

## REPORTS

### THE EXHIBITION 'CHANGES'

Last autumn, this exhibition of work by Japanese Shinzo Kajiwara and Lithuanian Juratė Petruškevičienė was held at three venues in Lithuania, ending at Perkuno House, Kaunas.

Kajiwara is Professor of Textile Art at Tamagawa University, Tokyo. His work is dominated by geometric patterns. He uses the *katazome* technique to create circles that are visible through the various

other materials he employs. Petruškevičienė has worked in *shibori* technique since 1999, using natural and chemical dyes on silk as well as synthetic and other materials. The purpose of the exhibition was to illustrate how artists build on their respective cultural heritages and integrate current trends in textile art.

(Synopsis of a text by Vida Mažiemenė)



Above: Shinzo Kajiwara/J, "Anticipation I, II", 2007, *katazome*

Centre: Kajiwara "Weathering" 2005 (back); Juratė Petruškevičienė/LT, "Rusted Meadow", 2007 (in front)

R.: Petruškevičienė, "Rusted Meadow", detail, 2007, *shibori*



### THE KAUNAS ART BIENNIAL 'TEXTILE 07'

Monika Auch

Visitors at the opening of the exhibition "Wide Examination"



The Kaunas Textile Biennial has become an established event on the Kaunas cultural scene and beyond. Its ascent, within six editions, from a local venture to an internationally acclaimed textile exhibition was driven by several factors.

The local driving force is a trinity of women – Virginija Vitkienė, an art historian, art critic and curator; Vita Gelunienė, an artist; and Laima Oržekauskienė, an artist and a professor at the VAA Art Faculty of Kaunas. Supported by others, they have set their sights on making each Biennial edition a different and interesting event.

The initiators succeeded in obtaining support from local museums, galleries, and the community, and have won an increasing number of international sponsors for the Biennial. The event is further strengthened by the great number of international guests and artists who meet for vibrant exchanges of ideas, performances, radio discussions, and TV coverage in the opening week.

The Biennial consisted of three main exhibitions – *Wide Examination*, *Narrow Examination*, and *Young Examination*, as well as accompanying shows, art commissions, research projects, and workshops.

About thirty events were scheduled for the opening week. A panel looking for new trends and developments in textile art selected thirty-two pieces for *Wide Examination*. The selection process was documented by the chair of the panel, Professor Janis Jefferies of Goldsmiths Institute, London, and published on the Biennial website and in the catalogue. Her essay provides an interesting insight into the selection process which so often seems to be shrouded in mystery.

#### WIDE EXAMINATION

This show presented works that explore and stretch the boundaries of every conceivable technique and theme. Twenty-two pieces were hung on walls, and ten works were presented as installations or three-dimensional objects. If you walked into the long gallery, where most of the two-dimensional pieces hung on a curved wall, and squinted through your eyelashes, the textiles appeared almost like paintings. Most of the installations were placed side by side in an adjoining room.

Observant spectators with a good visual memory were able to relate Tania Candiani Del Real's (Mexico) huge machine-stitched cityscape to an instal-



Brett Alexander/AUS: "Playing with Dolls", 2006, installation in 20 parts





Agnietė Janušaitė/LT  
 "Sterile", 2007, 50 x 70 cm  
 (4 parts), woven;  
 cotton



Fiona Kirkwood/South Africa:  
 "The Washing Line 3", 2007,  
 650 x 128 cm, digital print  
 Silja Puranen/FIN: "Rose", 2007,  
 130 x 217 cm, digitised photo, painted,  
 stitched, transfer print, fabric paint



Monika Auch/NL: Proxycloves-Embryologic  
 Objects, detail, 2006, 100 x 100 x 45 cm

lation by Ursula Steuler (Germany) for which refugee women had crocheted doll-sized dream homes as part of a social re-allocation project. Works dealing with material properties, such as a poetic installation using optical fibres and sound by **Maia Urstad and Hilde Hauan Johnsen** (Norway), could be linked to the men's shirts made of pig skin by Kristina Šaudytė (Lithuania). The wry humour of **Brett Alexander's** installation on homosexual identity corresponded to **Silja Puranen's** (Finland) exploration of the limits of human attraction. **Agniete Janušaitė** (Lithuania), Ruth Shomroni (Israel), and Bente Saetrang (Norway), espoused political themes in very different parts of the world. *(Names in bold are the Textile 07 award winners)*

