
THE FABRIC WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition program at Ben Shahn Gallery, the William Paterson College of New Jersey, has two goals: to recognize and document significant phenomena in the visual arts and to make it available to students, faculty and persons in the northern New Jersey community. It is our conviction that theories learned in the studio classroom must be evaluated against the realities of artistic production as we find it outside the academic setting. Ben Shahn Gallery is one of the best instruments we have to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Much credit for the success of the Gallery Program is due to the efforts of the chairman of the department of art, William Finneran, the faculty co-ordinator Alan Lazarus, who also curated the *Form and Utility* show and Ms. Eve Schreier, who curated *Clay: New Jersey*. Ms. Barbara Toll served as guest curator for: *Collection in Progress, The Fabric Workshop, Some Abstract Paintings, John Baeder, Diners of New Jersey, and Works on the Wall*. Her insights, sensitivity and hard work is evidenced by the diversity and quality of these exhibitions. Special thanks goes to these artists, dealers and collectors who con-

tributed to the success of the gallery program.

The gallery is operated by students from the William Paterson College of New Jersey who are enrolled in the Gallery Workshop, a course designed to familiarize students with gallery and museum operations. Along with the routine work of installing shows, answering inquiries and designing announcements, students have visited galleries and museums, artists' lofts and heard guest lectures by John Baeder, Leo Castelli, Ivan Karp, Jim Makins, Patterson Sims and Kippie Stroud. It must be noted however that while learning, the work these students contribute to the exhibition program is essential to its success.

The 1978-79 exhibition season was made possible by a program development grant from the William Paterson College of New Jersey.

Further information may be obtained by writing or calling Ben Shahn Gallery, the William Paterson College of New Jersey, 300 Pompton Road, Wayne, New Jersey 07470—telephone (201) 995-3401.

Nancy Einreinhofer, Director

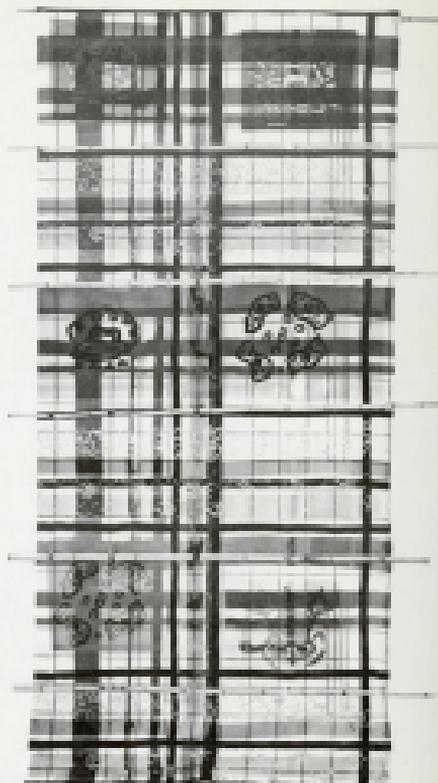
THE FABRIC WORKSHOP—EXPERIMENTAL PRINTS

The Fabric Workshop is a unique printmaking project based in Philadelphia. Now in its second season, the Workshop has invited a group of artists to use its facilities for a two week period in order to produce prints on fabric and, in many cases, transform that fabric into a work of art. This exhibition includes many of the most original of these prints, plus a selection of objects typical of each artist's work.

Using a National Endowment grant, state funds, and private contributions, the Fabric Workshop follows a time-honored tradition of training apprentices under the supervision of well-known artists. The resulting prints (printed fabrics and objects) are produced in very limited editions and sold to support the project.

The works shown here emphasize the art-objects produced by several visiting artists. Scott Burson's window print is exhibited as curtains on an actual window. Kim McConnell, who normally employs found fabrics in his work, here had the opportunity to print his own fabric. Jeff Way took a different approach and produced a suit and mask which represent a familiar image in his drawings. Bob Kushner's cape is one of the fabric and costume pieces for which he is known, but now he has been able to produce the cape as a multiple.

