

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Museum of Modern Art****UNIQUE EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE TEXTILES OPENS AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles  
November 12, 1998-January 26, 1999

Works of astonishing beauty that reassert the artistic potential of textiles are presented in *Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles*, opening at The Museum of Modern Art on November 12, 1998. On view through January 26, 1999, the exhibition highlights the revolution that has occurred in the creation of textiles during the past decade. Textile artists and designers currently working in Japan are combining traditional techniques with modern industrial methods to yield new expressions, having an extraordinary impact on textiles, interior design, and fashion worldwide.

*Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles* presents a selection of some 110 works by 29 of the most influential textile artists, designers, and manufacturers currently working in Japan (see separate sheet for complete list of artists). Materials as diverse as newspaper, banana fiber, copper, stainless steel, and feathers, for example, are being woven together with silk, cotton, wool, linen, and polyester. The exhibition is organized into six groups of works, according to the textiles' predominant characteristics: transparent, dyed, reflective, printed, sculpted, and layered. Throughout the exhibition, touch samples allow visitors to experience the tactile aspects of these works in addition to their visual beauty.

"The innovative fabrication processes employed in the works presented here are the culmination of four decades of textile research, development, and invention, which has matured into a full-fledged movement with an international impact," write Matilda McQuaid, Associate Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art, and Cara McCarty, Curator, Decorative Arts and Design, The Saint Louis Art Museum, who together organized the exhibition.

**Transparent**

Implying both a literal and metaphorical lightness, the appearance of transparency can be achieved through the blending of different fibers. Artists such as Akiko Ishigaki and Michiko Uehara work with silk, using various weaving techniques to achieve different qualities of transparency. Ishigaki depends upon materials from the island that is her home to create her work. Powerfully influenced by the luminous color and surface of the sea around her, Ishigaki's *Indigo-Dyed Silk* (1997) is completed by immersing the cloth in the sea.

Sakase Adtech Company designs and produces technical textiles, such as *Triaxial Fabric* (1991), for consumer products. The lightness and delicacy of these fabrics do not diminish their strength, achieved through a revolutionary process called triaxial weaving, in which three yarns are interlaced at sixty- to seventy-degree angles, allowing for maximum

flexibility and strength. Triaxial material has been used to make golf club shafts, solar panels, skis, fishing rods, and speaker cones.

### **Dyed**

Natural dyes and dyeing processes can produce an endless variety of subtle hues and tones with an irregular and unpredictable beauty directly connected to nature. Hiroyuki Shindo preserves the craft of working with natural indigo, a process which has almost vanished in modern Japan. Shindo's *Space Panels* (1993) are dyed in a shallow trough lined with small stones and pebbles. Shindo lays the cloth in the trough, carefully pushing it into the concave shapes between the stones. He ladles dye into the depressions of the fabric, often changing the arrangement of stones to effect subtle color gradations.

### **Reflective**

With the advent of synthetic fibers have come relatively inexpensive ways to make metallic yarns. Junichi Arai has explored the uses of polyester slit-film, a type of fabric made by vacuum-sealing a layer of metal such as titanium, chrome, or aluminum to a nylon/polyester base fabric, which can then be slit into strips for thread. In *Deep Sea* (1994), a woven polyester and aluminum fabric is subjected first to Arai's "melt-off" technique (dissolving a metallic thread to leave behind a transparent cloth), and then to heat-transfer printing.

Reiko Sudo's *Stainless Steel Gloss* (1990) is a metal-coated woven polyester. Three powdered metals, (the components of stainless steel: chrome, nickel, and iron) are "spatter-plated" separately onto the polyester to impart a shiny, stainless-steel finish. Differences in weave density and surface texture allow for a wide range of lusters.

### **Printed**

The tradition of printing involves the mechanical transferring of characters or patterns to a surface, using inked type, blocks, or plates. Stacks of freshly fired bricks are the inspiration for Keiji Otani's *Brickyard* (1997), a knitted-nylon base fabric printed with polyurethane foam in small rectangles resembling bricks. The tiny "bricks" remain in relief even when the cloth is stretched.

In Reiko Sudo's *Scrapyard* series, barbed wire, nails, and iron plates are recycled and weathered to become the printing tools for the cloth. In the case of *Scrapyard (Nail)* (1994), rusty nails are laid on top of a dampened rayon fabric until a trace is imprinted. Different patterns are formed by varying the placement of the metal scraps and the length of the weathering time.

