

9th International Shibori Symposium by Stephanie Fortin

Attending the 9th International Shibori Symposium hosted by The World Shibori Network and The China National Silk Museum, was an experience I will hold close, endlessly, as it was my first time traveling to Asia. !!

The theme for the symposium being, Resist Dye on The Silk Road: Shibori, Clamp Resist and Ikat, I knew that I had to try to attend; as the focus of my art practice has been mainly within clamp resist dyeing, specifically itajime shibori, for the past 4 years.!

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I was a bit apprehensive to travel somewhere so foreign to me, on my own, to be honest. With the incredible support from colleagues and friends, who gave me great advice and the confidence to go; I am proud to say, that I made it to Hangzhou, China and home again with little bumps along the way. !!

With a quick tourist stop in Shanghai, it was time to try my luck at taking the train to Hangzhou.!! After a few small mishaps on my part with my last minute packing and organizing. I secured the help of friendly locals, who were happy to speak the little english they knew, to generously guide me in the right direction. I made it to Hangzhou safe and sound and settled into my room at The Jade Emperor Hotel in Hangzhou, China. !!

Jade Emperor Hotel, Hangzhou China

Waking up at The Jade Emperor Hotel, was a bit of a dream, surrounded by picturesque mountains and ponds and a short walk to The China National Silk Museum. I had arrived after dark the day before and had no idea what the landscape was like. Grounds surrounding The Jade Emperor Pond with fishermen Hangzhou China Hangzhou is located in Eastern China in Zhejiang Province. It is known for its scenic beauty

and West Lake. Many artists have been inspired by the Lake's gorgeous surroundings for centuries. Hangzhou was a perfect local for the symposium. !!

West Lake photo cred: Sara Bakken I packed my belongings for the days events and headed over to The China National Silk

Museum for the opening ceremonies and to preview the 8 exhibitions, in conjunction with the symposium. It was an honour to not only be attending, but to be exhibiting with the help of The Ontario Arts Council, my Pinwheel Series work in The Contemporary Art of Shibori and Ikat show, curated by Yoshiko I. Wada. Front entrance of the China National Silk Museum with the Symposium Banners A view inside the education space, in The China National Silk Museum, this area showcased the process silk goes through to become cloth. The museum hosts a main building with smaller buildings and galleries, joined by lovely walkways and ponds. A view of the grounds and walkways between museum and gallery spaces. A local high school group had installed site specific indigo work in the area.

There was so much going on during the symposium, that this article could go on forever, so I will keep it to some of the events and proceedings that stood out for me during the main event. The opening celebrations melted my heart. Qiuzhi Primary School students performed a dance depicting the story of silk, from silkworm to cloth and the dyeing process. My favourite part were the young ones, dressed as silk worms. I arrived at the museum fairly early, with my jet lag, I misread the time of the celebrations. Which was ok, I had time to mingle and meet other attendees as well as take a peek around the exhibitions on my own. When I was making my way back to the main lobby to view the performance, I walked by the children backstage, who were bursting with excitement and greeting me with such joy - they were genuinely adorable. Qiuzhi Primary School students performing the story of silk through dance

Children performing Next the eight plenary speakers were introduced with an address from ZHAO Feng the director of the museum - a very friendly and warm person - I don't think I ran into him, without a smile on his face. Yoshiko also addressed the crowd as she is the reason all of these amazing events

happen with the help of an incredible team. The plenary speakers for the conference, distinguished scholars and artists from across the globe: Francoise Cousin from France, Alejandro de Avila from Mexico, Deborah Milner from the UK, Yongsong Huang of China and of course Yoshiko and Feng Zhao. Michel Garcia unfortunately could not make it due to being ill and was very much missed. Some of the Plenary Speakers being introduced :Francoise Cousin, Zhao Feng, Yoshiko Wada, Carter Smith, Asa Parson Zhao Feng, Director of the China National Silk Museum Dividing into groups depending on language spoken as there were roughly 250 participants that spanned 15 countries participating in the symposium. We toured the grounds of the museum and through the galleries to get oriented to the space and exhibitions. It was nice to see a few familiar faces that I had met at previous textile symposiums. Yoshiko, being the generous leader she is, brought a sample of textiles from across the globe for exhibition, from her own collection. The exhibition entitled Resist Dye on The Silk Road: World Shibori and Ikat. You will see a couple very interesting resist dyed pieces from India and Peru in the images, a

few of us spent a bit of time, trying to figure out how the piece from Peru would have been woven and resist dyed, it looks simple but is quite intriguing and ingenious. Yoshiko Wada walking through the exhibition from her own personal collection. Resist Dye on

The Silk Road: World Shibori and Ikat. Curated by Yoshiko Wada Lahariya (Wave) Safa (Mans Turban), Jaipur,

Rajasthan, India, 19th - 20th Century, Handspun

and handwoven fine cotton, natural dye, 37 varied patterns of lahariya (bias twist bound resist, dyed twice from opposite direction) 37 cm x 7cm, 1.2.21SH M!

