

Short Subjects

Japan Prime Minister Dresses as Super Mario

Mr. Abe Promotes Tokyo Olympics at closing ceremony of 2016 Rio Olympics.

At the closing ceremonies of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appeared in costume as "Super Mario," the hero of the popular video game series, created in 1985.



As Japan is hosting the games next time round, the country was given a brief segment to showcase its plans, right after the Olympic flag was passed to the governor of Tokyo. A flashy video segment featuring other Japanese exports including Pac-Man and Hello Kitty. The [video ended](#) with Abe turning into Super Mario, diving into a pipe and drilling his way through the earth to reach the stadium to make his live entrance.

Although his costume fell away soon after he appeared, leaving him standing in a sober suit, costumers who participate in masquerades appreciate the special kind of courage it takes to go on stage in costume in front of an audience. Well done, Mr. Abe!

Discovery of 6200 Year Old Blue Jeans?

Oldest indigo dyed cotton fabric found at archeological site in Peru.

The ancestors of today's pants could be include ancient Peruvian dyeing techniques that appear in 6,200-year-old piece of indigo dyed fabric. Archaeologists discovered the ancient cloth samples during the 2009 excavation of a Peruvian ceremonial mound known as Huaca Prieta. After dating the dyed cotton scraps, they discovered that their samples were at least 1,800 years older than the next-oldest instances of indigo dye use, found in Egypt.

"The cotton used in Huaca Prieta fabrics, *Gossypium barbadense*, is the same species grown today known as Egyptian cotton," according to the study's lead author, Jeffrey Splitstoser of George Washington University. "And that's not the only cotton connection we made in this excavation – we may well not have had blue jeans if it weren't for the ancient South Americans."

Peru is famous for its cotton. In fact, a particularly hardy cotton was domesticated at an undetermined site in Peru, likely along the northwest coast. The country's modern-day cotton is very insect-resistant, and often grown without insecticides or fertilizers.

The cloth scraps at Huaca Prieta were found sandwiched between layers of a ramp that led up to the temple. Originally, their blue coloring wasn't evident because of the sooty material used to build the temple. After gently washing the cloth and using a technique called high-performance liquid chromatography, researchers discovered that it was the oldest indigo-dyed fabric in the world. Five of the eight samples that researchers tested were confirmed to contain traces of indigo. The remaining three samples may have been degraded over time.

Traditional indigo dye comes from an organic compound called indigoid, generally found in plants such as *Indigofera*, the likely source of the Huaca Prieta indigo dye. Ancient Egyptians, extracted their indigo coloring from sea snails. Today, the dye used for blue jeans is produced synthetically.



6200 year old cotton fabric with indigo blue dye was discovered recently in South America.

Researchers knew that blue dyes were used in the Americas at least 2,500 years ago, and a sample from 2,400 BC showed that Egyptians had been using indigo for at least 4,400 years. However, the Huaca Prieta samples prove that the ancestor of blue jeans might actually have first been created in South America.

"The people of the Americas were making scientific and technological contributions as early and in this case even earlier than people were in other parts of the world," according to Splitstoser. "Many people ... remain mostly unaware of the important technological contributions made by Native Americans, perhaps because so many of these technologies were replaced by European systems during the conquest," he said in the press release. "We always leave them out. I think this finding just shows that that's a mistake."

The study was published in September 2016 in the journal [*Science Advances*](#).

Cancer Patients Hand-Paint Spacesuit

Recovering patients from many countries decorate Hope, Courage, and Unity suits.

Astronauts about the International Space Station are wearing three hand-painted spacesuits that were decorated by young recovering cancer patients from several countries to raise awareness about the benefits of pairing art with medicine as part of the Space Suit Project.

The Courage and Hope spacesuits were created by patients at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. Spacesuit Unity was created at cancer hospitals in Germany, Russia, and Japan with collaboration from astronauts from NASA's international partners, ESA (European Space Agency), the Russian Federal Space Agency and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency.

