

Review of : **A Terrible Beauty: an installation by Jennifer Angus**

Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto, Canada.



November 26 2005—May 14 2006

Originally from Canada Jennifer Angus is currently assistant professor of Textile Design at the University of Wisconsin. She has been using ethnological designs as signifiers in her work for many years. Knowing her work does not prepare you for the wonder, gothic horror and eventual delight you experience viewing “A Terrible Beauty”. This show is as much about historical context and the questions that arise when considering the specific location as well as the choice of material. The 15,000 insects pinned directly to the walls of the Textile Museum of Canada, are partly the what” and “where” of it but not however, the “why” of it, It’s all about the “Wallpaper”,

In 1839 a calico printing firm, Potters of Darwen in Lancashire, England, adapted a printing machine for wallpaper. Wallpaper could now be mass-produced, prices dropped, and more of the middle class were able to buy it, By 1851 and the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, 13,000 exhibits from all around the world presented new inventions such as the Jacquard loom. The objects on display came from India and other countries from the British Empire, as well as the rest of the trading world, The edification and improvement of society through educational public events was a source of entertainment for the growing middle class, Various “societies” : Geographic, Women’s, Missionary, etc. presented lectures, debates and expositions concerning geographical exploration, archaeological finds, the natural sc an exotic mix of theories, objects, plants, animals, minerals, insects and the occasional hoax.

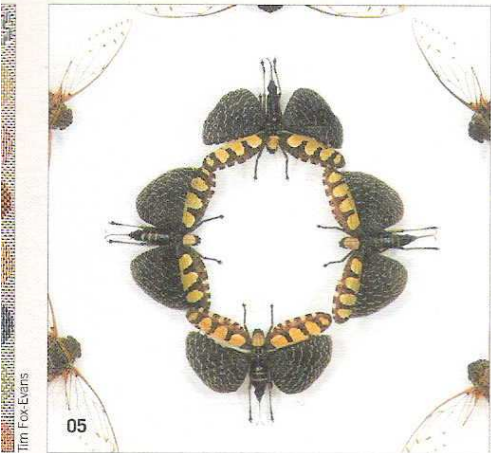
With the forced opening of Japan in 1860 and the building of the Suez canal in 1869 the ebb and flow of ideas became a Tsunami clearing a path for creative regeneration. This era brought new

design ideas for wall papers which fell into three distinct areas: Neo-Gothic, geometric patterns, and Arts and Craft papers.

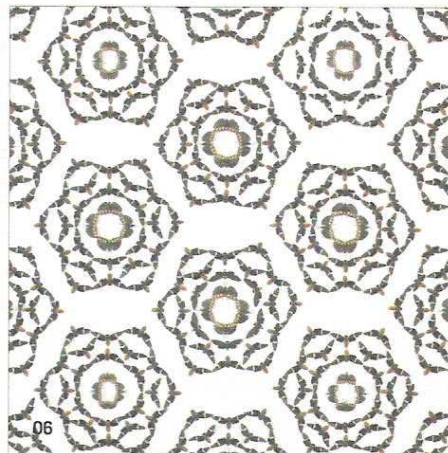
2005, enter the intrepid Entomologist and Explorer and the “Goliathus Hercules”. A hoax presented in the best P.T. Barnum tradition. In her previous installation Jennifer Angus established a fictitious character with a personal history, and a mythic adventure operating in the late 19th century. Now Angus with ‘A Terrible Beauty’ enters the home of her creation: The Flower, the Indian, the Egypt and the Japan Rooms, though mostly Neo Gothic in design, evoke the appropriately eerie Victorian atmosphere. Curator Sarah Quinton explains the identity of her curious collector remains a mystery, his story presents one of the conflicting tensions between the impulsive and the repulsive features of unbridled acquisitiveness and the never-ending efforts to display and contextualize his collection.’

In the Japan Room pinned on white walls a cicada from Thailand the *Tosena Albata*, looks more like an exotic headdress worn by a silent film vamp than a run of the mill insect? It has a wing span of five inches with the texture of silk velvet the rich dark blackish brown colouring is luminescent yet seems to simultaneously absorb light. Wing tip to wing tip with bodies of a coppery golden brown their heads facing out in a repetition of circles with in circles cover one entire wall. Sharing this room another cicada *Pomponia Imperator*, from Malaysia and a Katydid from Thailand, called *Sanna Intermedia* are pinned in undulating stripes. Enter Angus’ Wonderland and face your own imagination. ••• Joe Lewis

05, close up, 06 Japan Room Installation



Stephen Funk Courtesy of the Textile Museum of Canada



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A Terrible Beauty: an installation by Jennifer Angus

Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto, Canada T: +416 599 5321 www.textilemuseum.ca November 26 2005–May 14 2006

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05/06 Installation, Japan room