



San Jose Museum of
**Quilts &
Textiles**

News Release

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TEXTILE EXHIBITS EXPLORE THEMES OF WAR AND PATRIOTISM

SAN JOSE, Calif., March 22, 2007 – This summer the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles will present three exhibits that explore themes of war, politics and patriotism. Ranging from textiles made in traditional folk traditions, clearly influenced by the war experiences of their makers, to historical flag imagery and thought-provoking political commentary by contemporary fiber artists, these exhibits demonstrate how textiles, both historical and contemporary, can powerfully express responses to world events. The exhibition runs July 17 – September 23, 2007 with an opening reception July 22 at 2:00pm.

“Together these exhibits demonstrate the powerful, emotionally expressive capacity of the textile medium. Whether in the context of a folk art tradition or in the work of contemporary fiber artists, textiles – perhaps because of their close association with home and hearth, warmth and comfort – have the power to express reactions to the upheavals of war with a unique poignancy,” said Curator Deborah Corsini.

In San Jose for its only west coast appearance, *Weavings of War: Fabrics of Memory* includes textile works depicting the horrors of war by mostly women artists and artisans from Central and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Africa. Works in the exhibit include an embroidered memory cloth from South Africa with chilling scenes of death and violence and a Hmong story cloth whose brilliant, happy colors belie its imagery of organized warfare. Textile artists throughout the world have responded to the terror of war by incorporating their experiences into works produced with traditional methods. This exhibit is an eloquent and powerful testimony to the impact of modern warfare in our world and the relevance and resilience of folk arts in contemporary life. *Weavings of War* is a traveling exhibit produced by City Lore, Inc., Michigan State University Museum, and the Vermont Folklife Center. A catalog is available for \$19.95.

Woven Witness: Afghan War Rugs takes a closer look at the influence of war on the evolution of traditional Afghan rug design from the Russian invasion through the current U.S.–Taliban fight. Whether individual rugs were woven as political statements, personal reflections, or as souvenirs for soldiers, only the weavers could reveal for certain. Regardless of intent, these examples are a powerful testament to the relevancy of the rug form, its expressive capacity, and the ability of a people to adapt to the ravages of war.

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In conjunction with this exhibit, the museum will also display the *Afghan Freedom Quilt*, a collaborative sewing and fund-raising project sponsored by the Foundation for Self-Reliance. The quilt is a collection of blocks made by war widows in Afghanistan and assembled in the San Francisco Bay Area. Pieces sewn for this quilt are symbolic interpretations of what human rights, empowerment, equality, peace, hardship, sisterhood and freedom meant to each individual contributor. The Foundation for Self-Reliance conducts life-skills training and economic empowerment programs for Afghan women immigrants.

Patriot Art reflects on the uses of patriotic imagery and allusion in contemporary fiber art and historical textiles. With true patriotic fervor, humor, irony and passion, these works marshal a range of textile techniques to serve the inalienable right of expression. From Navajo weaver Arlene Yazzle's stunning American flag tapestry to *The Patriot*, Mark Newport's red, white and blue knitted super-hero costume, these textiles provide a thought-provoking reminder that patriotic expression sometimes takes the form of dissent. Included with the *Patriot Art* exhibit is the *9/11 Memorial Tapestry*, conceived by Pasadena tapestry weaver, Monique Lehman, and sponsored by the American Tapestry Alliance. The *9/11 Memorial Tapestry* honors those whose lives were most deeply affected by the events of September 11, 2001. This large scale work is a compilation of 90 smaller tapestries made by artists from 15 countries and then unified into a single piece.

Vis Funesta (Deadly Force) is an installation by Bay Area sculptor Dixie Brown consisting of hand-knitted wool bombs descending toward a target. Called "charming, in a chilling sort of way" by the New York Times, *Vis Funesta* symbolically represents modern warfare in a material associated with the body, creating a powerful and ironic statement about sources of protection.

Now celebrating its 30th year, the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles is the oldest museum of its kind 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; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission is \$6.50 general; \$5 students and seniors; and free to museum members and children under 13. Admission is free on the first Friday 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.sjqiltmuseum.org.

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Editor's Note: For available images go to http://www.sjqiltmuseum.org/summer07_PRimages

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Major funding for the *Weavings of War* exhibit was provided by the Coby Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Paul and Eileen Growald.