

ARTIST PROFILE

Radiating Light: The Auspicious Path of Kiranada Sterling Benjamin by Leanne Jewett

When Betsy Sterling Benjamin was ordained as a priest into the Triratna Buddhist Order in 2009, she became Kiranada, meaning *one who radiates the light of the moon*. Anyone who is familiar with her art is struck by the aptness of the name. Her work, meticulously painted in layers on silk, using Rozome, a Japanese form of wax-resist, is notable for its luminosity. Her gentle gradations of color and intensity guide the eye through the work and create a sense of light emanating from the fabric.

In 1981, having earned a degree at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and a graduate degree in art from Arizona State University, Benjamin traveled to Japan to further her artistic studies. She stayed there 18 years. When asked what kept her in Japan she replies: "I found that there was much to learn, much, much to learn . . . concerning art and its processes, as well as from that culture."

And learn she did, becoming a master of Japanese wax-resist techniques and, in 1996, introducing Rozome to the western art world in comprehensive detail in her book, *The World of Rozome: Wax Resist Textiles of Japan*.

As she explored the Japanese batik processes, she also found she had a natural connection to the culture and the Buddhist philosophy, one that had its roots in her New England childhood. "It was auspicious that I found a path that fit what had been working toward, and living, that brings me so much joy and contentment."

Benjamin's work is inspired by her sketches of nature and by her readings and meditations, the touching of an ineffable source. Her mastery of technique wedded to her appreciation of natural beauty and her spiritual explorations come together most dramatically

in her *kesa* project, seven cloths of healing and unity, one for each continent, prepared for the millennium and exhibited globally. She describes her work as a meditation and a centering in this diverse world.

Born outside of Boston, Benjamin keeps a seasonal studio in the forests of New Hampshire, on land that was once her family's vacation get-away. A truly global citizen, however, she travels much of every year, setting up studios in warm climates in the winter months where, in semi-isolation, she spends long, undisturbed hours on her art. She also takes an annual meditation retreat away from both her work and the distractions of the outside world. She has lived, worked, and forged connections in Japan, Bali, Mexico, Costa Rica, Iceland, and Spain, as well as across all of the United States. "I carry all of those places with me," she says, which is evident in the work that evolves from her sketches and meditations in vastly different regions of the world.

Sharing skills and inspiration as they have been shared with her is very important to Benjamin. In addition to her other pursuits, she is a teacher. Each fall she teaches Rozome and Shibori at Mass Art, her alma mater, in Boston. She also conducts workshops every year across the United States and in other countries. Last year, in response to her students' requests, she produced the first of a series of DVD's on wax-resist techniques. The DVD on Ro-Kata, a Batik method using wax stencils, was released in November and is available on her website. Her book, *The World of Rozome: Wax Resist Textiles of Japan*, now on CD, is also available on the site.

Benjamin's knowledge and skills are always in demand and she has a very full art schedule including lectures, workshops, and exhibitions. This year besides preparing some large pieces for an October 2012 solo exhibition at the Alliance for Visual Arts in Lebanon, NH, she will be teaching workshops in Mexico, Washington State, Santa Fe, and in Massachusetts.

For more information, visit Kiranada's website at: www.betsysterlingbenjamin.com



Blossom Detail of Blue Lotus of Lumbini
Rozome wax-resist with acid dyes of silk,
2007 42" x 30"



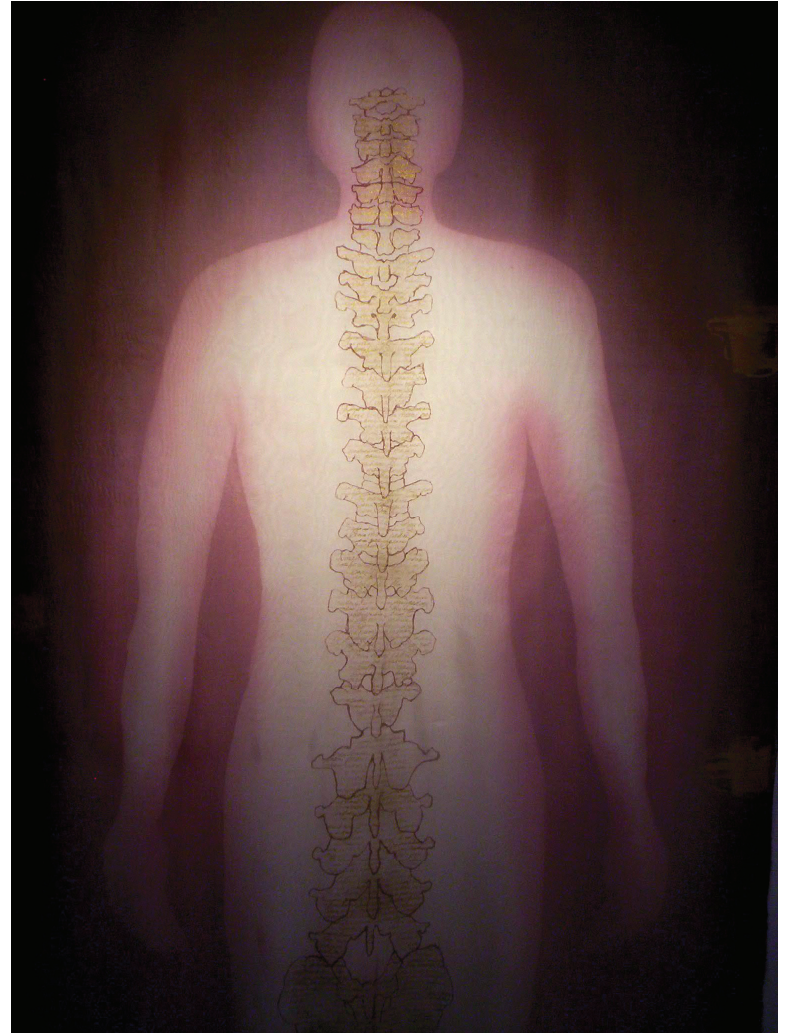
Transcendence Rozome wax-resist with acid dyes on silk;
mounted scroll, 2010 Detail 40" x 19"

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ABOVE *The Path* Rozome wax-resist, acid dyes on layered silk photo credit: Jen Bouchard, 2011 68" x 30"

RIGHT *The Column* Rozome wax resist *kinsai* gold stenciling, acid dyes on layered silk, 2010 74"x34"



“My work is a meditation and a centering in this diverse world. It is my hope that it might bring more awareness, kindness –and a bit of joy into the world.”

~Leanne Jewett lives and works in Vermont, where she writes, edits, and helps clients navigate the maze of publishing and marketing their books.

