary"

By Jennifer Chen-su Huang | 黃謙恕

Soon after lunch on Thursday, September 20, the conference attendees began to crowd the room which would hold the "Embroidery in Action" session. The speakers in this session each delivered exquisite presentations on the symbolic and cultural significance of embroidery. First, Deborah Emmett spoke about the embroidery artisans of the Kashmir Valley and the multitude of influences that shape the region's needlework culture. Then Suzanne MacAulay presented on a similar phenomenon taking place in New Mexico, specifically in the development of *colcha* embroidery. Next, Shannon Ludington analyzed 19th-century Uzbek embroidered dowry textiles, called *suzanis*, with the intention of giving voice to the female artisans whose histories were overshadowed and presented as an oriental "other" by the Soviet Union during its colonization of Uzbekistan. Lastly, Sonja Dahl delivered a powerful talk on whitework and the manifold connotations of the term. Whitework can be used to describe the white on white embroidery that rose to popularity beginning in 16th-century Europe, but Dahl also uses the term to examine the responsibility of white-identifying artists and scholars in the field of textiles, such as herself.

The atmosphere in the room grew visibly tense as Dahl finished with one last quote by writer Toni Morrison asking those of us



Modern Meadow bio leather.

Photo credit: Modern Meadow, [www.modernmeadow.com](http://www.modernmeadow.com)



privileged enough to be sitting there to recognize and act on our “response-ability.” As the closing applause waned, the first question and the subsequent questions thereafter were about the color of an Uzbek motif—an impulse to dodge the discomfort provoked by our response-ability/responsibility.

Dahl’s call to action was especially poignant given the line-up of white women who had minutes before spoken on textile traditions bound up with the legacy of European colonization and/or belonging to those historically colonized by another.<sup>1</sup> This observation is not to discredit the exceptional panelists but to acknowledge the pattern of who is researching whom and who is speaking for whom.

In the Closing Plenary presentation given by Charllotte Kwon, founder of Maiwa, we were shown a promotional video for the company. We watched white women model beautiful textiles in a foreign land, using the local people as exotic props. We have seen this before in the pages of *Vogue* and *National Geographic*—it is nothing new—but many of us expected more from the Textile Society of America, an organization that strives to be inclusive and critical. As I scribble these thoughts in my notebook, I observe a steady trickle of attendees exiting the large banquet hall, while others continue to sit in their chairs marveling at the scenes of colonial tourism.

I am not familiar with the company but the plenary struck me as suffering from a kind of white savior complex. But perhaps this is what we are left with in this globalized capitalist market—stuck in a hopeless bind, where the preservation of craft tradition is contingent upon its commodification, upon its appeal to those with capital, to those who benefit from the legacy of colonization. Yes, it is a good thing that Maiwa ensures a livelihood for the Indian artisans they employ, but one cannot help but wonder if it is at the cost of history repeating itself, of these artisans being, as Shannon Ludington described in her abstract concerning the Uzbek women, “Exoticized as an oriental ‘other’... then recorded not by themselves but by foreign men.”

What is our “response-ability” to this?

I am not writing to condemn Maiwa nor am I advocating for the avoidance of cultures other than one’s own, so as to steer clear of accusations of political incorrectness or insensitivity. That would be totally isolating, divisive, and counterproductive. Rather, I want to underscore Dahl’s intention for whitework, to examine the privilege that allows one to study the culture of

another and to take responsibility for the colonial underpinnings of our research and/or business endeavors. Beyond race, this is about privilege and visibility. As an Asian-American artist studying indigenous Taiwanese textiles, I find myself similarly confronting the task of whitework.

While Maori anthropologist Linda Tuhiwai Smith expresses her wariness towards the institutionalized research of indigenous peoples, she also concludes that, “sharing is a good thing to do, it is a very human quality. To be able to share, to have something worth sharing gives dignity to the giver. To accept a gift and to reciprocate gives dignity to the receiver. To create something new through that process of sharing is to recreate the old, to reconnect relationships and to recreate our humanness.”<sup>2</sup>

I am reminded of Ludington’s presentation when she explains how *suzanis* were often stitched by multiple hands, how the experienced embroiderers intentionally left areas open for the younger women to complete. Likewise, I think of Dahl’s reference to the “pulled thread” technique in whitework embroidery, how the stitches pull open spaces in the structure of the cloth. How do we respectfully share and co-contribute to this social fabric? It is a question that has no set answer, that must be asked again and again, but perhaps we can begin by looking at the examples our “Embroidery in Action” panelists have shown us—to continually make space for all voices.

*Jennifer Chen-su Huang | 黃謙恕 is an artist, writer, and American transplant in Taipei, Taiwan. She is a 2017-2018 Fulbright Fellow in Installation Art and is currently hosted by the Ethnology department at National Chengchi University, where she is working with indigenous Atayal women in Wulai, and specifically, apprenticing with weaver, Sayun Yuraw | 彭玉鳳 to learn Atayal textile traditions. In Spring 2018, she will be a Visiting Artist in the Fibers Division at Tainan National University of the Arts in Tainan, Taiwan. Jennifer graduated with her M.F.A. in Fiber and Material Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2017. She received her BA from the University of California, Berkeley in 2013, majoring in Art Practice and minoring in Art History. Recent awards include various scholarships that have financed her attendance at Ox-bow School of Art in Michigan and Haystack Mountain School of Craft in Maine. Her work has been exhibited internationally in Taiwan and across the United States at Untitled Prints and Editions in Los Angeles, Kearny St. Workshop in San Francisco, and Gallery 400 in Chicago, among others.*

1 I assume every speaker on the panel identifies as white, but I apologize if I am mistaken.

2 *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 105.



## Response to Jennifer Chen-su Huang | 黃謙恕

By Jean L. Kares

The 2018 Symposium, “The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global,” offered perspectives from and about researchers and scholars, makers, and collectors of textiles, and consciously strove for diversity of presenters, within the limits of the proposals submitted. When considering the global aspect of the symposium theme, trade and textiles are clearly inseparable, and we felt it was important to also include the voice of a trader at the conclusion of the gathering. In the opinion of the Organizing Committee, Charlotte Kwon conducts her business of trade in an extremely thoughtful and ethical manner that is rooted both in responsibility and “response-ability.” As such, I feel compelled to respond to some of Jennifer Chen-su Huang’s criticisms of Charlotte and her company, Maiwa.

