
Department of Textile Conservation Newsletter

Spring 2020 Volume 4

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Introduction

Dear Colleagues, Friends, and Supporters,

We were looking forward to an exciting 2020 filled with special exhibitions and events commemorating The Met's 150th anniversary, and we were nearly finished with the installation of *Making the Met*, when our regular work was interrupted by the Coronavirus outbreak. The Met closed to the public on March 13 and non-essential staff was asked to work from home for the foreseeable future.

Textile Conservation meets regularly via Microsoft Teams to get status updates and to gather new ideas for moving forward in our professional world. In our meetings we are also exploring options for reaching out to our colleagues and friends, both specialist and non-specialist, who share our love of textiles.

Our department continues to actively contribute to image-based social media platforms, which have provided powerful, accessible venues for sharing visual information and object-centered narratives. Working from home, we now have the opportunity to take a deep dive into departmental images and photomicrographs of textiles. By publishing on Instagram and Pinterest, we can share our work with new audiences.

This is a time to support each other as we find new ways to live, to work, to learn, and to educate, drawing strength especially now from our uniquely and powerfully diverse community within this museum and beyond. Living and working in the digital sphere, we can extend the reach of a collection which transcends time and culture.

We look forward to returning to our unfinished conservation projects and hope to see you later in the year at the Museum's events and activities celebrating a landmark anniversary.



THE
MET 150

Introduction



The Mask Project

Twenty-one volunteers from seven departments (Textile Conservation, Ratti Textile Center, Costume Institute, Islamic Art, ESDA, Design and Paper Conservation) participated in a project to make and donate face masks to essential workers in the New York area.

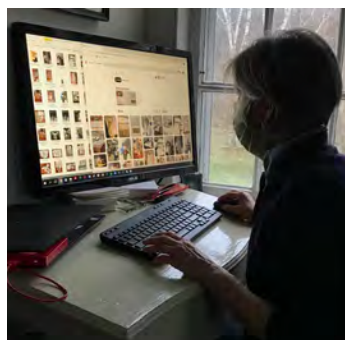
Nearly 2000 masks were donated to three hospitals and five non-profits including women's shelters, veteran's housing, facilities for those with developmental disabilities, unhoused New Yorkers through the Girl Scouts, and to our own Met essential workers in the Security Department, the Buildings Department, and the Collections Emergency Working Group.

