

SILKWORM

The Magazine of Silk Painters International



Volume 25
Issue 4, 2018

DOSHI, *She Walks In Beauty*,
Silk Organza, 32" tall, 18" wide, 6" deep
Techniques: Discharge, Acid Dye, *Shibori*
Figurines made from Thermoplastic and Acrylic

FEATURE ARTICLES



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TEACHING TRADITION IN THE CONTEMPORY

by Alicia Decker

Exhibit from **TEKUNIKKU: The Art of Japanese Textile Making** exhibition at UC Davis, September 24 to December 9, 2018. Sample Kimono Fabric. Technique: Woven, Dyed Using *Katazome* (stencil and paste resist).



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ARTISTIC EXUBERANCE ON EXHIBITION AT THE SPIN FESTIVAL 2018

by SPIN Members and Liz Constable

DEBBIE ALLEY and JOANNA WHITE
SPIN Festival Organizers, 2018.
Photographer, Lauren Rutton

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SILKWORM (ISSN 2162-8505) is the quarterly magazine of *SPIN* -- Silk Painters International -- a nonprofit organization of silk artists, painters, practitioners, and educators. *SPIN* provides its members opportunities to network with kindred spirits and to grow through workshops, conferences, juried competitions, and gallery exhibitions. Material contained in *Silkworm* belongs exclusively to *Silkworm* and/or the artist. Do not reprint without written permission. P.O. BOX 585, Eastpoint, FL, 32328, USA

LET'S CELEBRATE

Our final issue of the year gives us so many reasons for celebration as 2018 draws to a close! Early in the preparation of this issue, I'd pondered the challenge of crafting a narrative about the range of artistic exuberance, camaraderie and learning at the October *SPIN* Festival. After all, my perspective represents the point of view of just one participant-observer! However, before too long, the "right" way to approach this challenge became clear. It revealed the opportunity---like no other---to invite some *SPIN* members at the Festival to share their perspectives on a selection of the striking garments in the *Fashion Show*. So, I reached out to some of you, and thanks to your responses and back stories about your art, we have a luscious second feature article representing your voices. *Silkworm* readers will gain not only a sense of the visual beauty of the garments, but will also learn a good deal about process, materials and sources of inspiration.

Then, it's not by chance that some of the recent articles in *Silkworm* have foregrounded topics and people associated with the Design Department at UC Davis. Indeed, I'm thrilled to see our lead article for this issue, *Teaching Tradition in the Contemporary*, is by Alicia Decker, recent MFA graduate in the Design Department, UCD. Decker brings to *Silkworm* the expertise of a skilled curator, experienced product designer in the apparel industry, researcher in artisan design and arts educator. As you will discover, the exhibition she curates also displays the textile collection of another former UC Davis student, Catherine Cerny, now a renowned textile collector and research scholar and Board member of the *Textile Arts Council*, 2018 – 2019.

And so, it is also the occasion to celebrate UC Davis's decades of pioneering work in textile research, production, and exhibition, ethnographic and historic costume and contemporary apparel design, sustainable design, wearable art and the broad field of fiber arts.

In our first issue of 2018, we featured an interview on prison labor in nineteenth-century silk production with UCD alumna, Denise Nicole Green, Assistant Professor in Fiber Science and Apparel Design Department, Cornell University, and Director of the *Cornell Costume and Textile Collection*. Our article on Ana Lisa Hedstrom, in our second issue, pointed to the powerful impact on 1970s fiber arts of former UCD faculty member, Gyöngy Laky, who founded *Fibersworks: Center for the Textile Arts* in Berkeley, a center with a global reputation offering accredited undergraduate and graduate courses. Laky's impressive artistic range focused on the sculptural in fiber arts with a particular interest in environmental design and outdoor site-specific installations. She initiated the founding of the Environmental Design program at UCD and later developed its graduate program in Textile Art and Costume Design.

So, celebrate by getting curious about fiber arts, fashion, wearable art and environmental design at UC Davis. You will recognize the names of some of our path-breaking scholars and artists who built this remarkable strength at UC Davis. **Susan Taber Avila** combines traditional hand crafts with technology to create stunning wearable art, re-purposes waste from the fashion industry to create new textiles, and served on the Board of Directors of the *Surface Design Association* from 2011 to 2014. You might also want to check out **Victoria Rivers's** book, *The Shining Cloth: Dress and Adornment that Glitter* (1999), or **Ann Savageau's** work that often focuses on artistic transformations of waste to counter the effects of consumer culture, **AnnSavageau.com**, or **Susan B. Kaiser's** feminist approach to fashion in her book *Fashion and Cultural Studies* (2013).

Check out the back cover photo of the amazing dress that Avila made for the 2018 *World of Wearable Art (WOW)* Awards Ceremony in New Zealand. *In Bloom* was modeled in the Avant-garde section of the ceremony.

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BEYOND THE ORDINARY



I was walking to my last class in *Arrowmont* when this beautiful rose found me. I think its purpose was to remind me that not only did beautiful silk creations surround us, but that the natural beauty of the *Arrowmont* campus itself was everywhere visible. The ten days I spent there were inspiring, challenging, and exhausting. *SPIN's* Festival 2018 provided opportunities

to meet silk artists new to the Festival and to reconnect with returning friends. Since much of this issue is devoted to Festival 2018, I'd like to thank all the people who donated their time and talents towards making the week a success. In addition, there were countless unnamed attendees who volunteered on the spot when something was needed. *SPIN* is enriched by your service.

Joanna White and **Debbie Alley**, Festival Co-Directors, volunteered endless hours building the festival experience for our enjoyment. Their mentor, **Gloria Lanza-Bajo**, provided guidance for the team as well as knowledge of all the behind-the-scene details.

Deborah Adams worked as the team's registration assistant. She greeted attendees, answered questions and assisted them in navigating the campus itself. As the registrants entered the main building, the exhibits of the *Master Silk Painters* welcomed them in.

During the weekend, participants enjoyed seminars, a *Vendors' Expo*, and an opening reception for the *Art Exhibition*. All those presenting work shared their expertise in a wide variety of subjects, and we had the opportunity to meet many of the instructors in the seminars before the start of the workshops. **Mitzi Ash** organized the *Vendors' Expo* where vendors offered their wares to the attendees. Saturday's Plans also had enough time to squeeze in *SPIN's* *General Meeting* chaired by yours truly. Members present and the Board of Directors welcomed the free-flow discussion.