This exhibition is the first major public exposure the Fabric Workshop has had. It is a particularly relevant project today, when prints and multiples on paper are experiencing a great resurgence. However, for many artists, producing prints on paper in multiples is not a sufficient or suitable expression. The Fabric Workshop had provided alternatives in printmaking to many adventurous younger artists. by Barbara Toll



KIM MCCONNELL



ROBERT KUSHNER



ROBERT KUSHNER



KARL WIRSUM

The Fabric Workshop exhibition at William Paterson College constitutes a year's work from an institution which is only eighteen months old. The artist-in-residency program provides artists with two week residencies during which they are able to experiment with new materials and stretch the limits of a traditional printing form as it relates to their own work.

Coming from all over the United States, Florida, California, Colorado, Michigan, Washington, Massachusetts, New York as well as France and Japan, these artists have brought skills equally as diverse; painting, sculpture, printmaking, fibers, fabric design, glass, clay, basket-weaving and even kite design. It is hoped that the experience of a print workshop and the use of new materials will not only strengthen their own work, but will give them new techniques and new ways of thinking. This has already proved to be the case, not only to the pattern painting movement, but also to performance artists, sculptors, and any artists who have previously been interested in fabric or costume, but who have not had the facilities or materials to put their ideas into production. During their stay at the Fabric Workshop the artists are introduced to the special problems of printing on fabric. The Fabric Workshop is, to the best of my knowledge, a new and totally unique resource open to artists and its techniques are worth a practical explanation as an interesting new art form now available in Philadelphia.

During the first day of the two week residency the artist explains his proposal for a fabric project to the staff. Then, with the aid of a

master printer and apprentices, the artist draws his design in repeat patterns on frosted acetate. Employing the same technical devices used in silk screen printing on paper such as heavy pencil, lithocrayon, opaque film ink, spray paint and rubylith, the artist's drawings on acetate serve as an original record of his work. The acetates are then shot photographically onto the silk screens, each color requiring a new screen. The size of the screens vary according to the width of the material to be used as well as the images drawn on the acetate. To give the reader an idea of the variety of screens used, Sam Gilliam's "Philadelphia Soft," a fabric print multiple, required nineteen photo silk screens, each placed at a different angle to the seventy-five foot printing table. Robert Kushner's "Lilies," however, required only two screens, placed back to back, giving his one color cape an enormous fabric repeat of close to eight feet in width. The Kushner cape utilized the natural cotton twill material as its second color. However, the color of the material itself can be changed or the print can cover the entire surface area of the fabric, as a painting might.

The printers help the artist with his choices of color and materials. Both pigment and dyes are used. The print is proofed first with pigment on cotton, to check the accuracy of the "repeat" (the area in which the silk screen has to fall back onto itself in order to form a continuous pattern) and to start the artist thinking about the many possible colorways which his new design will allow. At this point, the artist is urged to try all the types of materials which are available to

them and which may work for their particular design. Unusual directions in material which have been taken include Jody Pinto's project piece, which used natural pigskin to simulate flesh for her "Hairshirt," 2 inch thick industrial felt for Chuck Fahlen's "Navaho Blanket Print," Alexa Kleinbard's use of vibrant red satin for her "House with Heart and Hands" print, standard bleached muslin for Marjorie Strider's "Painter's Pants," and Horikoshi silk for Jeff Way's traditional Japanese "No Performance Robe." Richard Francisco used ultra-suede in his print, using the print to reveal the fabric.

Although the variety of approaches to fabric has been the keynote of the Workshop, the time the artist has spent with the sewers during the second week of their residency has been equally important. Some artists have designed their own patterns, such as Bob Kushner's two capes (see photos 1 and 2). Others, such as the black pajamas by Karl Wirsum (see photo 3) are standard Simplicity patterns, used to emphasize the fabric itself, rather than invent a new form of garment. In all cases, the fabrics have related to the artist's current work and further development. At the same time, the artist must take into consideration the use of the silk screen and the fact that the print medium is fabric. The work created at the Workshop must function on two levels, just as Picasso's sculpture in which the bull and the bicycle handles are both co-existent. Workshop art presupposes to deal with this dichotomy. For example, Karl Wirsum's black pajamas can be worn for lounging or sleep but when placed with mask and gloves become sculpture representing a ghostly person as scary

