

Art Textiles

Marian Clayden

11 March – 17 April 2016

[#arttextiles](http://ftmlondon.org/exhibitions)

- **Art Textiles highlights why textiles are the most ubiquitous, diverse and consistently creative art form on the planet.**
- **From luxurious furnishings to wearable art, Marian Clayden's unique colour and resist dyeing techniques star in the first-ever London exhibition of her work.**
- **Famous for her psychedelic clothing and designs for the musical Hair (1968), worn by Elaine Paige and Marsha Hunt among others, Clayden transformed tie-dye techniques into a radical statement of 1960s attitude and style.**
- **Likened to Mariano Fortuny and Sonia Delaunay, Clayden's belief that art should be wearable, led her to create her first atelier fashion range in 1981, and over the next 20 years to dress Hollywood stars including Cher, Whitney Houston and Meryl Streep.**
- **Curated by Mary Schoeser, the globally respected textile historian, Art Textiles gives a behind-the-scenes look at textile dyeing – including using a kitchen toaster – and why Clayden's work deserves recognition as a bold and experimental art form.**
- **The exhibition opens on 11 March 2016 and is accompanied by the Festival of Textiles.** (opens 11 March 2016)

An exhibition of luxurious art textiles in silk, velvet, cotton and felted wool by internationally renowned textile artist Marian Clayden (1937–2015). The retrospective celebrates the influence of a British-born artist, who transformed psychedelic tie-dyed fabrics into a million-dollar fashion business in the United States.

Clayden's career took her from the world of textile art, through dyeing fabrics for nine touring productions of the musical Hair, to high fashion – with the launch of an haute couture line in the 1980s and having her own in-store boutiques in New York City's Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Fifth Avenue in the 1990s.

Commenting on her move from art to fashion, Marian Clayden said:

"The real thrill of clothing design was making a successful combination of all the elements – body, style, fabric, drape, dyeing, and how it moves when worn – so as to create a garment that makes the wearer feel she is enclosed in something as valuable to her as a work of art."

This exhibition 'Art Textiles: Marian Clayden' illustrates Clayden's development as an artist, celebrating her experiments in dyeing fabrics and fashion design. Included are her eye-popping silk wall hangings, oozing with 1970s appeal, plus a small selection of her surprising hand-made structural works using donkey straps and ropes. The selection also includes over thirty garments from her 1981–2004 fashion lines, themselves pieces of art made to be at their best in motion. Mary Schoeser, exhibition curator, said:

“The exhibition illustrates Marian Clayden’s ever changing mediums and style, celebrating her ability to, as she put it, ‘dance’ with her techniques. It is evident how she amalgamated her knowledge of dance and musical theatre into her creation of fashion. Having lived in four countries and travelled around the world, her trail-blazing textiles embody a global sensibility.”

Celia Joicey, Head of Fashion and Textile Museum, said:

“Marian Clayden’s work remains as exciting and fresh today as it did in the 1960s. These textiles are an inspiration to everyone who loves colour, showing how simple resist dyeing methods can create complex, sumptuous effects. We hope the exhibition will be a revelation to artists and policy-makers alike, highlighting textiles as a bold, experimental medium for art, drama and self-expression.”

Biography

Born in Preston in 1937, Marian Clayden (née Bolton) studied Education at Kesteven College in Lincolnshire and Art at Nottingham School of Art. Exhibiting paintings at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery on several occasions in the 1950s, she taught in primary schools in Nottingham and Chorley from 1957–62, when she emigrated to Australia. There she began to experiment with dyeing. When she and her family moved to California in 1967, she established her own studio in Los Gatos. It was there that she met the set and costume designer Nancy Potts, and was invited to work on the musical *Hair*. She designed every textile used in the nine touring productions worldwide, and their visual impact was key to the production’s visual identity.

Renowned by the 1970s, Clayden was a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Award in 1971, which enabled her to create a professional dyeing workshop and she soon became a fixture of the international textile scene. Clayden exhibited textiles in landmark exhibitions across the world in Australia, Japan, India, North America, South America and Europe.

Unusually for the times, she moved from textile art to hand-made limited edition garments, in 1981 establishing Clayden Inc. Likened to Mariano Fortuny, she created timeless wearable art. Using luxurious velvets and other cloths masterfully air-brushed, discharged and dyed, her increasingly successful collections from 1981 until 2005 resulted in national acclaim and exposure on red-carpet events, with her designs worn by Oprah Winfrey and many Hollywood stars including Whitney Houston and Catherine Zeta Jones.

Marian Clayden retired in California in 2005, where she lived with her husband and business partner Roger Clayden, until her death in 2015.

