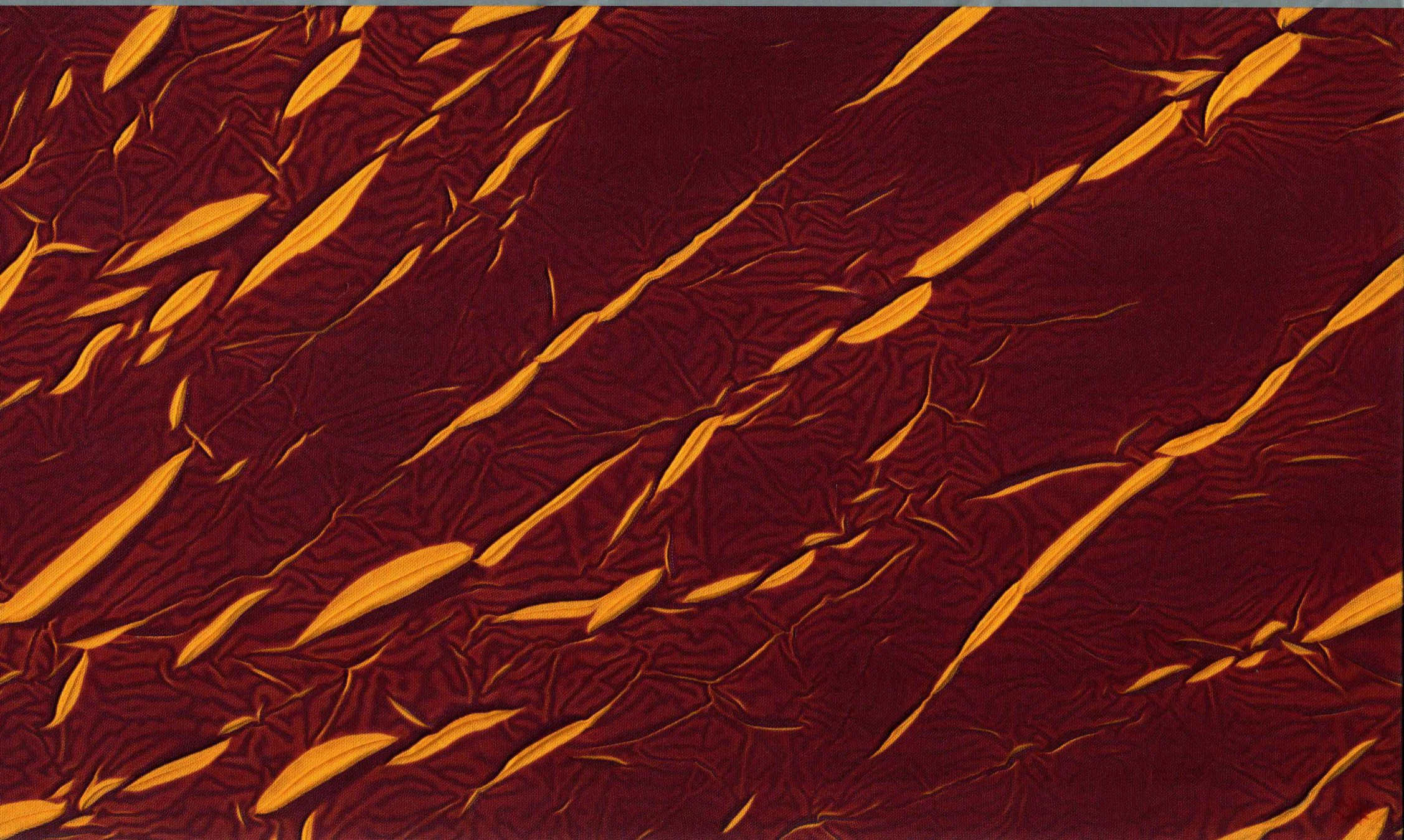
THE MUSEUM
OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK

Structure and Surface

Contemporary Japanese Textiles



Structure and Surface

Contemporary Japanese Textiles

Cara McCarty and Matilda McQuaid

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles*, organized by Matilda McQuaid, Associate Curator in the Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Cara McCarty, Curator of Decorative Arts and Design, The Saint Louis Art Museum, November 12, 1998 to January 26, 1999.

