



Photo by Karen Truax

## University Museum of Art Photography Gallery Karen Truax

Two arresting photographs stop a passer-by at the entrance to the current photography exhibit at the University Museum of Art.

In a photograph entitled "Center of Feeling," a woman gazes out, one hand on her breast, the other at her side. Behind her, a jungle of sepia-toned leaves threatens to engulf

her; she would fade into the background entirely except for the hyper-real coloring of her russet hair, fuschia lips and matching fingernails.

Next to "Center" is the whimsical "Whoosis," in which an ultramarine eye stares out of a hole torn in a giant green catalpa leaf and framed — by these ubiquitous fuschia fingernails.

The hand-colored silver photographs were done by Karen Truax between 1973 and 1978. Three

series of her works are on display in the museum's Photography Gallery through Oct. 29. Truax's work has appeared in both national and international publications, and she has been exhibited in numerous solo and two-person shows as well as major juried and invitational exhibits.

"The meaning of my photographs is beyond the model's own identity," says Truax about her first series "Colors of My AHand." My images are autobiographical accounts and reflective ideas from within me. They combine the intellectual powers of my mind with the emotional feelings from my heart. My photographs are visual conversations; ideas that are better expressed by images rather than words."

"My purpose in applying color to an object is not to change it — as coloring a rock pink or skin purple," Truax says. "But rather I am concerned with the emotional effect and the symbolic implications of color. I am also interested in the way that color can be used to unify the relationship between objects."

These "visual conversations" feature long-haired women lounging on intricate, garishly tinted bedspreads — suggestive, yet not lewd — sunlight coating patches of their bodies like an extension of the fabric. The background remains a tranquil sepia tone recalling early 20th century efforts at photo tinting, in sharp contrast to the vivid hand-coloration.

In her second series, the models blend into a repetitive background of flowered wallpaper. Truax' says her interest in the second series, "Paper Dolls and Wall Flowers," lies in the way that the female figure, placed in front of the pattern disrupt the space.

"Painted Women," Truax' most recent and continuing series, explores women as prostitutes. Backgrounds become tinted as well as the figures, who have

metamorphosed into blue and green skinned dames garbed in clothing by Frederick's of Hollywood and slinky antique lace. The insistent fuschia tones of the earlier series darken to crimson and scarlet.

Truax's work is sure to provoke different reactions among viewers. Some feminists might take exception to her portrayal of women and others may be taken back by the wickedly playful character that pervades her work. As one passer by commented, absorbed in a portrait of a yellow fox gripping a woman's nylon stocking between its teeth "It's nice and sleazy."

Interested persons will have a chance to meet the artist and perhaps voice their reactions to her work when Truax appears in Eugene October 13 and 14. She will present a lecture entitled "Color After the Fact" tomorrow in Room 107 Lawrence, at 7:30 p.m. On Saturday, she will conduct a workshop at a time and place still to be determined. A fee will be charged. For more information, contact Michael Catlin, Chair of the Photography at Oregon Gallery, at 343-0138. By Robin Smith

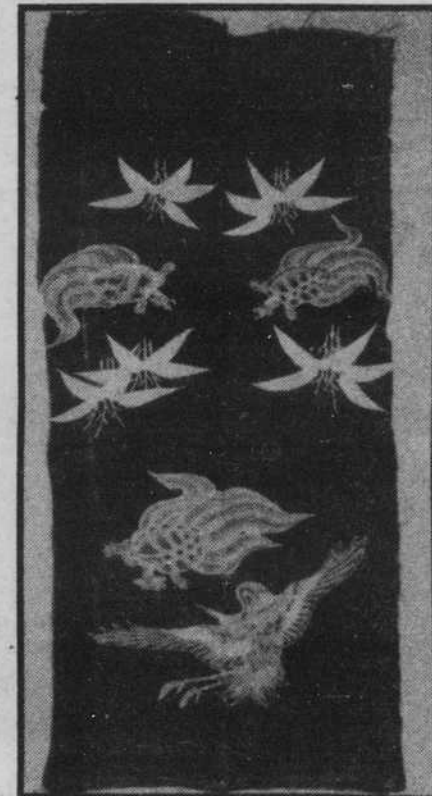


Photo courtesy Museum of Art

## University Museum of Art Indigo Blues Japanese country cottons

"Indigo Blues" is an exhibit of Japanese country cottons currently on display at the University Museum of Art.

The patterned fabrics, created in home and village workshops during the late 18th and 19th centuries, are skillfully decorated in stencil and/or painted designs using a rice-paste resist method and indigo blue dye.

Most of the hand-woven cotton, hemp and ramie fabrics are well-worn, having served as *futon* (heavy Japanese quilts), *furoshiki* (carrying cloths), *noren* (clothes which hang in the doorways of shops and homes, kimonos and jackets of the logger and fisherman of 19th century Japan).

The textiles, which are a part of the extensive Murray Warner Collection of Oriental art (most of which remains in storage) include a display of courtly arts and crafts from the Orient.

The peasant textiles provide an interesting contrast to the permanent exhibits of rich brocades, colored silks and embroidered garments of the Japanese aristocrats of the Edo period.

"This is the best collection of its kind in the country," says Barbara Zentner, museum registrar and co-arranger of the display. She adds that Gertrude Warner, who selected the textiles while traveling through Asia, "seemed to know textiles especially well."

The last exhibit of these textiles at the Museum was in 1937; they were donated by Warner in 1933. Zentner had to make some difficult decisions once the "indigo blues" theme was decided on. Many pieces had to be excluded for various reasons.

"Indigo, fortunately, is color-fast," she explains, "but we still had to exercise great care in washing the textiles."

Careful patches stitched into a late 18th century *furoshiki* blend in with the design and give the object a nostalgic quality — as anyone who wears jeans over six months old can easily appreciate.

Zentner thinks that popular interest in batik and stencil techniques, along with the fact that "common people made them for themselves," gives the exhibit special appeal to the public.

With stencil resist techniques, an all-over floral or symbolic pattern can be achieved. Thirty-foot long bolts of cloth are stencilled with paste which is then rinsed out in certain favored rivers and streams. They are then steamed to remove wrinkles and set the dye.

Where the paste is painted on in a freehand style, expressive white lines define bold peonies, paulownia blossoms, a crouching lion, phoenix birds and arabesque scrolls. Good luck symbols adorn the fisherman's pattern, and symbols of long life — the tortoise and crane — are painted in a smaller scale for a young girl's kimono.

The exhibit also contains examples of "needled" or embroidered jackets from the northern area of the island of Honshu. Because cotton won't grow in this climate, these jackets were cherished and kept in the family for generations. For that reason they are seldom seen in museum collections.

Those who have more than a passing interest in Japanese culture may be interested in the current exhibit of paintings by Japanese monks and scholars on display at the Portland Art Museum through the month of October.

The exhibit, entitled "Zenga and Nanga," contains selections from the Kurt and Millie Gitter collection. Four Sunday afternoon lectures by authorities in the field have been scheduled in connection with the exhibition and will be held Oct. 8, 15, and 22 at 2 p.m. in the Berg-Swann auditorium. The museum is located at 1219 S.W. Park Ave. By Robin Smith

Thursday, October 12, 1978

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