<https://www.pinterest.com/mtextileconservation/face-mask-project/>

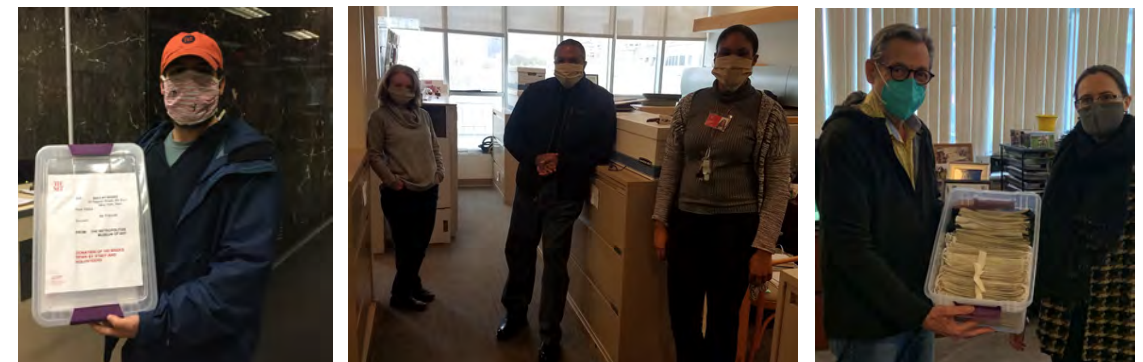
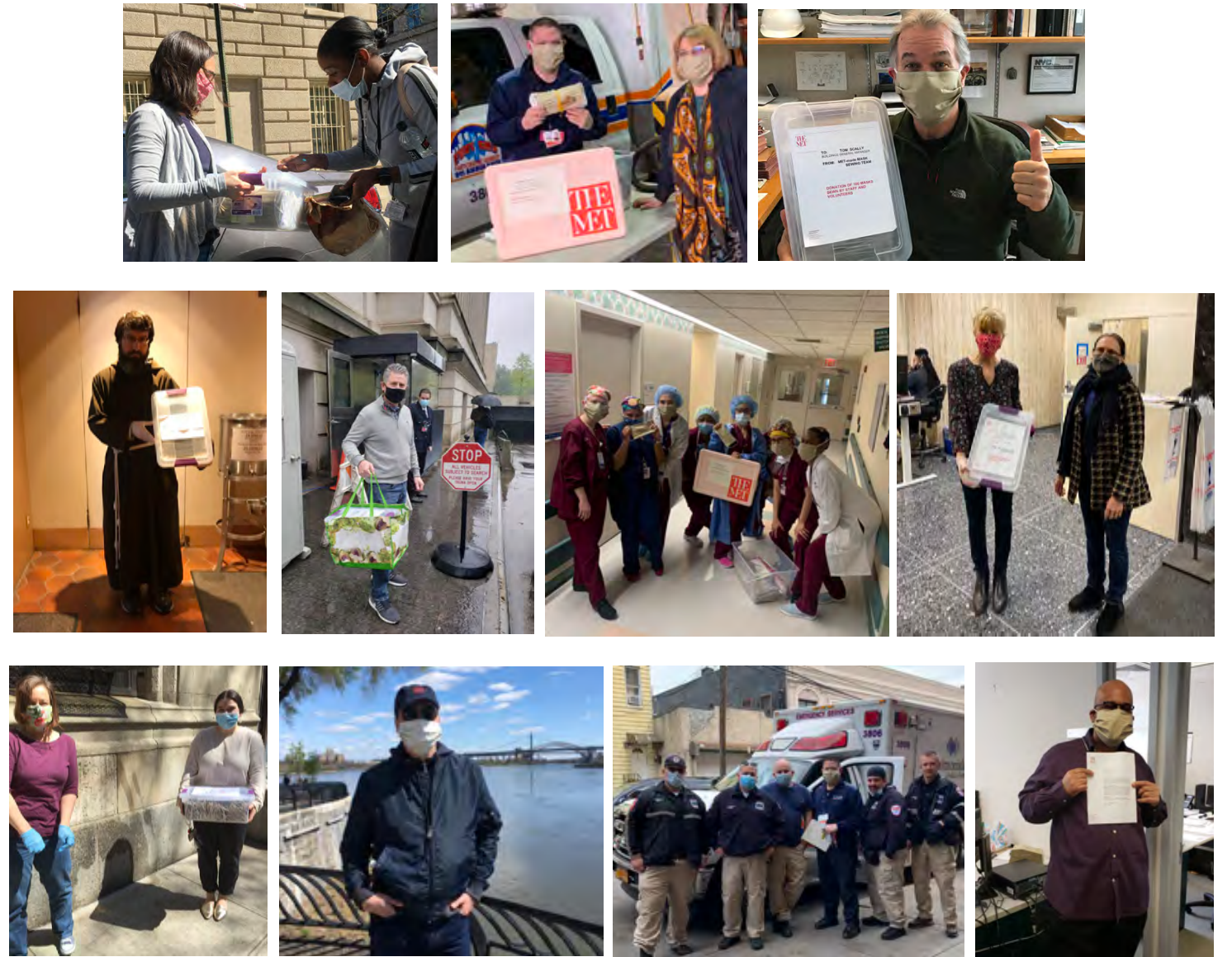
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B-faBUMFo4q/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/B_VMGlcF7AB/

<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18137820253022003/>



Introduction



Conservation Projects



Islamic Textiles Highlights of the Collection

Fragment, second half 16th century. Attributed to Iran. Maker: Ghiyath (Iranian, born ca. 1530). Silk; cut and voided velvet with continuous floats of flat metal thread. H. 25 3/4 in. (65.4 cm) W. 13 1/4 in. (33.7 cm) MMA 52.20.13 Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952

Prior to remounting for gallery display Julia Carlson had the opportunity to conduct in-depth analysis of an exceptional cut and voided silk velvet fragment in the Islamic collection expanding on research by previous scholars.