#### NARROW EXAMINATION

This exhibition showed three collections compiled by two curators and one curatorial team. Displayed in the Kaunas Picture Gallery, it juxtaposed political activism in South Africa with conceptual work from the UK, and included a personal homage to the strength of the Brazilian people. The three collections were presented in the same huge room, partly divided by screens that still allowed the viewer to make visual connections and references between pieces.

The South African collection by Fiona Kirkwood, "Skin – to – skin", focused on skin as a metaphor, ranging from ancient rituals to political apartheid. Tribal pieces and traditional beadwork were used to convey political messages, with the spread of HIV/AIDS a recurrent theme. The works showed a frankness about identity and the messages they conveyed whenever materials such as animal skins, or ancient techniques, were linked to current

issues. The show shouted 'Africa' at the viewer. At the same time, the pieces exerted a strong attraction, even an aura, that demanded closer examination.

"Unpicked and Dismantled", a British show, was devoid of even the smallest scrap of textile material. Textiles are carriers of sensual experiences that are visualised in media such as photography, tattoo art, videos, and work on paper. The two curators, Danica Maier and Gerard Williams, and most of the contemporary artists they selected had trained at Goldsmiths College, London, where textiles are dealt with in an academic and conceptual way, and actual textile materials are frequently relinquished. This broadens our view of the subject matter, while at the same time focusing our attention on its very essence, i.e. material properties and communication.

The Brazilian collection reflected on the everyday instability of life – on people living in extreme poverty and chaos in Brazil. Surprisingly vivid and colourful objects and videos showed people's strength and lust for life in the face of harsh realities. The show paid homage to curator Fernando Marques Penteado's deep dedication to his native country, and his empathy with the desire for artistic expression in 'uneducated' people.

The juxtaposition of the British presentation with the South African and Brazilian collections made *Narrow Examination* quite an experience. Indeed, it afforded views of textile art from many new angles.

*Narrow Examination* was a sensitive show that breathed compassion, thoughtfulness, and the human desire to create with our hands.

Lively crowds of visitors attended the show openings which were celebrated with flowers, music, and tasty food.

#### PROGRAMME

The programme of satellite events was hosted by galleries, the university, and even one disused church. Big woven panels by Laima Oržekauskienė were on display in the crumbling monastery St. George's Church, open just a few hours for the show. Some panels depicting nude torsos were turned to the wall, revealing the 'wrong side' of the weave to even more dramatic effect.

The numerous works by Lithuanian artists presented a variety based on a rich tradition and thorough education coupled with digital developments.

A collection of the best pieces shown at the well-known Italian Miniartexil since 1991 were displayed on the upper floor of M. Žilinskas Art Gallery.

Part of the Textile 07 concept was to include education and research projects, and to place commissions. This ambition was realised through open lectures by artists and curators; round table discussions; an interdisciplinary project by Irish artist Seamus McGuinness and Kevin Malone, a professor of psychiatry, on suicide in Ireland; and two research projects by Janis Jefferies. The twin brothers Osgemeos, famous Brazilian graffiti artists, and Mexican artist Tania Candiani Del Real had been commissioned to make site specific work in the city and the National M.K. Čiurlionis Museum.

Textiles have been carriers of messages and a means of communication since the early stages of mankind, possibly preceded in that function by early clay tablets and figurines. Textiles carry information in ritual cloths, as covers or decoration of human bodies, as banners of war, prayer flags, or interior decoration.

From paraphrasing the sacred, as in Gerard William's subtle photographs of draperies on a sarcophagus, to shouting the political, as in Fiona Kirkwood's prints and videos – the essential qualities of textiles were inclined to bounce off each other in this lively visual discussion of contemporary Textile Art.

*(To order the catalogue visit the website, [www.bienale.lt](http://www.bienale.lt))*