

Textiles and Apparel Newsletter

Contents

Announcing

New Exhibit by TXA Student 1

Engaging Youth

4-H Resource Directory Update 2

Plants and Textiles – A Legacy of Technology 2

Chemistry at the Mall 2

Concerning Consumers

What Goes Down, Goes Up 3

Crafty Accessories 3

The Prewash Face Off 3

Exploring Fabrics

Less Static 4

Browsing Websites

Fabrics.Net 4

Announcing

New Exhibit by TXA Student

ALANA LAUREN STAITI

A fashion and textile show entitled *Fashioning the Tourist: An Andean Traveler's Wardrobe* opened on November 9 and will remain on view at the Elizabeth Schmeck Brown Costume and Textiles Gallery on the 3rd floor of Martha Van Rensselaer Hall for most of the 2006 spring semester.

The exhibit, part of my senior honors thesis, explores contemporary textile production and aesthetics geared towards



tourists visiting the Andes region. It includes items such as this *arpillera* from Peru. Andean women make these panels from cloth scraps for use as wall hangings. They are hung in native homes and sold to tourists.

I became interested in textile production in the Andes while taking an anthropology class last year entitled *People of the Andes*. As I read ethnographies over the summer for my thesis, I was inspired by the writings of Lynn Meisch and Blenda Femenias to address the textile market for tourists in the Andes.

ENGAGING YOUTH

4-H Resource Directory Update

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

As you probably know, the state 4-H Office has been working to create a web-based 4-H Resource Directory. Betty Heitmann, Seneca County, and I reviewed materials for inclusion in the clothing and textiles category. Some of you provided feedback on curricula that you have found helpful. Please check out the list of recommended resources, <http://www.cerp.cornell.edu/4h/>, and let us know if you find inactive links, outdated publications, or have something new that you would like to have listed.

Among the recommended clothing and textile publications are these that are currently on sale through the Cornell Resource Center. Calculate the additional CCE discount and these are a real bargain:

- Adventures in Clothing (Unit I), Challenges in Clothing (Unit II), Strategies in Clothing (Unit III), and 4-H Clothing Project Leader Guide . . . \$1.95/each.
- Simple Gifts. . . \$6.95/each.
- In-Touch Science titles: Foods & Fabrics, Fibers & Animals, Plants & Engineering, and Chemistry & Environment. . . \$10.95/each or a set of four for \$39.95.

Plants & Textiles — A Legacy of Technology

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

We are in the final year of the Plants & Textiles — A Legacy of Technology grant, a project shared by the departments of Textiles & Apparel and Horticulture. Leigh MacDonald is now conducting interviews with adults and youth who have used the program. Marcia Eames-Sheavly and I express our gratitude to those of you willing to take the time to speak candidly with Leigh and to help with this evaluation.

Also, remember that traveling trunks (kits) are available for loan should you want to teach or demonstrate this program. Trunks contain a notebook with how-to instructions and samples; 1 small loom with bobbins and yarns; 1 rope machine with twine; 1 indigo dye kit with stencils; 2 mold and deckle sets; and books about weaving, rope making, paper making, and indigo dyeing. No fee is charged, but transportation is the responsibility of the borrower (although we often assist with the “relay” if we are traveling to your area).

Special Offer! We are making a few looms for mat weaving for our own use and will make a few extra to sell to interested educators. The cost is \$25 for the small loom and \$40 for the large loom. You may pay by check or provide a CCE account number.

Finally, we invite you to explore and contribute to the website at <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/plantsandtextiles>.

To borrow a traveling trunk, purchase a loom for mat weaving, or contribute ideas or photos to the website, contact Marcia Eames-Sheavly, me14@cornell.edu, or me, cwc4@cornell.edu.

Chemistry at the Mall

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN and ANNELIES HEIDEKAMP

The Department of Textiles & Apparel joined other campus and community members in offering hands-on science activities at the Pyramid Mall in Ithaca as part of the annual American Chemical Society’s “Chemistry at the Mall.” This year’s activity was dyeing nylon, cotton, and wool yarns with the acid dyes found in powdered drink mixes. Youngsters could see that each yarn’s chemical makeup resulted in different amounts of dye uptake.