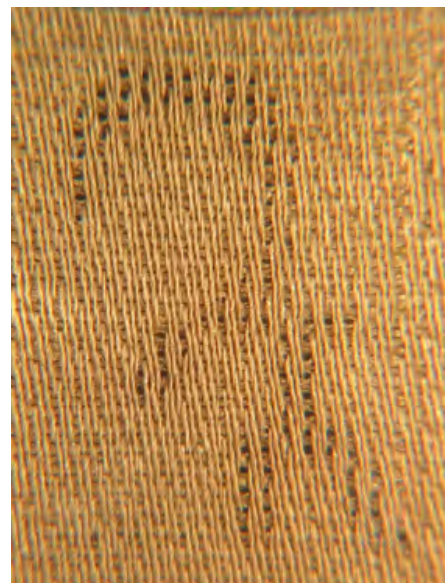
Obverse

Reverse

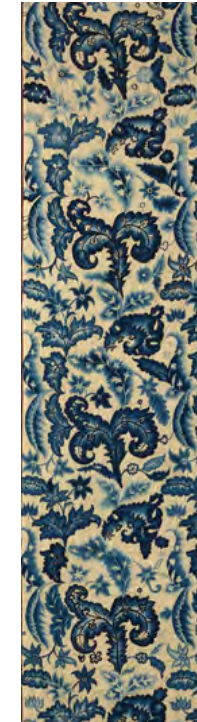
A signature is embedded in its ogival and floral design. The nasta'liq Persian script "The work of Ghiyath" is repeated in each compartment, revealing the name of its designer. Khwaja Ghiyath ad-din 'Ali was known in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century as a textile designer and poet. He served as a master weaver at the court of Shah 'Abbas I in Isfahan (modern day Iran). Inscriptions on Persian textiles bearing names of designers or weavers are extremely rare. Although examples of Ghiyath's velvet design work appear in other museum collections, this is the only known Ghiyath textile in the Met's Islamic collection. Abraded and faded, with much of its lavish metal strip components lost, this fragment still conveys the splendor of the Safavid court and the mastery of complex weaving techniques in the royal workshops.



A closer look revealed remnants of metal strip wefts



Conservation Projects



A Pair of Embroidered British Furnishing Textiles

English or Scottish, early 18th century. Wool plain weave embroidered with wool yarn. Panel a 9ft. 10 in. x 25 1/2" Panel b, 9ft. 10 in. x 25" in. Purchase, Gift of Irwin Untermyer, by exchange, 2017

Left to Right:
MMA 2017.726a
MMA 2017.726b

Giulia Chiostrini examined and prepared for display two early 18th century embroidered panels included in the first rotation of the newly renovated British Galleries. Both panels have wool plain-weave ground fabric, embroidered with dyed wool yarn. The panels are in good condition and are exhibited almost full length with selvages visible.



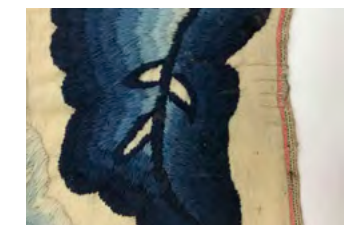
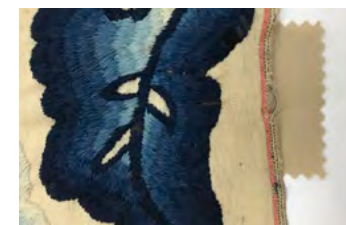
Although the design of the two panels is similar, worked in the same long-and-short embroidery stitch, their appearance is different, suggesting the embroideries were executed by different needle-workers.