The *Art Exhibition*, chaired by **Nadja Lancelot**, began with an opening reception, after which Nadja announced the exhibition awards juried by an independent reviewer. The *Sandra Blain Gallery* at *Arrowmont* is a beautiful venue,

and provided a stunning environment for the wide variety of silk art on display there. In fact, since our *Art Exhibition* had been open for over a month, by the time we arrived, several pieces on display had already sold. You can find the names of the artists who received awards in this issue.

Joyce Estes and her daughter **Dee Allen** brought all of their fundraising ideas to fruition. Selling "retro" *Silkworm* issues, raffle tickets, and a silent auction of donated items generated more dollars for *SPIN's* organization.

Festival organizers had recruited the teaching faculty with a goal of providing workshops in a wide variety of subjects, techniques, and styles. The two-day workshops took place in spacious, well-equipped, studios, and **Christy Green** volunteered as the Teacher Liaison to make the experience even better. She ensured supplies were ready in studios before teaching faculty arrived, and she kept up with the teachers' day-to-day needs.

On Tuesday evening, **Suz Knight**, the outgoing Chapter Chair, hosted *Chapter Night*. Each regional Chapter contributed a jointed doll, adorned in bright silks, to represent their chapter. Participants had the opportunity to visit each doll table and exchange information with participating chapters.

Wednesday was a rest day. All of us appreciated this! But we were even more excited about the *Fashion Show* that **Kathy Goodson** and **Julie Cox-Hamm** coordinated. Representing 39 artists and 97 fashion pieces, the show provided a thrilling experience for several artists who saw one of their creations on a model for the first time, an experience many of us remember as transformative.

Becky Kyhl chaired the *Share Fair* on Thursday evening. All those attending shared a new idea, technique, or community project with the group, providing a wonderful opportunity for discussion and exchange of ideas.

The last two days brought us back to a second workshop, and learning a teacher's style and techniques. When all was said and done, we returned home armed with new ideas and enthusiasm. For me it was an honor to meet the new attendees and great to see our returning ones. Our organization has every reason to be proud of our Festivals and I'm excited to discover what 2020 brings.

Kaki Steward
President, *SPIN*



Exhibition Title Wall, © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy

TEACHING TRADITION IN THE CONTEMPORARY

by Alicia Decker

MAKING AN EXHIBITION

As a community-engaged contemporary designer and educator in the field of textiles and clothing, and someone who is fascinated by cultural aspects of artisan design, my responsibilities as Curator for the current UC Davis Design Museum exhibition *Tekunikku: The Art of Japanese Textile Making* have enabled an excitingly perfect marriage of my interests. What do I mean by this? *Tekunikku* is an exhibition that celebrates Japanese traditional textile design for its beauty and masterful technique, while asking its visitors to contemplate how these techniques continue to inform and inspire contemporary design.

Also, creating *Tekunikku* relied on active engagement and participation of several groups and individuals from the UC Davis community.

Over my ten years of apparel industry experience as a product developer prior to completing my MFA in Design, I'd gained invaluable exposure to diverse international textile and apparel design practices and familiarized myself with many textile-making cultures and communities worldwide. I developed and implemented techniques such as engineered weaving

TEACHING TRADITION IN THE CONTEMPORARY by Alicia Decker

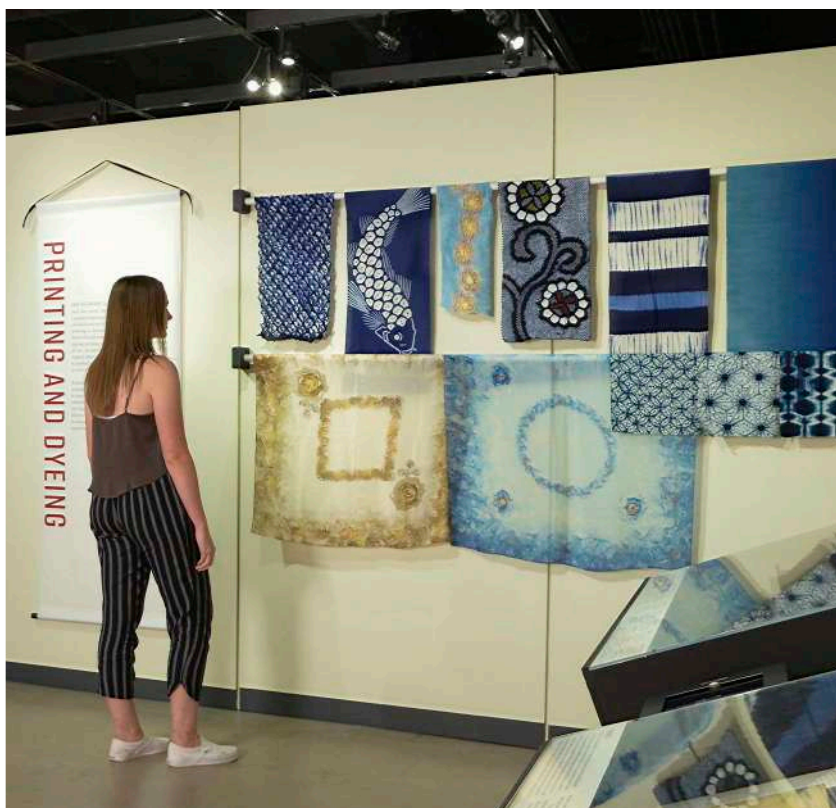
patterns and seamless technology to bring clothing designs to life with factories around the world, in Vietnam, China, and Sri Lanka. And it was these experiences that shaped my technique-driven curatorial focus and the cultural narrative framework of *Tekunikeku*. This passion for the study of artisan textile-making as a tool to understand cultural identity was also foundational to my MFA thesis. I explored narrative textile design as a means of celebrating various indigenous cultures of Oaxaca, Mexico such as the *Zapotecs* and *Mixtecos* who have survived the invasion of the Aztecs, colonization, and continue to thrive in contemporary Oaxacano society. My research suggest that these communities' strong roots in textile making practices contributed in powerful ways to their survival.