As researchers, we must always remember that there is a story going on outside and behind the boundary of the photograph or video. Pictures trigger imagined narratives that can only guess at the relationships and context of what is seen. These days, the danger of making quick assumptions about and reacting to what we see are obvious—at worst with deadly consequences, but extending to minor occurrences such as observing people leaving a presentation or women posed on an ancient wall. Engaging in meaningful dialogue requires interrogating our reactions with curiosity and gathering information while withholding judgment.

I regret that some of the video clips included in Charlotte’s presentation apparently distracted audience members from her message. Maiwa is interested in expanding their marketing, just as the makers are interested in promoting their work as fashionable. Does it make a difference to learn that the women who modeled the garments were not professionals hired for the occasion, but rather “real” people: employees of Maiwa who habitually wear those clothes, travel to India on Maiwa’s working trips, and know the makers very well? The fabric and its makers are Indian, and the “exotic” locations in the video are the Deep Local of the product. Would it be more or less authentic if the models frolicked on a Vancouver beach, or on British Columbia’s equally dramatic—and undoubtedly exotic to some—mountains? Would the fashion shoot be improved with impassive darker-skinned models posed in Indian (or other) locations, or would this smack of Orientalism?

Jennifer admits she is not familiar with Maiwa. Charlotte Kwon has worked with families and villages of artisans in India for thirty years, many of those for the entire history of the company. She enters into trading relationships for the long-term and takes this responsibility seriously, spending nearly half of every year in India on working trips to consult with the makers. The company exercises quality control on the products they order, but otherwise doesn’t interfere with fabric design, which is

entrusted to local specialists. Maiwa designs their garments that are sold in North America, and freely shares the patterns with the makers, who can use them as they wish.

Far from being a “white savior,” Charlotte is a pragmatic businesswoman who is clear that her and Maiwa’s role is to facilitate linking artisans to markets, and to farmers and other groups of artisans in order to source materials and develop innovative products. Historically, trade was a conduit for exchange of ideas and knowledge. This remains true today, as Maiwa collaborates with artisans and communities to deepen understanding, develop business practices, and jointly troubleshoot problems that range from technical, financial, and legal matters to natural disasters. When possible, Charlotte brings these artisans to Vancouver to participate in Maiwa symposia, conduct workshops, and to meet the people who love and buy their products, bringing our local community into relationship with theirs. This seems to me to represent “response-ability” in the most direct and meaningful way possible.

Fraught as it is with its potential for power imbalance and exploitation, trade is the way artisans around the world have always made their living. Humans have long traveled to the lands of others to seek out wonderful goods, an activity that long predates colonization ventures by dominant cultures. Sadly, there is currently only a small market within India for hand woven, hand dyed, and hand printed cloth and clothing, which are inevitably more expensive than screen printed polyester garments. The makers Maiwa works with do not lack agency; they are creative and skilled individuals who are equally pragmatic businesspeople, happy to sell their products to appreciative consumers wherever they may live, while also developing local markets.

I conclude with some thoughts from Charlotte:

*We have all opened up an interesting if uncomfortable discussion—one that is necessary to keep on the table and keep revisiting from all of our perspectives. The words “middleman” or “trader” or “global capitalist markets” can be easy targets for criticism. But there is always room for the unexpected, the authentic, the philosophical; for those working in the field and on the ground who become considered, open, inclusive, sensitive and who can, over years of commitment, become trusted advocates of craft in its true role within a culture. And that room needs to be left open by [and to] all—just in case something quite extraordinary is happening.*

TSA can be a potent catalyst for extraordinary happenings and conversations. Let’s bravely probe what makes us uncomfortable, cast off our pre-conceptions, and be as generous as we can with each other.

Jean L. Kares  
Chair of the Organizing Committee  
TSA 2018 Symposium



# A Long-Delayed Professional Conversation

By Stanley Bulbach, PhD

I rejoined the Textile Society of America for several reasons: 1) TSA's enthusiastic invitations; 2) the pride TSA voiced for exploring professional issues; and 3) my personal celebration of working in the fiber field for four decades.

I have served in the following roles: Board Member of the Handweavers Guild of America (HGA); an American Tapestry Alliance digital bulletin board co-founder and co-monitor; and a frequently published writer, teacher, and lecturer. Also, I am an artist working with premium wool growers, creating my own yarns and my own traditional dyes. I create flat-woven carpets from timeless Near Eastern traditions as contemporary art to be displayed on the wall.



*Image Caption: Stanley Bulbach with black Lincoln fleece  
Photo credit: Dan Franklin Smith, 2016*

The contemporary fiber field is arguably the largest in the craft media arts, while being grossly under-recorded in art research and treated officially as less significant than ceramics, glass, jewelry, etc. Other craft media arts usually enjoy being researched by people with expertise in those fields. The record on contemporary fiber, however, is primarily documented by people who are neither in our field nor include required safeguards like exercising due diligence. For decades

fiber organizations have asked why it is almost impossible to accurately identify who is examining our field. Fiber organizations ask what commercial galleries examine fiber art, what publications agree to cover it, what art writers agree to record it, who its collectors are, etc.

For accuracy and reliability, all quality academic research in the liberal arts and sciences requires: 1) transparency and accountability of research design; 2) disclosures of conflicts of interest; 3) disclosures of limitations such as participation fees; 4) due diligence; and 5) discussion opportunities to test the conclusions. Our field seems not to encourage these research requirements and therefore we struggle with the economic and professional consequences.

The poor visibility of contemporary fiber art impacts not only fiber artists. It diminishes professional and economic opportunity throughout the entire fiber field: teaching opportunities, public interest in historic textiles, curatorial opportunities, longevity of publications, vitality of galleries, viability of museums, etc. The more undercapitalized fiber organizations urgently request additional donations, the more they are only competing against each other for the same decreasing capital in our field.

For example, HGA membership has plummeted catastrophically from above 10,000 in 1990 to 3,651 in 2016. That includes a major loss of dues. In August, HGA seemed surprised by a shortfall in scholarship donations and the "greying" of our field. Similarly the American Tapestry Alliance recently indicated that, in 2015, the average ATA member age was approaching 70 with only 2% being under 40.

HGA, ATA, and TSA all have a very serious lack of diversity but offer little more to attract broader membership than an enjoyable, costly, time-consuming hobby, requiring independent economic resources.