The exhibition will travel to The Saint Louis Art Museum, June 18 to August 15, 1999.

The exhibition is made possible by AT&T and the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with funds 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 Urase Company, Ltd.

This publication is made possible by the Japan Foundation.

The accompanying Web site is made possible by Emily Rauh Pulitzer and IIJ America, Inc.

Special thanks to Karin Willis for her photography of the textiles.

Produced by the Department of Publications, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Edited by Jasmine Moorhead
Designed by Patrick Seymour, Ji Lee—Tsang Seymour Design, New York
Production by Christopher Zichello
Printed by Toppan Printing Company, Ltd., Tokyo

Third printing, 2000

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 98-067047. ISBN 0-87070-076-6 (The Museum of Modern Art). ISBN 0-8109-6190-3 (Harry N. Abrams, Inc.)

Published by The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019. (www.moma.org)

Distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York
Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames and Hudson, Ltd., London

Printed in Japan

Cover: Urase Company, Ltd. *Harmony*. 1997. Polyester. Heat-transfer printed

Photograph Credits

Philippe Brazil: 14, fig. 5; 92, plate 57; 94, plates 60, 61. Rebecca Clark from the film *Basho to Spun Steel: Contemporary Japanese Textile Design*, by Cristobal Zañartu: 12, fig. 2; 13, fig. 3; 14, fig. 6; 18, figs. 1, 2; 19, figs. 3, 4; 21, fig. 7; 22, fig. 9; 23, fig. 10; 25, fig. 13. Courtesy of Inoue Pleats Company: 6; 10; 13, fig. 4; 15, fig. 7. Craig Konyk: 25, fig. 14. Cara McCarty: 20, fig. 6. Matilda McQuaid: 12, fig. 1; 20, fig. 5. Erika Mosier: 24, figs. 11, 12; 26, figs. 15, 16; 27, figs. 17, 18; 29; 31. David Ulmer Photography: 30, fig. 21; 90, plate 55; 91, plate 56. Karin Willis: 16; 21, fig. 8; 28, fig. 19; 30, fig. 21; 33 all; 34–89, plates 1–54; 92–93, plates 58, 59; 95–100, plates 62–66.

Contents

Structure and Surface

Contemporary Japanese Textiles

Structure and Surface

Contemporary Japanese Textiles

Cara McCarty and Matilda McQuaid

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles*, organized by Matilda McQuaid, Associate Curator in the Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Cara McCarty, Curator of Decorative Arts and Design, The Saint Louis Art Museum, November 12, 1998 to January 26, 1999.

The exhibition will travel to The Saint Louis Art Museum, June 18 to August 15, 1999.

The exhibition is made possible by AT&T and the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with funds 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 Urase Company, Ltd.

This publication is made possible by the Japan Foundation.

The accompanying Web site is made possible by Emily Rauh Pulitzer and IIJ America, Inc.

Special thanks to Karin Willis for her photography of the textiles.

Produced by the Department of Publications, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Edited by Jasmine Moorhead
Designed by Patrick Seymour, Ji Lee—Tsang Seymour Design, New York
Production by Christopher Zichello
Printed by Toppan Printing Company, Ltd., Tokyo

Third printing, 2000

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 98-067047. ISBN 0-87070-076-6 (The Museum of Modern Art). ISBN 0-8109-6190-3 (Harry N. Abrams, Inc.)

Published by The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019. (www.moma.org)

Distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York
Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames and Hudson, Ltd., London

Printed in Japan

Cover: Urase Company, Ltd. *Harmony*. 1997. Polyester. Heat-transfer printed

Photograph Credits

Philippe Brazil: 14, fig. 5; 92, plate 57; 94, plates 60, 61. Rebecca Clark from the film *Basho to Spun Steel: Contemporary Japanese Textile Design*, by Cristobal Zañartu: 12, fig. 2; 13, fig. 3; 14, fig. 6; 18, figs. 1, 2; 19, figs. 3, 4; 21, fig. 7; 22, fig. 9; 23, fig. 10; 25, fig. 13. Courtesy of Inoue Pleats Company: 6; 10; 13, fig. 4; 15, fig. 7. Craig Konyk: 25, fig. 14. Cara McCarty: 20, fig. 6. Matilda McQuaid: 12, fig. 1; 20, fig. 5. Erika Mosier: 24, figs. 11, 12; 26, figs. 15, 16; 27, figs. 17, 18; 29; 31. David Ulmer Photography: 30, fig. 21; 90, plate 55; 91, plate 56. Karin Willis: 16; 21, fig. 8; 28, fig. 19; 30, fig. 21; 33 all; 34–89, plates 1–54; 92–93, plates 58, 59; 95–100, plates 62–66.