### **Sculpted**

When cloth surfaces are sculpted, highly articulated, individual landscapes are formed by manipulating and revealing the inner behavior of the yarns. Pleats are created using heat, whether applied by hand or by machine. *Wrinkle P* (1995), developed by the Inoue Company, is a fabric that has been stuffed into a small container and placed in a thermosetting machine where the pleats are permanently set, resulting in a compact bundle that may then be unraveled to reveal the pleated cloth. Over one dozen different examples of pleated fabric by the Inoue Company are on view in this exhibition.

Combining different materials can also create sculpted surfaces. In *Pedocal* (1996), Yoshihiro Kimura combines polyester chiffon, stretched knitted fabric, and a flocking technique to create a double-layered cloth with a puckered, crenellated appearance.

### **Layered**

No fashion and textile team in Japan has used layering techniques more effectively than Issey Miyake and his partner Makiko Minagawa. In Miyake's recent *Prism* series (1997), coats and dresses are ingeniously composed of layers of materials joined together by an industrial method called needlepunching. In this process, different fabrics, such as polyester chiffon and nonwoven batting, are connected to the base fabric by punching needles through them, intertwining the collage elements. The visual appearance is like a painting--the surface of the garment is built up with layers of color that either are blended together or appear as separate blocks, resulting in a one-of-a-kind, wearable artwork.

Textile artist Chiyoko Tanaka applies traditional weaving as well as her own techniques to her work. Tanaka carefully polishes the surfaces of her works with a stone, brick, or other tool, adding soil or charcoal to achieve the desired color and texture. Gradually, certain areas of the fabric are abraded, revealing previously concealed warp threads and the texture of the earth.

"All these artists, designers, and manufacturers exemplify a commitment to a long-standing Japanese tradition of combining technology of the hand with the creative spirit of the mind," writes Matilda McQuaid. "The successful integration of opposing extremes--tradition with technology or practicality with aesthetic--in these textiles results in an extraordinary collection of beautiful artifacts."

Toshiko Mori, principal of Toshiko Mori, Architect, since 1981, designed the exhibition. The unique lighting, designed by Shozo Toyohisa of Kilt Panning Office, Inc., uses Asahi glass fiber-optic cable--thin, flexible fibers of quartz-glass--as a light source. Unlike incandescent, fluorescent, or halogen sources, which can lend a flat appearance, fiber-optic lighting enhances the colors and textures of the fabrics. Because fiber-optic lighting does not generate heat, it can be safely used near delicate artworks, and is becoming more commonly used in museums worldwide.

The exhibition is organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in collaboration with The Saint Louis Art Museum, and is made possible by the AT&T Foundation and the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder.

Additional generous support is provided by Toray Industries, Inc., Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., the Pola Art Foundation, Asahi Glass Co., Ltd., S.G.F. Associates Inc., and Uruse Company, Ltd.

The accompanying publication is made possible by the Japan Foundation.

The Web site accompanying the presentation of the exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art and The Saint Louis Art Museum is made possible by an anonymous donor and IIJ America, Inc.

#### **PUBLICATION**

*Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles* by Cara McCarty and Matilda McQuaid. Essays, artists' biographies, and extended glossary. Bound in featured textile. 100 illustrations, including 67 in full color, 104 pages, 8 x 12". Clothbound, \$24.95, distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams; available in the MoMA Bookstore.

#### **TRAVEL**

The exhibition will travel to the Saint Louis Art Museum, from June 18 to August 15, 1999, and to other national and international venues.

#### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

The Museum of Modern Art is planning several public programs in conjunction with *Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles*. These programs include a conversation with Reiko Sudo, co-founder and director of the award-winning textile design firm Nuno, and one of the artists featured in the exhibition; a one-day symposium at the Japan Society in which an international roster of leading textile artists, designers, scholars, and curators will examine the evolution of textiles in Japan, and their impact on fashion, interior design, and the textile industry; and a screening of the film *Basho to Spun Steel: Contemporary Japanese Textile Design* at which the filmmakers will be present. For a complete schedule of events, please see separate public programs release.

No. 93

[press office](#)

[menu](#)

©1998 The Museum of Modern Art, New York