Left to Right:
Obverse and reverse of long-and-short embroidery stitch
MMA 2017.726a



The ground fabrics are similar in appearance but the selvages are different. Panel "a" is slightly wider than "b", and has a higher warp and weft count resulting in a tighter weave structure.

Left to Right:
MMA 2017.726a
MMA 2017.726b



Conservation of the panels included stabilizing areas of abrasion with a cotton support fabric.

MMA 2017.726b



Work continues on The Met Cloisters Heroes Tapestries

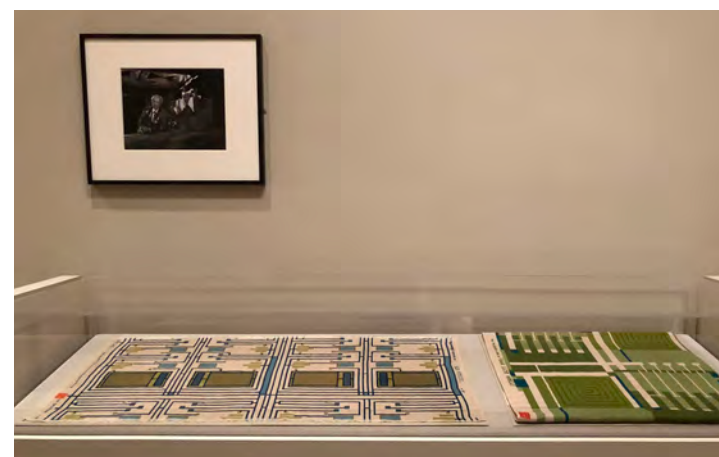
In the preceding issue of the *Textile Conservation Newsletter*, we introduced a major conservation campaign of The Cloisters *Heroes Tapestries* series. Kathrin Colburn, Kisook Suh, and Anna Szalecki work closely with project curator, Barbara D. Boehm on this collaborative effort with the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters initiated at the end of 2018 with the transfer of *King Arthur*, the first of four hangings, to Textile Conservation. Two major principles inform the treatment decisions of this project: the stabilization of the tapestries' weakened structure and an improvement of its visual appearance. Extensive research determined that wet cleaning was the most effective way for addressing issues caused by decades of environmental exposure.

After wet cleaning, the overall structure of the tapestry was strengthened by reinforcing damaged warps. This process allowed the realignment of warp and weft yarns and often returned design details close to their original appearance. During the remaining time of the project, we will continue to give priority to three conservation considerations: previous restorations that have compromised the structural stability and visual appreciation of the original weaving, open slits, and the development of an enhanced support and display system for *King Arthur*.

We wish to express our gratitude to Jane and Michael Horvitz for their generous support to the Museum, which makes the first phase of this ambitious undertaking possible.

Left, Top-Bottom:
Wet cleaning of the *King Arthur* tapestry, June 2019

Treatment of the *King Arthur* tapestry on a tension table, February 2020



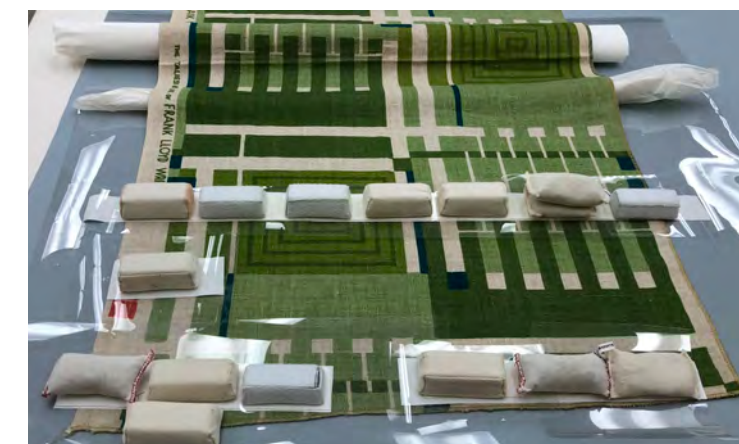
Frank Lloyd Wright Textiles: The Taliesin Line, 1955–60

