



Textile Museum of Canada

**30 YEARS** Celebrating Cloth, Culture and Art

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **YOU WENFENG: FISH SKIN CLOTHING** **NEW EXHIBITION AT THE TEXTILE MUSEUM OF CANADA**

April 18 to September 28, 2007

Curated by Natalia Nekrassova

Opening reception: May 2, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, remarks at 6:45 pm

TORONTO April, 2006 – Around the world people create textiles and clothing from elements in their environment. Groups that raise sheep use wool and leather, in tropical regions cultures use the inner bark of certain trees and in small villages on the Amur River in northeast China, the Hezhe people use fish skin to create garments.

The traditional culture of the Hezhe, a Manchu-Tungus native group, was based for centuries on fishing. The people of the area made and wore fish skin clothing for its durability, lightness and water resistance. The fishing communities along the Amur River turned to farming in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the manufacturing of fish skin clothing began to fade. **You Wenfeng is one of the only women who can still make fish skin clothing the way her ancestors did.** She learned this centuries-old skill from her grandmother and has made 15 outfits, all of them commissioned by museums in China and around the world. The boy's garments featured in this exhibition were commissioned by the TMC.

*You Wenfeng: Fish Skin Clothing*, is annotated with photographs and a DVD of this time consuming and labour-intensive process. The DVD follows another fish skin maker as she treats the skin by flaying, drying, softening with corn powder and then mashing with wooden jaws. The artist then sews a garment by hand and decorates it with traditional appliquéd shapes made from fish skins of another colour and scale pattern.

Information about *You Wenfeng* was provided by photographer Ruth Lor Malloy. Both she and curator Natalia Nekrassova are available for interviews. **Join Ruth Lor Malloy for an illustrated talk about fish skin clothing from northeast China, *Pretty in Salmon*, on Tuesday May 22 at 6:30 pm.**

- 30 -

For additional information, interviews or visuals:

Call Beth Sharpe at 416- 599-5321, x 2239 or email [bsharpe@textilemuseum.ca](mailto:bsharpe@textilemuseum.ca).

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Textile Museum of Canada  
55 Centre Avenue (Dundas & University)  
Toronto, ON M5G 2H5  
T (416) 599-5321 F (416) 599-2911  
[www.textilemuseum.ca](http://www.textilemuseum.ca)  
Transit: St. Patrick Station



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30 YEARS  
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#### Museum Hours

Open 7 days a week 11 am – 5 pm  
Wednesdays 11 am – 8 pm

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