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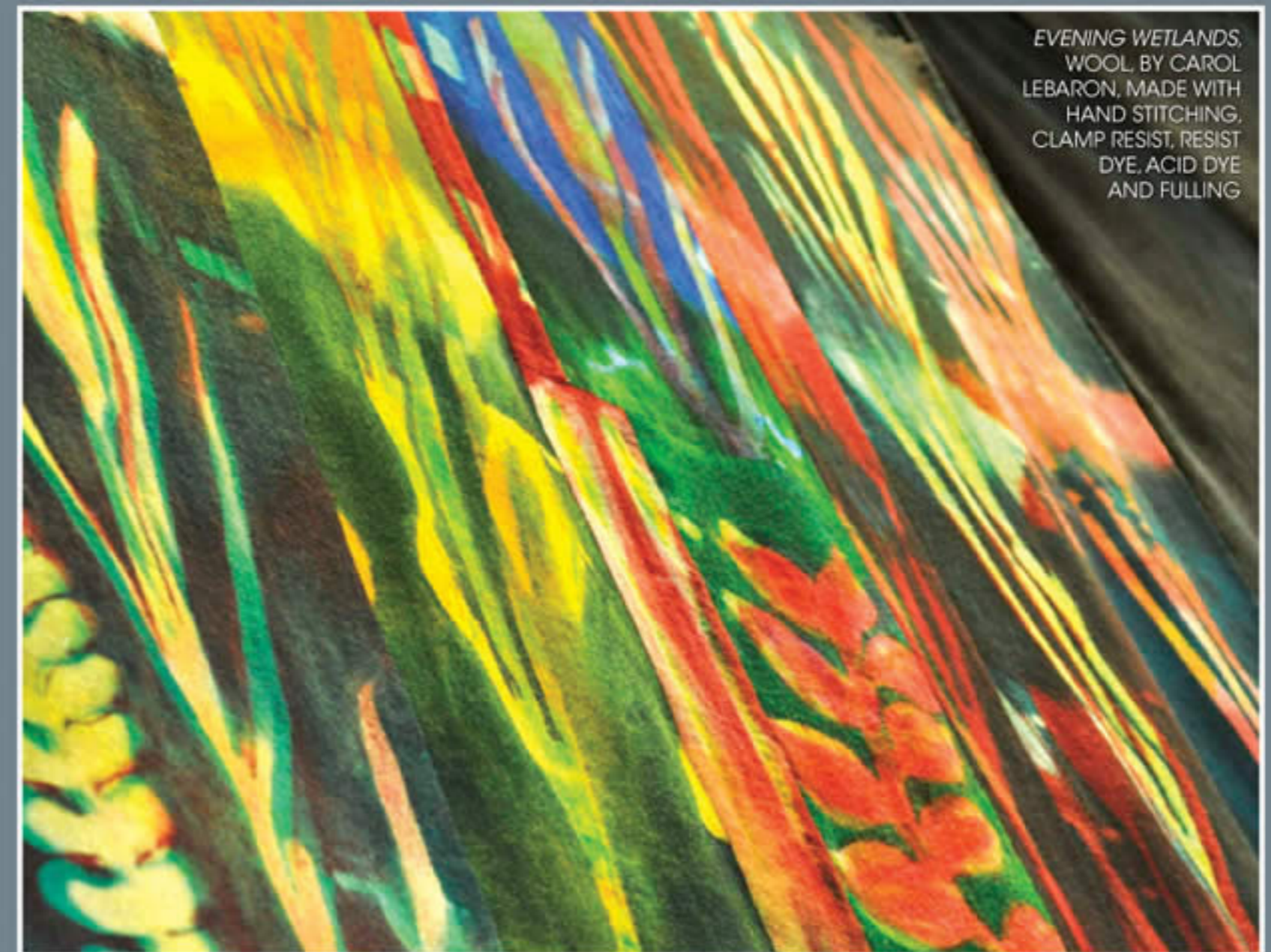
FIT TO BE TIED

In conjunction with the 8th International Shibori Symposium, HKDI presented *The Animal Fiber: Art Informs Shibori* from 13 December 2011 to 14 January 2012, revealing how an ancient technique has grown into an art form revered by couturiers and a medium of experimentation loved by children of all ages. DAISY ZHONG reports.

PANEL 1, SILK AND WOOL, BY JEUNG-HWA PARK, USING MACHINE KNITTING, TYING, FELT AND DYE



EVENING WETLANDS, WOOL, BY CAROL LEBARON, MADE WITH HAND STITCHING, CLAMP RESIST, RESIST DYE, ACID DYE AND FULLING



THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION of textile artwork showcased Shibori's inherent transformative power on material and the way it moves fabric from 2- to 3-D.