From: Resist Dye on The Silk Road: World Shibori and Ikat. Curated by Yoshiko Wada

Amarras, Huari Culture, Peru, 600 - 900 CE, Camelid fiber, natural dyes, Bound resist on scaffold weave, stepped shapes, 20cm x 35cm, 1.2.60SH!

From: Resist Dye on The Silk Road: World Shibori and Ikat. Curated by Yoshiko Wada Also on exhibition New Beat: International Student Competition - Textile and Wearable Art, I

actually ended up stepping in as the token foreigner to accept awards on behalf of one of the winners. Participants tour the Student Exhibition, Jorie Johnson and Carter Smith in the foreground

Yoshiko also curated a Contemporary Exhibition, Contemporary Art of Shibori and Ikat, showcasing pieces from 63 international artists working with resist dyeing in a contemporary milieu around the world. The Pinwheel Series, I created for exhibition earlier that year as mentioned earlier, was shown in this show. I feel so honoured to be part of such an inspiring group. Instal shot of The Contemporary Art of Shibori and Ikat work from left to right: Life by artist Tomas Robefelt from Sweden, Ocean Rubble by artist Sandra Clark from USA, Pinwheel Series by artist Stephanie Fortin from Canada and Imprint Series by artist Hiroshi Ishizuka from Japan Crossing #18 and Crossing #19 by artist Ulla de Larios, Sweden to USA, silk, indigo Detail image of UK fashion designer Deborah Milner's Small Knot Dress, silk chiffon, shibori. Mary Zicafoose with her work entitled: The Mountain for the Buddha Series: Caution, wool on linen warp, hand-dyed, wrapped, weft-faced ikat and slit-woven tapestry There were eight exhibitions in total associated with the symposium, the last one I will show

images of that I found intriguing was a project installed down a side street beside my hotel in a tiny gallery and cafe: Xiangxian Gallery. An exhibition of Ancient Chinese Costume Replicas of the Han and Jin Dynasties, with resist dyed details. Curated by Liu Shuai and Edith Cheung. Instal view of costumes and work by artists Candace Edgerley of USA, Catherine Ellis of USA, Mascha Mioni of Switzerland and Carter Smith of USA

LIU Shuai in 2007 started the project with a group of young artists, researching collections, historical references, paintings, colours and more to recreate the fabrics, designs, resists and costumes from the time period. To understand how an artists hands would have worked in that time period. The replicas were stunning to see.

Instal view of Ancient Chinese Costume Replicas of the Han and Jin Dynasties, curated by Liu Shuai and Edith Cheung

Instal view of Ancient Chinese Costume Replicas of the Han and Jin Dynasties, curated by Liu Shuai and Edith Cheung Detail image of costume from Ancient Chinese Costume Replicas of the Han and Jin Dynasties, curated by Liu Shuai and Edith Cheung One of the hardest parts about attending a conference is choosing which talks and events to

attend as there are usually concurring sessions going on. I tried to choose a wide variety of talks, a bit of everything from the areas of study being resented. The topics for the conference included; Archeology, Ethnography, Fashion and costume, Art, Compression Resist, Conservation, Natural Dye and Empowering People, echnology and Design and Education.!From the Archeology and Ethnography sessions, though all were amazing. I really appreciated he knowledge, Dr Alejandro De Avila brought in speaking about the Oaxaca Ethnobotanical arden as well as Chris Buckley and Francoise Cousin's research with Ikat. Alejandro de Ávila giving his lecture on Oaxaca's Ethnobotanical Garden Chris Buckley showing ikat examples from his talk entitled: Ikat making in Asia: An Overview After the session of lectures that day, we were to tour some of the exhibits with the plenary

speakers taking us through and discussing pieces. However, the group I met in Yoshiko's exhibition, decided that instead we would continue the discourse and conversation from the earlier lectures and exchange conversation about linguistics, origins of dye plants, cultivation and more. Being able to take part in this conversation was a fantastic experience. The knowledge within the group that sat in the gallery that day was incredible. The discussion was so well received that we gathered after the second day to do the same. The group enjoying a discussion together led by Alejandro de Ávila, Francoise Cousin and Chris uckley(Francoise and Alejandro There was a strong sense of patriotism within each country and of course there were differences of opinions on where certain techniques and textiles originated from. The conservation panel was very moving, a couple of the projects brought tears to my eyes in

