

Review of **New Directions: Examining the Past, Creating the Future**

Textile Society of America's 14th Biennial Symposium – Los Angeles CA 2014

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The theme of the 14th biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America was **New Directions: Examining the Past, Creating the Future**. It truly lived up to all expectations. Under the guidance and creativity of TSA president Elena Phipps and the board, the symposium had a breadth and depth that was phenomenal. The gathering included a broad range of professors, scholars, artists and makers, curators and some of the most creative thinkers in archeology, anthropology and history from all over the world. It was a time to explore and discuss not only change and innovation in textiles, but how the knowledge from the past can inform how we move forward. How can we create, work and live more sustainably? What are the shifts in direction for cultures, technology, creativity and knowledge? And how do these shifts affect our understanding of textiles?

The total symposium was 5 days, including a day of pre-symposium workshops with visits to the studios of L.A. artists and designers including Christina Kim of dosa, Clare Graham, Tanya Aguiniga, Christy Matson and Margaret Wertheim. There were also incredible offerings at the Autry Museum, the Getty and LACMA on a range of subjects including a workshop with Sophie Desrosiers on warp faced Andean weaving to Early Dye books at the Getty with Dominique Cardon.

The symposium opened on Wednesday evening September 10th at UCLA and attendees were treated to a very humanizing keynote address by Peter Sellars. He artfully reminded us of the deep connection that we have to cloth from birth to death and wove a metaphorical tapestry that had much warmth, soul and humor. He was introduced by James Bassler, a magnificent weaver and storyteller who taught at UCLA with Peter in the World Cultures program. Afterwards everyone enjoyed an inspired seasonal reception prepared by Alice Waters which fit so beautifully into the idea of sustainability and set a tone of beauty and care for the entire symposium.

The program included two full days of multiple concurrent sessions on the UCLA campus which were fascinating and diverse. Roy Hamilton, senior curator at the Fowler, arranged four concurrent sessions in conjunction with the textile related shows at the Fowler Museum including *Textiles of Timor-Island in the Woven Sea*, *Yards of Style African Print Cloths of Ghana* and *Bearing Witness: Embroidery as History in Post-Apartheid South Africa* or a behind the scenes look at *Aymara* textiles and *Maori* textiles in the Fowler collections.

Symposium attendees enjoyed a full day of plenary sessions at Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Great efforts were made by LACMA curator Sharon Takeda to have wonderful textile offerings including the stellar exhibits, *Kimono for the Modern Age*, *Fragmentary Tales: selections from the Lloyd Cotsen "Textile Traces" collection* as well as *Big Quilts in Small Sizes: Children's Historical Bedcovers*. The beauty

of the plenary sessions at LACMA were that all the attendees were together in one auditorium so there was a sense of cohesion and sharing of the day by all members. The day was divided into four sessions and included *Textiles in Museums, Indigenous Systems of Knowledge, Sustainability in Textile Art and Industry* and ending with *New Directions and New Ways of Thinking*. Artists Ann Hamilton and Rowland Ricketts shared their work process along with presentations by Gary Urton, anthropologist, speaking on the *Life of a Knotted Cord: Khipu, Memory and Knowledge Systems* in the Andes to Janis Jefferies, professor at Goldsmiths College, London on *Back to the Future*. There were many other inspired presentations too numerous to name but each contributed to the rich juxtaposition of thought process, and created a fertile ground for cross pollination of ideas, an intellectual feast for all.

The closing reception was at The Craft and Folk Art Museum to celebrate the first *TSA Juried Exhibition* as well as the opening of L.A. artist Clare Graham's show, *The Answer is Yes*. Director Suzanne Isken of Craft and Folk Art Museum hosted this joyous event. Everyone enjoyed a cold drink in the patio and tacos from the Border Grill Truck, as the evening cooled the attendees seemed to be basking in the glow of great conversation, connection, community and camaraderie.

To read more about the event see the website for the symposium, and the papers will all be available on the Digital Commons site. We encourage people to become part of this vibrant TSA community. Our next symposium in 2016 will be in Savannah, Georgia.

<http://textilesocietyofamerica.org/symposia-2014>