In the Spring 2018 TSA Newsletter, I reported how the Fuller Museum of Craft stated its exhibition was about "under-recorded" art. Chronic under-recording can only indicate a defect in professional research practice. Yet the Fuller's crucial call for a conversation about that was met with almost universal silence.

According to the TSA's Mission Statement, TSA seems to be the best prepared fiber organization to cultivate that conversation about exploring how institutions and individuals are examining contemporary fiber art and how the current deficient research record impairs our field's ability to thrive in the future.

And, where TSA is urgently soliciting donations, improved economic and professional opportunity can only help current members better afford to contribute and new members better afford to join. Thus, as a returning TSA member, I believe it is vitally important to answer the following question: where in the TSA's activities can the constructive conversation encouraged by the Fuller Craft Museum's exhibition be initiated and supported?

*Stanley Bulbach, PhD, (Ancient Near Eastern Studies, NYU, 1981) has been a fiber artist and independent writer on the fiber field since 1978.*

[www.bulbach.com](http://www.bulbach.com)

# Book Reviews

## *Art, Honor, and Ridicule: Fante Asafo Flags from Southern Ghana*

Authors: Silvia Forni and Doran H. Ross

Published by: Royal Ontario Museum and Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2017. 304 p.

ISBN: 978-0-88854-516-9

Reviewed by Roy W. Hamilton

The winner of TSA's R. L. Shep Ethnic Textiles Book Award for books published in 2017 is *Art, Honor, and Ridicule: Fante Asafo Flags from Southern Ghana* by Silvia Forni and Doran H. Ross.

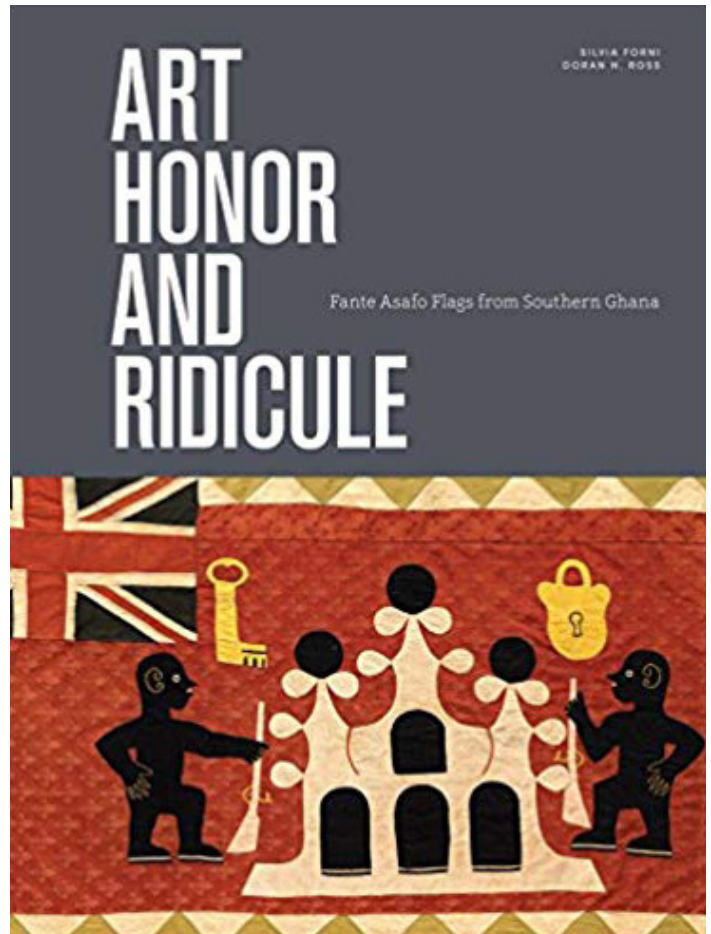
While several exquisitely produced books were among the twenty-three nominated publications this year, the winner stands out in particular for the depth of the scholarship based on field research conducted in Ghana over a period of decades. Ross has been a leading figure in the study of African arts at UCLA for many years, including his service as director of the Fowler Museum from 1996 to 2001. Forni is Curator of Anthropology in the Department of World Cultures at ROM and Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Toronto.

The book is illustrated with photographs from the authors' field research and magnificently reproduced cloths from the collections of both museums, which maintain the two most extensive holdings of *Asafo* textiles in North America. ROM and the Fowler are to be congratulated for this kind of collaborative effort, which offers perspectives that are often missing when museums publish books based solely on their own collections.

*Asafo* are commoners' military organizations among the Fante peoples, functioning as local police and providing community services. Larger towns support several competing "companies" and each company maintains a collection of twenty to sixty different colorful appliquéd flags. The flags are carried and "danced" in performance at festivals, vouching for the pride and power of the respective *asafo*. They are the most vibrant visual markers of a system that has served as a commoners' check on the power of local rulers. The military nature of the *asafo* is also closely linked to the history of the slave trade and colonial rule on the Ghanaian coast.

The bold, diverse and often whimsical motifs that adorn the flags are connected to orally-transmitted proverbial interpretations. To give just one example among many gathered from the authors' interviews with *asafo* artists, a motif of a hedgehog recalls the aphorism: "The hedgehog grows fat to the benefit of the rotten log." This is understood to mean that the *asafo* company and its larger community stand in a symbiotic relationship.

One groundbreaking dividend of the authors' extensive field research is that they are able to associate many flags now in museum collections with specific artists and workshops active historically in various Fante communities. They also have



interview data from those same artists and their descendants. Additional chapters explore woman and gender in *asafo* and the recent globalization of *asafo* imagery.

Authors justifiably get most of the credit for any publication, but every author appreciates how important good editing is. While no author has yet won the Shep Award more than once, a surprise lies mostly hidden in the small print of the winning books' credit pages: one person, Lynne Kostman, has been the lead editor for three winning books (2007, 2013, and 2017) in the eighteen-year history of the award. Kostman has recently retired from her career as Managing Editor at the Fowler Museum.

*Roy W. Hamilton is the former Curator of Asian and Pacific Collections at the Fowler Museum at UCLA. His book, Material Choices: Refashioning Bast and Leaf Fibers in Asia and the Pacific, co-edited with B. Lynne Milgram, won TSA's R. L. Shep Award for the best ethnographic textile book of 2007.*



# Polychromatic Screen Printing

Author: Joy Stocksdale

Published by: Oregon Street Press, 2018. 156 p.