Dyeing with powdered drink mixes such as Kool-Aid and Wylers has long been a favorite activity of 4-Hers — and of teens fond of dyeing their hair bright colors for Halloween or just for fun! You can find many recipes on the Internet with details of which flavor yields which colors. An easy rule of thumb is to dissolve one packet of powdered drink mix in two cups of hot water. Keep this solution warm in a crockpot and add the yarn or fabric. Check the color periodically — remove the item and rinse when the desired color is obtained. You can dilute the dye solution with more water to get lighter colors and leave in the solution longer to obtain darker colors. Add new dye solution as the dye is exhausted.

If you want to demonstrate this activity at a club meeting or fair, you might print the explanation below and distribute it to viewers.

Food dyes in drink mixes are acid dyes that react with the basic chemical groups on some fibers. They bond tightly with protein fibers such as wool, mohair, cashmere, silk, and human hair. They bond less well with other types of fibers.

The colors obtained and their stability depend on the chemical composition of the dye; the chemical composition of the fiber; and the dyeing conditions such as temperature, acidity or alkalinity, and duration; and the presence of mordants (a substance that helps “fix” the dye to the fiber).

Advantages of dyeing with drink mixes:

- The acid dyes have passed food safety tests
- Bright colors are achieved
- Some like the fruity aroma

Disadvantages of dyeing with drink mixes:

- Colors may be garish
- Depth of color can not be controlled
- Some show poor fastness to light and washing
- More expensive than dyes sold specifically for dyeing textiles

CONCERNING CONSUMERS

What Goes Down, Goes Up

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

If, over the last few years, you watched in dismay as the midriff gap widened between tops and jeans, it is time to take a deep breath and relax. At-the-waist and even high-waisted jeans are the new thing! Jaycia Gayle is promoting a new denim label, Jainesse, with high-waisted jeans that she claims are more flattering and more feminine for the female body. Low-rise styles, she says, “make us look like boys.” Rises (crotch-to-waist measurement) on Jainesse jeans measure 8, 10, 11, and 13 inches compared to the 3- to 7-inch rises found on the popular low-rise models. PZI Denim, formerly Perazzi Apparel Company, is also promoting misses’ styles that “fit curvy women and eliminate the waist gap.” This change in waist placement for jeans is well timed, based on the response from New York buyers who report adding high-waisted styles from the US and Europe to their denim offerings. We should have seen this coming. After all, *Vogue* announced in May 2002 that low-rise pants were out of fashion and several designers included high-waisted pants in their 2003 collections. The question now is how long before this new fashion is available in your area.

References:

1. Fortini, A. Has America’s Low-rise Obsession Gone Too Far?, *Slate*, October 20, 2003.
2. Lee, G. PZI Gives Curves a Southern Touch, *Women’s Wear Daily*, October 20, 2005.
3. Tran, K. T. L. Waist not, Want Not, *Women’s Wear Daily*, October 20, 2005.

Crafty Accessories

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

For several years, accessories have been important fashion items sometimes costing more than the outfit. These little extras are still popular, but the coming look is more about down-home creativity than runway pizzazz. As one fashion consultant explained, “We’re in bling recovery.” A corporate design administrator concurred, “Granny crochet accessories have gone from uncool to super trendy.” The new costume jewelry is made from beads and yarns of natural fibers. Belts, scarves, gloves, hats, and legwear are crocheted, knitted, felted, or knotted. Wicker baskets, embellished with scraps of leather, lace, or bandanas, serve as handbags. That’s good news for folks who like to make things with their hands, and that includes a lot of young people. It is time to fish out those old macramé instructions from the 1970s or browse the local library for both old and new titles. Quicker still, try the instructions on these websites for items to enhance your own wardrobe or to give as gifts:

- Beadage <<http://www.beadage.net/hemp/index.shtml>>
- Jewelry Making <<http://jewelrymaking.about.com/cs/>>
- Martha Stewart <www.marthastewart.com/>
- Sew News <<http://www.sewnews.com/>>

References:

1. Hirshlag, J. A Stitch in Time, *Women’s Wear Daily Accessories*, October 2005.

The Prewash Face Off

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Consumers know that the use of an effective prewash product can make the difference in winning or losing the weekly stain battles they face in the laundry room. What might be confusing are the claims of rival products. The Consumer Reports staff put the two best-selling products to the test: Shout vs. Spray ’n Wash.

Cotton, cotton-polyester, and nylon fabrics were soiled with mustard, automotive grease, lipstick, grass, ballpoint ink, and cherry drink mix. Additional cotton fabrics were saturated with dirt, spaghetti sauce, chocolate syrup, ring-around-the-collar, coffee, grape juice, and blood.