Each piece of the bright patchwork spacesuits tells a story. Some of the triangles were painted by childhood cancer patients who are impossibly young, some on the edge of 17, some in isolated treatment, some in recovery. The bright swirls of color and creativity represent how some celebrated defeating cancer. For others, touching a brush to fabric was one of their last acts.



Kate Rubins, wearing the Courage spacesuit aboard the International Space Station, talks to cancer patients.

On September 16, astronaut and cancer researcher Kate Rubins donned the Courage suit and called down to Earth to speak with some of the patients. She had visited with some before departing for the station in July, and even picked up a brush to contribute her own splash of color. "Thank you to every single kid who painted on this suit," she told them. "You guys are artists, you're awesome and you're inspiring to me."

The Space Suit Project was started by Ian Cion, who believes in the power of art and medicine combined. Cion has run the Arts in Medicine program at MD Anderson for six years, creating large-scale projects to connect communities and patients. Making space suits out of artwork by childhood cancer patients seemed like a natural fit.

"For me there's always been this other layer to what art can do," Cion said. "The primary goal was to get our patients motivated and excited to do something unusual and profound. And for the second goal, I hoped we could generate enthusiasm and it could translate into building awareness for childhood cancer."

Cion worked with Gordon Andrews in the Strategic Communications Group at Johnson Space Center, and retired astronaut Nicole Stott, the first astronaut to paint in space, and who now pursues her passion as an artist. Stott brought on Rubins. ILC Dover, which has made NASA's space suits for years, helped construct the suits. Stott calls the Space Suit Project the most meaningful thing she's ever supported.

“Spruce Girls” Wear Wooden Bathing Suits

Spruce clad bathing suits promoted Hoquiam, Washington lumber industry.

Costumes often play a role in advertising, but few are as strange as the ones used to promote the products of the Gray Harbor lumber industry in Hoquiam, Washington. A [collection of photos](#) from the University of Washington Libraries Digital Collection shows bathing beauties in bathing suits that are clad with spruce wood veneer during “Wood Week in 1929. Perhaps the wood veneer was supposed to make swimming a lot easier.



“Spruce Girls” c. 1929. Univ. of Washington Libraries.

Toilet Paper Wedding Dress Contest

12th annual event features amazing high-fashion creations made of toilet paper.

During a wedding dress design contest at Tavern on the Green in New York’s Central Park a model sashayed in the winning entry – a spectacular white affair dress with lacy accents between beads of what looked like pearl. It had the allure of haute couture, but most people didn’t realize that all the entries were made almost entirely of toilet paper.

Professional and amateur designers created wedding-ready bridal gowns out of Charmin toilet paper in hopes of winning a spot in a runway show in New York, where models show off the finalists before an excited audience. It began 12 years ago as the brainchild of sisters Susan Bain and Laura Gawne to generate buzz for their wedding website, [cheap-chic-weddings.com](#). For the past six years, though, Charmin and Ripley’s Believe It Or Not have sponsored it, and real money is at stake. The winner receives \$10,000, second place gets \$5,000, and the third place winner receives \$2,500.

The 12th Annual Toilet Paper Wedding Dress Contest, presented by Cheap Chic Weddings and Charmin, took place at the Haven Rooftop at the Sanctuary Hotel in Manhattan. Designer Van Tran of Brooklyn was the winner, with Judith Henry from Woodland Hills, Utah, and Donna Vincler from Brentwood, Tenn., placing second and third.



Several of this year’s entries. Photo: Susan Bain/Chic Cheap Weddings.

Bain said contestants can use only toilet paper, tape, glue, and a needle and thread to make the dresses, which must be wearable “by a person who can walk” in them. A key is ensuring that they are strong enough to actually be worn. Toilet paper’s main quality generally is not its strength. Some use thin, single-ply, but others get creative. Bain warns designers, “If you use too much duct tape, it gets too heavy, and it doesn’t work.”

In 2007, Charmin gave away a wedding via an essay contest and flew the winning couple to Manhattan to tie the knot. There was just one catch: the bride had to wear that year’s winning dress, and the ceremony took place in a public restroom in Times Square. “You may kiss the bride,” the officiant said, “but please don’t squeeze the Charmin dress.”