ISBN: 9781718729698

Reviewed by Astrid Hilger Bennett

First published in 1984, this newly revised and expanded book lays out techniques for polychromatic screen printing—Joy Stocksdale's method of printing limited edition, multiple colored designs using one screen with no registration. Similar to an extended monoprint, the process yields four to six prints from a single painted image. The technique can be adopted by artists working in different media, on cloth, or paper. The author describes polychromatic screen printing as a cross between printing and painting.

These days, if we are interested in a technique, we tend to turn first to YouTube and social media. Often, videos successfully present overall concepts without complicating details. In many cases, videos bring up more questions in need of answers. The strength of Stocksdale's book lies in the depth of information presented. One does not read this book for eye candy. Unlike videos and most glossy, visually stimulating books currently being published, you will not immediately find portfolios of inspiring photos that beg for more in-depth reading. Instead, this is a treasure trove of useful information, digging deep into detail in ways that a video cannot. The book is for people who are not only interested in polychromatic screen printing, but also for those more generally interested in screen printing. Screen printing frame tips are doled out in a manner that allows even the DIY tinkerer to adapt to lower budget options. Also included are useful tips about working with large-scale screens, counterweights, one-arm squeegees, and printing tables.

The book would have benefitted from a more visual graphic design layout, with "idea" images shown earlier in the text, guiding the viewer towards possibilities for practice. Stocksdale also includes instructions on how to mix, use, and process dyes as a necessary addition to her excellent screen printing technique. It would be best to view the dye instructions as one artist's approach, not necessarily a compendium of current practices in dyes and dye processing, which can vary according to fiber and geographic location. Safety protocols could be introduced earlier. Liquid Procion dyes are no longer carried by some suppliers. Both washing out and batching techniques might depend on whether silk or cotton is used. As a person who works with cotton and Procion MX dyes in a seasonally-challenged climate, I prefer the crisper edges that result from steaming. Similarly, in my experience, silk easily rinses using her techniques; cotton and heavier fabrics, not as well. For these, Ann Johnston's excellent book, *Color by Accident*, details the science of dye processing and encourages using pH neutral

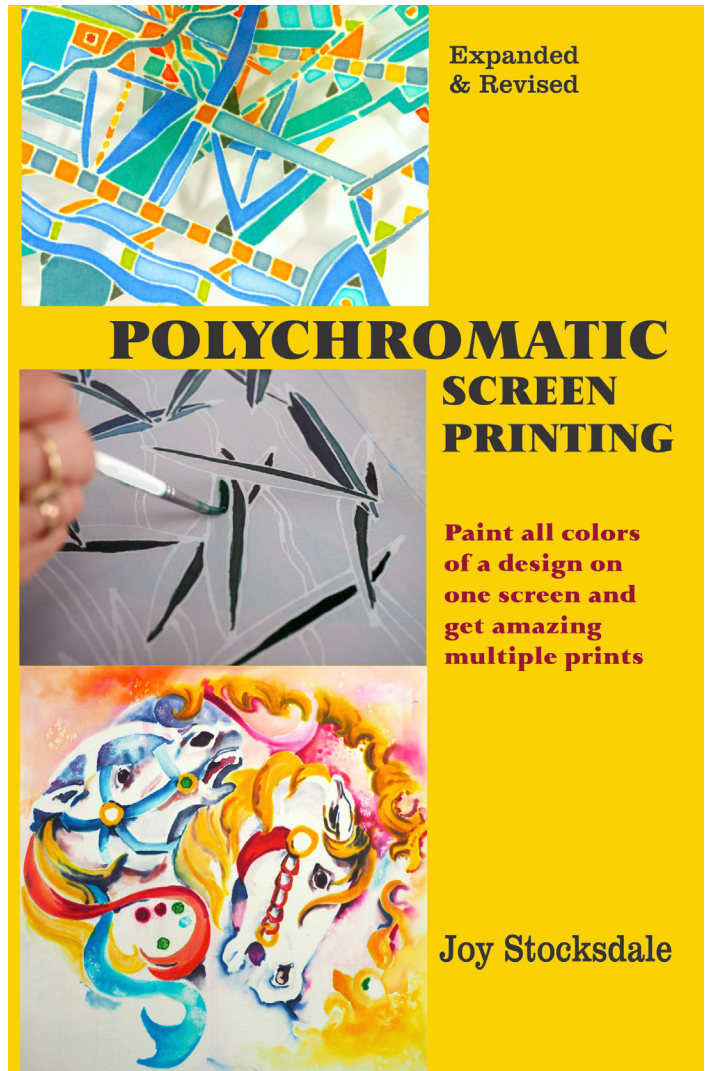


Photo credit: Doug Payne

soap when rinsing and processing finished pieces in a washing machine. This step is especially useful when backstaining is possible. This critique therefore advises readers to not shy away from adapting their own dye practices or consulting their dye suppliers for pertinent instructions in addition to those presented in the book.

In summary, this book is a useful and thorough reference for screen printing methodology, especially polychromatic screen printing, written by a master in the field. We applaud Stocksdale for taking the time to share a career's worth of experience. It will be a useful read for those interested in pursuing ideas for technique and equipment setup. And then, all those YouTube videos will finally make sense!

*Astrid Hilger Bennett is a studio artist, retired gallery owner and current president of Surface Design Association. She lives in Iowa City, IA.*

# Rug Money: How a Group of Maya Women Changed Their Lives through Art and Innovation

Authors: Mary Anne Wise and Cheryl Conway-Daly

Published by: Thrums Books, 2018. 160 p.

ISBN: 978-0-9990517-8-8

Reviewed by Maggie D'Aversa

A few months ago, I ran into members of a rug hooking guild at a rummage sale near my home in New Jersey. They were searching through tables piled high with used clothing for brightly colored, cotton T-shirts. I asked them their reason for such a singular search; they told me they were rug hookers headed to Guatemala for a rug hooking tour with Mayan women. Part of their care package included as many T-shirts as they could carry, which would eventually be cut into strips for hooked rugs with unique but traditional Guatemalan designs.

It wasn't until I read *Rug Money* by Mary Anne Wise and Cheryl Conway-Daly that I connected the rug hookers at the rummage sale to the Guatemalan rug project in the book. The tour the New Jersey rug hookers were taking was one aspect of the Multicolores rug project, one that exposed the artistry of Guatemalan rug hookers to the North American market either through guilds or craft development organizations. Multicolores began as a weekend experiment of rug hooking training for Maya women who were traditional back-strap weavers and embroiderers and quickly expanded to a textile artisan group producing high quality hooked rugs from five rural communities in Guatemala for international markets.

