

Editorial: The Not So Comfortable Zone

Comfort Zone blankets, sweater, scarves old family textiles things that inspire safety: this was the editorial call that was posted last November. The response was not what I expected. I wish makers of textile and fibre based work felt their position on the creative stage was clearly defined, secure, legitimate, well documented and had a place in history that was static. This is not the case regardless of how they work what they make exist on shifting ground, and it is any thing but Comfortable.

Is it Craft, is it fine or decorative art, what is its function and who has the authority to judge it. On a recent visit with a friend that lives in a rural area outside of Ottawa we talked about her becoming a judge for the local fair. This was a multi step process and is based on guidelines that were set in stone a century ago by the Woman's Institute or the 4 H and have not adapted an inclusive attitude to new ways of working with textiles. In almost every craft and textile arts magazine that has come out this year there have been articles about "craft writing" or "Writing about Craft"; making one assume it doesn't happen or is just now getting underway.

In this issue we present a range of examples of writing by students, professional Textile object makers and academics.

In the Finishing School section four recent graduates from textile programs have been given the opportunity to present themselves (unedited) It is always interesting to see what they come up with. Oldouz Moslemian Jon Riosa, and Tiffany E-Ting Wu are from OCAD University and Lena Guézennec the MCCT in Montreal.

I was hoping to get at least one story about Blankets for this issue and have two to present; East coast weaver Rilla Marshall gives us a profile of the MacAusland's Woollen Mill on Prince Edward Island. Originally a saw and grist mill started in 1870, the mill was converted into a woollen mill in 1902 by Archibald MacAuland it is still family owned and operated.

The confident myth making present by Italian weaver Luciano Gheris in "BLANKETS OF WISDOM: Italian Tribal Art of the XXI century, Hand-designed & woven by the Weaver of the Century" is a re-publishing of an article he posted on line in April. I found the story to radiate a joy of weaving that even though he is not from Canada and presents no Canadian content I was impelled to ask permission to share it in fibreQUARTERLY

I am connected to Gheris on facebook through members of the European Textile Network One of which Eva Basile as curator of the international exhibition of felt "The Climate is Changing" (there are two Canadians in this show: Diane Gonthier and Andrea Graham) has provided us with In the Vernacular: Artistic Responses to Climate Change by Jo Turney a textile historian from Bath University.

The first section of Absence and Presence: Disembodied Clothing as Relic by Jennifer Smith-Windsor was published as the Back Page in Volume 5 Issue 4/ Winter 2009. It is pushed here in its entirety.

This time around I look through the maze into the face of America artist Lia Cook. Her 2009 touring exhibition Faces and Mazes which originated from the Robert Hillestad Gallery at the University of Nebraska is having a six month run at the Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto as part of their "Person Place and Thing" exhibition. Weaving for over 30 years she considers herself an Artist while others depending on their point of view consider her a Craft artist. I consider her weaving skill and the work which is produced.

Even though 2010 is only half over I am presenting a mid year round up of textile exhibitions in Canada. Two survey shows of contemporary fibre arts Around the Frayed Edges at the Agnes Jamieson Gallery in Minden, Ontario and at the Gibson Centre in Aliston, Ontario. The Evolution of Fibre appearing as out of nowhere is community based galleries in small towns just beyond the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) presenting the work of nearly 50 artists from across Canada took place this spring. The coverage of these shows was one article about Around the Frayed Edges in the local community paper and there it stops. Forty Seven exhibitions have happened coast to coast since January and so far only …. You know the rest of the story.

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I need to thank Carol-ann Cassleman (Virginia Johnson: Canadian Contemporary Design fQ Volume % Issue 2) and Heidi Overhill ("Museum of Me" by Elizabeth Legge Canadian Art Summer 2010) for their editorial efforts and stepping in while my usual editor Jane Kelley was unavailable (She is in Mexico trying to finish an Archaeological dig she has run for 15 years.)

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Flexing my muscles or is this the beginning of a yawn? photo by Pauline Groen taken at the opening of "Telling Tales: Narrative Woven Textiles by Joe Lewis and Kathy Schicker" at Berkeley Castle Gallery, Toronto, April 10, 2010