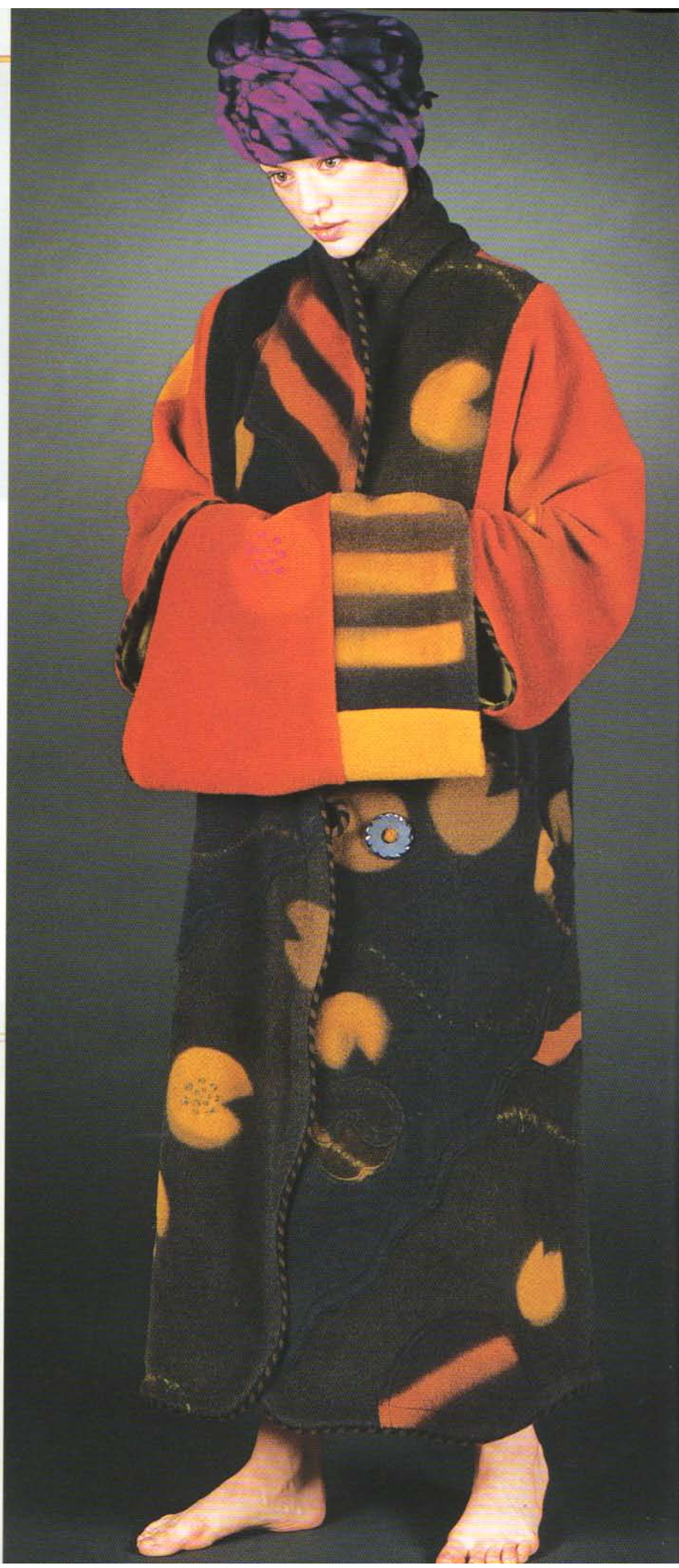




JEAN
WILLIAMS
CACICEDO
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"CLOTH HAS THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM IDEAS AND THE POWER TO SEDUCE THE EYE AND HAND. I LOVE MY MATERIALS AND MY PROCESS...AS TEDIOUS AS IT MAY BE AT TIMES. I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT TEXTILES, AND I LOVE THE FACT THAT YOU CAN WEAR A COAT, BUT YOU CAN'T WEAR A PAINTING."



When Jean Williams Cacicedo

was a child, she carefully arranged dollhouse furniture in shoe boxes, building small architectural kingdoms from her imagination. At an early age, she was interested in the structure of things, and that interest has compelled her to stretch the boundaries of the definitions of both art and craft.