With its shape changing and volume shifting abilities, the Shibori process, which is often known as "tie-dyeing" in the west, creates a unique interplay with animal-based fibers. The exhibition also served as a commentary on contemporary global innovations in materials that have been with humanity since primeval times.

The point of departure for this exhibition was artwork made from animal fiber, animal hide, or a combination of both, utilising the principles of shaped or resisted Shibori dyeing techniques. The works were inspired by the transformative

properties of materials and their potential to change surface and structure, exhibiting visual and dimensional transformation.

"The design process can begin with it, as in pattern dyeing, or end with it, as in over-dyeing and shaping", says Jorie Johnson, a renowned textile artist and co-curator of the exhibition. "I enjoy utilising even the most simplistic of the resist motifs to emphasize the movement of the line I have preserved in the wool, so I can apply the technique myself without the aid of a professional dyer. There can be vibrancy, as well as, a subtlety to the application of Shibori techniques."

There were a total of 52 pieces of artworks showcased in the exhibition from 39 international textile artists, including a masterpiece from Junichi Arai,

who was an important choice for the exhibition because his innovative approaches have made him a designer's designer. For more than 40 years Arai has been rethinking fabric's identity: making three-dimensional scarves out of steel, reinterpreting ancient traditions like Shibori, and developing flame-retardant fibers for theatrical and commercial drapery. His collaborations with Issey Miyake and Comme des Garçons in the 1970s and '80s – when he became known for combining the new technologies of the West with the ancient Japanese art of obi fabric weaving – have had a huge influence on interior, fashion, and textile designers.

Accompanying the main exhibition was another show titled, *Animal Fibers in Chinese Tradition*, curated by Edith Cheung, which



showcased 16 items chosen from different regions of China, with interesting uses of animal fibres on display, especially from minority groups who raise sheep, goats, horses, yaks, camels and birds. Various techniques were displayed, including those used for headdresses, costumes, carpets and stage costumes, including weaving, interlacing and embroidery. The exhibits are all on loan from the Textile Collection of the Jin Ze Arts Center.

Johnson says that animal fibres have a good memory for retaining shape after being exposed to extreme changes in conditions such as heat, pH and time. "The variations and techniques which fall under the Shibori Tie-dye umbrella when applied to animal fibers can produce simply extraordinary effects on the cloth or the object itself."

As part of the project there is a third, extended exhibition, *Wearable Art: Draped, Shaped, Flow and Shadow*. And it focuses on the notion of clothing as an extension of the skin, which stretches and contracts as the body moves. The concept of clothing "as a second skin" implies that clothing should be a good fit with a wearer's day-to-day movements, feelings, and activities. This approach leaves room for the active participation of the wearer in the design process because it is they who actually complete the designer's artistic vision.

Using Shibori to add not patterning, but texture alone to a piece contributes to the creation of a new type of garment in which shape and function are dictated by material. The artists and designers in the exhibition share their unique investigations in this conceptual and playful approach to wearable design.

BELOW CREATIVE FELTING DESIGN WORKSHOP HELD AT HKDI DURING THE EXHIBITION PERIOD; OPPOSITE ITEMS IN THE EXHIBITION



"The simplicity of wrapping a fabric with rope and therefore preserving that area from being touched by colour is such a primitive pattern making action, yet it can be highly sophisticated as well," says Johnson. "This shows the flexibility of the medium when directed by individual artists and, as seen in our recent show the range of work produced is broad."

During the exhibition period, renowned artists and exhibitors were invited to deliver workshops and seminars to HKDI staff and students, including Makiko Minagawa, the Director of Textile Design at Issey Miyake Design Studio; Yoshiko I. Wada, President of World Shibori Network; Michel Garcia, Botanist and founder of Couleur Garance and of the Botanical

Garden of Dye Plants in France; Rta Kapur Chishti, author of the book *Saris – Traditional and Beyond* and founder of the Saree School, India and renowned textile artists Ana Lisa Hedstrom and Jorie Johnson.

"The primitive aspects as well as the exceptionally sophisticated and detailed work of true lifelong practitioners of Shibori makes this dyeing and shaping technique approachable by children, as well as, professional textile artists," says Johnson. "Excellent results can be achieved with little equipment and a personalised item is produced and that thrill is uplifting." It is not surprising that Shibori has been so enduring in occasional periods of mass-market popularity to attain an honoured position in the fashion and fabric designer's toolbox. ☺