

TEXTILES and APPAREL NEWSLETTER

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Announcing

Textile Exhibits

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Story Cloths of Bali

Johnson Art Museum, Cornell University
January 28 - March 26

Women on the Indonesian island of Bali used embroidery to record class folk epics on cloth. These ceremonial textiles adorned temples, shrines, and buildings. This exhibit is testimony to the artists' considerable skill and the universal tradition of storytelling. If you happen to be in Ithaca on March 16 at 5:15PM, join Dr. Kaja McGowan's lecture, *Living Threads/Painted Surfaces: Ni Made Suciarmi*, given in conjunction with the exhibit.

Textiles from the Garden of Eden

Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT)
February 17 - April 22

The Fashion and Textile History Gallery at MFIT now features *Textiles from the Garden of Eden*, an exhibit of approximately 65 textiles with images of flowers and plants. Flowers may be identifiable, abstracted, stylized, familiar, exotic, or fanciful, while plants may recall tropical jungles or dense forests, sometimes in combination with birds or animals. All represent artists' ideas of the heavenly beauty found on earth. The exhibit includes fabrics used for apparel and home furnishings from the mid-10th century to the present. A few of the featured designers are Wiener Werkstatte, Paul Poiret, Jack Lenor Larsen, Wendy Klein, and Gary Page.

ENGAGING YOUTH

Ways to Share

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Now is a great time to plan a project that gives back to your community. Two ideas are shipping clothing to Mississippi 4-H for persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina and joining the efforts of Sew Much Comfort.

In November, 2005, many of you received a note from the NY 4-H Office asking for volunteers willing to raise money or collect new clothing for Katrina victims in Mississippi. Several 4-H clubs responded, but the need is still great. The original call emphasized the need for children's coats, and although the southern states are approaching spring, lightweight coats are still welcome. Other requested items are sweaters, sweatshirts, socks, caps, gloves, and blankets. Mississippi 4-H is soliciting, receiving and working with Mississippi State University to distribute items that will go to all needy children along the Mississippi Coast. Donations should be sent to Operation 4-H Relief, Mississippi 4-H, Bost Building, Mississippi State, MS 39762. If you have questions, contact Morris Houston, 151 Pine Ridge Circle, Brandon, MS 39047; Tel: 601-829-3611 or 601-906-1694.

An article in the February 2006 issue of *Sew News* explained how a volunteer group, So Much Comfort, is sewing adaptive clothing for soldiers recovering from amputations, burns, and other injuries. As the group's president, Michelle Cuppy, explained, "Our mission is to provide soldiers with comfortable clothing, which allows them more independence and dignity as they recuperate." Because the request for such clothing is greater than the supply, your donations will be put to immediate use. To learn more about the group's goals and how to contribute, check out the website, Sew Much Comfort. <<http://www.sewmuchcomfort.org>> The site includes instructions for sewing fixator pants, prosthetic pants, and boxer underwear or you can contact the volunteers for other ideas. Those familiar with some of CCE's earlier programs will recognize many of the construction techniques used in Clothing for People with Special Needs.

Plants & Textiles: A Legacy of Technology

Both large and small wooden looms are still available for sale and traveling trunks (teaching kits) are available for loan. Contact Charlotte Coffman at cwc4@cornell.edu or 607-255-2009.

CONCERNING CONSUMERS

New On the Market

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Sideways Cords

Corduroys are always on somebody's list of favorite winter clothing. Some years, it seems that every child at the elementary school playground is wearing cords. Other years, ads for corduroys are mostly found in magazines for outdoor enthusiasts. And, occasionally, cords rule the fashion runway. This has been a good winter for fashion cords, but have you tried the horizontal cords — garments cut with the wales running around the body? Businessman Chris Lindland was so intrigued by the concept that he founded Lindland Clothing and ordered 500 pairs of horizontal corduroy pants. Unfamiliar with apparel lead times, he was too late to sell to retailers for this season. Thus, he turned to the Internet offering his sideways cords in pants, jackets, and skirts. The website provides a bit of off-beat humor and a chance to order your own sideways cords. Check it out at <<http://www.cordarounds.com>>

—Business 2.0

<<http://www.business2.com/b2/web/articles/o,17863,1127626,00.html>>

Bra with Smarts

Smart clothing has made headlines for years. You may recall articles about garments that can sense body temperature and then cool or heat the wearer, or medical vests that monitor the wearers' vital signs. All too often, however, these exciting garments are *experimental* or *available only to the military*. Welcome the new heart sensing sports bra, now available to consumers. The seamless bra has sensors knit into the fabric that relay the wearer's heartbeat to a transmitter that is snapped into the front of the bra. That data is sent to a heart rate monitoring watch worn on the wrist. The wearer can slow or speed her workout based on a quick glance at the watch. The sensors must be damp to work properly so users moisten the sensors to activate the system, but the body's perspiration maintains the connection as the activity heats up.