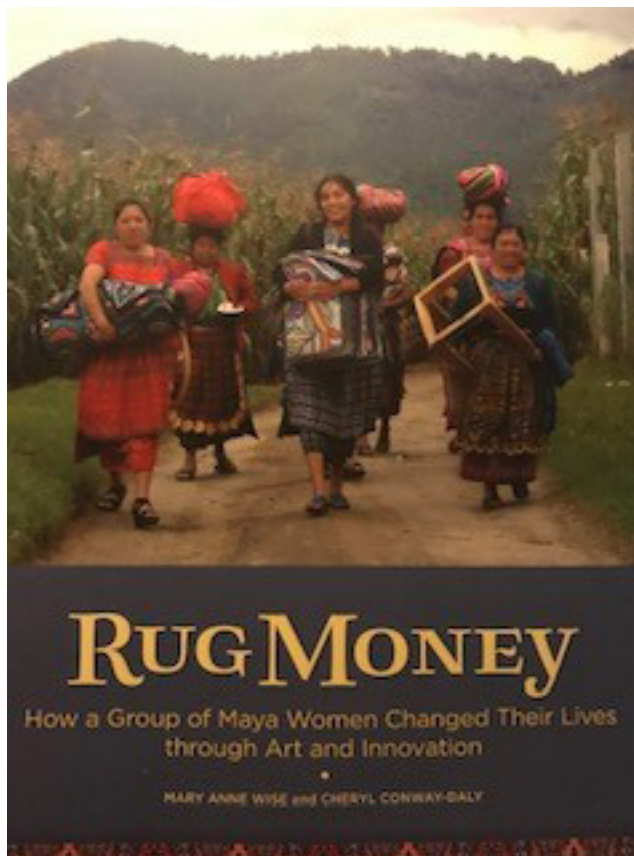
In the voice of Mary Anne Wise and supported by the research of Cheryl Conway-Daly and the photographs of Joe Coca, *Rug Money* is a three-part narrative, with each section building upon the previous. Part I describes how the work of indigenous women in the rural villages of Guatemala transformed from their traditional textile craftwork of back-strap weaving and embroidered goods to rug hooking, a non-native craft, but one matching the women's requirements of equipment portability, interruption-friendly capability, and

economic potential. Also described are the methods Mary Ann Wise and Jody Slocum used to connect the needs and skills of the women to the craft of rug hooking without insisting on their own methods of rug hooking or appropriating their students' unique culture. This is an important point and one which Wise returns to again and again in her discussion of the unique symbols and vibrant colors of the Guatemalan women's culture. Part II describes the group's exposure to the North American marketplace through the International

Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the development of rigorous standards for design and execution of the rugs expected in higher end markets. The small staff of Multicolores began to establish procedures and systems for the growing number of newly trained teachers working with five rug hooking communities. Part III, the final section, shows the reader the group's transition from a fledgling non-profit to one with an international reputation of authenticity in indigenous art through exhibitions in major American museums and entry to competitions sponsored by global governmental organizations.

Throughout the book, Wise describes the dual paths the Maya women traveled as they adapted to a new craft while keeping their unique Guatemalan designs and colors intact and learned how to market their art to an international audience. Carmen, a woman from Chiriquiac, had participated in

several different similar programs only to find herself defeated at the end of them. Once she discovered the rug hooking training sessions from Multicolores, she knew she had arrived because of her love of all things textile and the medium's flexibility of design. Her early years were disrupted by the death of her mother and later her husband's death through alcoholism. She had to leave school after first grade and at nine years of age,





she took care of the family home. Another participant, Glendy, a young woman from Patanatic and the oldest of ten children, did not make it past fourth grade and had to take a second job to support her family. She married at age seventeen and had seven children by age thirty-three. Before each rug hooking training, Glendy left a clean house and a fully prepared meal to last the duration of her training. Yolanda, from Quiejel, has a sixth-grade education with a natural entrepreneurial spirit. She is a weaver in the tradition of her mother and grandmother but is proudly ambitious for new opportunities to expand her family income. Yolanda is a board member of Multicolores and participates in other development projects to promote Guatemalan handcrafts to international markets.

The stories of these women are representative of the several cohorts who went through the Multicolores rug project trainings and while there are variations within the cohort in terms of education level, age, number of children and motivation, there are also commonalities. All live in varying degrees of poverty and refuse to be confined to their current method of earning money. All have low levels of education prohibiting them from potentially obtaining higher wages outside their homes. All play traditional gender roles within their communities with the attendant pressures of ensuring domestic equilibrium in their large families while seeking new means of income. Wise and Conway-Daly, describing how they provided craft development through training and subsequent exposure to the North American markets, miss the opportunity to examine the conditions of indigenous Maya women and the pressures of grappling with the legacy of generational poverty, the stigma of indigeneity, and the crushing effects of traditional gender roles. Indigenous populations, especially women, bear the heaviest burden of these persistent pressures which at times become sites of domestic violence and familial neglect.

Organizations such as Multicolores empower women in indigenous communities, and their reach is expanding to additional communities and international venues. They have nurtured trust between Maya rug hookers and agencies in North America and have taught the indigenous community that a more stable income stream is possible. It is vital that agencies with this type of reach continue their work and deepen their mission through examination of the structural conditions of an indigenous community. This reviewer is looking forward to Part IV of this project.

*Maggie D'Aversa is a weaver, textile/materials engineer, and social scientist who wonders if equilibrium is ever possible.*

## Spider Woman's Children: Navajo Weavers Today

Authors: Lynda Teller Pete and Barbara Teller Ornelas  
Published by: Thrums Books, 2018. 144 p.  
ISBN: 978-0999051757

Reviewed by Dakota Mace

*We are the enduring Diné. We have persevered through warfare, starvation, and forced relocations. We are warriors. Most of us are given warrior names at birth; our umbilical cords are buried on our homesteads. We honor these warrior names by living each day, rising with the sun, giving our blessings, and being productive to the best of our potential, to be in Hózhó. Hózhó is our way of life, to live in balance and beauty. We do not separate the weaving arts from our culture, spirituality, daily life, or our connection to the earth. Weaving is a way for us to live in balance.*

-Spider Woman's Children

In the book *Spider Woman's Children*, audiences are invited into the intricate world of the Diné (Navajo) weaving culture to learn about the concept of *hózhó*. The term *hózhó* itself has many meanings, but all relate back to the idea of bringing beauty and balance to one's life, which is translated through the stories of contemporary Diné weavers. Barbara Teller Ornelas and Lynda Teller Pete provide a refreshing perspective on



Photo credit: Joe Coca

Diné weaving culture by creating a book about the Diné through firsthand accounts from Diné people. Through the concept of *hózhó*, Barbara and Lynda share their own personal narratives as well as family histories to explain the significance of weaving within Diné culture. This is one of the many important aspects of Diné culture and its relationship to weaving today.

