



**PRESS RELEASE  
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## **Molas in Transition: The Textile Art of Kuna Women**

**October 3, to January 17, 2010**

St-Lambert, September 9, 2009. *Molas* are the layered reverse appliqué and embroidered blouse fronts and backs made and worn by Kuna women of Panama. In the twenty-first century the textile art of Kuna women is in transition between the esteemed aesthetics of *tradition* and the pressure to create contemporary *topical* products for the marketplace. *Molas* are collected, reused, interpreted, traded and dissected by both scholars and the marketplace. The Kuna view *Molas* as their cultural wealth and intellectual property. *Molas* tell their stories through the materials used to make them, the quality of their designs, the popular subject matter selected for production and by the 'voices' of the makers. Mediated as 'income generation' through cooperatives, individual Kuna entrepreneurs and outsiders, *Molas* are sold to tourists on cruise lines, peddled on the streets of Panama City by 'middlemen', and sold by Kuna men and women in designated tourist markets of Panama city.

While commerce drives the cash economy of *Mola* making, *Molas* co-exist as an integral part of a women's identity, inclusion in the community and value as a member of a family 'at home' in the Kuna Yala Archipelago. In the midst of this complex dichotomy are exquisite examples of geometric and abstract interpretations of ancient cosmology along side representations of the latest political struggle in Panama or a slice of popular culture and the latest fashion trends.

Textile scholar, artist and filmmaker Kathryn Lipke Vigesaa and folklorist Dr. Skye Morrison made a collaborative field trip to Panama in June of 2009 to document a moment in the time of '*Molas in Transition*'. This exhibition project received the *Aid to Research Related Events, Exhibitions and Dissemination Activities Program* from Concordia University. John McKay, videographer received the *Concordia University Part-time Faculty Asso* grant for the video presented in the exhibition. The Curators wish to express their gratitude to the M. Max Allen for is loan.

The Museum of Costume and Textile of Québec is sponsored by the ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec and from Canadian Heritage. The museum is located in St-Lambert, 349, Riverside Street. You can access the Museum by highway 132, exit 6 or by public transportation, bus 6, 13 or 15 leaving from the Longueuil subway station. The MCTQ is open to the public from Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. Free parking on Riverside St. at Seaway Park. Admission is \$4. The MCTQ offers (for groups) guided tours and hands-on workshops for young visitors, by reservation. Workshops are also held for families on weekends.

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**For more information:**

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