

# REPORTS

## 6th 'TEXTILE SOCIETY OF AMERICA' SYMPOSIUM

Held from 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> October, this year's edition of the above biennial event was themed 'Creating Textiles: Makers, Methods, Markets'; as usual, it was organised by the Textile Society of America (TSA). The conference venue was the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) located at the corner of 7th Avenue and 27th Street, New York.

The symposium was very competently organised by Desirée Koslin and Madelyn Shaw. The former is a professor of museum studies, textile/surface design and cultural history at the FIT, the latter a curator at The Textile Museum, Washington D.C.

Founded in 1987, the Textile Society of America is a charitable interest group of specialists and self-taught people, similar to the European Textile Network (ETN). It is managed by a board who work on a voluntary basis, and whose most important task is the organisation of a symposium in the autumn of every second year. Those meetings usually take place at a US university or museum.

This year's TSA Symposium attracted approx. 300 participants, including university lecturers, museum curators, specialist publishers, textile and fashion designers, textile artists, gallery managers and a very few textile businesspeople, most of them from the USA and Canada. However, there were some participants from Europe (A, B, D, FIN, I, IRL, F and UK) as well as Peru, India, Pakistan, Japan and New Zealand.

The excursions preceding the symposium went further afield than New York City, their destinations being studios, industrial companies, galleries and private collections. With the exception of a long bus journey during the rush hour the trips were rather interesting on the whole.

The actual program consisted of sessions held at the FIT's Katie Murphy Amphitheater in the mornings and afternoons. There was a great variety of selected lectures accompanied by slide shows. In the afternoons, a wide range of seminars were offered at New York museums, historic buildings, companies, designer shops and galleries.

Other noteworthy events were the round tables arranged at lunchtime, the evening receptions, gallery openings and the farewell dinner, although the

latter, unfortunately, took place in a Chinese restaurant.

The program offered a total of 90 items, slide shows, panel discussions and specialist tours covering a great variety of subjects. Examples are 'The US Silk Industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries'; finding markets for traditional crafts; the role of designers in the textile creation process; the interplay between technology and design; medieval and contemporary European textiles; historic and modern ethnographic textiles; commercial textiles; non-commercial textile production; and the work of textile artists.

The three-day event was designed to give participants an opportunity of viewing original textiles in collections, help improve their knowledge, and promote a personal exchange of information and experiences. For me as a European participant the long journey was worthwhile. However, although I was able to learn many new things, one question remains unanswered: why is there no cooperation between the TSA and ETN? *Sanja Zivo*

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Symposium participants at the Fashion Institute of Technology



The Mantero factory in Como: Works by Josep Grau Garriga

## MINIARTEXTIL COMO 1998

From 26<sup>th</sup> September to 25<sup>th</sup> October the large rooms of the former textile factory Mantero housed the 8<sup>th</sup> International textile art exhibition 'Miniartextil Como'. This year the exhibition, which began as a small show with 30 participants from Italy, astonished visitors with 180 works, measuring at most 20 cm<sup>3</sup>, from 29 countries. Three large installations by Italian participants, as well as a homage to the well-known Catalan artist, Josep Grau Garriga, completed the picture.

The Catalan's work was shown to the Italian public for the first time: four large tapestries with abstract forms, a strong palette and strong materials, were hung between the frames of the miniature textiles. They captivated visitors with their emotional appeal – '...de las tres culturas' dated 1995, 'De velles pompes' (1993), 'Estiv del 95' and 'NME' (1996).

The textile concept installations of the Italians provided a contrast. Robert Zanello's pieces of clothing, printed with rust and colours that expressed traces of human activity, greeted visitors in the exhibition hall. The flat 'water wall' by Anna Moro-Lin covered the wall with white and blue stripes of gauze and paper-mâché, seemingly like a canalised sea pressed into a rectangle. Immediately in front was the work 'Will there still be trees?' by Lydia Predominato, consisting of a TV showing a film by Stefano Sestili on green landscapes, which was surrounded by tree skeletons of wrapped threads – a warning about devastated nature after a nuclear catastrophe and a virtual memory of better times.

The 180 artists, invited personally by Mimmo Totaro and Nazarene Bortolaso to contribute to the theme 'Threads of Hope', included the Belgian artist, Jeannine Coppens. She

exhibited a circle of metal gauze, which she juxtaposed with a small, suggestive book made of lead with paraffin pages. Anna Goebel from Poland composed organic elements of cellulose and dried leaves into the work 'Recorded Traces'. Kenji Takahashi from Japan presented an untitled piece: pieces of marble secured by coloured threads. Mimmo Totaro composed an image of hell from wood, metal and green barbed wire inspired by Dante's 'Inferno'. A work entitled 'Verde y sombra sobre la pietra' by Argentinian Kela Cremaschi, brought a stone cube to life with paper vegetation.

Innumerable works were presented in the form of small books, as nests with eggs or as small stages with scenes of miniature objects.

In addition, students of the 'Setificio' lyceum for vocational training in Como exhibited four joint works, including an interesting installation on the subject of the four elements of air, fire, earth and water. The piece consisted of a cube of interwoven nylon, with light shining through and reflected by four mirror surfaces, in blue, red, green and white.

Unfortunately, as there had been no selection process – the exhibition was staged based on invitation and with the financial contributions of the artists – the standard of Miniartextil was somewhat prejudiced. Textile art exhibitions frequently suffer from a mixture of art, craft, handiwork and improvisation. This limits any positive effects of the commendable intentions on the part of the organisers to enable regular international comparisons *Renata Pompas*

### Address

The exhibition catalogue is available from: '98 Miniartextil Como', via Sant' Abbondino 8, I-22100 Como; tel/fax (Arte & Arte): +39-31/270592