The curatorial process for *Tekunikeku* involved collaboration not only with the lender, UC Davis alumna, Catherine Cerny, currently a Board member of the *Textile Arts Council* and published author on the social and cultural anthropology of clothing; the process also engaged many undergraduate Design students, and Design Professor and Museum Director, Tim McNeil. "*Tekunikeku*", commonly translated as technique in English, focuses on Cerny's extensive Japanese textile collection. Japanese textiles, and the artful techniques used to create them, demonstrate a rich tradition of design making, and exemplify unique processes that continue to inform contemporary textile/

fashion design and education. Cerny's collection spans over 40 years of first-hand cultural exploration and technical study. Some of my favorite curatorial moments of this exhibition, have occurred during meetings with Cerny, while hearing her many invigorating travel stories such as her visits to Japanese open-air markets and national treasure sites as she pulls out each artifact from her archive. For example, Cerny visited many artist studios during her Japanese trips, where she attended workshops, learning many of the techniques highlighted in *Tekunikeku*. Cerny provided me with vivid first-hand accounts of her experiences learning various processes, coupled with great photographic documentation of the techniques explored, such as the intricate and laborious hand-tying steps of the *Shibori* process.

CATHERINE CERNY: FROM SCHOLAR TO COLLECTOR

Cerny, enamored with textiles as a young child, shopped at curio shops with her father while living in Japan during her father's U.S. military assignment; she later earned her bachelor's degree in Design at UC Davis and then worked as a costume designer for several theatre companies around the country. While working as a costumer, Cerny's interests shifted toward the study of dress and identity. In turn, this led her to complete a PhD at the University of Minnesota in



Exhibition Objects made using the processes of indigo dyeing (*shibori* and *suminagashi*), © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy



Exhibition Objects made using various techniques of *kasuri (ikat)*, © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy

Textile Studies and later to enter academia, as a professor of Clothing and Textiles at the University of Rhode Island and Virginia Tech.

Cerny's love for textile-focused exploration has prompted her travel to textile-producing communities in almost every part of the world such as South America, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Early on in her exploration, she found a focus and rationale for her textile procurement: to build a diverse collection, perfect for university study; and hence, she began to identify as a collector. Catherine set out to build a collection to inspire and inform future generations, with hopes of building appreciation for the many diverse yet endangered textile techniques and the cultures that created them. Therefore, she has spent significant time studying and collecting in countries with rich textile history and culture to meet her collection goals, such as India, Cambodia, Indonesia, and of course Japan.

CURATORIAL PREMISE AND PURPOSE

Tekunikkeu focuses on textile samples and clothing Cerny collected from various regions of Japan. Cerny's Japanese collection include archival artifacts of the many cultures and communities she has encountered while living and then traveling in Japan, as well as personal artifacts collected to document her travel experiences. Presenting materials

that are both visually captivating and experiential, my curatorial goal was to create a compelling process-based narrative, inviting the audience to explore the distinct design techniques exclusive to Japan. These techniques have produced a rich textile culture that spans centuries and continues to be emulated and admired worldwide. I organized the exhibition into three types of process: weaving, printing/dyeing, and surface embellishment. Each section is then broken up into subsections by technique such as *boro*, an intricate technique of patch working small pieces of fabric to increase warmth or durability, with heavy emphasis on not only design and pattern, but also on repurposing and reusing of textiles. Other subsections, to name a few, focus on techniques such as *katazome*; intricate stencil-based printing, and *shibori*; an ancient bound-resist dye method.

Each section of *Tekunikkeu* pairs objects from the Cerny collection with tools and materials used in the process to create them, along with explanatory text and in-process design photographs to complement the objects of each section. For example, in the weaving section of the exhibition, beautiful woven silk tapestries hang near weaving tools such as heddles and yarn winders. In turn, these are exhibited together with silk fibers in various stages of becoming yarn, from silk cocoons, to raw silk bundles, and to processed fine silk yarn in its final form.



Exhibition Objects incorporating the surface embellishment processes of *boro*, *sashiko*, and *sakiori*, © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy

TEACHING TRADITION IN THE CONTEMPORARY by Alicia Decker

DESIGN STUDENT LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

In the undergraduate *Design 160* class, called *Textile Design Patterns*, students learn traditional and contemporary processes to create images, patterns, and textures on fabric using a variety of dyes and techniques. These may include direct and immersive dye application, bound and mechanical resists, discharges, and surface additives. At the beginning of the term, instructors introduce *Design 160* students to the *Joann C. Stabb Collection* to which Cerny donates and that she enthusiastically supports. The UC Davis campus houses this stunning and extensive collection of textile and fashion artifacts for teaching and research purposes. Made up of over 5,000 historical and contemporary objects, it includes 1920s flapper dresses, African American quilts, and a 19th century Syrian wedding tunic woven from thin strips of hammered metal, to name a few. The collection is wide-ranging, but “consists primarily of endangered textiles from around the world,” said Adele Zhang, collection Curator and Manager. Initially established as a teaching tool, the *Jo Ann C Stabb Collection* continues to provide design inspirations for undergraduate

Student **Eric Anderson**’s textile collection using the techniques of indigo dyeing and *boro*. © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy



I took inspiration from a *maekake*, a Japanese apron from a 20th century sake house in creating my collection that utilized the patchwork technique of *boro*. While researching, *boro* really stuck with me because of how strikingly beautiful and unique the fabric becomes, and the traditional workmanlike quality it represents. I related a lot to this technique. Growing up, I spent a lot of my days skateboarding so almost all of my pants had patches. I was also particularly inspired by Indigo dye that I experimented with to achieve a broad spectrum of blue hues in my textiles. -Eric Anderson

students, as well as research material for graduate students and faculty members.

In *Design 160* students are shown a grouping of collection objects from a region that the instructor selects. Each student then selects an object from the region that they use as inspiration in creating their own textile collection. In their *Design 160* coursework, students complete a research paper entailing thoughtful investigation of their chosen object, including cultural significance, design technique, color choice, and motif semiotics.

In the Fall 2017 *Design 160* class, Professor Susan Avila and I selected Japanese objects from the collection to coincide with the *Tekuniku* exhibition. Students researched the techniques now showcased in the exhibition to create their collections, such as the quilting and embroidery technique called *sashiko*, indigo dyeing, *shibori*, and appliqué.

