

Education Programs

PUBLIC GALLERY TALK & TOUR “BLUE”

Saturday, April 5, 11 am

Lee Talbot, Assistant Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections and Mattiebelle Gittinger, Research Associate, Southeast Asian Textiles. Free. No reservations required; limited to 35.

SPECIAL PROGRAM “JAZZ AND BLUE”

Saturday, April 12, 5-7 pm

Join us for an evening of Jazz and “BLUE.” Enjoy musical performances by the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra and celebrate April as “National Jazz Month.” Explore the exhibition “BLUE” with our docents and enjoy wine, beer and light refreshments. Co-sponsored by Blues Alley Society “Big Band JAM!” Fee: \$10/members; \$15/non-members. Space is limited. Advance registration required. Call 202.667.0441, ext. 64.

BLUE LECTURE SERIES

Learn more about the color blue in the textile arts, from the history of indigo dyeing to your favorite pair of jeans. Fee per lecture: \$5/members; \$8/non-members. Advance registration required; space is limited. Call 202.667.0441, ext. 64.

Lecture: “A Passion for Indigo: My Fascination with the Exotic Past and Exciting Future of this Unique Dyestuff”

Thursday, April 10, 6:30 pm

Jenny Balfour-Paul, Scholar, Artist.

Lecture: “African Blues”

Thursday, April 24, 6:30 pm

Lisa Aronson, Associate Professor of Art History, Skidmore College.

Lecture: “Transforming Blue: From Seed to Dye, Indigo in Contemporary Japan”

Thursday, May 1, 6:30 pm

Rowland Ricketts, III, Artist.

Lecture: “Indigo Immortal: The History and Global Culture of Levi’s Jeans”

Thursday, May 15, 6:30 pm

Lynn Downey, Historian, Levi Strauss and Company Archives.

Lecture: “Indigo: A Personal Journey”

Thursday, May 22, 6:30 pm

Hiroyuki Shindo, Artist, and Mary Lance, Filmmaker.

RUG & TEXTILE APPRECIATION MORNING

“A Samurai’s ‘Business Suit’: Blue Textiles in Japan and their Social Messages”

Saturday, June 21, 10:30 am

Ann Marie Moeller. Free. No reservations required.

CELEBRATION OF TEXTILES

Saturday, June 7, 10 am-4 pm

Sunday, June 8, 1-5 pm

Join us for the 30th anniversary of *Celebration of Textiles* for 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. Learn about natural dyes and create a blue dyed textile, inspired by textiles in the exhibition *BLUE*.

Celebration of Textiles is part of Museum Walk Weekend, hosted by the Dupont-Kalorama Museums Consortium.

GALLERY TALKS

Lunchtime Textile Talks

Every Thursday from June 12-26, 2008. Free.

No reservations required; limited to 35. Take a break and join The Textile Museum for a lunchtime talk regarding the exhibition *BLUE*. Join curators and artists as they give their unique perspective on selected works in the galleries.

Southeast Asian Textiles

Thursday, June 12, 12-12:30 pm

Mattiebelle Gittinger, Research Associate, Southeast Asian Textiles.

Blue through an Artist’s Eyes

Thursday, June 19, 12-12:30 pm

Hillary Steel, Artist.

Chinese and Japanese Textiles

Thursday, June 26, 12-12:30 pm

Lee Talbot, Assistant Curator of Eastern Hemisphere Collections.

LOCATION

The Textile Museum is located at: 2320 S Street NW, a ten-minute walk north of the Q Street exit of the Dupont Circle Metro (Red Line).

MUSEUM HOURS

Monday–Saturday: 10 am–5 pm

Sunday: 1 pm–5 pm

Closed Federal holidays and December 24.

ADMISSION

Free; suggested donation \$5.

TOURS

Highlights tours are offered every Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 pm.

Docents are available to answer questions in the galleries on Fridays from 12-1:30 pm.

Docent-guided tours for groups of six to

forty may be scheduled on Monday,

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday

after 10:15 am, and on Thursday after 1:30

pm. For reservations, call 202.667.0441,

ext. 65 four weeks in advance.

PHOTO CREDITS

Front: Hiroyuki Shindo, *Shindigo Space 07* (detail), 2006. ‘Shindigo shibori’-dyed cotton and hemp and Shindigo balls (polystyrene wrapped with hemp and dip-dyed). Photo by Joel Chester Fildes.

Inside left: Rowland Ricketts, *Untitled Noren Partition* (detail). Indigo-dyed hemp, stencil paste resist. Photo by Osamu James Nakagawa.

Inside right: *Kain panjang* (long cloth, hip wrapper) (detail), Indonesia, Yogyakarta (in the style of Ceribon), Indonesian-Chinese, 20th century. Commercial cotton, resist patterning. The Textile Museum 1998.11.16. Gift of Beverly Deffes Labin Collection.



THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

2320 S Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008-4088
202.667.0441

www.textilemuseum.org

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MUSEUM SHOP

The Textile Museum Shop offers a unique assortment of textile-related books, ethnographic textiles, jewelry, and merchandise created by contemporary textile artists. For further information, please call 202.667.0441, ext. 29 or visit www.textilemuseumshop.org.

WEBSITE

Go to www.textilemuseum.org for information regarding current exhibitions, calendar of events, and museum membership.

LIBRARY

Visitors are invited to use The Textile Museum’s Arthur D. Jenkins Library.

The library contains unparalleled holdings of literature and visual resources related to the textile arts.

Library hours:

Wednesday–Friday, 10 am–2 pm

Saturday, 10 am–4 pm

For further information, including wheelchair accessibility at the Museum, please call 202.667.0441.

Generous support for the exhibition provided by

THE BOLD LOOK
OF **KOHLER.**

BLUE

April 4, 2008 – September 18, 2008

BLUE features the work of five artists currently using natural indigo dyes in Japan, South America, and the United States, as well as a historical section that provides a background from which to approach the innovative vision of these contemporary artists. This exhibition is just one manifestation of the renewed focus throughout the world on the color blue. Fiber artists have ignited this interest by their imaginative blue forms that incrementally change in response to the environment that each viewer creates. These creations merge into the realm of kinetic sculpture. Not only in shape are these works of art changeable, but also in subtle degrees of color. Indigo-based dyes have only a mechanical attachment to the fibers they color, so abrasion and simple existence continually alter the color. (This gives blue jeans their unique wear patterns.)

The Japanese artist Hiroyuki Shindo works near Kyoto, where he processes locally-grown indigo. Drawing on traditional methods, he has developed innovative patterning techniques. For example, to make the blue and white patterns on the banners in the main gallery, he wraps and pleats the fabric around metal cylinders. This procedure creates areas that resist the dye when the cylinders are lowered into the vat. As hung in this installation, entitled *Shindigo Space*, the banners pose the questions of how textiles define physical space and how the color blue influences our perception of space. The balls sprinkled across the floor are not static, but change the sculpture as they are handled and rearranged. The subtle motion of the banners, the continually altering blue dye, and the rearrangement of components make this environment a delight to experience.

In the adjoining gallery is the work of Shihoko Fukumoto, one of Japan's foremost artists working in indigo. This installation references the banners (*manmaku*) that can be seen in scrolls of the Heian period and which are still used on ceremonial occasions today. The ornately carved Victorian-style chair epitomizes Western design for the Japanese viewer. For Fukumoto, blue is the color of space. To look at the blue sky and the deep blue sea is to ponder the infinity of space. Fukumoto's tearoom, called *Morning Mist*, is adjacent. This six-foot cube of indigo-dyed linen is an actual functioning tearoom designed to be easily transportable to any setting for the enjoyment of tea in an airy blue space. The cube fills the gallery area in a manner complementary to the vertical banners in *Shindigo Space*.

Rowland Ricketts, an American-born artist, spent many years in Japan's Tokushima area, renowned for its indigo dye. He acquired his skills in dyeing by working on an indigo farm for a year and serving an apprenticeship to a master indigo dyer. This practical experience informs Ricketts' 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." Here *noren* (cloth partitions) add to the continuum of this history.

After spending several years in China and India studying sericulture, Maria Eugenia Davila and Eduardo Portillo are now raising silkworms in Venezuela. They also are spearheading the techniques of weaving with locally produced fibers and coloring with the region's natural dyes. Their endeavors are represented in the textile presented here. The palm fiber comes from the Orinoco River delta. The cloth was woven on a handloom using computer-assisted design. Called *Guardian*, the textile seen here was inspired by visits to the Orinoco and the Amazon and the realization of the obligation we all have to safeguard the environment.

