



Master weaver Ashken Binat poses with Lora Lee Mason, who bought one of her beautiful jaki-ed. Above, the very crowded Melele Room at the Marshall Islands Resort last Thursday evening.

Huge crowd at jaki-ed exhibition

CAROLINE YACOE

Journal Opinion,
see page 14

Neither heavy rain nor airline problems kept the Sixth Annual Jaki-ed Exhibition and Auction — including the visiting Hawaii contingent led by Marquis Marzan with two 19th Century Bishop Museum mats — from filling the Marshall Islands Resort's Melele Room last Thursday.

During the day 818 local school children enthusiastically visited the exhibition. They enjoyed presentations by USP's Tamara Greenstone and Marzan, a fiber artist from the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and were especially awed and inspired by seeing the Bishop Museum Jaki-ed mats which their ancestors had created so many years ago.

Dr. Irene Taafaki opened the evening festivities with a warm tribute to Bill Weza who was a major supporter of the project and former Master of Ceremonies. In the Marshallese tradition of "dijo im ukøj" (lifting up and going forward), Alson Kelen carried on as emcee, and with the support and guidance of traditional leader Maria Kabua Fowler, the generous backing of MIVA and the local Marshallese community, the evening was a delightful and resounding success for both weavers and visitors.

During the past year Dr. Taafaki, and Tamara Greenstone arranged workshops on Majuro and Ailinglaplap with expert weavers Patsy Herman and Ashken Binet teaching apprentices for four-to-six months. These mats exhibited for the first time at Jaki-ed 2012 show how dramatically "kōrā im an kōl," the unique creative talent that is bestowed on Marshallese women at birth, lives on today.

Among these apprentices, the first place winner was Betty Lobwoj of Majuro.

Second place went to Anetty Clement of Ailinglaplap and honorable mention to Rosana Langinbelik also of Ailinglaplap

Patsy and Ashken are familiar figures among the master weavers. Patsy, who hails from Namdrik, took first place followed by Ashken, of Arno, who took second and third place.

Mats by both master weavers and apprentices sold out and from prize and sale money the weavers took home \$11,025 (\$7,750 mat sales and \$3,250 in prizes).

Among mats bringing the highest prices were two mats by Ashken: one an extremely finely woven mat decorated with atat and the other large one with complex traditional and contemporary designs.

The quality of this year's work attests to the skill and dedication of both the apprentices and their teachers. In the past, Marshall Islanders were known as being the best weavers in the Pacific — a reputation that these mats seem sure to continue.

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