Select student work is on display in cases outside of the exhibition, along with an inspiration piece from the *Joann C. Stabb Collection*. For example, *Design 160*



Student **Melissa Anderson**'s textile collection using the techniques of indigo dyeing, *shibori*, and *bingata* using Japanese inspired motifs. © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy

student Eric Anderson created a textile collection inspired by indigo dyeing and the patchwork technique called *Boro*. Through the research and experimentation process of *Design 160*, — learned these techniques and the cultural significance behind them allowing him, in turn, to develop a design collection and narrative of great depth and beauty. Throughout the class, I observed and guided student research and interactions with the Japanese textile objects of the *JoAnn C. Stabb Collection*, which was a great experience for me, given my background and interests. I assisted and critiqued as students carefully took reference and inspiration from many aesthetic values of the

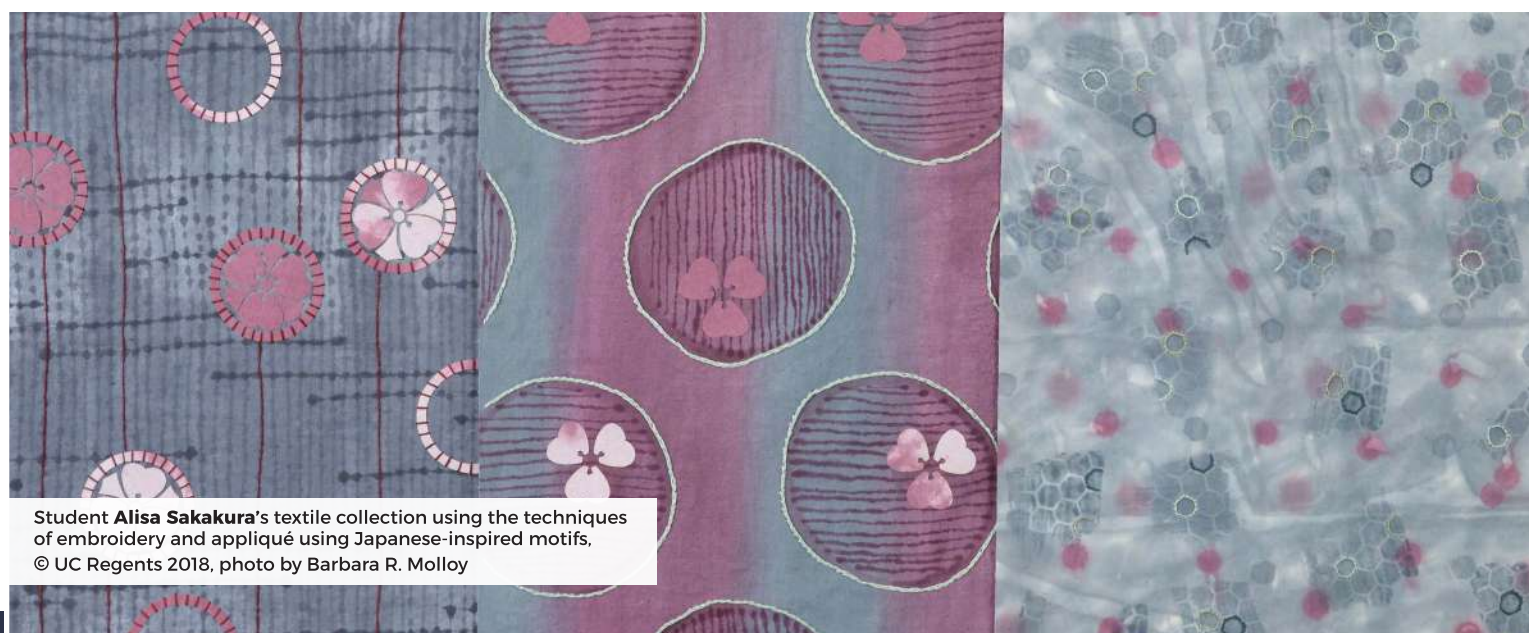
textiles such as motif and color. In this process, they learned and adapted some of the traditional techniques to find their own creative voice and to develop their own contemporary collections. I feel this method of instruction can be quite rare in a Design department curriculum, and yet it's very valuable, successful, and impactful for young designers as they navigate their own creative practices.

In addition, other students from the Design and Fashion Drawing classes visited the exhibition, sketching pieces from the Cerny collection as part of their coursework. Finally, students participated during the exhibition creation process through the exhibition design and build phases, as well as

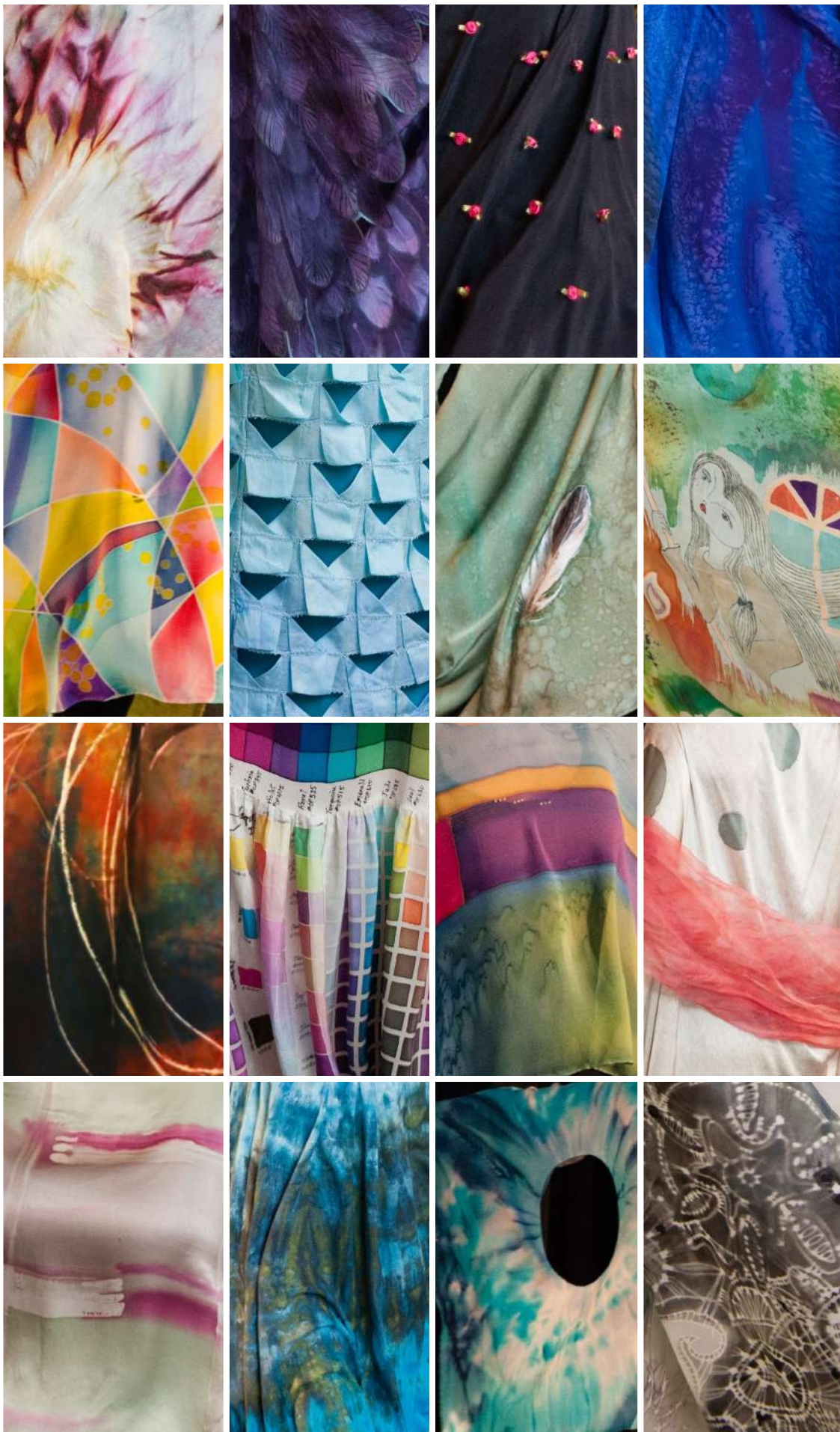
through individual tasks, such as hand-dyeing of the entry door curtain and sewing of the title wall panel.

