



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 21, 2008
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BLUE, FOCUS OF EXHIBITION, IS THE NEW 'GREEN'

BLUE, a follow-up to the 2007 Textile Museum exhibition RED, is on view now through September 18, 2008

April 21, 2008, Washington, D.C. — Blue iris has been chosen as Pantone, Inc.'s 2008 "Color of the Year" and various shades of blue have appeared on fashion runways in recent seasons, and textile artists have been using this bold color for several millennia – and continue to do so today. But the color blue also evokes a clear sky and the tranquil hue of clean water—primary concerns of the environmental movement. Blue, especially as derived from natural indigo dyes, has become associated with ecologically and environmentally friendly processes and products—leading some to dub it the 'new green'. BLUE, on view at The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. now through September 18, 2008, explores the creation and meaning of the color blue on textiles produced across time and place, with particular emphasis on contemporary artists' use of natural indigo dyes as part of the melding of artistic production and environmental conscience.

Until the invention of chemical dyes in the late 19th century, peoples worldwide relied largely on indigo-bearing plants to achieve blue-colored garments, household furnishings, artworks and even body paint. Many cultures attributed talismanic properties as well as health benefits to indigo, and the mysterious transformation of this temperamental dye has long been steeped in myth and magic.



Maria Eugenia Davila and Eduardo Portillo, Guardian, 2006. Silk, Moriche palm fibers and wool from the Andean mountains. Dyed with indigo, eucalyptus and cochineal and handwoven in triple weave. Collection of The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK.

Contemporary works in the exhibition highlight an interest in returning to natural indigo dyeing that stems from an increased environmental awareness of the impact of artistic and textile production. While much more convenient, quick and colorfast, synthetic indigo dyes use a variety of chemicals that have been found to negatively impact the environment. Natural indigo, which may be derived from various species of plants of the genus *indigo*, may be grown and produced with little or no negative impact to the environment, and even has antiseptic properties that have earned it a medicinal and protective value in many cultures. Hiroyuki Shindo, a Japanese artist, processes his own indigo to produce innovatively patterned textiles. Filmmaker Mary Lance documents part of his process in a film that is part of her work-in-progress, *Blue Alchemy: Stories of Indigo*. Maria Eugenia Davila and Eduardo Portillo raise silkworms and dye threads with natural dyes in Venezuela. Shihoko Fukomoto, also of Japan, uses natural indigo dye to achieve the depth and variety of blue tones in her ethereal works. Finally, a pair of Levi's® {Capital E} in the exhibition entryway demonstrate the environmental conscience that has taken hold in the fashion industry as well.

BLUE features 30 historical textiles from the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East – as well as installations by contemporary artists working in Japan, Venezuela and elsewhere. Complementing the exhibition is a film by Mary Lance, a work-in-progress of the upcoming documentary *Blue Alchemy: Stories of Indigo*.

BLUE is co-curated by Lee Talbot, Assistant Curator for Eastern Hemisphere Collections, and Mattiebelle S. Gittinger, Research Associate for Southeast Asian Textiles.

Related Programming

GALLERY TALK & TOUR

Saturday, April 5 • 11:00 am

Join exhibition curators Lee Talbot and Mattiebelle Gittinger for a tour of the new exhibition.

FREE; no reservations required. Limited to 35 participants.

FAMILY FIRST SATURDAYS:

“BLUEBLOOD: PRINCES AND PRINCESSES FOR A DAY”

Saturday, April 5 • 2 – 4 pm

Did you know that in many places blue is a royal color? Explore the exhibition BLUE, and learn about the history of this magical dye through different cultures and time. Create your own textile crown and watch *The Emperor's New Clothes*. FREE; no reservations required.

FAMILY FIRST SATURDAYS: “BLUE JEANS”

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Saturday, May 3 • 2 – 4 pm

Learn why your denim jeans are called "blue jeans" and examine Levi Strauss jeans from different eras. Wear your favorite pair of jeans and receive a free bookmark, while supplies last. Inspired by the exhibition BLUE, decorate your own jeans or make another blue textile. FREE; no reservations required.

BLUE LECTURE SERIES

Learn more about the color blue in textiles ranging from historical works, to blue jeans, to contemporary fiber art. This lecture series complements the exhibition BLUE. Fee: \$5/members; --

\$8/non-members. Advance registration required; space is limited. Call (202) 667-0441, ext. 64 to register.

"A Passion for Indigo: Jenny Balfour's Fascination with the Exotic Past and Exciting Future of this Unique Dyestuff"

Thursday, April 10 • 6:30 pm

Jenny Balfour-Paul, textile artist, researcher and author of Indigo, examines the mysteries and mystique of this ubiquitous dyestuff.

"African Blues"

Thursday, April 24 • 6:30 pm

Lisa Aronson, associate professor of art history at Skidmore College, explores the use and meaning of blue in African textiles.

"Indigo Immortal: The History and Global Culture of Levi's Jeans"

Thursday, May 15 • 6:30 pm

Lynn Downey, an archivist with Levi Strauss and Company, looks at the

"Indigo: A Personal Journey"

Thursday, May 22 • 6:30 pm

Hiroyuki Shindo, a Japanese artist who processes his own indigo to produce innovatively patterned textiles, discusses the use and meaning of this dyestuff in his artwork.

CELEBRATION OF TEXTILES

Saturday, June 7 • 10 am – 4 pm

Sunday, June 8 • 1 – 4 pm

Join us for the 30th anniversary of Celebration of Textiles, an annual festival of hands-on fun and learning at The Textile Museum. Visitors of all ages are invited to explore the textile arts and cultures of the world through a multitude of activities and demonstrations in the Museum's historic buildings, exhibitions and garden. During this year's program, learn about natural dyes and create a blue textile, inspired by the exhibition BLUE. FREE; no reservations required. Celebration of Textiles is part of the Dupont-Kalorama Museums Consortium's Museum Walk Weekend.

RUG & TEXTILE APPRECIATION MORNING: "A SAMURAI'S 'BUSINESS SUIT': THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF BLUE IN JAPAN"

Saturday, June 21 • 10:30 am

Join expert Ann Marie Moeller for an exploration of the significance of the color blue in samurai textiles. The audience is invited to bring clean, well-vacuumed examples that relate to the title of the program. Please arrive early, as program seating is limited. FREE; no reservations required.

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About The Textile Museum

Established in 1925 by George Hewitt Myers, The Textile Museum is an international center for the exhibition, study, collection and preservation of the textile arts. The Museum explores the role that textiles play in the daily and ceremonial life of individuals the world over. Special attention is given to textiles of the Near East, Asia, Africa and the indigenous cultures of the Americas. The Museum also presents exhibitions of historical and contemporary quilts, and fiber art. With a collection of more than 18,000 textiles and rugs and an unparalleled library, The Textile Museum is a unique and valuable resource for people locally, nationally and internationally.

The Textile Museum is located at 2320 'S' Street, NW in Washington, D.C. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Admission is free with a suggested donation of \$5.00 for non-members. For further information, call 202-667-0441 or visit www.textilemuseum.org.

In fall 2008 The Textile Museum will open a second site, dedicated to exhibitions and educational activities, in Washington, D.C.'s thriving Penn Quarter neighborhood. For more information about this exciting initiative, visit www.textilemuseum.org/secondsite.htm.

For more information or images, please contact Annie Laurie Sánchez at 202-667-0441, ext. 77, or by email at asanchez@textilemuseum.org or visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm.