ETN
textileforum
3/2005 September Copy/Einzelheft 11 €

© "Spiritual Sticks" (detail) by Elyse De Lafontaine, Canada

TEXTILVERANSTALTUNGEN WELTWEIT
WORLD-WIDE TEXTILE EVENTS

SQUARE – CARRÉ – CUADRADO

Paula Ortiz

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The 3rd International Biennial of Women in Textile Arts united personalities from all over the world through cubes and squares made of woven fibres, their shapes and colours reflecting the diversity of our lives.

The biennial broke with conventional schemes during the inauguration in the Museum of Culture, Valencia, Venezuela, on 2nd December 2004. The organisers of the event were the International Organisation of Women in Textile Art whose president and founder is Pilar Tobón, a well known Colombian artist; ARA Gallery, represented by Raiza Sala; and Carabobo Foundation of Historic and Cultural Heritage, represented by the architect Franz Risquez. The biennial brought together 123 artists from 37 countries, including 9 guest artists, in an event unprecedented in Venezuela, perhaps even in Latin America. Its innovative character produced such an impact in Venezuela that the local government of Carabobo extended the exhibition for an extra month.

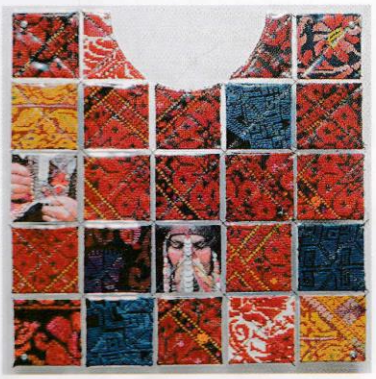
Looking at two- and three-dimensional objects created by the hands of weavers and inventors can be an overwhelming and surprising experience – seeing textures and colours produced by embroidery, layers of fabric, dyes, discolouration, weaving and temperature treatment. Textile objects always hide surprising details that are only revealed when we finally approach them. Due to their flexibility, textile objects either burst into space in showcases, float and swirl over walls, or simply rest on the floor as if trying to entangle us forever in their threads, bewitching us with their knots and ties.

Each object is a sensory space in itself. At the biennial, objects displaying similar qualities were grouped together, allowing the viewer to journey through conceptual spaces. The superb exhibition created by the architect Franz Risquez, the director of the City Museum, and Alicia Benamu, the Carabobo Fine Arts Coordinator, was thus embued with a living dynamic quality.

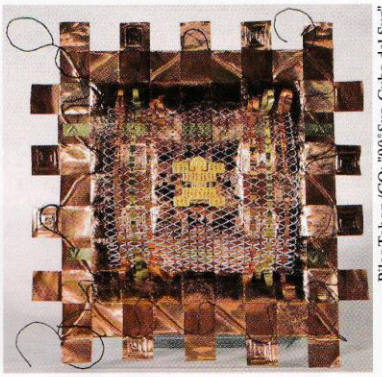
Lamis Feldman, a guest artist from Venezuela, exhibited "And her Tears, Rainstorms and Torrents became Flowers...", winning first prize for best in show. Her tapestry consisted of exquisitely fashioned, fine meshes and woven aluminium and silver wires with glass and crystal beads that created a transparent play of light and shadow, with metaphoric rain falling on a valley of copper, steel and bronze flowers. Fragile, feminine and soft, yet deeply strong, her ensemble gave a hopeful message in its title: peace and flowers arise after a storm, and tears, just like rain, come and go.

Another distinguished guest artist was Sugane Hare, a Japanese artist who exhibited a tapestry entitled "Her Tragedy is a Commodity". Torn layers of fabric, either opaque or transparent, represented the crimson broken heart of women who have to sell their bodies to survive. "Dogs in Real Time", a large installation presented by local artist María Antonieta Arnal, exhibited great chromatic harmony that was in stark contrast with the strong and aggressive dogs eating industrial waste –foreshadowing a future we face. Marie-Noëlle Fontan, a French artist, presented "Lianas – Corozo", a very long tapestry with textures produced by playfully inserted twigs. Carolyn Lee Vehslage from the USA exhibited a modern reference to classic American quilts, combining waste produced by computer technology with quilted needlework on a hand-painted fabric showing spirals and alphabets.

"Tamarind", a pleated silk ensemble by the Chilean artist Inge Dusi, was another outstanding work in the open exhibition. Sabine Zeiler, a German artist, presented "Square-dance", a play of colours in a dyed silk cube. Betty Cuykx and Patzy Boulez from Belgium presented two finely embroidered spirals, one in black and white, the other in colour. The Japanese artist Amayokasim presented "I –Playing the Tongue Game", a finely pleated, continuous tubular fabric shaped into a large bronze knot that served to reveal its rich texture. Reina María Valdez, the first Cuban artist to be represented at the Biennial, presented her culture's synthesis of the Yoruba and Catholic religions in a sculpture with burning incense at its base as an offering to Eleggua. Two Mexican artists participated, Frida Cañón and Enna Negrón. Surprisingly, Frida was one of the few artists who presented a hand-printed digital image, placed on a copper sheet and with a textile frame of copper thread, while Enna inserted some indigenous weavings into CD boxes. →

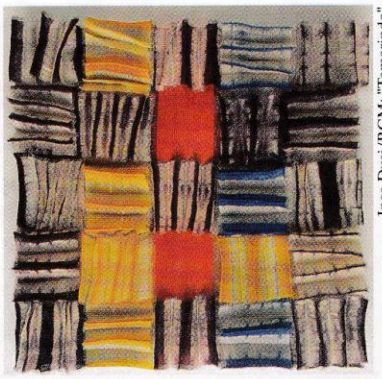


Batia Eichenholz/IL: Desert Woman"



Pilar Tobon/CO: "90° Sur. Cubo del Sur"

Mary Ruth Smith/USA: "Traced markings"



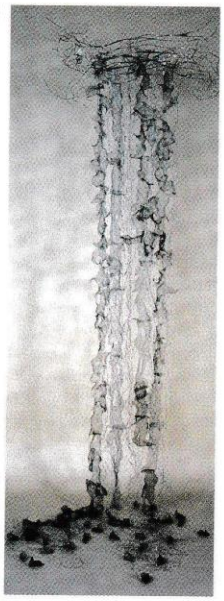
Inge Dusi/RCM: "Tamarindo"

Patzy Boulez/B: "My first art"

Norma Shoko/J: "Eternally"

Photos above: "Each object in the exhibition is a sensory space in itself" (Paula Ortiz)

continued from p. 29



Lamis Feldman/Y: "And tears, rainstorms and torrents became flowers"

WTA BIENNIALS IN LATIN AMERICA

The WTA Biennial is of paramount importance in Latin America. The revival of cultural heritage in art and textile design is still incipient in some countries whilst in others it is non-existent. Biennials are great opportunities for the public to make visual and tactile contact with multi-cultural textile exhibits to gain a better understanding of textile art. Empirical knowledge is the only means for the inquiring younger generation to find their way into textile art and help bring about changes.

Textile art has developed differently in Latin American countries. Despite our rich cultural heritage, the similarities and complexities of our shared socio-cultural and economic problems, plus the economic need to accept the pressures of the market and tourism, prevent textile art from developing fully.

Central America and some South American countries now face tough competition from the Asian textile industry. Asian countries have the leading edge in European and North American markets due to the value added to their clothing exports, which include design, raw materials and manufacture of final products. Historic reference is the key in developing a different product range that would change our present economic stagnation.

I have hopes that the current crisis shall give rise to the necessary determination and confidence to implement diverse design programmes in schools, ultimately leading to an advancement of textile art.

The next biennial exhibition, "Man + Woman = Creation", is scheduled in Costa Rica for September – October 2006, thanks to the initiative of Manuel Arce, Director General, and Juan Diego Roldán, coordinator at the Sophia Wanamaker Gallery in the Costa Rican – North American Cultural Centre.

The exhibition theme will be a symbiosis of feminine and masculine art, which must be merged into one in each piece. It will be interesting to see the masculine contributions to an artistic environment that is historically feminine – it will undoubtedly be an enriching event. ■

Beatrijs Sterk

The fourth edition of this quilt art event was held at the Dairy Barn Arts Center, Athens, Ohio, USA, from 28th May until 5th September 2005. Still one of the most important juried exhibitions of its kind, it essentially presents the best of the North American quilt art scene and attracts fewer and fewer contributions from the "rest of the world". This year's submissions numbered more than 1,200 quilts, 83 of which were included in the catalogue; they comprised just 8 quilts from the "rest of the world" – two each from the UK and Japan and one each from Belgium, the Netherlands, France and New Zealand. The inside dustcover text of the catalogue reads: "This juried collection showcases the best and most exciting contemporary art quilts being produced today." The organiser would have been better advised not to let such an assertive statement stand, because it demonstrates a very narrow world view.

When reviewing the 13th Quilt National in TF 3/03, I voiced my opinion about the dangers that beset "art" quilt exhibitions. At that event, the first prize was awarded for an object that could not, in good faith, really be called a quilt. In the present edition, the jury again passed an object which, although witty, must be considered part of a category other than quilts: "Bingo!" by Susan Else from California. I can easily appreciate that the judges were pleased to see something different after viewing 1,200 quilt submissions. Our North American colleagues are not the only ones and not the first to "weaken" in this way. The issue of our magazine mentioned earlier, TF 3/2003, page 27 showed an object similarly unrelated to quilts that had made the selection for the 2nd European Quilt Triennial. In view of such examples it seems worth posing the question of what constitutes the boundaries of quilts – be they "art" quilts or not.

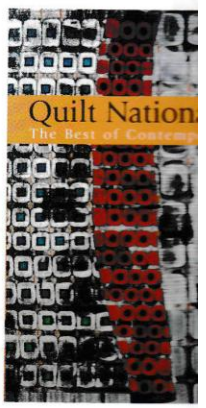
Back to the selection for 2005: the most convincing piece, both in my eyes and in the eyes of the jury, was "Rainy Day" by the Hungarian Anna Torma, a resident of Canada, although she was out of the running because her work is older than the contest allows. An American quilt artist of long-standing renown, Jane Burch Cochran from Kentucky, contributed the very interesting piece "Deviled and Angel" which I would have awarded "Best of Show". However, the jury reserved this title, an award worth US$ 1,500, to "Orange Construction Fence Series # 29" by Jeanne Williamson from Massachusetts. The same quilt also received the McCarthy Memorial Award endowed with US$ 500 and graces the catalogue cover. The Award of Excellence ($ 1,200) went to Jane Sassaman from Chicago for "Forgotten Garden". The prize for innovative use of the medium, donated by Friends of Fiber Art International and endowed with US$ 850, was awarded to Patricia Mink from Tennessee for "Wall Quilt # 25", a photo of a crumbling wall projected onto a fabric by means of an inkjet printer that does not strike me as innovative at all. The Cathy Rasmussen Emerging Artist Memorial Award ($ 250) went to Jea from Berkeley, Calif Style 2-504". The a for 35 years (!) and i in artwear. Would it r such prizes to young unsure of themselve reassurance in their

Further prizes we for "Beijing" (Quilts Woock for "Pipedrea Award for Surface D Lupe Pelish for "Safe siek Award, $ 300), a from the USA. The a be presented until 20 tion has completed i States. The locations and further details o be viewed on the orga dress: Dairy Barn Art 747, Athens, Ohio 457 dairybarn.org

THE CATALOGUE

As usual, the catalogu in book format. It co the quilts selected, wi of each object but unf the artists' addresses. statements by two jur Lintault, New York, a Roberts, Berkeley, as tion by the project dir Fletcher, who has bee years and has gained ing the development art. Entitled "Quilt N Best of Contemporar ing 111 pages with 85 the publication is avai Forum Library for Eu

An overview publicat pages illustrating 400 1995 and 2003 has bee autumn of 2005: "Art tion" will also be avail Forum Library for Eu



Jean Willia "Markers: Style 2

Jane "Forgotten Ga

Marla "So Cal