The educational opportunities with access to a university design collection and museum are endless, and the UC Davis Design department has taken full advantage of available resources for student engagement at every stage of *Tekunikkū*. I feel a great sense of pride in helping to facilitate these various learning opportunities, and have learned a great deal in the process as well.

Tekunikkū: The Art of Japanese Textile Making runs through December 9, 2018 in the UC Davis Design Museum. For more information about this exhibition, visit arts.ucdavis.edu/design-museum.



Student **Alisa Sakakura**'s textile collection using the techniques of embroidery and appliqué using Japanese-inspired motifs. © UC Regents 2018, photo by Barbara R. Molloy



ARTISTIC EXUBERANCE ON EXHIBITION AT THE **SPIN FESTIVAL 2018**

*by SPIN Members
and Liz Constable*

For those of you able to participate in The SPIN Festival 2018, you know what an immensely rewarding opportunity the Festival provided for us all. Many of us learned new techniques, shared our experiences and experiments with silk, explored the misty beauty of The Great Smoky Mountains, discovered the abundant range of work in the *Art Exhibition* and reveled in the sumptuous and spectacular garments modeled with such elegance in the *Fashion Show*.

Let's start with a recap of the *Art Exhibition* and artists who received awards. Denise Stewart-Sanabria served as the independent juror, and provided clear criteria for what she considered outstanding art. As she puts it in her remarks, "Jurors look at exhibits always in different ways, and with certain subjectivities. Mine is a focus on the individual characteristics of the medium itself. [. . .] I want to see the medium itself used as experimentally and successfully as possible by being itself. I want fiber to be fiber." And with these criteria, Doshi's artwork received the first prize (as well as the People's Award!).

Our cover illustration features Doshi's *She Walks in Beauty*, and Sanabria's comments are insightful here: "Doshi's work showed a complete understanding of the organic nature of the material and integrated a beautiful muted color palette with perfectly crafted wooden presentation and hanging materials. The presence of elegantly realized scale model pieces along with large wall pieces gave an interesting look into the breadth of the artist's output."

Margaret Agner's *Mike's May Iris* received the second prize, an artwork where Sanabria found "Agner's masterful handling of dye and resist to produce flawless botanical pieces that also have a strong understanding of abstraction [is] notable. Her ability to bring the work even further along to an almost sculptural feel by cutting the edges along object perimeters is very dynamic" (Sanabria). Breccia Kralovic-Logan received third prize "for her intimate mixed media pieces. The integration of other media and felting was spot on and lent a strong feeling of abandoned and rediscovered cultural artifacts" (Sanabria). And finally, Audrey Frigstad's hyper-realist *Koi Dreamscape*, Muffy Clark-Gill's monochrome batik *Agua XXVI: Storm* and David Higgins' two-panel *Memory* all received Honorable Mentions.

As I indicated in my Editor's Message, I wanted to give *Silkworm* readers a sense of the Festival from many different perspectives and to include your voices: SPIN members and Festival participants. And so, I invited a selection of the participating artists to share with us some of the stories behind the garments: their sources of inspiration, joys and frustrations in the preparation, techniques and process, and I think you'll find the results amplify the pleasures of the visual spectacle of The Fashion Show! I've compiled participating artists' comments in alphabetical order along with the photo of the garment in the show.

Special thanks also go to the fabulous models from *The Gage Talent Agency*, Knoxville, Tennessee. The models were so professional in the ways each of them (through their body language, poise, grace and passion) communicated such pleasure in each garment, and gave each one a new life. Thank you to each of you: Talisa Cantrell, Amanda Johnston, Kandee Wallace, Brittany Congress, Jennifer Bishop, Katie Traffanstedt, Jennifer Meredith!

NAILA ABRAR

In Abrar's words, "My inspiration for this kaftan are the beautiful abstractions in human emotions. I painted with *Marabu* silk paints on pure habotai silk, which gave me a very vibrant result."



NAILA ABRAR, *Shibori Kaftan*, Pure Silk, Marabu Paints
Photographer, Lauren Rutton

MARGARET AGNER

In Agner's words, "The idea for *Bird Cape* started with an exhibit I was invited to contribute to where each work is accompanied by a sound track. This is so new to many of us. I hit upon a collaboration with my sister, the poet Susan Groff Johnson, to "illustrate" several of her works.