The exhibition “*Frank Lloyd Wright Textiles: The Taliesin Line, 1955–60*” is installed in the Antonio Ratti Textile gallery. Originally scheduled to be on view from May 20, 2019— April 5, 2020 it will remain open until September 27 in the revised exhibition schedule. Featured are textiles and showroom samples designed by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright and produced by F. Schumacher & Company. Many of the textiles are recent acquisitions.

Several of the samples are exhibited with both sides visible, showing the reverse, as well as the different colorways once available. For safe display, Alexandra constructed soft supportive archival mounts for each textile.

Alexandra Barlow prepared nine textiles for this installation. Many of the samples needed localized cleaning and humidification. This printed linen textile (MMA 2018.221.11) was gently humidified through a layer of Gore-tex with the addition of light weights to relax creases. Gore-tex is a moisture-permeable material which permits controlled humidification.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/press/exhibitions/2019/frank-lloyd-wright-textiles>





Phenomenal Nature: Mrinalini Mukherjee Exhibition June 4–September 29, 2019

This retrospective featured the extraordinary works of Indian female sculptor Mrinalini Mukherjee (1949–2015). Included in the exhibition were over 60 pieces in fiber, ceramic and bronze, a remarkable display showcasing her larger-than-life fiber sculptures. Mukherjee's masterful skill for knotting jute rope allowed her to mold it as if it were clay, creating three-dimensional figures with articulated joints.

Textile Conservation played an integral role in the preparation of the fiber sculptures, as well as implementing various types of conservation and innovative display methods to rejuvenate the fiber sculptures after coming out of their crates from India.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/video/collections/modern/mukherjee-timelapse>

https://www.instagram.com/p/BOD_FcqF7uU/

Aryanani Fiber Sculpture, 1996
Mrinalini Mukherjee (Mumbai, 1949–2015)
Gift of Mrinalini Mukherjee Foundation, 2019



Janina Poskrobko

Janina Poskrobko (Strzeciwlk) defended her PhD at her alma mater—Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland and was awarded her Doctor of Humanities in Arts Studies diploma at the February 2020 graduation ceremony. Her comprehensive dissertation, *Polish Kontusz Sash and its Cross-Cultural, Artistic and Technical Connections with 17th–18th century Sashes from Safavid Persia and Ottoman Turkey* highlights The Met's collection and includes many examples from other collections worldwide. Her PhD was supervised by Dr hab. Jerzy Malinowski, Distinguished Professor, Head of former Institute for Research, Study and Conservation of Oriental Works of Art at Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń and reviewed by Dr. Walter Bell Denny, Distinguished Professor of History of Islamic Art and Architecture, University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Dr hab. Agnieszka Bender, Professor of Humanities, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw.



A core member of TC's Mask Making project, Caroline cycled many miles delivering materials and collecting finished masks. She was an optimistic and indispensable member of the team, always on arriving on time and in style.

Follow these links to see her in action:

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/328762841552840330/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/328762841552873223/>

Caroline Borderies

Caroline Borderies joined the Department of Textile Conservation as a volunteer in 2006. Her first project was to scan 35mm slides documenting the conservation of *Christ Is Born as Man's Redeemer*, a tapestry in the Medieval Art collection. The scanning project was one of the earliest initiatives for digitizing conservation records in the department.

Caroline works with long-time TC volunteer Gemma Rossi constructing custom made archival storage boxes and support structures for textiles. These are used during storage, display, and transfer of textiles and have become indispensable particularly in the preservation of fragile textiles.