fact. In any field it is important to think of our industry within a larger context of conservation, thinking about things like fair trade, child labour, environmental change, loss of tradition and technique among others. William Ingram who is the co-founder of Threads of Life an organization; I highly recommend checking out what they do, they keep a wonderful instagram account. Working with traditional weavers, fair trade, supporting women, conservation of technique and much more based out of Ubud, Bali. In William's talk he spoke on a naturally derived plant mordant from the powdered leaf of the Symplocos Cochinchinensis tree. This mordant replaces industrial produced alum. You can purchase it in Canada as well. William Ingram co-founder of Threads of Life, speaking on: The Plant Mordant Project: Bringing

Indonesia's Traditional Plant-sourced Dye Mordant to the World.

Another lecture that sticks in my mind was artist and educator Sara Goodman's presentation on her work with The Goodweave Foundation an American NGO whose focus is to cease child labour in the carpet industry. Fair Trade Certified Shibori Designed Carpets. Sara with her work in the Contemporary exhibition as well as two carpet samples from The Goodweave label. Fair Trade Certified Shibori Designed Carpets (The carpet industry is well known for using child labour and the Goodweave Foundation has set up a fair-trade certified carpets, consumers can feel good about purchasing. The foundation was formed in 1994 by activist Kailash Satyarthi, who was one of the recipients along side Malala Yousafzai for the Nobel Peace Prize this past year, 2014, for his work against the exploitation of children. Goodweave takes children out of factories, builds systems where proper wages and trained adults are now working in the industry and children are caught up with their education as some have never been to school before, to then be placed back into school with peers. Goodweave educates consumers to purchase child labour free rugs.

The last lecture I discuss in this article, was of course a talk on clamp resist dyeing. A lecture given by ISHIZUKA Hiroshi on the Replication of Izumo Carved Board Clamp Resist Dyeing in Indigo, an obvious favourite for me. As Hiroshi is Japanese, Yoshiko translated the lecture for us. The technique of this type of board resist, had been practiced between the 7th and 8th c and an example can be found in the collection at the Shoso - in, but really stopped being produced for a period of time. Until itajime was reintroduced in Japan during the 18th century. Izumi is where carved boards are used to clamp folded layers of fabric together to create intricate designs and images. Hiroshi and my work became neighbours in the Contemporary exhibition, one of my favourites for obvious reasons, such a privilege for me to show beside him. ISHIZUKA Hiroshi and Yoshiko present Hiroshi's talk entitled: Replication of Izumo Carved Board Clamp Resist Dyeing in Indigo. images of boards and equipment during the clamp dyeing process. My brain was swimming with all my new found knowledge, but I was very excited and lucky to be able to register for an amazing showing and discussion of Mr. Yamazaki's extensive work with natural dye books. Mr. Yamazaki's book and research within natural dye! Jorie Johnson and Catharine Elis take a look at some of the natural dye books on view for the discussion.

Mr Yamazaki's father was a botanist and lover of colour. He produced the beautiful dye sample book you see in the images, with dye recipes, swatches and plant diagrams.

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In this discussion group, Mr. Yamazaki showed us his research so far in recreating swatches on silk, with the original recipes. He even had special silk woven that would replicate the original specifications. This work is ongoing. !!

(Yoshiko and Mr. Yamazaki, presenting his research in natural dye and the set of swatches, that have been recreated with his father's original recipes. Page in Mr. Yamazaki's father's original book, with diagrams, recipes and swatch Natural dyes on silk are the most luxurious colours, the samples so far are brilliant that Mr. Yamazaki has obtained. I love the family connection and tradition in this project as well. Detail of natural dye samples Of course there were many more events, discussions and happenings that occurred over the course of the symposium. I recommend visiting The World Shibori Network to find out more information on the speakers, artists and participants. China was a whirlwind of a trip and I will certainly travel back. The people, hospitality and love of craft was inherent in the culture of Hangzhou; a wonderful place for such an event. Thank you to the World Shibori Network and The China National Silk Museum for a fantastic symposium, for bringing artists, researchers, educators, students and enthusiasts within the resist dyeing world wide together. I leave you with one final image of our group waiting outside of the galleries along The Grand Canal in Hangzhou, on the final day of the symposium, I especially love the detail of Mexican artist Yosi Anaya's jacket. Group photo of some of the participants outside of the galleries along The Grand Canal!
Artist Yosi Anaya from Mexico - jacket detail