PASSING by Susan Groff Johnston ¹

What shall I send to you
when I have pierced the scrim of separation?
The hummingbird dressed in jewels hovering
at the front door when you force yourself outside
for the first morning's paper?
The static amaryllis stalk suddenly shooting up in brilliant
blossom, its red reaching toward the sky to stop your breath?
A monarch landing briefly on your shoulder clad in black
brushing its velvet dust against your grief
or a russet gold leaf large as a dinner plate swirling onto your lap
when you escape to the porch on that October afternoon
gasping for silence in the din of support and sandwiches?
I could send a crow to your yard, patient as a friend,
tilting its glossy head toward you, its dark eyes calm as wisdom
and willing to wait for you to see.
I will send a cape of petals and feathers invisible but palpable
settling around your shoulders, an embrace that you will sense
and somehow believe.

This poem is sad and refers to an invisible embrace, so I made a piece called *Visible Embrace*. I thought that a cape shape would embrace the body well, and that feathers would have a cozy aura, like huddling under a mother bird. And so I dyed the two fabrics (organza over a crepe chiffon layer) by painting directly with thickened and thin dye, drawing the linear elements after the underpainting was done. After steaming and rinsing, I drew all around each element with my squirt bottle of fabric paint. Usually I've mixed my own colors using a base of "fabric medium" that's not unlike polymer medium for acrylic painters, but more flexible, for fabric. The only ready-made one I've found that might work is *Tulip Soft*. I've only tried the black, and I'd remain skeptical that all the requirements would always be met (penetrate to the other side, not run, cure to hard enough to iron but soft enough to be flexible and be washable) It's taken 20 years to develop the technique to the level it's at now. Finally, I assembled the layers with bias neck binding, adding a button and short little side seams.

MARGARET AGNER, *Bird Cape*, Fiber Reactive Dye, Silk Crepe Chiffon, Georgette, Fabric Paint, 30" L x 41" W, 2018
Photographer, Lauren Rutton

¹ Copyright Susan Groff Johnson. Please do not use without the author's permission

MITZI ASH

In Ash's words, "My inspiration was something I saw online. I had big plans for the *Rosebud* skirt. I *YouTube*d circle skirts because I thought that would be easiest for me as I am a terrible machine sewer. I bought the white silk and took it with me to Maine where a friend talked me through cutting a circle skirt. I brought it home from Maine and dyed it black with the rose-colored hem. Back on *Youtube*, I watched how to do a lettuce hem with fishing line. I bought fishing line but it was too lightweight. Back to *YouTube* and learned about a heavier weight. Great! Then I went to my "go to" sewing friend and asked her to try to sew in this lettuce hem. My friend suggested a crinoline underskirt. Yes! We sewed the crinoline on a half slip. I planned on sewing torn dyed silk strips to the skirt but when I tried, it looked horrible. While looking for thread to sew the fishing line, I spied the rosebuds. Voilà! One hundred and fifty hand-sewn rosebuds later, I had my skirt. It takes a village."

MITZI ASH, *Rosebud*, Silk Fabric, Silk Scarves, Rosebuds, Fishing Line, Tulle
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



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OLIVIA BALCHOLDER



OLIVIA BALCHOLDER, *The Sea at Night*,
Crepe de Chine gown, 2018
Photographer, Lauren Rutton

In Balchelder's words, "In the 1980s I began exploring bias, a mystery that reveals itself slowly. For a time, I made a lot of bias dresses. Trained in conceptual and abstract art, by contrast, I had learned to paint with dye "on the fly" and yet discovered my skills at creating beautiful effects. It's always been catch-as-catch can; work quickly and intuitively, always be around nature, be joyful in my work all the time.

For my early bias dresses, I drafted a regular pattern with a back and front joined by shoulder and side seams, laying this out on a 45-degree angle for cutting out on a wide table. These dresses were lovely, and I must have made 200 over a period of several years. I sold them briskly at a big summer-long festival in Laguna Beach, California. They were very feminine and responded to all the body's curves. I had a wonderful seamstress who sewed them for me so I could keep my focus on painting beautiful fabrics. When she retired, that ended an era.

But bias still fascinated and eluded me. I knew there was more to know. In the 1980s, I took a 3-day workshop with Carter Smith, and this brought a revelation. At the end of the first day, I had a headache I couldn't knock, and went to bed, but sleep didn't come. In the wee hours, I awoke with a jolt. I saw it! All at once, I knew what to do. How to turn, and drape and fold and sew under the dreamy mentorship of "Our Lady of Bias Gowns," the legendary Paris designer Madeleine Vionnet who Carter Smith introduced to us. She passed away in 1975. I never met her, but I found everything I could about her after that.

Working fabric on the bias requires one to let go of old notions and let the fabric lead. A paper pattern is useless. You must let the fabric guide you. It's about math ratios and draping. Rectangles working together to create flow. Using a vertical thinking mode rather than a horizontal mode to make a gown. I was so surprised that the process became one of simplicity rather than complexity. Do less to get more. Stand back and let fabric speak to you. Manipulate it in 3 dimensions rather than 2.

On the second day of Carter's workshop, I went to the classroom early in the morning and began working all alone. Carter came in and saw me at the sewing machine, a pile of 3 garments already sewn up. He glanced over at me and remarked, "Oh, you got it." That was a turning point. Taking these lessons to heart, dozens of bias garments flowed out after returning home. But the mystery evolves . . .

Last year, when a fashion show deadline loomed before me during an intensely busy summer, I had some beautiful fabrics ready but no design presented itself. I picked up

one corner of my uncut rectangle of painted silk, and decided to lay it on my dress form. I put one pin in and stood back to see what happened. Then a few more pins, moving things this way and that, and, all of a sudden, a flowing garment appeared! It was magical. Effortless in the midst of other efforts. I made 3 dresses the next day. First, I hemmed all around the big pieces of dyed crepe de chine silk without any cutting at all. Guided by my pins, I interfaced the shoulder areas with silk organza, because this was the important structured part supporting the flowing gown. I sewed the shaping on the outside of the fabric, mirroring the body's curve. Everything else was fold and hold. Allow instead of insist. I left the bottom of the fabric to become a train in some of the dresses that came from this beginning; for others I trimmed it off at floor length and sewed a narrow hem.