Contents

Preface

Newspaper, banana fiber, copper, stainless steel, and feathers are woven among silk, cotton, wool, linen, and polyester in today's Japanese textiles. These often unlikely juxtapositions of materials assembled using an array of construction techniques have resulted in works of astonishing beauty and creativity that reassert the artistic potential of textiles. Most of the pieces selected for this catalogue and exhibition were made in the last five years and represent some of the finest and most imaginative textiles by artists, designers, and manufacturers currently working with fiber, cloth, and fashion.

For centuries Japan has been associated with a rich textile tradition and was a leading center of cotton and silk production, but in recent years it has reemerged as an influential and vital force in this industry. 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. The ingenious convergence of mechanical and industrial techniques with labor-intensive handwork poignantly captivates and symbolizes our contemporary spirit.

Since the 1980s we have each made several trips to Japan to study the vast and flourishing activity, visiting textile producing centers in Kiryu, Fukui, and the Kyoto region, handweavers in Okinawa, and many small but technically sophisticated factories. We continue to be enraptured by what we have seen, and this exhibition, jointly organized by The Museum of Modern Art and The Saint Louis Art Museum, is a celebration of these textile treasures. Normally an installation of this range would draw from several cultures, but all the works come from one country not quite as large as California. Even so, the textiles represent only some of the many artists and designers whose accomplishments are too numerous to display in one exhibition. By documenting these magical and masterful artworks, we hope to sensitize our culture to the continually expanding boundaries and possibilities for creating textiles.

Cara McCarty
Curator
Decorative Arts and Design
THE SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

Matilda McQuaid
Associate Curator
Department of Architecture and Design
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

Opposite: Detail of pleated fabric from Inoue Pleats Company

Acknowledgments

This publication is dedicated to Sheila Hicks. Throughout the project she provided constant encouragement and support and was exceedingly generous in sharing information, her time, and her vast knowledge about textiles. She made known all her sources in Japan, opening many doors for us and then letting us pick and choose from our perspective as museum curators. Her editorial comments greatly enhanced both of our essays and helped refine our thoughts.

Numerous individuals have been extremely helpful throughout our travels and research in Japan. We regret there is not sufficient room to acknowledge them in detail but have tremendous gratitude for them all—this exhibition and publication are a tribute to each and every one. In particular we would like to thank the artists, designers, and manufacturers who opened up their studios, workshops, and factories and shared their world with us. Many of them graciously revealed secrets of their art, disclosing their well-guarded processes that here are documented publicly for the first time.

Filmmaker Cristobal Zañartu and producer Rebecca Clark deserve special recognition. When we met they were producing a series of films that document the textile culture in Japan today, and we were particularly intrigued with their footage of the artists working in remote regions of Japan. We had already been gathering information about textile designers in the Tokyo area, so we joined their pioneering efforts and investigated further.

Reiko Sudo of Nuno Corporation and Junichi Arai were two of the first designers we met, and throughout the entire project they have been extremely cooperative and enthusiastic. Issey Miyake and Makiko Minagawa of Miyake Design Studio, with Jun Kanai and Nancy Knox of Issey Miyake USA Corporation have been incredibly forthcoming with assistance. Koichi Yoshimura of S. Yoshimura Co., Ltd., made certain that we saw the most innovative factories in the Fukui prefecture. Individual artists we would like to acknowledge are Akiko Ishigaki, Masakazu Kobayashi, Naomi Kobayashi, Chiaki Maki, Kaori Maki, Yuh Okano, Hiroyuki Shindo, Toshiko Taira, Hideko Takahashi, Chiyoko Tanaka, Jun Tomita, and Michiko Uehara. Many of them have created works specifically for this exhibition.