Caroline is also a gifted puppeteer creating all aspects of the puppet show including the script, puppets, set design and musical accompaniment. She has created numerous shows based on exhibitions beginning in 2009 with "Margarita von Varick" for the Bard Graduate Center and most recently "The Adventure of the Knight Theuerdank" for The Met's "The Last Knight: The Art, Armor, and Ambition of Maximilian I" exhibition .

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/grand-design/blog/posts/chasing-shadows>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/shadowkaroline>



Special Events



During the pandemic, Laura Peluso has continued her role in the working group as a member of the CEWG Closure Team, a task force that drafted and finalized a museum closure contingency plan and now oversees a museum-wide collections monitoring program.

In this image you see her in the darkened ESDA galleries on patrol with our colleague Eva Labson who took this picture.

Collections Emergency Preparedness Forum at The Met

On September 27, 2019 over 100 people participated in a Collections Emergency Preparedness Forum co-organized by The Met's Collections Emergency Working Group (CEWG), Alliance for Response—New York City, and the New York Public Library. The groundbreaking event was the first time that staff from over 30 cultural institutions gathered to discuss in detail the contents of their collections emergency plans and staff training. Textile Conservation's Laura Peluso played a key role by initiating and participating in the organization of this event.

Led by Jeanette O'Keefe in the Director's Office, CEWG developed the idea with Elizabeth Nunan, the president of NYC's Alliance for Response, and Rebecca Fifield, head of collections management at the New York Public Library. The program included talks by Nunan, Fifield, and Carolyn Riccardelli, a member of The Met's CEWG. Talks were followed by a panel discussion and a tabletop emergency preparedness exercise led by Peluso. The day ended with a networking event on The Met's Cantor Roof Garden.

The CEWG is composed of 11 Met employees who oversee the Collections Emergency Team (CET), a group of approximately 35 museum staff members who have committed to learning and developing disaster response skills necessary for collections recovery following an emergency event. Four members of Textile Conservation actively participate in the CET: Emilia Cortes, Olha Yarema-Wynar, Giulia Chiostrini, and Laura Peluso.

Research



Twenty Years Apart: Revisiting a Caftan from the Northern Caucasus in The Met Collection

Martina Ferrari, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Conservation Fellow
Department of Textile Conservation

