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Introduction

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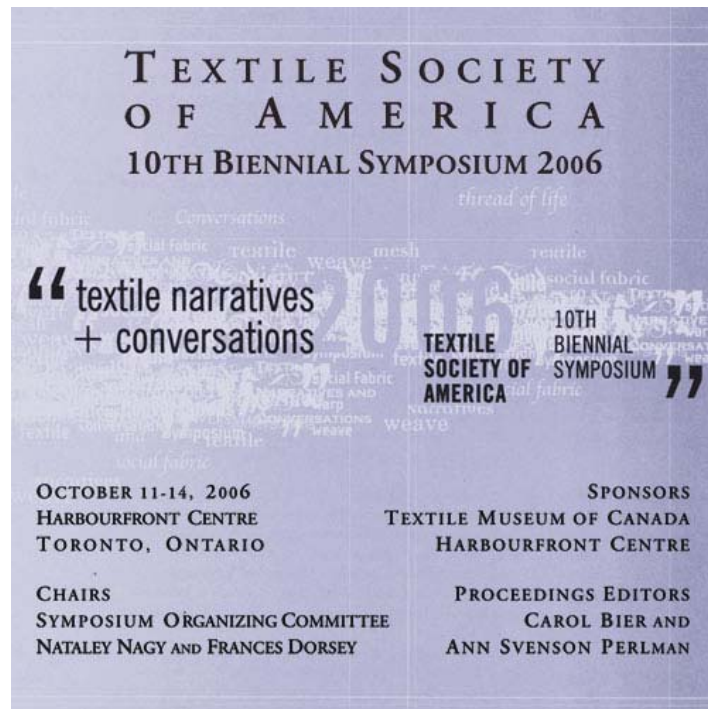


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INTRODUCTION

The Textile Society of America's 10th Biennial Symposium took place in Toronto, October 11-14, 2006. The Textile Museum of Canada and Harbourfront Centre co-sponsored the event. A springboard for discussions across disciplines, the symposium offered in-depth explorations of specific topics related to textiles. The Program, which serves as the Table of Contents, includes presentations about textiles and trade, education, ritual practices, cultural transitions, cultural and gender issues, and contemporary art practices, offering an enticing and savoury array of narratives and conversations about textiles. The organized sessions, panels, and plenary programs are designed to raise questions that encourage our talking to one another across disciplines, through our common interests and concerns.

This 10th Biennial Symposium inaugurates two important ventures for TSA: *Student/New Professional Scholarships* and a new short course, *Identifying Textiles: Techniques & Terminology*. Five scholarship awards were announced to TSA members who are currently either students or recent graduates from a textile-related field, or have been in their first job in the textile field for less than three years. Recipients each selected one panel or session from the Symposium, or an exhibition held in conjunction with the Symposium, and prepared a review for publication in the TSA Spring *Newsletter*. The short course, taught by Desiré Koslin and Sandra Sardjono, was offered at the Textile Museum of Canada for twenty participants, providing an educational opportunity for professional development. Topics included cloth construction, dyeing, weave structure, and surface design techniques. A similar course will be offered at future symposia, each designed to provide a foundation for further participation in textile studies and to introduce tools for identification and understanding of terminology.

Textile Narratives + Conversations was hosted by two of Canada's most respected cultural entities, Harbourfront Centre and the Textile Museum of Canada. Harbourfront Centre, on Toronto's waterfront, is an innovative nonprofit cultural organization which creates events and activities of excellence that enliven, educate and entertain a diverse public. Since its inception, Harbourfront Centre has been introducing Toronto audiences to artists and art forms that would not normally be seen in commercial venues, exploring new and bold frontiers in the arts and creative expression. Its mission is to nurture the growth of new cultural expression, stimulate Canadian and international interchange and provide a dynamic, accessible environment for the public to experience the marvels of the creative imagination.

The Textile Museum of Canada (TMC) is one of this country's most engaging arts and culture organizations. Founded in 1975, the TMC is the only museum in Canada dedicated to the collection, exhibition, and documentation of textiles from around the world. 2005 marked the 30th anniversary of the Textile Museum and during this time, the Museum has grown to become a significant cultural resource for the people of Ontario.

The collections of the Textile Museum of Canada represent more than 12,000 artifacts from over 200 countries and regions. The TMC explores the continuum of textile work from antiquity to the present through all its activities including exhibitions, collections, education programs, research and documentation. Key to its artistic programming are the lectures, roundtable discussions, workshops, music and dance performances, hands-on demonstrations, school programs and public tours. The TMC regularly exhibits photography, video, sculpture, sound and site-specific installations alongside traditional, ethnographic textiles — all within a 'single-media' organization. The exhibitions embrace multidisciplinary aspects of visual art, craft, design, technological innovations and the decorative arts. This approach engages a diverse community of artists, designers, educators, scholars and visual artists.

In 2005 significant TMC resources were channelled into the enormously successful website *Canadian Tapestry: The Fabric of Cultural Diversity*, launched in September with funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage through Canadian Culture Online. This state-of-the-art website allowed the TMC to document and digitally render 7,000 artifacts, providing easy access for the Museum's 270,000 annual online visitors www.canadiantapestry.ca.

We hope that the Symposium and its published Proceedings provide food for thought, and that the Proceedings offer a means of continued reflection as well as a chance to view many of the wonderful textiles presented in cultural contexts. We are pleased to have had the opportunity to welcome you to the Textile Museum of Canada, to Harbourfront Centre, and to Toronto.

Symposium Co-Chairs
Frances Dorsey and Nataley Nagy