INDULGE YOUR LOVE OF FABRIC

Textile art to delight the senses



'HOMAGE TO KLEE': This work shows Leonie Castelino's traditional Korean Pojagi stitching and method of connecting fragments of fabric together. The title refers to her inspiration for the piece, artist Paul Klee.

METAMORPHISIS by Leonie Castelino. makes her portfolio impressive. At the Irma Stern Museum, until June 21. VERONICA WILKINSON reviews.

A RARE combination of passion, technique and love of beauty is on show at an exhibition of textile art by Leonie Castelino titled *Metamorphosis* at the Irma Stern Museum.

This American artist demonstrates her skill with Japanese and Korean traditional techniques to create material poetry that pays homage to cultural sources drawn from time honoured traditions of craft and care.

The opportunity to view work of this calibre here is significant because of Castelino's generosity. She has introduced South Africans to her visually satisfying creations which exemplify both respect for tradition and pioneering innovation.

One of our most intimate lifelong relationships is with fabric and when that experience is extended to fine art, levels of sensual eroticism are subtly brought into play that stimulate and delight the senses.

The 17th century Japanese poet Matsuo Basho (1644-94), the poet wanderer, was close to the heart of nature and had insight that brought new meaning to the commonplace.

As one of Castelino's favourite authors, Basho's influence is unmistakable. Basho recorded that the hallmark of great art is "the poetic spirit". The spirit is supposed to "lead one to follow the ways of the universe and to become a friend with things of the seasons"

This capacity for finding a multilayered context to every situation is precisely what distinguishes Castelino's diaphanous dexterity and sophisticated aesthetic sensibility.

Although we only view her textile art in Cape Town before it travels to the Embassy of the Philippines in Pretoria later this month, her accomplishments include a fluency in surface art studied at the Isabel O'Neil Studio in New York where she earned journeyman accreditation, participation in the prestigious Cheongiu International Craft Biennale 2007 at the Korean Craft Museum in Seoul, Korea. She is also a veteran of numerous solo and group exhibitions.

Working with Oriental dyeing, folding, tying and seaming techniques she is equally competent in paint, pen-work, gold leaf, powders, egg shell and the finish of art objects which

Born in Bangalore, India, Castelino earned her Masters degree in Geography before moving from Mumbai to New York in 1976.

She worked in business until motherhood gave her the relative freedom to explore her passion for art.

Her link with Cape Town is the result of a visit made some two years ago when her husband was a visiting Professor at the University of the Western Cape.

They fell in love with the natural geographic splendour of the Cape and she was determined to return. If all visitors to our shores were as

keen to share their talent and skills with us we would have even more reason to anticipate a bright future.

Traditional Korean "Pojagi" or "po" are versatile square-hemmed cloths of differing size, design and colour used to wrap, store or carry things since time immemorial.

"Painstaking devotion to craft and process reveals the innate adventurous spirit of this courageous artist"

They add flair and style to various ceremonies and rituals but have their origin in ancient folk religion when it was believed that keeping something wrapped was tantamount to keeping good fortune.

As time passed the handicraft of connecting fragments of fabric employing a method similar to French seaming reached the highest levels of artistic accomplishment.

This was achieved with the use of the cloth ranging from functional to decorative and motifs and symbols creating their own codex for interpretation.

They are used within the royal confines of court circles and by ordinary folk, even sought after as collector's items among connoisseurs. Shibori sculptures created using

the Japanese technique display a symphony of cascading pleats, tucks, pouches, drapes and folds that stag-

ger the viewer with their voluptuous sensuality. This is the painstaking devotion to craft and process that reveals the innate adventurous spirit of this courageous artist.

She admits that planning an effect is more an embrace of serendipity than a scientific calculation.

Silk organdy twisted tie-dyeing resembles multitudes of miniature stalactites in one work while the surface of another entitled Midnight Frolic contrasts with its nap-removed "devoree" and discharge applications between the Monarch butterflies, native to New Jersey.

Tonal gradation takes on fresh subtlety in her "rozome" or painting with dye and wax compositions. European and Asian decorative

arts of the last two centuries have a profound influence on the time-consuming design and final effect of her work.

The intricate detail of these labour- intensive processes was explained during a walkabout.

into the way of securing and preparing cloth for applications of dye and wax and the methods employed to keep the fabric moist and taut for painting.

to present images on some of the work while others display elements such as Chinese ethnic Miao braiding and images of fragments of architectural and religious significance to add resonance to the work.

with chubby Japanese brushes, syringes or dipped, depending on the level of control necessary.

word for wood grain in Japanese) draped from an ornate horizontal cloth pole was once a four-metre length of chiffon.

It has now been transformed into an object arresting attention as a visual statement which would be equally at home around the shoulders of a diva attending an opera in New York

Indulge your appetite for luxury and see this show and its collector's pieces on loan from private collections while it is in Cape Town at the Irma Stern Museum in Cecil Road,

• The museum is open from Tuesday to Saturday 10am-5pm. Call 021 685 5686.

Evita Se Perron

Icons and Aikonas, with Pieter-Dirk Uys, will be staged at Evita se Perron in Darling on Saturday at 2pm. Uys remembers the past and celebrates the future. Evita for President will be staged at 7pm. *Evita Praat Kaktus* will show on Sunday at 2pm. Call 022 492 2851

Philharmonia double bill

The Philharmonia Choir of Cape Town will present a double bill on Saturday at 8pm in the City Hall. The concert will feature Requiem by Gabriel Fauré and Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. Richard Cock will conduct. Requiem will be performed with Mario Nell on organ and Erina Bezuidenhout on keyboard. Frank Mallows will play percussion for the Chichester Psalms. Soloists will be Antoinette Blyth, Patrick Tikolo and Evan Froude. To book, call Computicket on 083 915 8000.

Seether in concert

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CHESS

THE MUSICAL

Ton - Fri 8pm

Seether will perform at GrandWest on Sunday. Stealing Love Jones, 12th Av-

This provided invaluable insight

Silk-screening has been employed

Dyes are heat fixed and applied

One work entitled Mokume (the

Rosebank.



enue and A-King will be the supporting bands. To book, call Computicket on 083 915 8000.

Youth Day at Sciencentre

The Challenge by Choice Campaign has erected a climbing wall inside the MTN Sciencentre, Shop 407, Upper Level, Canal Walk. It will be open from 10am to 5pm on Monday

'Meaning and Matter'

The new Bell-Roberts Gallery in Fairweather House, 176 Sir Lowry Road, will feature Between Meaning and Matter as its first exhibition, from June 25 until August 8. The exhibition will deal with the relationship between meaning, matter and living in a seemingly dislocated and secularised world. Artists included are Kevin Brand, Lyndi Sales, Johann van der Schijff, Nigel Mullins, Tanya Poole, Lynette Bester and Amelia Smith. Call 021 422 1100.



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