

# The Valley SUN



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## Clothing artisans demonstrate wares at fashion show





# Show weaves together history, art and fiber

By ANNE H. PURDY

Valley Sun staff

A fashion show in the Valley?

Isn't Valley fashion the latest Iditarod T-shirt with a pair of new jeans and perhaps a pair of red leather running shoes?

Not according to the Valley Fiber Arts Guild. Last Saturday local artisans in the fabric arts presented their first spring "Fabulous Fibers" fashion show at Pioneer Square in Palmer.

According to Bea Adler, the mistress of ceremonies and Laura Schultz, president of the Fiber Arts Guild, the show was presented to "raise awareness in the community about fiber arts."

Adler presented a collection of clothing running from hand-knit winter socks, an angora beret and a rabbit crocheted of angora to fabulous custom designed raw silk kimonos, jackets and scarves tie-dyed in an ancient Japanese method and/or the batik resist dye process.

The show rapidly dispelled any notions that Valley fashion is limited to the blue jean variety.

With more than 45 pieces presented in just over an hour, more than 75 people were entertained (and educated) with the variety of clothing worn by models during the well-paced presentation.

The show began with a bit of history with Bernice Johnson's 1965 championship classic two-piece beige suit trimmed with knitted qiviut, now in a collection housed by the Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry.

According to Johnson, the suit was made sometime in the early 1960s as she remembers wearing it in 1965 before entering it in the Palmer and Tanana Valley fairs that year.

The wool for the suit came from Harold Dinkel's sheep, raised on his Wasilla farm. She cleaned the wool, carding, spinning and dyeing

it before weaving the material and making the suit.

She wove as a hobby during the early 60s. "I do just about anything for a hobby. . . I had the most fun spinning the wool, it was a big task to do."

The two-piece suit also features knit qiviut trim on cuffs and bottom trim on the top piece.

The musk ox wool was given to Johnson by Mrs. Van Hansen, the first home demonstration leader at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Van Hansen had gathered the wool from the fence line at the new Musk Ox experimental farm and sent a big ball to Johnson to work with. She spun and knitted the wool, knitting tight bands that could be brushed to give a fur-like appearance to the suit's trim.

The show rapidly moved through a variety of fabric art disciplines, including the batik-dyed velvet Japanese-styled jackets, silk kimonos, hand-woven blouses, jackets, scarves, caps and a wide range of accessories, along with hand-made Chinese silk clothing.

According to Schultz, many of the guild's members own their own animals, shearing and harvesting the fibers from sheep, llamas, rabbits, goats and even the family's dog to use in their projects.

Saturday's show featured articles of clothing by over 15 guild members.

Terri Swan of Palmer, presented an unusual collection of clothing and accessories woven from the fibers collected from her angora rabbits and family dogs.

As an example of using dog hair, Swan presented a crocheted tam and knitted scarf set where she had used Samoyed, collie and St. Bernard hair in their natural tones of white, orange and gray in a striped pattern.

Perhaps the most distinctive pieces in the show were the raw silk kimonos and other pieces by Bea Adler, Linda Rapp and Marilyn Chevalier. Each of these three artisans have recently joined the guild, as a way of being with others who feel that "clothing is an extension of the inner person," as Adler said.

Linda Rapp has been working with the batik wax resist dye process for clothing and wall hangings as well as the Japanese shibori tie-dyeing process for five years now. She first became interested in the surface manipulation of fabrics created by these processes when she took a course from Celia



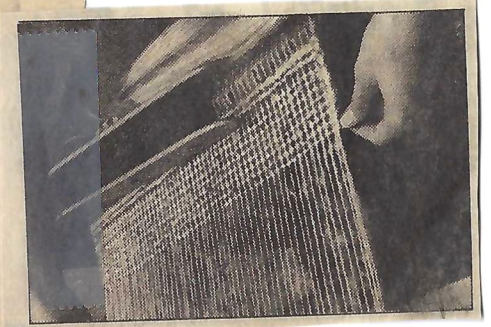


(Top) Bea Adler's whimsical moose design on a traditional Japanese houri brings vitality to this batik design on raw silk.

(Near left) This coat of many colors was a project using scraps of yarns and fibers collected from various Guild members.

(Center left) Linda Rapp's padded and quilted maroon velvet jacket has been batik-dyed with an original design of sprightly spring blossoms.

(Far left) A loom is where many of the show's creations started.



Anderson at Mat-Su College.

Adler's pieces, which she had borrowed from their owners, ran the gamut from a whimsical houri (short jacket) that featured a big-nosed moose to a more traditional kimono with a purely Alaskan fireweed motif.

Many of the artisans in the show work solely out of

their homes, working on commission, although recently a shop opened in Palmer—The ARC—that carries several local artisans' pieces.

The guild organized in 1984, although many artisans kept in contact with each other on an informal basis for several years prior to the guild's organizing.

The guild has over 70 members, with about 35 active, according to Schultz. Some of those 70 non-active members are Outside, including the Yukon Territory, Schultz added.

The guild holds two or three workshops a year, an annual "Fiber Fest," held in late November, and sponsors the fiber arts exhibit at the Alaska State Fair in

Palmer.

The latest workshop series the guild is sponsoring will be held in May when Canadian weaver Bryn Pinchin will be at Mat-Su College May 10-14 presenting a rug-weaving and lace weaving course. A reception will be held Wednesday, May 11, 7 p.m. at the college for the public.