Testimonials from athletes note that wearing the heart sensing bra is much more comfortable than monitors that are strapped onto the body. To launder the nylon/Lycra bra, remove the transmitter and machine wash in warm water. Tumble dry on low heat or air dry. Tests show that the bra can be washed 80-100 times without any effect on its performance. The *smart* bra was developed by Textronics, a company dedicated to creating functional clothing by converging electronics and textiles. They market apparel under the brand Numetrex. The bra-transmitter-watch system sells for \$115. You may also purchase just the bra and transmitter for \$75 or the bra only for \$45. All are available online at Numetrex <<http://www.numetrex.com>>

—Knight Ridder, Washington Bureau

<http://www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/13399408.htm>

Ties Are Stylish Again

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Valentine's Day is past and Father's Day is a few months off, but it is never too late (or too early) to stock up on gifts for the men in your life. And, you need look no further than the tried-and-true necktie. It is back!

Historians differ on the exact origin of the necktie, but we know that through the years men have worn ties to proclaim status, occupation, group identification, humor, and political leanings. Fashion experts use terms such as cravats, jabots, bandannas, ascots, bows, butterflies, kerchiefs, and bolos, while many men use descriptors such as noose, dog collar, and abomination.

Ties have been made from a variety of fibers: silk, cotton, wool, leather, linen, rayon, and polyester. Some years ties are wide; other years they are narrow. Some guys wear dark, conservative styles; others go for the colorful and outrageous.

Whatever the style, there is no denying that this accessory is making a comeback. In the casual 1990s, tie sales dropped to about \$750 million per year. This year, sales are expected to exceed \$1.1 billion.

So what is driving this rebirth? Some say it is the fickle fashion cycle. . . in one year and out the next. Others say it is youthful rebellion. . . if Dad is wearing jeans and sweats, young men want to dress up. A third theory is the generally conservative mood of the country and the accompanying changes in the corporate dress code. Fiber scientists believe it is the new fabric blends that made ties more durable, wrinkle-free, and easy-care. The news media credit their popular makeover shows. Designers might say it is their understanding of what the male customer wants.

A recent example is the "zipper ties" carried by Casual Male, a chain store for big and tall men's clothing. These pre-knotted ties slip over the head and are tightened by means of a zipper at the back. What began as a \$10 novelty item is now going for \$25 after endorsement by several television personalities.

If you are a woman and if you are thinking about making a purchase, you may have to budge in line. Today, men buy 75 percent of the neckties sold compared with only 45 percent 10 years ago.

Resources:

1. Gardner, M. Fit To Be Tied, Again, The Christian Science Monitor, December 5, 2005.
2. Johnson, D. 2,000 Years of the Necktie, Infoplease <<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/tie1.html>>
3. Sager, I (Ed.). Zip This, Up Front, Business Week Online <http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_49/c3911003_mz003.htm>

Tie Care Tips

- Most ties are dry cleaned, but make sure your cleaner is experienced with ties.
- Ties made of synthetic material might be washable.
- When ironing ties, make certain the roll along the tie edge is not pressed flat.
- Hang ties on a rack, except knitted or crochet ties, which should be rolled and stored in a drawer.
- Rest ties two or three days before wearing them again to allow wrinkles to hang out.
- Unknot your tie when taking it off. Never slip it over your head.
- Do not unravel the knot by pulling on the small end. Always reverse the knot itself.
- Do not make your knots too tight.

— Neckwear Association of America

EXPLORING FABRICS

Speedo's Race to the 2006 Winter Olympics

BETH HERGET, CHARLOTTE COFFMAN AND NANCY BREEN

The Olympics have always generated international excitement and it has only increased with the pageantry of ever evolving athletic fashions. In addition to ramping up competitor's speeds, these super textiles help apparel companies cash in on super publicity. The 2006 Winter Olympics pushes this trend as more manufacturers enter the fray. Fans are accustomed to seeing Nike-clad speed skaters and skiers dressed in Spider attire. Now, make way for Speedo.