Technique

From fashion and dramatic accessories to large three-dimensional and sculptural pieces, Clayden experimented with different shapes and mediums. She created huge abstract silk artworks using tie-dye, resist and other dyeing techniques. Clayden dyed fibres, twisting them together to create lengths of rope to make sculptural works. She also began to experiment with ‘found’ items and processes, such as printing with a sandwich toaster, using ‘G’ clamps from the hardware store to hold dye-resisting shapes in place, and manipulating donkey straps -- discovered when she lived in Iran in the mid-1970s -- into sculptural forms. The success of her fabrics with fashion and stage designers such as Bob Mackie and Cecil Beaton, led Clayden to create her own fashion line in 1981. Over the next 20 years her masterful control of colour moved from

the raucous 1970s to the extremely subtle 1990s. Although her line used bohemian techniques, colours and patterns, its signature was elegance and polish. In the 1990s, Clayden introduced luxurious garments made of jacquard-woven cut velvets, designed and hand-dyed to create stunning patterns.

Legacy

Marian Clayden's work is in the collections of major museums worldwide such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, De Young in San Francisco, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. In 2012 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Art from Nottingham Trent University, where her work was shown in an exhibition that later toured to the Harris Museum Preston (27 September–29 November 2014).

Festival of Textiles 2016

The Art Textiles exhibition is accompanied by three displays that bring together some of the best and brightest textile developers, artists and designers now working in the UK. *Gesture in Cloth* is an installation of works curated by Linda Brassington and selected to represent a breadth of approach taken by seven textile professionals including Mary Restieaux RDI. *Chemistry for Couture* features the practice-based research of metal horticulturalist Jo Horton at De Montfort University. *Textiles Surface and Structure* is a display of work, designed and made on the BA Hons Textiles course at UCA Farnham.

Notes to editors

1. 'ART TEXTILES Marian Clayden' is organised by the Fashion and Textile Museum and runs from 11 March–17 April 2016
2. The Fashion and Textile Museum is at 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF. For further information about FTM and its activities visit www.ftmlondon.org
3. Museum opening times: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm; Sunday, 11am–5pm; Late night Thursday until 8pm; Last admission 45 minutes before closure. Ticket prices: £9 adults, £7 concessions, £6 students and free entry for under 12s (includes 10% donation).
4. Booking information: online or call 0844 248 5076
5. The Fashion and Textile Museum is the only museum in the UK solely dedicated to showcasing developments in contemporary fashion, as well as providing inspiration, support and training for those working in the industry. Founded by iconic British designer Zandra Rhodes, the museum is part of Newham College London – one of Europe's largest further education colleges.
6. The Festival of Textiles displays, talks and events programme accompanies the exhibition
7. The exhibition is curated for the Fashion and Textile Museum by Mary Schoeser the globally respected historian and author of *Textiles: A World History* (Thames and Hudson 2012). Schoeser brings a wealth of experience in archives, design and exhibitions. She is internationally recognised as one of the leading scholars in the field of wallpaper, design and textile history and is often consulted for her expertise. Her passion and enthusiasm for these areas spans across both the academic and practitioner fields, seeking to inspire future designers, collectors and historians.
8. More information about Marian Clayden is available at www.marianclayden.com

For further press information and images please contact:

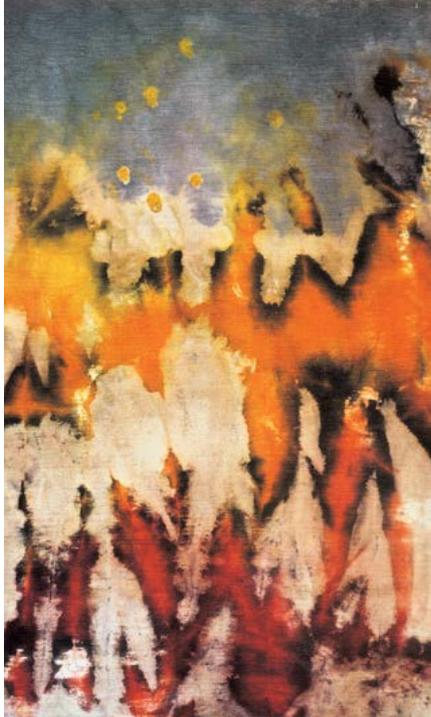
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Press images

A selection of press images is illustrated below.



l to r: 1970 Dip Dye: Raw Cotton: folded, tie-dyed, dip-dyed, discharged. 2.1m high. Clayden Collection no.1.
1977 Disintegrating Circle Square: Black silk: clamp-resist discharged, re-clamped and dyed. Clayden Collection no.10.



l to r: Marian and Roger Clayden in the 1970s wearing examples of her work.
1971 Joyful Noise, Silk yardage: folded, multistage stitch-resist-dyed, discharged. This dates from the period when Clayden was making textiles for the musical Hair. Clayden Collection no.2.