The textile designers and manufacturers we especially wish to thank are Kunio Satake and Masami Kikuchi of Bridgestone Metalpha Corporation; Mikio Inayama, Yuuichi Inayama, and Yoshiyuki Matsuda of Inayama Textile Inc.; Katsuhiro Inoue, Hiroshi Sako, Chikayoshi Shirasaki, and Yaichiro Nakamura of Inoue Pleats Co., Ltd.; Sokichi Kaneko and Akihiro Kaneko of Kaneko Orimono Co., Ltd.; Yoshiyasu Arai of Kay Tay Textile Inc.; Yoshihiro Kimura of Kimura Senko Co., Ltd.; Jürgen Lehl and Eva Takamine of Jürgen Lehl Co., Ltd.; Akihiro Mita and Osamu Mita of Mitasho Co., Ltd.; Eiji Miyamoto of Miyashin Co., Ltd.; at Nuno Corporation, Keiji Otani, Hiroko Suwa, and Sayuri Shimoda, along with Yoko Obi, Yuka Taniguchi, Mari Ohno, Kazuhiro Ueno, Kazue Tamagawa, Ryoko Sugiura, Mizue Okada, Yukiko Takahashi; Ryoji Sakai of Sakase Adtech Co., Ltd.; Yoshiharu Sakai of Sakase Textile Co., Ltd.; Shinichiro Ohkubo at Teijin Limited; Takanobu Shibuya, Kenji Yamazaki, and Ikuhisa Ishikawa of Toray Industries Inc.; Chisato Tsumori; Nobutaka Urase and Shigemi Matsuyama of Urase Co., Ltd.; and Masaji Yamazaki and Hiroki Yamazaki of Yamazaki Vellodo Co., Ltd.

This exhibition would not have been possible without funding from the AT&T Foundation and the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art. We are also grateful to Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman; Toray Industries, Inc.; Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.; and the Pola Art Foundation. The publication is made possible by the Japan Foundation, and Urase Co., Ltd., donated the fabric for its extraordinary cover. Asahi Glass Co., Ltd., provided the magnificent lighting of the exhibition.

Other people who deserve recognition are Takeo Ohbayashi of Obayashi Corp.; Kenjiro Shinohara and Masaru Igarashi of Itochu Gallery Co., Ltd., for their tireless fund-raising efforts; Shozo Toyohisa of Kilt Planning Office, Inc., for his extraordinary lighting design; Craig Konyk for reading the manuscript; Yasuki Hashimoto and Akane Nakabayashi at Opra; S.G.F. Associates Inc.; Kayoko Ota for her

translating talents; Emily Rauh Pulitzer; Katharina Belting at the Japan Society; Yaffa Gaon; Seiju Toda; Kazuko Koike, Director of Sagacho Exhibit Space in Tokyo; Richard Martin at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute; Mieko Taira; Betty Hoffman; Amanda Mayer Stinchecum; Yoshiki Hishinuma; Takahisa Suzuki; The Textile Research Center, Kiryu; and Akira Mishima. The elegant installation design by architect Toshiko Mori, with Sheila Choi, enhanced the beauty of the works.

Special thanks go to research assistants Mari Nakahara and Yoshiko Yoneyama whose invaluable help with translations, correspondence, cataloguing, and compiling documentation was indispensable and facilitated the project at all steps of the way.

Many colleagues at both institutions helped make the exhibition possible. At The Museum of Modern Art we are especially grateful to Glenn D. Lowry, Director, and Terence Riley, Chief Curator of the Department of Architecture and Design, for their early enthusiasm; Jennifer Russell, Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Collections Support, for her ongoing encouragement; in the Department of the Deputy Director for Development, Michael Margitich, Monika Dillon, and Kyle Miscia; Jennifer Herman in the Department of Development and Membership; Jay Levenson, Director of the International Program; Eleni Cocordas for her mountain of encouragement and belief in the exhibition; Lynda Zycherman and Roger Griffith in Conservation; Patterson Sims, Deputy Director for Education and Research Support; Josiana Bianchi and Janet Stewart in the Department of Education; Diane Farynyk, Linda Karsteter, and Peter Omlor in the Department of Registrar; Elizabeth Addison, Deputy Director for Marketing and Communications; Alexandra Partow and Jessica Ferraro in Communications; John Calvelli and Ed Pusz in Graphics; James Gundell, Seth Adleman, and Liz Reddisch in Sales and Marketing; the entire staff of the Exhibition Design and Production department, especially Jerome Neuner and Mark Steigelman for their continually outstanding organization ability; in the Department of Publications, Michael Maegraith, Publisher, Nancy Kranz, Manager, Promotion and Special Services, and Marc Sapir, Production Manager; Susan Richmond, for proofreading; and in the Department of Architecture and Design, Luisa Lorch, Curbie Oestreich, and Abby Pervil for many of the details that could have easily been overlooked.