My silk fabric was hand-painted with *Tinfix* dye in an all-over motif of deep blue and black. I worked it on two big stretching frames, using layers and textures of wet and dry to achieve a rhythmic flow that echoed the sea. Painting is always in the Zone: such a grand place to be! My inspiration is Nature. I take walks every day, most times alone, and this nourishes and revives me, and answers questions in mysterious ways. In dim light, late at night, I gazed long at my finished deep blue bias dress on a dress form, admiring her loveliness. I mused over a name. The sea at night seemed swirling in my room then, so I just let that be her name."



OLIVIA BALCHELDER, 1975 *Bias Top*

JULIE COX-HAMM

In Cox-Hamm's words, "I was inspired by a piece of Thai silk that a friend brought to me from Thailand. It was a lovely bright green with iridescent blue. I painted the silk crepe de chine on the front with colors that I thought went well with the green silk. I had 1.5 yards of the Thai silk so I decided to make it the back of the tunic. The ultimate purpose was to wear something I had painted for my opening at a gallery in Kansas. I've only worn it once but when I saw it on the model it looked really good on her too. And she was skinny!"

**JULIE COX-HAM, *Stained Glass Tunic*,
Front: Painted Crepe de Chine, Back: Thai Silk
Photographer, Lauren Rutton**



SUSAN CUNNINGHAM

In Cunningham's words, "The inspiration came from my sewing magazine *Threads*, and the design is from Kenneth D. King, a contributing designer. This is the second time I've made the top: first, for a trip to Nottingham, England along with a silk skirt featuring sights of Nottingham. The skirt was entered in 2016 SPIN fashion show. But sadly, since the top was made in Rayon Grossgrain Ribbon, it didn't qualify for the show. This time, I made it out of silk ribbon!

I have sewn since seven years of age, and always love a challenge. This top encouraged my creativity, from hand dyeing 30 yards of white silk ribbon in ombré colors, the unique sewing process, to the exposed metal zipper."

**SUSAN CUNNINGHAM, *Silk Ribbon Origami*,
Fiber Reactive Ombré Hand-Dyed,
Kenneth D. King-Inspired Custom Creation
Photographer, Lauren Rutton**





GEORGINE FORGATCH

In Forgatch's words, "I created my *Silk Dream Wrap* with charmeuse silk to give my garment a soft flowing drape. The five feathers incorporated in my overall design represent the five senses on a spiritual level, and my signature style uses feathers as a design element. A stroll along the banks of the Bitterroot River in Montana inspired my feather design. When I spotted some delicate feathers floating atop the water, propelled into motion by the swirling eddy, my vision was born. On arriving home, I immediately put brush onto silk, recreating this beautiful experience: thus my feather design was born.

The quiet dance of the suspended feathers on my silk designs communicate a soothing, therapeutic sense of contentment to those who wear my silk designs."



GEORGINE FORGATCH, *Silk Dream Wrap*,
Silk Charmeuse, Tinfix Dyes, Lumière
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



FERESHTEH GHARAGOUZLOU

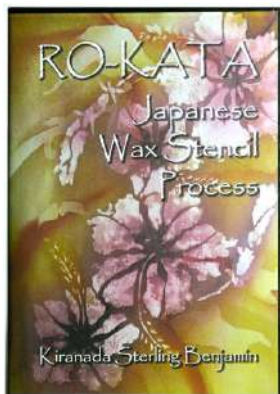
In Gharagouzlou's words, "This piece of art was created in three different stages during the three years of the designer's life when she had a feeling of instability, depression and anger in this very complicated world. What you can see on her work is a reflection caused by these feelings. In a third step, she added a picture of some characters that are inspired by illustrations of an Iranian artist called Nasrin Khosravi."²

**FERESHTEH GHARAGOUZLOU, *Sweet Girl's Dream*,
Silk Habotai, Acid Dyes
Photographer, Lauren Rutton**

2 Nasrin Khosravi, 1950 – 2010, was a highly celebrated Iranian book illustrator, and children's book illustrator known for the whimsical and surreal character of her watercolors. Khosravi created the illustrations for the children's book, *A New Life*, by Rukhsana Khan about an eight year-old girl, Khadija, and her family's move from Pakistan to Canada. In 2010, the Canadian Children's Book Center selected *A New Life* for their Best Books Selection.

RO-KATA

JAPANESE WAX STENCIL PROCESS



This is the first DVD available, world-wide, of this exciting, innovative process.

One in a series of instructional DVDs by Master artist Kiranada Sterling Benjamin. This is a "complete course, on one disc" covers the origins of this unique process in 8C Japan and its contemporary

development as a flexible art technique for applying pattern to fabric.

It is only in the past thirty years that ro-kata (wax stencil) has been explored enough to be a viable alternative to pattern-making techniques.

Included in the DVD are ten instructive units on:

- History • Materials • Cutting a Stencil • Preparing to Wax • Applying Wax to Stencil • Cleaning Stencil • Waxing hibiscus • Dyeing • Blending Process • Steaming and Finishing. This is a 53 minute DVD, plus a booklet of instructions on the process.

Kiranada's research into ro-kata has spanned twenty-five years, and was first documented in the book "The World of Rozome: Wax-Resist Textiles of Japan". Her personal work with ro-kata includes its use on kimono, obi, scrolls, standing screens as well as fashion and wall hangings.

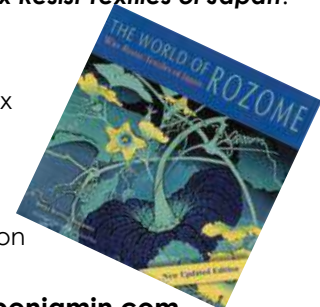
Also available for purchase is a CD of the book *The World of Rozome Wax Resist Textiles of Japan*.

Written by Kiranada Sterling Benjamin.

A complete history of wax resist process of Japan. The CD is segmented by chapter in PDF format.

Both can be purchased on line at

www.kiranadasterlingbenjamin.com



DAVID HIGGINS

In Higgins' words, "I was inspired by a beautiful length of five meters of wedding dress satin silk (40 mm Satin crepe) that I bought from my silk supplier, Marion Hera Gorr, owner of *Beautiful Silks* (BeautifulSilks.com). Marion is a great friend and has a huge, huge depth of knowledge about silk, fibers, and all things textile. She also has a Botanic studio for natural dyeing and a huge warehouse stocked with goodies. Her website is well worth a look! This particular silk is quite special and heavy, and it soaks up dye and gutta without mercy.