Samples were laundered using three treatments:

1. Highly-rated detergent only (control)
2. Pretreatment with Shout
3. Pretreatment with Spray ’n Wash

And the winner is . . . well, there is no winner. Both prewash products performed better than detergent alone, but no single product was a standout. Both removed grass and lipstick. Spray ’n Wash was more effective against ink; Shout was better removing blood stains.

Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised as these results. Prewash products have similar ingredients and work in similar ways. They contain surfactants and solvents. The solvents penetrate the fibers and help dissolve grease and oil, while the surfactants help disperse the solvent-grease mixture during washing. Prewash products are available in pump spray, liquid, gel, stick or aerosol forms.

And the bottom line. . . prewash soil and stain removers are the launderer’s friend because they aid in the removal of oil-based stains, particularly from polyester, but the smart consumer will select a prewash product based more on price than on brand.

References:

1. Claim Check, Shout vs. Spray ’n Wash, *Consumer Reports*, pp 5. November, 2005.
2. Laundry Fact Sheet Notebook, Soap and Detergent Association. <<http://www.cleaning101.com/laundry/fact>>

EXPLORING FABRICS

Less Static

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Perhaps you remember shuffling about on the carpet and then touching your brother or sister, giving them a little jolt. Or maybe you “shocked” yourself when you touched a metal doorknob. The human response to static electricity varies with foot size, body size, clothing materials, and the humidity and temperature of the surroundings. In general, static electricity is harmless to people — most can absorb 2,000 to 4,000 volts without suffering any adverse effects. In contrast, electrical components can be damaged by as little as a few volts. The electronics and computer industry estimates annual losses of 5 billion dollars due to static electricity. This figure will increase as consumer products incorporate more technology. A partial solution is antistatic apparel because people are the greatest source of static charge in the workplace.

Garments that neutralize static electricity are made from fabrics that are conductive (able to transmit energy). Fabrics are rendered conductive by one of these methods:

- add antistatic chemicals to create a specialty fiber
- incorporate conductive yarns into fabrics
- apply an antistatic finish to yarns or fabrics
- use fabric softeners when laundering garments

A specialty fiber is created by modifying a first-generation fiber. Antistatic chemicals, such as carbon particles, can be added to the polymer solution prior to extrusion or they can be incorporated into the fiber surface. Nylon, polyester, and acrylic fibers have been modified in this way to provide protection against electrostatic charge. Conductive elements such as fine metallic yarns can be woven into fabrics as stripes or grids. A dense grid (~ 5 mm x 5mm) provides enhanced antistatic capability over a loose grid (~ 20mm x 20mm). Antistatic finishes can be applied to the surfaces of yarns or fabrics. Nylon carpeting and lingerie fabrics are often treated in this manner. Aerosol sprays to control static are available in the laundry products section in grocery stores. The use of fabric softeners when laundering garments is also an effective method of controlling static.

The primary use for antistatic garments is as workwear. Antistatic clothing is worn to prevent fires when handling flammable liquids and gases. Factory workers wear antistatic clothing to protect computers and electronics during manufacture. Even auto workers wear these garments because of the increasing number of electronic circuit boards in vehicles. Common antistatic garments include wrist straps, shoes, and coveralls. Antistatic materials are also used in carpets, filters, brushes, conveyor belts, cleanroom garments,

and smart textiles.

References:

1. Hatch, Kathryn L. Textile Science, West Publishing Company, Minneapolis, MN. 1993.
2. Texindex
< <http://www.texindex.com/News/Detail.asp?id=3021> >
3. Textiles Intelligence. Anti-static Technology in Performance Apparel, Performance Apparel Markets 14. Oct. 2005. <<http://www.textilesintelligence.com>>

BROWSING WEBSITES

Fabrics.net <<http://www.fabrics.net/>>

Although intended to entice fabric buyers, the Fabrics.net website contains a wealth of practical and whimsical information for the fabric lover. You can explore fiber and fabric characteristics as well as search for helpful hints on how to sew and care for a variety of fabrics. You can scan the articles for interesting historical notes about how feathers replaced whalebones as stiffening for ladies’ foundation garments and how advertisements printed on cloth and enclosed with tobacco were collected for quilt making. Contests, newsletters, fabric sources, and a Q/A section round out the offerings.

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