Within *hózhó* there is the importance of family, which is the center point of *Spider Woman's Children*. We are given a glimpse into the lives of many Diné weavers and their reasons for continuing with this long tradition of weaving. In the end, it feels as though you know each and every weaver on an intimate level through their work. As Sierra Teller Ornelas explains in the forward, "Whenever I look at a rug, I always wonder, who was the person behind the loom? What was she going through when she made it? Was he a caretaker for his family? Was she self-taught? Was he far from home or surrounded by loved ones? Was she in the middle of hard times or her renaissance? Every rug tells a story, and these are ours. I welcome you to take a seat at our kitchen table and listen as these weavers share their histories and those of their families through the medium of my favorite American art form."

While the book focuses on weaving within Diné culture, it also brings up the long history of the Diné people, such as the Long Walk and the boarding school era. Weaving was a tool towards self-reliance for the Diné and an important aspect of Native American history. Through weaving, there was the ability to hold on to one's culture over time despite changes in weaving styles, designs, and narratives from the trading post era and the influence of outside cultures on Diné people. As Michael Paul Teller Ornelas explains, "So while weaving designs have always been changing, the challenges and skills of weaving will always connect us together." It is this connection between the weavers and their work that really translates well in *Spider Woman's Children*. While there have been many books written on Diné weaving, this is the first book to highlight the importance of the weavers themselves within the context of *hózhó*. Barbara and Lynda have created a beautifully illustrated book that offers an intimate look into the Diné culture and how their weaving has continuously inspired people from all backgrounds.

*Dakota Mace is a Diné (Navajo) artist from Albuquerque, NM. She received her MA and MFA in photography from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is currently pursuing a second MFA in textile design at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

## Call for Nominations: R. L. Shep Ethnic Textiles Book Award

Nominations for the Textile Society of America's 2018 R.L. Shep Ethnic Textiles Book Award are now open and are being accepted through March 1, 2019. This prestigious annual award recognizes outstanding scholarship and accessibility in the field of ethnic textiles. Established by R. L. Shep in 2000 to promote the field of ethnic textile studies and the work of TSA, the award consists of a cash prize.

Anyone may nominate a book, including TSA members, non-members, authors, and publishers. The award is open to English-language books (including multi-lingual books in which all essential information appears in English) on the topic of ethnic textiles. For the purpose of the award, "ethnic" textiles are defined as the non-industrial textiles of Asia, Africa, Oceania, Native and Latin America, and identifiable cultural groups in Europe and North America. Monographs,

anthologies, exhibition catalogs, and other book formats are eligible. No author may be a current TSA board member, Shep Award Committee member, or recipient of the Shep Award in the previous six years. The prize-winning book will best present original scholarly research in an engaging and accessible manner.

For additional details and to nominate a book, visit the TSA [website](#) and enter the book's title, author, publisher, and year of publication. Publishers must provide three review copies of nominated books to the Shep Award Committee in order to be considered for the award. The winning book for 2018 will be announced Fall 2019. For questions and further information about the award, please contact committee chair, Eulanda Sanders, at [sanderse@iastate.edu](mailto:sanderse@iastate.edu).



# Film Reviews

## Threads

Director: Cathy Stevulak  
Collective Eye Films, 2017

Reviewed by Yasmine Dabbous

Extending over thirty-two minutes of exceptionally beautiful frames, *Threads* relates the story of inspiring and inspirational artist Surayia Rahman.

As the journey unfolds, and the story is stitched together, we learn how this Bengali woman reinterpreted her country's *kantha* tradition in spectacular ways and shared her incredible aesthetic vision and sharp artisanal skills with women in her community.

In the process, Rahman revolutionized an ancient craft, elevating it into visual art, prized by individual collectors and museums around the world. She also provided hundreds of Bengali women, who learned to embroider under her sharp eyes, the precious gifts of dignity, sustainability, and independence.

*Threads* is the story of a culture and a gender. It provides feminism with new meanings. Surayia Rahman is real. She braves cultural, personal, and legal trials, from living with a difficult husband to the untimely death of her daughter and an unfair legal combat over intellectual property. In the face of immeasurable difficulties, Rahman stitches. She does not lecture nor does she publish theories. She stitches, and she teaches others to stitch.

The film is also the story of an ancient textile tradition, transformed through the efforts of Rahman into an internationally recognized art. *Kantha* is one of the oldest forms of embroidery in the Indian subcontinent. Dating back to pre-Vedic ages, it typically involves quilting rags together, using a running stitch, and creating visual stories in the process. The visionary woman applied the same tradition to silk wall pieces and *nakshi kantha* tapestries were born. Stevulak's lens offers stunning close-ups of thousands of colorful stitches and aerial views of the vivid stories lingering within them. The director presents a strong visual argument for embroidery as art.

Most art references fail to treat embroidery as high art. We see no mentions of aesthetic sensibilities, abstract relationships, or visual sensations in many encyclopedic entries about stitching. Because embroiderers—mostly women—are often keen to preserve the techniques and motifs of their ancestors, and because they often work under the umbrella of a collective project, the works they produce are often classified as “craft” or “pastime.” These biases, projecting a sharp gendered prejudice and relating to ideological preferences for innovation and individualism, are shattered by Suraya Rahman's creativity and Cathy Stevulak's lens.



Photo credit: Kantha Productions & Anil Advani, Maritime City Photography

At the intersection of the feminist and the artistic comes a sustainable project that provides a livelihood for thousands of underprivileged women in Bangladesh. Rahman, who created the Skill Development for Underprivileged Women project, put bread onto the tables of hundreds of families in her community. Women working with her sent their children to schools and universities, breaking the cycle of poverty and creating a better tomorrow for their loved ones.

