

Selections from the Fibre Art Collection at Cambridge Galleries: Design at Riverside

Selections from the *Fibre Arts Collection* at the Cambridge Galleries is a look at what this public collecting institution has been engaged in since its inaugural exhibition in 1986. This exhibition is the counter balance or second half of the biannual *Fibreworks* exhibition the Cambridge Galleries has been mounting for thirty years.

In the beginning, curator Helen Duffy brought together the work of 18 artists for an exhibition called *Here and Now*. These works, ranging from the sculptural to the two-dimensional, were chosen because they were visually challenging and/or technically outstanding.

"Over the past few years there have been substantial changes in the field of contemporary fibre art. Gone are the improvised flamboyance of jostling colours, exaggerated textural effects, the uninhibited celebration of novelty, characteristic of the 1970s. The days of puzzled questions such as: 'what does it add up to?', or 'how long will it last?' may be over, but the commitment to experimentation continues."¹

Since then with numerous exhibits spread throughout their three exhibition spaces, Queen's Square, Preston Library, and Design at Riverside, the gallery has built on its original mandate "to reflect upon Cambridge's historical connection to the textile industry as well as looking to the future, to new and innovative concepts in art-making." All the while they have been purchasing work with the assistance of various sponsorships, donations and fundraising projects specific to the task of building the collection. There is no other Canadian public gallery/museum solely engaged in collecting contemporary textile and fibre work. With the work of more than 85 artists the collection covers an array of approaches and techniques.

This year's sampling comes from across this thirty year time span, with work by artists from across the country and a range of materials including:

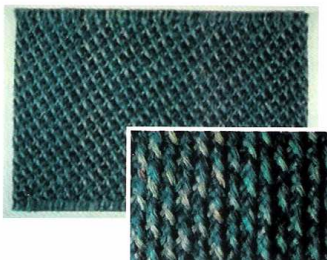
- An untitled piece by Arounna Khounnoraj (Toronto, Ontario) which was added to the collection in 2001, knowing her delicate small scale printed and embroidered textile work, this piece of three by four foot high copper wire "seed pods" encrusted/fused in salt came as quite a surprise.



- Linen, fibre paper, and paint, *Veil: Form Following Desire*, by Andrew Smith (Cambridge, Ontario) which was made in 1984 and added to the collection in 1989.



- Hand dyed braided Sisal, *Corrugated Blues* by Karen Chapnick² (Vancouver, British Columbia) which was made in 1982 and added to the collection in 1991.



- Janet Morton, an instructor from the nearby arts department of the University of Guelph, is represented in the collection by her extreme knitted sweater with Intarsia text *Camus* has 144' long sleeves with flowers sprouting from them. This 2001 creation of various fibres and wire was added to the collection in 2002.

Photos courtesy of Esther Shipman except as indicated.



- During *Fibreworks 2008* Janet Morton's giant toque, 13 feet in diameter and weighing nearly 100lbs., was suspended from the lobby ceiling of the Queen's Square site.



During the opening of *Selections from the Fibre Art Collection* gallery director Mary Misner spoke of the pleasant encounters with works that have not been seen by any one except the conservators and photographers digitizing the collection since they were added to the collection.

References

- ¹ *Here and Now* catalogue essay by Helen Duffy 1986 *Here and Now: Canadian Fibre Art*, The gallery and library Cambridge, Ontario, June 7 - July 28, 1986
- ² Karen Chapnick (Born 7 August 1950, Died 18 November 2008) Read about Karen Chapnick's career and life with MS Georgia Straight: December 22, 2005 *A Little Help from Her Friends* by Robin Laurence www.straight.com/article/a-little-help-from-her-friends MS Societies Winter 2006 news letter www.mssociety.ca/bc/PDF/news/winter%2006.pdf fibreQUARTERLY stories on previous Fibreworks exhibitions fibreworks 2008 fibrequarterly.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=162359&id=890860310&lc=284600a80 fibreworks 2006 fibrequarterly.blogspot.com/2006/09/fiberworks-2006-cambridge-galleries.html Audience Development Coordinator K. Jennifer Bedford X119 Cambridge Galleries: Design at Riverside 7 Melville Street South, Cambridge, Ontario www.cambridgegalleries.ca



Hoodoos, artist: Ursulina Stepan, Regina, SK
Materials: handmade cast paper 1987

Esther Shipman, curator of Design at the Riverside site, told me about preparing *FABRICation*, an exhibition of studio production textiles for interiors by Canadian designers/makers to accompany *Fibreworks 2010*. This year's jurors are artist Catherine Heard and gallery owner David Kaye. The creation of the *FABRICation* exhibition adds a new dimension to fulfilling the Galleries' mandate of "historical connection to the textile industry" for the first time reminding the audience of fibre works' relationship to multiples and contract projects in "craft production." These exhibitions open in September. ☘



multiple works 2010 exhibition Design at Riverside, Cambridge Galleries

From the *FABRICation* Show



Laura Friedland Design,
Bear Throw, White 63" x 50"
100% brushed Merino wool



Virginia Johnson Bedding
100% Cotton Assorted Block Printed Bed linens
100% Wool Chain-stitch pillows
Photo courtesy of Virginia Johnson.



Virginia Johnson Bedding
100% Organic Cotton, various sizes



Designer, Kathryn Walter-FELT Studio,
100% wool industrial felt:

124 Pieces of Felt
molding collection, Cooper Hewitt Museum,
Smithsonian Institute, New York
Worsk Theatre: Museum of Tolerance,
Los Angeles, project architects:
Yasdani Studio, Cannon Design



MOTIF Textile (Montreal)
linge de table
Table Linens – Blue 100% natural flax linen
Designer, Marie-Hélène Langevin

Joe Lewis is a textile artist/publisher and writer. A former painter and performance artist he has been working exclusively with textiles since 1997 and concentrating on weaving since 2000. As a Publisher he has been presenting Canadian Textile and Fibre arts since 2005 in fibreQUARTERLY on-line at www.velvethighway.com.

