



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

BLUE

April 4 - September 18, 2008

Artist Biographies

Hiroyuki Shindo (b. 1941, Tokyo, Japan) is a key figure in the revival and transformation of natural indigo dyeing in Japan. As a young man, Shindo was enraptured by the colors achieved with natural indigo, but saddened by the precipitous decline in indigo farming, processing, and dyeing that accompanied Japan's modernization. Through his career he has helped to revitalize and develop this ancient craft.

In his studio in Miyama, a mountain village north of Kyoto, Shindo processes locally-grown indigo to create unique artworks. He has drawn on traditional methods to develop innovative patterning techniques. Shindo states "In my exploration of indigo dyeing, I have discovered that the white in each work...is as great a concern as the dyed portion. If the white is not brilliant enough, or the undyed portion is not of the right proportion, the balance is broken, and so I insist: white is as important to my work as is indigo." Shindo's artworks have been exhibited worldwide, and are included in the permanent collections of museums such as The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Art Institute of Chicago; and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Since 1997 he has been a professor in and head of the textile department at the Kyoto College of Art.

Shihoko Fukumoto (b. 1945, Osaka, Japan) studied painting at the Kyoto Municipal University of Fine Arts. After several years, however, she realized that the painting medium suited neither her ideas nor her ways of working, and so began her career making indigo-dyed textiles. Combining the demanding traditional Japanese crafts of indigo dyeing, or *shibori*, and tonal gradation dyeing, *bokashi*, Fukumoto creates works of luminous, transcendent beauty. Although contemporary in feel, her works nonetheless exude a sense of tradition, which she also acknowledges through her involvement in kimono design. Fukumoto's major concern is with space, and for her, *ai*, natural Japanese indigo dye, is more than just a shade of blue – it is the color of space. Explaining its unique qualities, Fukumoto says, "the characteristic of *ai* is its hue, which has a highly spiritual element and transparent beauty."

Maria Eugenia Davila (b. 1966) and **Eduardo Portillo** (b. 1966) are spearheading the techniques of rearing silk worms, weaving with locally sourced fibers, and dyeing with natural dyes in Venezuela. They spent several years in China and India studying sericulture, or silk farming, and since then their research has taken them worldwide. In Venezuela they have established the entire process of silk manufacture: they grow mulberry trees on the slopes of the Andes, rear silkworms, obtain the threads, color them with natural dyes, and design and weave innovative textiles. This activity takes place in Mérida, where they founded the Taller Morera silk farm. There they experiment with traditional looms as well as looms with computer assisted design units. In 2001, in a journey along the Orinoco, Davila and Portillo first learned that threads could be obtained from lianas, palms, pitas, bromelias, and other native flora. These fibers reflected not only the natural diversity of Venezuela but also the indigenous cultures that still employ these materials.

Rowland Ricketts' work with indigo began with a two-year apprenticeship in Tokushima, Japan. He spent one year learning to farm and process the indigo plants and a second year studying the traditional wood-ash lye, natural fermentation indigo vat, as well as *shibori* techniques. After his apprenticeship, Rowland established a studio and farm with his wife Chinami, a *kasuri* weaver. Together they farmed and hand-processed the indigo that they used in their work. Rowland and Chinami returned to the United

Media Contact: Cyndi Bohlin, Communications & Marketing Manager, 202-667-0441, ext. 78
or cbohlin@textilemuseum.org. Also visit www.textilemuseum.org/about/pressroom.htm

States in 2003. He is now an Assistant Professor at the Henry Radford Hope School of Fine Art, Indiana University, Bloomington. Ricketts' years of practical experience inform his philosophy.

“Using gathered and cultivated plants as dyes I transfer their color to cloth with...dyeing techniques honed over centuries. The colors obtained are enriched by each plant's historical, cultural, and physical substance as well as by...connections...to all who ever worked within these traditions...I strive to present the viewer with a color so rich that they see beyond the dyed material to examine all that lies within a color's substance.”