At The Saint Louis Art Museum we would like to give particular thanks to James D. Burke, Director, and Sidney Goldstein, Associate Director, for encouraging this project. We would also like to thank Jeanette Fausz, Director of Exhibitions; Zoe Perkins, Textile Conservator; Susan Rowe and Carol Kickham for their dependable, good-natured assistance; Rita Wells, Director of Retail Sales; Jim Weidman and Judy Wilson in Development; Cathryn Goodwin in Information Services; Mary Ann Steiner and Patricia Woods in Publications; Registrars Nick Ohlman, Diane Vandegrift, and Bonnie Walker; Jeff Wamhoff, Installation Designer; Dan Esarey and Larry Heberholt in Building Operations; and members of the Program Team—Louise Cameron, Judy Mann, Kay Porter, Dan Reich, Rochelle Steiner, and Mary Susman.

Several people worked enthusiastically to produce the catalogue. In particular we would like to thank Jasmine Moorhead who skillfully organized and edited the manuscripts. We are also grateful to Harriet S. Bee for overseeing the publication and Christopher Zichello for his superb ability to assure the finest quality production. Karin Willis's photographs captured the spirit of the works, and Patrick Seymour, with Ji Lee, created the elegant book design. Finally, we are grateful to all who have participated in and supported this project over the years.

Cara McCarty and **Matilda McQuaid**

Texturing Life

by Cara McCarty

Textiles are among the oldest and most pervasive art forms. Because they are integral to people's lives in innumerable ways and because they can be made of virtually any material, they continue to provide artists and designers with opportunities for imagination and inspiration. This age-old endeavor is reaffirmed by contemporary Japanese textiles, some of the most ingenious and dynamic artifacts being made today. Their beauty and intriguing mysterious qualities are rooted not only in Asian traditions but also in surprising new technical innovations that introduce unsuspected discoveries. Their materials range from ethereal silk, whose atmospheric, vapor-like strands resemble wisps of air, to immutable stainless-steel threads.

Art, interior design, and fashion are the primary areas of textile activity. Many of the artists, employing traditional weaving and dyeing methods and natural or synthetic materials, shape unique works that are either flat or sculptural. By contrast, the fabric designers collaborate with dyers, weavers, and manufacturers, using complex technologies and innovative manipulation techniques to create new textures, finishing processes, and extraordinary visual effects that are then industrially produced. Their textiles are used for residential and commercial interiors, fashion, and practical applications. All of these works, however, are outgrowths of the rich Japanese traditions of spinning, dyeing, weaving, manipulating, shaping, and finishing fabric.

Throughout their history the Japanese have shown great sensitivity toward nature and love for its beauty. Japan's indigenous religion, Shinto, centers on the worship of and communion with the spirits of nature. This, coupled with the country's paucity of natural resources, has instilled in its people a heightened respect for all materials, natural or synthetic. An ability to maximize limited resources and to revere the inherent character of materials is a deeply embedded aspect of Japanese culture.

The Kyoto region and islands of Okinawa (fig. 1) are long-standing cultural and textile centers and harbor many of the artists working with natural fibers. Some of these artists live a hermetic existence in isolated areas, unifying the rural atmosphere where they live with their work. They do not seek publicity or public relations agencies to promote their art. All live in harmony with their surroundings, embracing the elements, working with natural materials, using their hands for repetitive, labor-intensive tasks. They master their chosen techniques, with no arbitrary changes made merely for the sake of innovation. Using natural indigo (*ai*), banana fiber (*basho-fu*), or silk (*kinu*), which have been the mainstays of this craft for centuries, these artists have dedicated their lives to refining their procedures with dignity in a spirit of artistry.

