

Riches from Rags: Japanese Country Textiles

with DeAnn Tyler
Monday, May 4, 7:00 p.m.

This lecture will bring new insights to every textile lover and quilt maker, many of whom may already have experienced the graphic appeal of African American work clothes quilts in the recent Gee's Bend exhibit. Like the Gee's Bend work, the Japanese tradition uses layer upon layer of patched fabric and creates a geometric simplicity reminiscent of Amish quilts and modern art. Also like the African American improvisational quilts, Japanese country textiles were created out of necessity.

Boro is a Japanese word meaning "tattered clothes" or "rags" and is commonly used to describe repaired work clothes and bedding lovingly used much longer than its normal expected life cycle. Like early North American patchwork quilts, Japanese boro fabrics reveal much about family living standards and the nature of the country's economy at the time. Most often boro was made from cotton, but other frequently used materials included asa or hemp, handmade paper, silk, and linden bark secured with large stitches of hemp thread.

Japanese farm women loomed cotton fabric to sell for taxes and to make work clothes and bedding for their family. This hand stitched work was called noragi. The noragi tradition, passed down each generation from mother to daughter, was considered a domestic responsibility for every Japanese farm woman.

For decades the Japanese regarded boro with great shame because these utilitarian textiles were strong evidence of rural Japan's impoverished past. In very recent years, however, scholars and collectors, mostly from outside Japan, have discovered the profound artistic value of boro. The study and collecting of these works of folk art have blossomed so dramatically that it has become surprisingly difficult to obtain pieces of boro.

Ms. Tyler, a textile artist herself, has studied the African American improvisational tradition for more than twenty years, working with renowned scholar and author Eli Leon. While serving as research advisor several years ago, DeAnn stumbled upon a fragment of Japanese boro in the textile archive of the DeYoung Museum and immediately saw cross cultural similarities to aspects of the African American improvisational tradition. A new research direction evolved from this experience.

DeAnn recently returned from a two week study trip to Kyoto which focused on Japanese country textiles. She will share a wealth of information, illustrated with pieces of boro and from her personal collection

Garcia River Restoration

with Craig Bell
Monday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.

Garcia River Watershed Coordinator Craig Bell will give a talk on Garcia River restoration efforts on Monday, May 18, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Bell has been involved with Garcia River restoration efforts since the 1980s.

The Garcia River is showing strong signs of recovery from past impacts, primarily from logging. Current success on the Garcia comes from a number of firsts for local rivers, including: formation of a stakeholder Watershed Advisory Group, development of a watershed restoration plan, and training and employment of local citizens in restoration.

It is the first coastal river to have the Clean Water Act TMDL applied for sediment pollution and for a pilot project of the Trout Unlimited North Coast Coho Project. In recent years steelhead have been making a steady recovery, coho salmon have been found in tributaries after long absence, chinook salmon are returning in small numbers, and even pink (humpback) salmon last seen in large numbers in the 1940s, are being counted.

The presentation will include a number of dramatic before and after photos of restoration projects. See how 2,000 year old, Chinese "bio-engineering" techniques are being used on the lower Garcia River to restore eroding banks and protect valuable Ag land.

Loggers, ranchers, environmentalists, fishermen and corporate interests all have had a role to play in these exciting developments that foreshadow what the future may be for our once healthy watersheds. It is one more important story that makes the Mendocino coast much more than a tourist destination.

Mr. Bell is the past President of the statewide Salmonid Restoration Federation, Chair of the Mendocino County Fish and Game Commission, appointed by the Director of Fish and Game to the DFG Coho Recovery Team, member of the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Salmon and Steelhead to the California Legislature, Mentor - AmeriCorps Program, consultant to the Conservation Fund and Pacific Watershed Associates, former logger, commercial salmon fisherman and a local steelhead fishing guide for over twenty years