as the night itself or as frightening as any of the work of the Chicago "Italy Who!" of which Karl Wirsum is an integral part (see photo 3). Bob Kushner's two capes, "Lilies" and "Hawaiian Punch" (see photos 1 and 2) are both pieces which form part of his nude fashion shows and simultaneously become wall paintings when shown on a gallery or museum wall. 8' x 4-1/2' wide in black and white, the "Lilies" are as blatant and unusual in their thrust towards the viewer as they are traditionally decorative. On the other hand, Kim McConnel's plaid could cover the world, a sofa or hang on the wall as art (see photo 4). Art is decoration, decoration is art as seen in his plaid. The plaid had already functioned as a tablecloth, sofa cover and fabric painting when he cut slits, inserted bamboo rods and hung it on the gallery wall.

At this timely moment, the Fabric Workshop has provided the facility for artists to explore decoration even further through the unconventional use of new materials in their work. Others have chosen to compete with industry and to enter the traditional design world and try their hand at it and still others to do minimal conceptual pieces. In its second year, the Fabric Workshop hopes to extend the use of its facilities to an even more diverse group of artists. Besides the artists already mentioned above, Scott Burton made an open window fabric, Margo Margolis silk scarfs and kimonos, Richard Tuttle a "shirt for Herbert Vogel," Italo Scanga, hot red pepper bandanas and Judith Shea, vests, shirts and graph paper pants—all in 1977/78. Who knows what can be printed in the Fabric Workshop in 1979. by Marion Boulton Stroud, Director

WORKS INCLUDED IN THE FABRIC WORKSHOP

JUDITH SHEA

4 Vests, Red, yellow and blue on natural heavy canvas, 24" x 34".

4 Vests, Red, yellow and blue combinations on grey lightweight felt, 24" x 24"

5 Shirts, Red, yellow and blue combinations on cotton lawn, 24" x 32".

Canvas Print, Secondary colors on natural canvas, L 120" x W 50".

KIM McCONNELL

Flat Printed Plaid with Bamboo, Red, yellow, blue and black on beige cotton, L 108" x W 54".

SCOTT BURTON

Window—Flat Fabric, Blue and yellow on white cotton, L 144" x W 54", 3 pieces.

ITALO SCANGA

Thorn Fabric, Red and black on natural cotton, L 144" x W 54".

Thorn Skirt and Vest, Red and black on natural cotton, L 50" x W 30".

MARGO MARGOLIS

Flat Fabric, Black, red, grey, blue on white cotton. Peach, black, grey, brown, aqua on natural cotton, L 360" x W 54", 2 pieces.

MARJORIE STRIDER

Palmer's Pants, Red, blue, green, black on white silk, L 42" x W 24".

RICHARD DAWORE

Scarf—From Kuba, Grey on natural silk, 38" x 38".

Scarf—Krit, Grey on natural silk, 38" x 38".

KARL WIRSUM

Flat Printed Fabric, Pink, green, orange on black polished cotton, L 180" x W 50".

1 Pair Black Pajamas, Pink, green, orange on black polished cotton, L 68" x W 27".

CYNTHIA CARLSON

Pajamas—Set of three, Printed dark brown, cream and blue silk, L 60" x W 24".

Flat Fabric—Set of three, Blue, green, brown, white silk, L 188" x W 40" each piece.

JEFF WAY

Suit with Matching Mask, Orange, pink and green on black polished cotton, L 68" x W 27".

ROBERT KUSHNER

Lilies, Flat Fabric, Black on white cotton, L 360" x W 54".

Lilies, Cape, Black on white cotton, L 180" x W 54".

Hawaiian Patch, Cape, Pink, green, blue, yellow, black on natural cotton, L 48" x W 72".

GARY BOWER

Handy, Flat Fabric, Pink and red on pink fabric, L 144" x W 24".

Camisole and Pants, Pink and red on natural silk, 45" x 27".