*Threads* is a must-see for anyone interested in textiles, art, artisanship, gender issues, and economic development. It should be watched by fashion and textile designers, curators, art professors, art students, social workers, economists, and decision-makers. It is also recommended for anyone who appreciates beauty and seeks a grounded sense of hope in our contemporary world.

For more information and to order the film:

Collective Eye Films

[www.collectiveeye.org/products/threads](http://www.collectiveeye.org/products/threads)

*Yasmine Dabbous is a visual culture artist and researcher from Lebanon. She is the founder of Kinship Stories, a line of wearable art that tells stories of world cultures.*

# Threads

Director: Cathy Stevulak  
Collective Eye Films, 2017

Reviewed by Robin Muller

*Threads*, a recent film by Kantha Productions, tells the story of Surayia Rahman, an artist and embroidery teacher in Bangladesh who refined *kantha*, sometimes called *nakshi kantha*, a textile traditionally made from layers of old sari fabrics. Over her lifetime, Surayia completed a large body of figurative work depicting everyday life in colonial Bengal and mythological subjects in great detail.

*Kantha* was developed in Bangladesh, West Bengal, and Bihar, India by women working in their homes. Traditionally, *kanthas* are functional embroidered textiles: blankets and household objects. The colorful stitching is mostly lines, creating a textural surface, as well as narrative elements, with figures of people and animals. Surayia transformed domestic *kantha* into a form of contemporary art for public display. She used new materials and richly colored threads to make wall hangings illustrating parties, sporting events, and other aspects of public and private life.

Surayia supported family by selling these embroideries. She gave this ability to other local woman when she designed for, and later ran, development projects providing destitute woman with job skills, elevating many from poverty to middle class.

Surayia's first love was painting. She pursued her artistic dreams and goals through tumultuous world and life events. These included the partition of India and Pakistan, the birth of Bangladesh, an unhappy marriage and the death of her adult daughter, Annie, who was instrumental in running the workshops. She remained equally productive through joyous events such as having her work purchased and given to world leaders as diplomatic gifts by the government of Bangladesh.

The film gives a brief but informative look at life in Bangladesh, including colonialism, independence, and intellectual property issues surrounding Surayia's designs. *Threads* is an ideal resource for a classroom or studio setting. The film shows Surayia's artistic vision and production. It also shows the complexities of the intellectual property of her designs used in the workshops, women's empowerment, and employment in a traditional culture. The film also focuses on the remnants of colonialism in her life story and illustrations.

Surayia Rahman received the Begum Rokeya Padak, a Bangladeshi national award presented by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on December 9, 2017. Surayia passed away in August 2018, three years after the film was completed.

*Threads* is the winner of several awards for "Audience Choice" and "Best Short Documentary," including at Toronto's Female Eye Film Festival.

*Robin Muller is a weaver and educator who retired from the NSCAD University, formerly the NS College of Art and Design, in 2015. She continues her artistic and scholarly activities, and is on the Board of the Textile Society of America.*

[www.robinmuller.net](http://www.robinmuller.net)



Surayia Rahman and Artisans of Arshi, Sojan Badiar Ghat—Gypsy Wharf

Photo credit: Kantha Productions, Maritime City Photography



# In Memoriam: Surayia Rahman

November 8, 1932-August 23, 2018

By Cathy Stevulak

Surayia Rahman—artist, teacher, mother, and social business leader—passed away peacefully at home in Dhaka, Bangladesh on August 23, 2018.

During Surayia's life journey of 86 years, she brought beauty and opportunity to many through her art. Rising above her own struggles by sharing her creativity with others in Bangladesh, she pioneered and taught a contemporary, refined genre of *kantha* embroidery that became known as "*nakshi kantha* tapestry." She drew stories from history, poetry, and daily life, working constantly to guide the fine stitchwork of hundreds of once-impooverished women who brought her visions to perfection. Surayia's legacy goes beyond her art and lives on through the tens of thousands of women and their families whose lives now have greater possibility through the making of *kantha* wall hangings. Surayia's collaborative textile works are held in private collections and museums, including the Bangladesh National Museum, Textile Museum of Canada, Royal Collection Trust in the United Kingdom, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in Japan, and Powerhouse Museum in Australia.

As a young girl in Calcutta during the last days of the British Raj, Surayia dreamed of becoming a painter. She drew on her father's freshly laundered clothes. She drew on lamp posts. She



Surayia Rahman, artist Photo credit: Kantha Productions & Anil Advani

hid her drawings, embarrassed by the teasing about her obsession. Surayia had limited formal schooling but learned at home from her enlightened family and also through observing and listening. Her mother taught her to knit and embroider. In 1948, Surayia was accepted to the Calcutta School of Art but had to give up the opportunity due to the aftermath of partition on the Indian sub-continent. Her parents arranged her marriage at seventeen years of age, and she moved with her husband to Dhaka, East Pakistan.

In Dhaka, Surayia turned to art to support her family. She began as a staff artist with the Women's Voluntary Association for eighteen years, initially stitching appliqué on fabric then experimenting with watercolors, painting on silk scrolls, and other media. After the War of Independence in 1971, when Bangladesh became its own country, Surayia pioneered a new form of *kantha*, refining the domestic quilting tradition for public display. At fifty years of age, Surayia co-founded the Skill Development for Underprivileged Women project with a Canadian expatriate. Later, she formed her own business to teach and work collaboratively with women for twenty-five years.

Surayia Rahman, a girl who dreamed to be a solitary painter, found her destiny in community and textile art. The world has lost a great soul, a person of quiet dignity and respect for others—a self-taught artist who expanded the boundaries of craft tradition to bring recognition to its value and consequently enabled women to work and create freely.

Further background on Surayia's life and textile art:

- The Art of Kantha Embroidery by Niaz Zaman
- "The Refining of a Domestic Art: Surayia Rahman" by Niaz Zaman and Cathy Stevulak: <https://bit.ly/2JHtb7q>
- "Accidental Saint" by Bianca Dibiasi: [handeyemagazine.com/content/accidental-saint](http://handeyemagazine.com/content/accidental-saint)
- "THREADS" documentary movie reviews in this TSA newsletter on pages 28 and 29.



Detail of embroidery by Surayia Rahman Photo credit: Kantha Productions & Anil Advani

Cathy Stevulak, a TSA member since 2012, directed and produced the documentary film *THREADS*, based on five years of research and interviews with artist Surayia Rahman and artisans of Bangladesh.