During 2000, Cacicedo was honored with a 30-year retrospective of her work, exhibited at the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco, California. Curated by Carole Austin, the show documented the wide range of Cacicedo's artistic inquisitiveness: from her early knitted and crocheted work created in the 1970s, when wearable art emerged as an alternative to mainstream art, to her more recent exploration of surface design through slashing and shibori.

Cacicedo studied sculpture and painting at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where she made freestanding sculptures that eventually evolved into work that she thought of as sculptures for the body. Crochet and knitting combined with materials such as leather, wool, and fur composed her first garments, which now seem to embody the spirit of the early days of art-to-wear. During this period, she met Julie Schafler Dale, founder and owner of Julie's Artisans Gallery in New York, who encouraged her and sold her work. It was through this gallery that she found her first market and audience, and she still shows at the gallery today.

By the 1980s, she was making pieced and dyed coats and vests from shrunken (fulled) woven wool, with remnants of crochet and knitting. From studying molas, she adopted reverse appliqué as a means of integrating design elements and garment construction. The visual depth that she is able to achieve with this technique has become her trademark, and she continues to be challenged by this method of piecing her vibrant, dyed wools.



Opposite page, top left:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *Lotus*, 2000; woven wool and mohair; fulled, clamp resist dyed, knit appliqué, stitched, shibori.

Photo: Barry Shapiro

Opposite page, bottom left:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *Aurora Coat*, 2000; wool, clamp resist dyed, fulled, woven.

Photo: Barry Shapiro

Courtesy of Julie Artisan's Gallery; New York

Opposite page, right:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *Lotus*, 2000; woven wool and mohair; fulled, clamp resist dyed, knit appliqué, stitched, shibori.

Photo: Barry Shapiro. Model: Anna Schonberg

Above:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *Lotus (detail)*, 2000; woven wool and mohair; fulled, clamp resist dyed, knit appliqué, stitched, shibori.

Photo: Barry Shapiro



Every piece begins with a drawing on paper in which Cacicedo works out the formal aspects of the largely abstract designs that become her coats and other garments. The final design is then drawn to scale and a paper pattern made. From muslin, she cuts the pieces of the pattern and sews them together to check the fit of the garment. "This pattern is my road map," she explains. "I can piece all I want, and know the final outcome of the construction."

She hand-dyes pieces of her wool that are large enough to create each part of the pattern. Then she refers back to the drawing and begins sewing the parts of her "puzzle" together. The final design emerges as she works. She



Above, top:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *Coat of Arms*, 1994; woven wool; fulled, dyed, pieced, stitched, appliquéd; knit bands.

Photo: Barry Shapiro. Collection of Bonnie Scott. Courtesy of Santa Fe Weaving Gallery; Santa Fe, New Mexico

Above:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *About Fate*, 1989; woven wool; fulled, pieced, dyed, reverse appliquéd.

Photo: Barry Shapiro

Right:

Jean Williams Cacicedo, *About Fate* (detail), 1989; woven wool; fulled, pieced, dyed, reverse appliquéd.

Photo: Barry Shapiro



uses a flat seam construction which cuts down on bulk and allows her to sew seams of any shape she needs to fulfill her design. Because she uses felted wool that doesn't ravel, she can trim close to the stitching on each seam to produce a "clean separation of shapes and colors."

Aside from her technique, which serves her well, Cacicedo's lifework as an artist is deeply spiritual and biographical:

The work I create comes from my desire to make what I experience both visual and tactile. Process (dyeing, felting and piecing of cloth) and content (ideas, themes that I want to express) form a base to my work, communicating ideas through the visceral language of color and texture. Inspired by personal myths and symbolic imagery, my work tells stories about journeys, both physical and spiritual. Cloth is the basic element to the work.

Her powerful work, so individual and personal, could not have been accomplished without years of contemplation and the ability to make the difficult link between abstract concepts and their material manifestation. She notes influences in her work, but her work is so intrinsically unique that they hardly seem worth mentioning.

The soft, evocative piece titled *Lotus Coat* (2000), made for her retrospective exhibition, is her interpretation of rebirth and her reflection on the turn of the century. Beneath the floating water lilies on the coat's surface seems to lie an infinite depth—perhaps a reflection of the artist's knowledge that there is always more to come.

Right:

**Jean Williams Cacicedo, *Rain Coat*, 1998;
knit wool; fulled, dyed, slashed, punched.**

Photo: Barry Shapiro. Collection of artist. Model: Anna Schonberg