As *USA Today* noted in a December 2005 article, performance athletic wear has gained market shares over the past few years. Speedo, known mostly for swimwear, has taken note of this shift and adjusted their production. The outdated corporate image of minimal swimsuits for men is about to change with Speedo's new look and very public sponsorship of athletes.

Speedo introduced "sharkskin" Fastskin FSII in the Summer Olympics in 2004. Modified to accommodate different swimming events, the fabric fit the athlete's body like a second skin. It even produced less drag than human skin since it mimicked the texture of a shark's skin. Clearly the suits, paired with the best swimmers in the world, yielded stunning results. Speedo clothed 47 medal winners at the Athens games, which was more than any other brand.

The breakthrough for Speedo was adapting their Fastskin FSII, designed for efficient movement through water, into a material that allows efficient movement through air. Developers changed the sharkskin model to one with "golf ball-like

dimples,” specialized for each event. For example, bobsledders sit upright and forward in their sled, lugers lie on their backs with their feet pointing down the run, and skeleton riders make the descent head first on their stomachs. Each sport requires streamlining in a different part of the body.

Speedo says their philosophy is all about “drag reduction, breathability, and moisture management.” They conducted extensive research, material testing, and athlete performance analysis in winter sport environments.

If you watched the televised Olympics, you probably saw some of the Speedo-sponsored athletes in action. Sporting the Fastskin FSII Ice Speed Suit, were luge and skeleton riders Vonetta Flowers, Todd Hays, Chris Soule, and Jean Prahm. Vonetta Flowers remarked, “The difference between gold and silver at the Olympics is hundredths of a second. I’m excited to be working with a brand that has not only been at the forefront of speed for more than 75 years, but has been very engaged with our specific needs during the suit development.”

For those who might like to try a Fastskin FSII Ice suit, they may be purchased by United State’s shoppers at speedousa.com for \$500. As Speedo tries to take its name brand out of the pool and focus on the root of its name (“Speed”) in other arenas, surely the company will continue to climb in the world of athletic apparel.

Resources:

1. Horovitz, B. Speedo Speeds Suits to Winter Olympics, *USA Today*, November 30, 2005.
2. Kletter, M. Speedo Looks Beyond the Water, *Women’s Wear Daily*, February 14, 2006.
3. Speedo. <www.speedo.com>
4. Speedo USA. <www.speedousa.com>
5. Just Style. Speedo Extends Fastskin Line to Winter Olympics, December 2, 2005, <www.just-style.com>

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Science and Technology Under Foot

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

The Olympic Games highlight not only athletes and athletic fashions, but new materials and designs of sports equipment.

Over the last few years, parabolic-shaped skis have become popular in downhill skiing. This style ski allows skiers more control because of its length (about 40 centimeters shorter), its wider body, its increased surface area, and its ability to cut into the snow better than longer skis. Young skiers like gold medalist Ted Ligety have never used any other type. More experienced competitors like Kristina Koznick, 30, have complained of making the adjustment from long to short skis.

Luge competitions are all about technology and most sled runners come from Austria. U.S. Steel has been working for about 18 months to create just the right alloy that will give the edge to American sliders. Although the materials are still in the testing stage, Erin Hamlin from Rensen, NY used these runners at the 2006 Olympics.

Figure skater Alissa Czisny, the 2004 US Collegiate Ladies Champion, did not participate in the Olympics, but she is using a new type of skate that may take her there. She is reportedly pleased with her tests of a hinged skate that acts like a shock absorber during jumps. Although costly, this technology lessens chronic ankle pain.

Resources:

1. Anderson, S. U.S. Steel At Heart of Latest Luge Technology, US Olympic Team, January 31, 2006, <http://www.usolympicteam.com/11767_43817.htm>
2. Borzilleri, M. and Bryant M. Latest Equipment Is Cutting Edge, *Gazette*, February 7, 2006. <<http://www.gazette.com/olympics/display.php?id=1314450>>

BROWSING WEBSITES

The FunWorks

<<http://thefunworks.edc.org/index.php>>

The FunWorks is a National Science Digital Library project that encourages middle and high school students to explore careers in science. It was designed for and by youth ages 11-15 years. Approximately 300 students from diverse backgrounds were involved in its development. Logon and explore careers in music, sports, art/design, medicine/law, technology, and exploration. Check out the information about nanotechnologists in the technology section or fashion designers in the art/design section.