BLUE DYEING

The problems of blue dyeing seem to have been solved independently in approximately the second millennium B.C. in Egypt, South Asia, and Peru. Subsequently, the skills spread to most of the world either by cultivation or trade. Some of the textiles in the long narrow gallery are examples of early indigo use from the Museum's collection; others represent customs associated with the dye in more recent ethnographic contexts. A fragment from Peru shows indigo's use in the first millennium B.C. Later items from that continent are fragments and bags created before Hispanic contact. A North American Navaho Chief's blanket illustrates the sophisticated manipulation of blue dyes achieved in more recent times. From Egypt are fragments that once graced garments and wall hangings in Roman culture of the 4th-6th centuries. Other examples from this geographic area, the so-called Fustat textiles (named for the old capital of Egypt where they were found), were made in western India from approximately the 11th to 17th centuries and traded to Egypt and the Mediterranean world. Several hundred from this group of textiles exist in museums around the world. They suggest the range of skills and patterns that stoked this trade. By the time Europeans reached India in the 16th and 17th centuries, the textiles we know as chintz were being perfected and soon commanded world attention because of the beauty and quality of their dyes. Indian-dyed textiles were essentially the currency of trade for more than 500 years.

INDIGO

Although blue dyes can be derived from Murex snails, logwood, and other substances, indigo—in particular, *Indigofera tinctoria*—came to dominate the production of dyes of this color. This plant has a higher percentage of dye substance and can be processed more quickly. The plants are cut shortly before blossoming and placed in a container with water. Enzymes and bacteria in the plants break down the indican, indigo's precursor, into a nearly colorless indoxyl and sugars. This fermentation continues for at least 12 hours. After removing the plant material, the remaining indoxyl must be oxidized by vigorous beating with sticks or hands and feet. This precipitates an insoluble indigo which may be dried and formed into cakes for future use or trade. When needed, the cake is joined with an alkaline substance

such as dates or wine in a vat with water. Fibers removed from the vat are yellow, but immediately become blue when oxidized by the air. Seemingly worked by magic, this alchemy introduced indigo dyeing to local superstition, myth, and ritual.

Indigo's unique qualities are ideally suited to a range of decorative techniques such as batik, shibori and ikat. All of these are "resist" techniques. By applying wax or paste, tying, gathering, pleating or stitching before the cloth is dyed, patterns are created in the negative. Different cultures have developed these skills to a high art form. Up until the late 19th century, when synthetic dyes began to displace the natural ones, indigo blue was used on garments, household furnishings, art works, and even for body paint.



Adjacent to the Fustat textiles is a 10th- century textiles made in Yemen. It is of cotton patterned in blue and brownish-yellow warp ikat and embellished with embroidered inscriptions. Made in state royal or public factories, the cloth was created for the court and other privileged constituents. Beautiful textiles such as this entered into trade from as early as the 7th century and are known as *tiraz* from the Persian word for embroidery.

More recent textiles in this gallery illustrate different customs and beliefs throughout the world that are related to blue dyes. For example, while blue clothing and furnishings expressed the elevated social status of rulers in many societies, as illustrated by the Qing-dynasty dragon robe, the color also came to be associated with the garments of the working classes, represented here by the 19th-century Japanese fireman's coat.

Groups in southwest China and Southeast Asia, such as the Miao, are experts in indigo dyeing. They fashion deep blue jackets carrying stunning embroidered patches and glittering metal attachments. The foundation cloth of this example is woven in an alternating float weave structure that creates whorl designs. While subtle, this monochromatic pattern in the cloth is very highly regarded among the Miao in the Taijiang region of eastern Guizhou. An elaborate skirt complements the jacket, creating a costume for public occasions, especially Miao courtship festivals.

In Indonesia, blue dyeing often was shrouded in secrecy. In one ancient village complex on Java's north coast, blue dyeing was the privilege of a senior family whose eldest woman guarded the sacred dye vats and passed on her skills to her daughter. Other weavers brought their yarns to be dyed blue in the sacred vats. Elsewhere along this coast, Indonesian-Chinese and Europeans were married in blue and white batik cloths that subsequently were saved to be used in the woman's burial.

The royal tunic is made from cloth patterned in the courts of the Bamum people of the Grassfields area of Cameroon in West Africa. Similarly patterned rectangular cloths are royal display cloths of the numerous Bamileke and Bamum sacred chiefdoms. In the 19th century the cloths were objects of specialist production and part of an extensive network of trade. The tunic probably was worn by a member of a royal regulatory society.

Lee Talbot, Assistant Curator, Eastern Hemisphere Collections
Mattiebelle Gittinger, Research Associate, Southeast Asian Textiles

Additional material available in the Museum's Arthur D. Jenkins Library includes:
Balfour-Paul, Jenny. *Indigo*. British Museum Press, London. 1998
Bohmer, Harald. *Keokboya: Natural Dyes and Textiles*. Remhob Verlag, Ganderkesee, Germany. 2002