



Contact: Sandra Duncan
San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles
408-621-1101
pr@sjquiltmuseum.org

Mai Bui
Chair, Association for Viet Arts
650-868-6158
mai@vietarts.org

**MUSEUM OF QUILTS & TEXTILES PARTNERS WITH ASSOCIATION FOR VIET ARTS TO
PRESENT *AO DAI: A MODERN DESIGN COMING OF AGE***

SAN JOSE, Calif., March 24, 2006 – In the first exhibition of its kind in North America, the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, in partnership with the Association for Viet Arts is pleased to present the upcoming exhibition, *Ao Dai: A Modern Design Coming of Age*. The *ao dai* (pronounced 'ow yie' in the south, but 'ow zie' in the north) is a versatile garment of ancient Vietnamese origin known for its unique beauty and grace. Considered a cultural symbol of Viet Nam, the *ao dai* is worn by women and men as a fitted tunic-style gown over long, loose-fitting pants. The exhibition opens April 18, 2006 and features the largest survey of historical and contemporary *ao dai* pieces, many never before seen in Viet Nam or the United States, from international designers, collectors and a royal restorer. Fashion designer Chloe Dao, winner of Bravo TV's "Project Runway" will appear at the opening reception Sunday, April 23, 2:00-4:00pm.

Ao Dai: A Modern Design Coming of Age is co-curated by Caroline Kieu Linh Valverde, Assistant Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California at Davis, and Robin Treen, Chief Curator, San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles. The exhibition will be on view through July 9, 2006.

"The beauty of these garments is not simply a matter of aesthetics. *Ao Dai* represent the full breadth of the culture, history, and tradition of the Vietnamese people. They act as a living and evolving link, showing us the roots of Viet Nam and how it is transforming both at home and abroad," said Valverde.

"*Ao Dai: A Modern Design Coming of Age* will touch on the evolution of, and participation in, cultural expressions of identity by communities displaced by war and economic reconstruction, as well as the reinvention of culture by post-war generations," added Treen.

In recent years, the contemporary *ao dai* has made its mainstream debut on Hollywood celebrities as well as on the haute couture runways of Paris from top fashion designers including Christian Lacroix, Karl Lagerfeld, Ralph Lauren, Claude Montana and Richard Tyler. Though originating in the mid 18th century as the national dress for both genders, the modern *ao dai* form only emerged in the 1930s. The exhibition takes the viewer on a journey through the past and present and combines traditional

techniques with new global influences that embody both functional and artistic designs, representing the innovative spirit of Viet Nam's *ao dai* tradition. The exhibition features the work of: prominent Vietnamese *ao dai* designer, Minh Hanh; fashion designer Le Minh Khoa; Si Hoang, an artist and educator turned *ao dai* designer; Le Phuong Thao, a Vietnamese-American designer who combines traditional and modern techniques; Trinh Bach, a collector and restorer of royal *ao dai* from the 19th and 20th centuries, and collector Nam-Son Ngo-Viet.

In conjunction with the exhibition the museum will host several educational lectures and children's workshops looking at the culture, design and influence of this art form:

- April 26: *Making Modernity Appropriate and Tradition Fashionable: Debates about Dress, Gender, and Identity in Ho Chi Minh City in the 1990s* with Professor Ann Marie Leshkovich
- May 11: *Ao Dai: A Modern Design Coming of Age* with Professor Caroline Kieu Linh Valverde
- June 3: *Ao Dai: Fashioning Culture in Time, Place, and Identity* with Professor Susan B. Kaiser
- June 4: *The Business of Ao Dai* with designer Monica Tran

Three programs for children are also planned, presenting *ao dai* as an art-making opportunity and form of individual expression. For more information email info@sjquiltmuseum.org or info@vietarts.org.

Sponsors of the exhibition include Applied Materials, Piercey Toyota, Union Bank of California, Southwest Airlines, and San Jose City Council members Judy Chirco, Linda LeZotte, Chuck Reed and Forrest Williams.

Association for Viet Arts

Founded in 1991, the Association for Viet Arts (AVA) is a non-profit, multi-disciplinary arts organization serving San Jose and the Bay Area. AVA's goals are to provide opportunities for Vietnamese American artists to present their work, open dialogues for cultural understanding, bridge Vietnamese and American cultures, and the sustain the arts through arts education for youth in the community. For more information call 650-868-6158 or visit www.vietarts.org.

San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles

The San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles is the oldest textile art museum in the United States and in 2005 became one of the top 10 attractions in San Jose. Museum and Museum Store hours are: 10:00am-5:00pm Tuesday through Sunday; open until 8:00pm Thursdays; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is \$5 general; \$4 students and seniors; and free to museum members and children under 13. Admission is free on the first Thursday of each month. The San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles is located at 520 South First Street in downtown San Jose. For more information, call 408-971-0323 or visit www.sjqmusem.org.

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