Chiyoko Tanaka, for example, creates surfaces with subtle nuances in grains and colors that are akin to unglazed ceramics. She dyes her warp and weft, then rubs the woven cloth with stones, bricks, or soil in a grinding motion to give them a time-weathered appearance, removing sections much like painters do when scraping off paint, giving each of her unique pieces depth and texture (plates 55, 56). Like stone-washed jeans or aged silk this time-worn quality makes the works particularly intimate. The Maki sisters, Chiaki and Kaori, collaborate and share an entrancing reverence for dyeing and combining silk and linen threads of different textures and origins (fig. 2). Their exquisite palette of earth tones and delicate weaves yield patterns of hypnotic beauty (plates 12, 13).

The astounding variety of industrially produced textiles in Japan is possible because of the manufacturing system in place there today. Textiles were one of the first crafts to be industrialized when Japan began to make its transition to a modern state at the end of the last century. Since then the country has engaged in a relentless process of modernization

Opposite: Detail of pleated fabric from Inoue Pleats Company

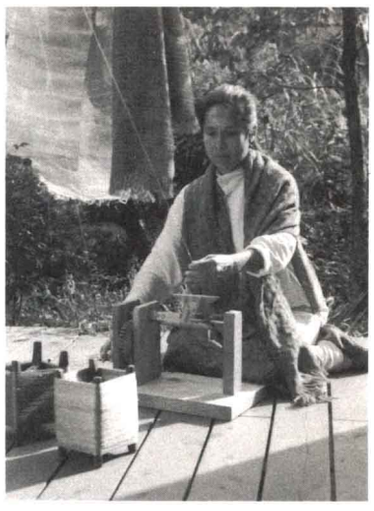
and marketing, establishing a solid network of industries with efficient factories that have been the foundation of their economic success. These manufacturers have not only invested in industrialization but have encouraged experimentation, which allows them to abandon false starts and try new ones with a high ratio of success. The current experimental fervor in Japan can be likened to postwar Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, when close collaborations between manufacturers and designers, eager to test new materials and construction techniques, led to an impressive output of original furniture and product forms. This flexibility contrasts with the assembly-line format of mass production in which economic incentives, standardization, and sheer volume virtually prohibit experimentation or customized production.

Although large powerful factories, such as Toray Industries, are technically advanced and automated, the majority, like Kaneko Orimono, Mitasho, Inoue Pleats, and S. Yoshimura, are small and simple by comparison (fig. 3). Many of these Japanese textile factories formerly made kimonos and other garments and have existed for generations. Each one tends to specialize in a technique—cutting, chemical etching, wave-reed weaving, pleating, or flocking, for example—but they take pride in the challenge of developing a new process or texture.

Most of these industrial textiles originate as pristine expanses of glossy polyester. Like a blank sheet of paper, polyester offers virtually limitless possibilities. Once considered an inferior fiber for clothing and furnishings, its status has been elevated through constant reinvention and forward thinking. This prosaic fabric has been enlivened by texturing its surface, an approach often used to conceal defects in lesser-grade plastics or glass. Heating, steaming, puncturing, dissolving with acid, polishing, clipping, shaving—abusive treatments associated with durable materials like stone, ceramics, or glass—transform polyester into cloth that challenges our notion of what textiles can be. Tidy folds, pleats, or crumpled textures are indelibly "baked" into these synthetic fabrics, whose thermoplastic properties have a "memory" for heat (fig. 4). Their variegated textures are characteristic of the Japanese predilection for elegant imperfection and asymmetry found in most of their art forms.