When thinking about the design, I decided to make something that reflected my love of nature. Various browns, red, blue and big flowing white design elements create a garment that is both classic and free of traditional iconography. What I mean by this is that I wanted to avoid fine lines, roses, perfect patterns, or motifs one would expect to find represented on a silk of such high quality. The visual symbols, images, and choice of color that I created and used were intentionally non-traditional. I wanted it to be contemporary, executed beautifully with an unusual hand-painted feel. Such was my approach to the imagery and emotion of the dress.

But the tale has another nice twist to it. Usually, Gail, my wife, makes all my garments. She's great! Since her mother was a seamstress, Gail really knows how to sew. For this garment, Gail was too busy, so we decided to engage another dressmaker. Enter Yvonne Lefebure, Head of Textiles and Fashion at *Brauer College*, Warrnambool, where Gail works. Yvonne was given free rein on this dress as we knew she is excellent, and then she made it to fit her daughter Monique who models it in the photos here. It turned out to be a very harmonious and wonderful collaboration between us in creating *Autumn Song*."



**DAVID HIGGINS, *Autumn Song*,
40 mm Satin Crepe
Modeled by Monique Lefebure**



IRM HOULE

Irm Houle wore her iconic and now legendary *Color Chart* dress to open the *Fashion Show* with great flair although Houle did not model the dress for the show itself. In Houle's words, "The first *SPIN* festival I attended was in 2008. I brought that dress to the festival and wore it for "dress-up" night. I think I have had it at every festival since and *SPIN* members always ask me if I have brought it because they all love it.

I started painting on silk in the 1980's and made a lot of color charts in those early years. I was learning about color mixing and also trying different dyes to see which brand I liked best. It helped me get a good understanding of color mixing so that, for many years now, I use only primary colors for my creations. Here in Victoria, British Columbia, we have *Metchosin Summer School of the Arts* for two weeks every summer. I was very involved with that for many years, both taking classes and working with registration, the information and sales desk, etc. It was always a very busy time since I had a lot of home obligations as well. One day, I was reminded that tomorrow was dress-up night! Trying to decide what I could possibly wear, I opened the cupboard in my studio and spotted my color charts. I held one up and realized it fit half my body and so did another one! So I sewed them together, added smaller charts for the sleeves and the «ruffle» on the bottom and a short while later I was all set to go!! It went over well with the artists there, but it is never as appreciated by anyone as it is by silk artists. I will have to make an addendum to my will to donate this dress to the *SPIN* archives!"

IRM HOULE, *Color Chart Dress*
Photographer, Lauren Rutton





SANDY LABAERE

Sandy's personal delight is to transform white silk into luscious wearable works of ART! *BE Empowered* is a sheer silk chiffon poncho with geometric designs and can be worn many ways. The jeweled hues bring this silk to life! A touch of salt in select areas adds flowing texture. Due to the time and effort that goes into creating each piece, Sandy titles these creations before they go out into the world. So each work of Silk Art receives a "BE" Affirmation.

Sandy's passion is to energize women...revitalize their soul...and envelop their spirit...like a cocoon wrapped in luxurious fibers! With no silk painters in her area, Sandy has been reading and experimenting with silks for the past 7 years. She was absolutely thrilled to attend her first *SPIN* Conference and first workshops! Her business operates under **Sandy's Silks LLC**. No website just a few shows each year.

SANDY LABAERE, *BE Empowered*, 8 mm Silk Chiffon
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



NADJA LANCELOT

In Lancelot's words, "I was inspired to create mermaids in three flavors; lemon, blueberry and cinnamon. Since I live in San Diego most of the year, the beach and the ocean are close to my heart. The base of sand tones with splashes of color on flowing silk charmeuse speaks to the watery landscape around me. My *Cinnamon Mermaid* is a spicy sea sprite, sensual and smooth."

NADJA LANCELOT, *Cinnamon Mermaid*, Silk Charmeuse
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



GLORIA LANZA-BAJO

In Lanza-Bajo's words, "I came to silk painting as the daughter of a dress designer ... the touch of the fabric was the real turn-on as well as how the colors played on the silk. And, like most of my friends, I love the serendipity of what happens when you play with color and texture."

My choice to design yardage started when I wanted to design clothes that flattered my shape and size. I have a number of blouses that I designed and wear, and since people have admired them, I decided to design and sell some this season. With *Dream Cream*, I actually started with the cream-colored silk and built on that color using wax. The gentle flow of the 12 mm silk satin is very flattering and the feel of the silk quite sensuous. I sketch my designs and I have a friend, Michelle McGoldrich, who does the patterns and sews the clothes."

GLORIA LANZA-BAJO, *Dream Cream*, Silk Satin
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



KAREN MALIN

In Malin's words, "I love ice dyeing with silk noil! You choose a color palette, and the process rewards you with beautiful and interesting surprises every time. This fabric reminds me of the colors you see in the Californian coastal tide pools!"

KAREN MALIN, *Tide Pool*, 12 mm Silk Noil
Photographer, Lauren Rutton

KAKI STEWARD

In Steward's words, "The piece has quite an international back story. For example, the silk, Italian Dupioni, is from Rome. I used Japanese *Shibori* techniques and French dyes. The inspiration for the design itself, which modifies the "Ho-hum" shape of the familiar poncho, by adding sleeves and giving it a closer body fit, came together from a top I saw in Crete. Finally, a local tailor who works near my home in Laguna Beach, put it together for me."

KAKI STEWARD, *Not Ordinary*, Italian Dupioni Silk
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



INGA STRAUSE-GODEJORD

In Strause-Godejord's words, "In my artwork, I find inspiration primarily in the Nordic landscapes and northern lights that are familiar to me. I am also fascinated by the colors of cold crisp Winters and I enjoy capturing the feeling of places I have visited in Scandinavia. I hope *Frost* leaves people with a sense of Nordic peace"

INGA STRAUSE-GODEJORD, *Frost*, Silk
Photographer, Lauren Rutton



SUSAN TABER AVILA

In Bloom

Digitally printed silk chiffon (fiber reactive dye) and free-motion stitching. The fabric is quilted with a layer of felt in between the silk and then a layer of recycled muslin on the back. Photographer: John Bagley
Model: Katharine Peterson
Women's Size 8