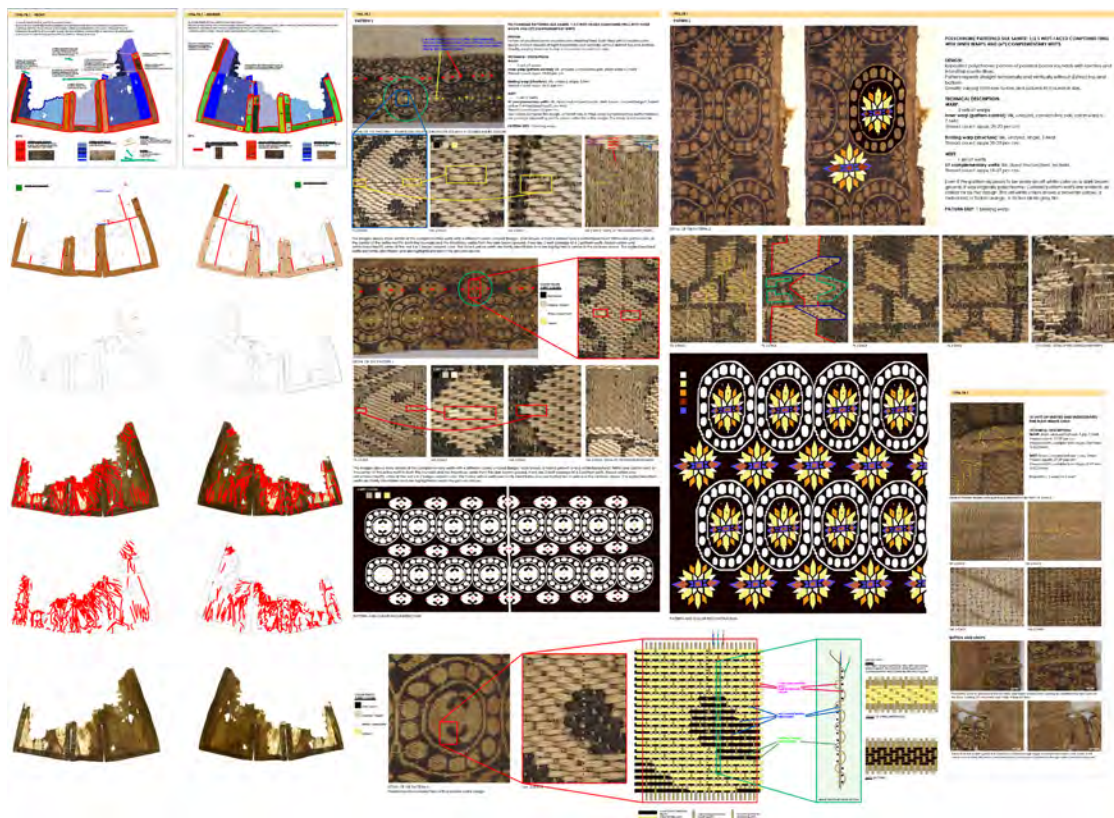
In recent years, advances in analytical studies, digital technology and diagnostic techniques have furthered interdisciplinary collaborations between curatorial, conservation and scientific research departments by providing new access to historical textiles in museum collections.

This interdisciplinary study aims to review and supplement Nobuko Kajitani's extensive research and treatment conducted nearly two decades ago on a fragmentary linen caftan bordered with silk and lined with fur (MMA 1996.78.1) in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art (ANE), which culminated in a Met Journal article (2001).

In 2019 further inquiry was approached in several different ways: 1) Technical details were compared with several of the Museum's textile fragments attributed to the Northern Caucasus; 2) a collaboration between Textile Conservation Department and ANE that resulted in the development of a detailed historical context for the caftan; 3) multispectral/multiband images and Liquid Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry (LC/MS) identified dyes; 4) digital renderings created with vector drawing software AutoCAD® were combined with photo-editing software, while 5) advanced photomicrographs further supplemented the previous technical documentation.

This multi-pronged analytical approach has created a sound foundation for future research, additional discovery and understanding of the caftan that has the potential to engage the contemporary museum audience in a dynamic, didactic way.

Above:
Kajitani N. A Man's Caftan and Leggings from the Northern Caucasus of the Eight to Tenth Century: A Conservator's Report. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 36. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001, pp.85-124



Left:
The chart shows the result of the labor-intensive data collection that has proven to be fundamental in translating textile technical data in visual representation, providing greater accessibility and increasing the understanding of the object.

Research



Egyptian Textiles from the Middle Kingdom Mummy of Wah

An ongoing collaborative research project between Egyptian Art Curator Catharine Roehrig and liaison Conservator for Egyptian Art Emilia Cortes, has focused on Middle Kingdom textiles (early Dynasty 12, ca. 1981–1975 B.C.) found on the mummy of Wah. Wah lived in Thebes, in Upper Egypt, and worked for Meketre, a wealthy Theban, who was the chief steward of the king. He probably started as a scribe, later becoming the manager of the storerooms of Meketre's estate. He may well have overseen the artisanal shops, including the weaving shop. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Egyptian Expedition found his intact tomb in 1920, inside Meketre's burial complex, confirming Wah's position as one of Meketre's most valued retainers.

The goal of this research is a publication on the textiles of this unique Middle Kingdom mummy. The mummy wrappings include sheets, bandages, and pads. There were also folded sheets of various sizes placed inside the coffin, above and below the mummy.