Many Tokyo-based designers have excelled at transforming these mundane materials, like polyester, into magical surfaces with great finesse. They experiment with various fibers and finishing processes to explore a material's physical characteristics often giving new interpretations to such ancient techniques as felting, embroidery, or quilting. Like their counterparts in rural areas they, too, draw on their surroundings for inspiration, but their environment is the raw urban landscape. The character of their textiles reflects the frenzy, glitter, motion, and excitement of city life, charged with

1. Okinawa landscape



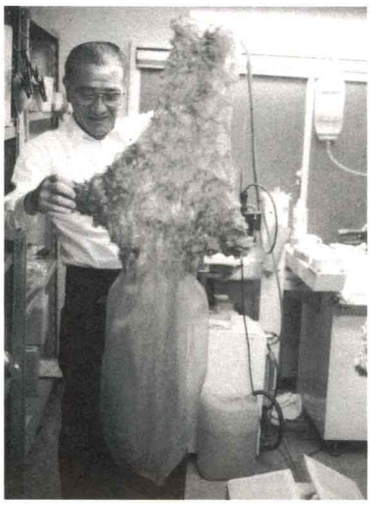
2. Chiaki Maki winding yarn

energy. They adopt forms or imagery from manmade products: plastic photo-ID containers or bubble wrap, for instance. Other times, their works represent abstractions of natural forces—decay, weathering, renewal. For some, like the pioneering and influential team of Issey Miyake and Makiko Minagawa of Miyake Design Studio (plates 57–62) or Reiko Sudo of Nuno Corporation, recycling and reuse of materials are prime concerns. Rusted nails and barbed wire become lyrical sources of poetic inspiration for Sudo's Scrapyard series (plate 22).

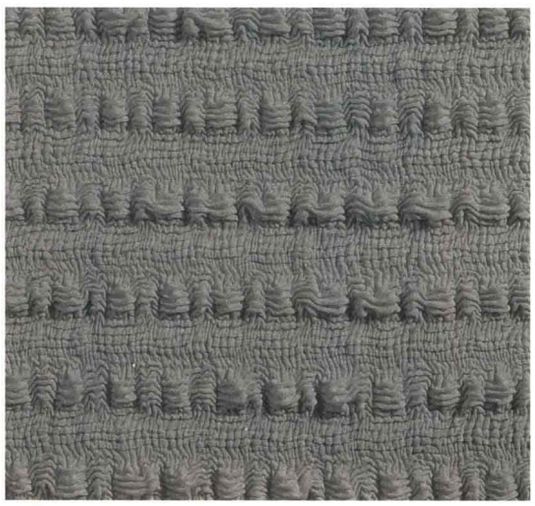
These visionary designers incorporate both ancient methods and experimental technologies into their untypical ways of working with textiles. They transfigure flat cloth into bas relief by manipulating it chemically or burning out sections; yarns with opposing characteristics are juxtaposed to create the equivalent of lace; acids are used to stretch or shrink separate networks of threads, creating a blistered texture. They weave windows and holes into fabric and steam-heat it, creating distorted, feltlike surfaces and perforated cloth. They have explored the potentials of reflective surfaces of metallics and polyester slit films. In some cases this revolutionary treatment of textiles and fashion has not only reshaped the look of the body and the way people dress but has also redefined the way they walk and move (fig. 5). It is this type of intelligent playing that is forging original works, new discoveries, and modes of expression specific to our era.

Sometimes, artists and designers have spawned new textile products by appropriating manufacturing processes developed for industrial purposes totally unrelated to the textile field. For instance, at the joint instigation of American artist Sheila Hicks and Junichi Arai, who were searching for a fireproof material to create a monumental stage curtain (fig. 6), engineers at Bridgestone Metalpha Corporation in Tochigi developed a new product using stainless-steel fiber (plate 14). Further collaborations between Arai and a Pachinko parlor-game-machine engineer focused on making stainless-steel threads elastic by plying and twisting them so they could be woven on mechanized looms without breaking. Sudo worked with an automobile manufacturer to apply the spattering technology used for polishing automobile hardware to coat her fabric with a silky stainless-steel finish (plate 19).

More direct cross-seminations can be found between the textile and paper industries. Historically, these industries were often located within the same village, and both were linked to kimono making. Increasingly today, textile and paper factories may be found under the same roof, particularly in the Fukui prefecture, where combining paper with synthetic threads has become a specialty. Paper has been traditionally used for clothing because it is surprisingly warm, durable, and astonishingly water-resistant. Like textiles, numerous textures and surfaces can be achieved in



3. Inoue Pleats Company, Ltd., Tokyo



4. Detail of pleated fabric from Inoue Pleats Company