# Featured Exhibitions

## *Contemporary Muslim Fashions*

de Young Museum  
San Francisco, CA  
September 22, 2018–January 6, 2019

*Contemporary Muslim Fashions* is the first major museum exhibition to explore the complex and diverse nature of Muslim dress codes worldwide. Organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, this pioneering exhibition examines how Muslim women—those who cover and those who do not—have become arbiters of style within and beyond their communities and, in so doing, have drawn attention to the variations and nuances of their daily lives.

“There are those who believe that there is no fashion at all among Muslim women, but the opposite is true, with modern, vibrant, and extraordinary fashion scenes, particularly in many Muslim-majority countries,” says Max Hollein, former Director and CEO of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. “Contemporary Muslim Fashions is an overdue, much-needed exploration of a multifaceted topic as yet largely unexplored by museums. This exhibition stands out in our long history of outstanding fashion exhibitions and will shed light onto larger political, social, and cultural understandings and misunderstandings.”

Spotlighting places, garments, and styles from around the world, the exhibition focuses on clothing that responds to individual and collective interpretations of modesty. It considers how Muslim women define themselves and are defined by their dress, providing a snapshot of the current moment in Muslim modest fashion. As Islam is a multicultural faith, the dress of its practitioners is shaped not only by religious traditions but also by local customs and global trends. *Contemporary Muslim Fashions* looks at parts of the globe where designers are creating and consumers are wearing highly fashionable garments, with a specific focus on the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and diasporic communities throughout Europe and the United States.

“Fashion is at its best when it both adapts to the needs of society and reflects its social and political undercurrents,” says Jill D’Alessandro, Curator in Charge of Costume and Textile Arts. “It is in this transformative moment where we now find modest fashion.”



Melinda Looi (b. 1973, Malaysia) for Melinda Looi (est. 2000, Malaysia), Ensemble (dress, turban, earrings, rings, and shoes), Sunset in Africa Collection, 2012. Tie-dyed silk chiffon with feathers, semi-precious stones, and Swarovski crystals, silk satin lining. Photo credit: Sebastian Kim, courtesy of the deYoung Museum.



In addition to approximately eighty ensembles drawn from established and emerging designers in high-end fashion, streetwear, sportswear, and couture, the exhibition includes about forty photographs that will contextualize the garments on view. Using social media as primary source material, *Contemporary Muslim Fashions* credits much of the recent, popular awareness of this sector to bloggers and influencers who took to social media when they could not find accurate representations of themselves in traditional media.

*Contemporary Muslim Fashions* is organized by Jill D'Alessandro, Curator in Charge of Costume and Textile Arts, and Laura L. Camerlengo, Associate Curator of Costume and Textiles at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Reina Lewis, Professor of Cultural Studies at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London, serves as consulting curator.



Slow Factory 1st Amendment Flight Jacket & Declaration of Independence.

Photo credit: Sebastian Kim, courtesy of the de Young Museum

## Helena Hernmarck: Weaving in Progress

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum  
Ridgefield, CT  
October 14, 2018-January 19, 2019

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is pleased to present *Helena Hernmarck: Weaving in Progress*, organized by The Aldrich's interim co-director Richard Klein. In addition to exhibiting a selection of her work, Hernmarck, one of the most important contemporary figures in the evolving history of woven tapestries, will be in residence at the Museum from October 14, 2018, to January 13, 2019.

Hernmarck began her career in the 1960s during an explosion of interest in fiber arts. Her innovations over the ensuing years are unsurpassed in visual imagery and technical innovation. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Hernmarck focused her practice on the pictorial, rather than sculptural form and abstraction. Influenced by pop culture, her mature style evolved into the creation of often-monumental tapestries that exhibit complex illusionary space and diverse subject matter, including *trompe l'oeil*, landscape, still life, and the human figure.

Her primary technique, a discontinuous plain weave on top of which she hand picks a supplementary pattern weft, resembles computer pixels, enabling Hernmarck to produce images that expand the use of photographic imagery into territory that is both abstract and realistic.

During *Weaving in Progress*, the gallery space will not only exhibit a selection of tapestries, but also function as a weaving studio. Three days a week, Hernmarck, and her apprentice Mae Colburn, will be working at the artist's five-foot-wide Glimåkra Countermarch loom. An inventory of the wool used in the process will be on view, along with a display of materials from the artist's archive, including photographs, watercolors, drawings, prototype samples,



Helena Hernmarck's studio in Ridgefield, CT.

Photo credit: Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

and other ephemera that illustrate and inform Hernmarck's process and the evolution of her career. The majority of the wool used in the tapestries is spun to her specifications at a family-run spinning mill in Sweden, and hand-dyed to reflect her color sensibilities. Visitors may touch and pick up the skeins of wool, amplifying the material nature of tapestry production.

*Weaving in Progress* is the first solo exhibition of Hernmarck's work in the United States since 2012 and will present twenty tapestries. Many of the works will be hung from the ceiling, so visitors can experience the complex three-dimensionality of her weaving technique, and the unusual materials she sometimes uses, such as leftover sequin material. The exhibition will transform the Museum from a place of looking to a place of making, where the physicality of fiber is amplified by the presence of the artist's hand. The sound of the loom's beater being sharply pulled to compress each row of weft will fill the space and the evolving progress of the tapestry will encourage repeat visitation.

## Lia Cook: Inner Traces

Richmond Art Center  
 Richmond, CA  
 September 11-November 17, 2018

*Inner Traces* features recent work by Berkeley-based visual artist, Lia Cook, whose practice combines weaving with painting, photography, video, and digital technology. Her work is woven by hand on a Jacquard loom (TC-1 loom), a combination of high tech and low tech. Cook explores the sensuality of the woven image and the embodied memories of touch and cloth. There is something about the textile medium and its materiality that seems to create a different and more intense response from the viewer. Working in collaboration with neuroscientists, she investigates the nature of this emotional response to woven faces and folds collected visualized data back into her weavings. Most recently text taken from the studies is woven into the work itself.

In addition, some work incorporates the relationship between neurological brain structures and woven structures. She often draws on the laboratory experience both with process and tools to stimulate new work in response to unexpected sources.



Left to right: Data Dots, Emotional Intensity, Mindmeld, Wonder Net, Neurothread Head.

Photo credit: Lia Cook