

IONS: OFF THE PEG STYLE IN

9 July-24 October 2010, The Museum, 83 Bermondsey Street SE1 8JL, London, Tel: 020 7407 8664, www.ftmlondon.org

The Museum (FTM) in London has a presence on the exhibition scene. At that time London already was showing costume and textiles, as a hard sell to culturally-sated of brand identity or coherent help. The whole place never felt

finding its feet. Since Newham reigns, each exhibition has been they are learning how to cope with and finding budgets that allow, display and advertising.

Horrockses Fashions. It's a good particular exhibition. Horrockses summer, print and femininity – all a comeback in the past few ed by Christine Boyde, the show e but heavy on wonderful exhibits. Horrockses story is delivered in the (commended) book.

ty formed Horrockses exhibition Museum, in their hometown of ago. But it is great to have an nion brand on show in London. ame that conjures up images of English version of Parisian chic. the print. Horrockses worked with



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Hulton Archive, Getty Images

designers such as Graham Sutherland, Eduardo Paolozzi and Julian Trevelyan. But in-house designers also came up with quintessential Horrockses fabrics. Most notably Pat Albeck, who designed bold graphic and floral fabrics and Joyce Badrocke, with her more painterly, artistic textiles.

In-house fashion designers worked closely with the textile designers at Horrockses, resulting in classic designs that framed the fabulous prints. The main shapes on show – classic sundresses with full skirts, playsuits and dressing gowns – or 'housecoats' as they called them – are of simple but clever construction. The balance of silhouette and print is well judged, the latter never overwhelming the former. One perfect English dress after another.

The exhibition has been designed by art director Michael Howells. He has painted the whole space sky blue and suspended seagulls to provide a humorous seaside-feel. Sand and shells dotted around finish off the theme, which provides a coherent visual backdrop for the exhibits. This sort of design isn't something you'd get away with in the V&A. Their strict conservators would twitch at the impropriety of sand near delicate textiles. But the FTM can and should exploit their ability to push the boat out, in the display and exhibition of fashion and textiles. They need to be confident, both to counteract that slightly overbearing space and to capture the imagination those endless numbers of British-fashion-hungry tourists. It will be surprising if, a few seasons hence, we don't see cotton sundresses in Horrockses-esque prints, back on the catwalk. ••• Jane Audas

01 Two-piece summer dress, Housewife Magazine, 1950

02 Town and Casual dresses, 1957, photo Chaloner Woods

03 Cocktail dress and bolero, 1950s, photo Henry Clarke

THE SHAPE OF THINGS Touchstones Rochdale, 17 July-3 Oct 2010, www.rochdale.gov.uk, Flow Gallery, London, a group selling show of work by artists awarded The Shape of Things bursaries, 9 September -6 November 2010, T: +44 (0)20 7243 0782, www.flowgallery.co.uk, www.theshapeofthings.org.uk

Displayed in adjoining galleries at Touchstones Rochdale, these linked exhibitions of work by jeweller Tanvi Kant and sculptor Taslim Martin form part of 'The Shape of Things': a national three-year programme funded by Arts Council England that supports the making, exhibiting and contextualising of new craftwork. The programme places itself within broader debates on identity, the intercultural nature of British society, its connections with global culture and the place of contemporary craft as a communicator of cultural expression.

It's a complex - and potentially heated - dialogue, yet the exhibition itself is deceptively simple and much of the work beguiling. Paired together for this programme, Kant and Martin approach the project from their different perspectives - female/male; jeweller/sculptor; Indian Gujarati/Sub-Saharan African – yet it is the commonalities in their practice that are drawn out. Both express a concern for materials, the creative process and experimentation. In the short films which contextualise their work, Kant and Taslim speak of working intuitively, developing ideas in response to the materials they handle – whether that be chiffon or clay. Both express a respect for dexterity and a cultural heritage of craft practice. All of this is evident in their work.

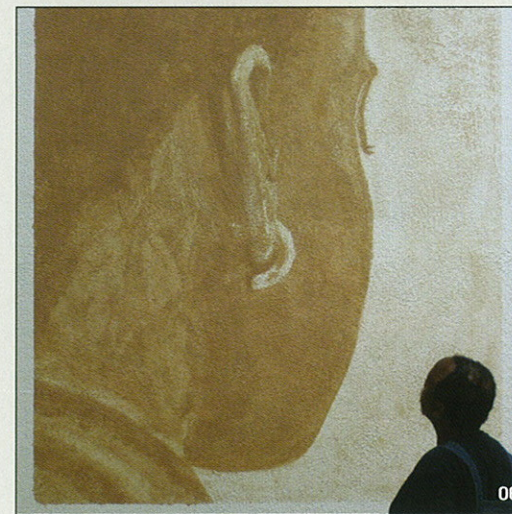
It is Kant's pieces that the visitor first encounters. Inspired initially by the unpicking of the hem on her



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mother's sari, Kant has chosen to work with dress off-cuts which she makes into neck-pieces. Given to Kant by home seamstresses and tailors, these remnants reference the sari blouses that have been cut from them: the outline of a sleeve; a section of tie-dye; an embroidered motif. Kant works with what is before her, using textile processes to shape and decorate each piece.

There is an inversion of worth in this work: the discarded being sought after; the marks of process becoming decorative forms. Softly textural, Kant's neck-pieces allude more to flower garlands than the gold jewellery which would customarily be worn. This play on value linked to materials is also present in Martin's work. Trained as a joiner, artist and designer, Martin is at ease exploring the sculptural potential of diverse materials. Clay, wax, terracotta, wood and cast iron all feature here. The concept of archetypes and hierarchy – cultural and material – is integral to this work: Martin using his knowledge of one, to examine and express the other. 'Ivory Pendant Mask' is one of three large-scale portraits made of clay applied directly to the gallery wall. Three male heads, sculpted in cast iron patinated with rust, depict individuals at pivotal stages of life.

'The Shape of Things' is a considered exhibition that demonstrates a sensitive and appropriate use of materials, process and cultural contexts. Ultimately, however, it is this appropriateness that raises questions – for whilst 'The Shape of Things' seeks to challenge our perceptions of what craft is, what we see is that which we expected. ••• June Hill

04 Taslim Martin Raimi, red clay drawing in progress 2010

05 Tanvi Kant

06 Taslim Martin