The study includes scale drawings, photography and photomicrography of weaving details. Documentation includes dimensions; fiber, warp and weft count, headings, finishes and selvedge identification; length and classification of weft fringes and documentation of additional decorative elements such as resin, ink, and woven marks. The study will document the different methods of folding the sheets into pads for burial with the mummy. Wah's sheets are undyed with the exception of the red sheet wrapped around the outside of the mummy (MMA 20.3.203a). The red pigment has been identified as hematite.

Left-Right:
Wah statuette (MMA 20.3.210)
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545111>

Wah Linen sheet inside coffin (MMA 20.3.222)
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/552472>

Presentations

Textile Conservation Colloquium: Recent Research

On Friday September 20, 2019 The Department of Textile Conservation held an exciting colloquium well-attended by the public and museum staff. The event was scheduled to coincide with New York Textile Month, a citywide festival to promote textile awareness. The day at The Met began with introductions by Andrea Bayer, Deputy Director for Collections and Administration, Janina Poskrobko, Conservator in Charge of Textile Conservation, and Kristine Kamiya, the moderator for this event.

The colloquium featured the following five presentations by textile conservators and one visiting artist, highlighting the varied interests of the presenters and displayed an inside perspective on work performed in the department.

Three Weeks and Forty Silkworms: Sericulture of Wild and Cultivated Silk in Japan by Minsun Hwang

The Mortlake Horses: A Collaborative Approach to the Conservation of 17th Century British Tapestries at The Met by Olha Yarema-Wynar and Alexandra Barlow

Advanced Imaging Techniques: Different Ways to See Textiles by Kisook Suh and Cristina Balloffet Carr

Printed and Painted Cotton Textiles: A Study in India and at The Met by Yael Rosenfield

Exploring Ajrakh Textiles: Patterns, Traditions, Hand-Block Printing and Natural Dyes by Sufiyan Ismail Khatri.



Presentations



Above:
Sufiyan Khatri demonstrated his craft in the Textile Conservation wet lab. TC staff and their guests were then invited to have a go with Sufiyan's guidance.

Sufiyan was invited as a guest presenter to Textile Conservation's 2019 colloquium. He presented "Exploring Ajrakh Textiles: Patterns, Traditions, Hand-Block Printing and Natural Dyes" and demonstrated the technique of block printing at a sold-out event. It was a rare opportunity to view this ancient tradition here at The Met.

The department was able to invite Sufiyan Khatri, a master dyer from India, thanks to a contribution by the Lenore G. Tawney Foundation.

Celebrating Sufiyan Khatri's Visit at The Met

Sufiyan Khatri is a tenth-generation artisan whose family has been involved in the art of Ajrakh, block printed textiles, since the fifteenth century. Sufiyan comes from a small village, Ajrakhpur, located in Kutch, Gujarat, India where his family and community practice this style of block printing unique to the region. His work is particularly engaging because it is both traditional and modern. He prints his textiles with historic designs, using time-honored techniques and natural dyes. Sufiyan is also an innovative and experimental artist, creating 'modern' Ajrakh variations, often working with contemporary Indian fashion designers. To learn more about Sufiyan's work visit <https://www.instagram.com/sufiyankhatri/>

Support the Department of Textile Conservation

With steadfast support from our friends, The Met's Department of Textile Conservation can continue to thrive and be a critical resource for the preservation of works of art as well as a vibrant center for research.

<https://www.pinterest.com/mettextileconservation/boards/>

<https://www.instagram.com/mettextileconservation/>

To learn more about how you can become involved and support this important work at The Met, please contact: Hilary Bliss,

Deputy Chief Development Officer of Individual Giving,
at 212-570-3897 or mail to hilary.bliss@metmuseum.org

You may also contribute online at:

<https://secure.metmuseum.org/secure/donation/donate>

Click on 'Provide additional information about your gift' and note 'For Department of Textile Conservation'.

**The Metropolitan
Museum of Art**

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