
Department of Textile Conservation Newsletter

Fall 2022 Volume 6

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Introduction

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

The past year has flown by with the Met's return to an almost pre-pandemic pace. The Department of Textile Conservation has had the privilege to participate in numerous exhibitions, gallery rotations and special events and acquisitions. Each engagement is an opportunity to investigate and learn about our extraordinary collection.

The stunning exhibition *Kimono Style* from the John C. Weber Collection, brought to a close almost two years of "hosting" these textiles in the lab for photography, research, conservation, and mounting for exhibition. Kristine contributed to the exhibition catalog a unique technical glossary illustrated with breathtaking photomicrographs.

Newly installed in the *Art of Native America: Charles and Valerie Diker Collection* are two Ojibwe Jingle dresses displayed on custom mounts. Two exemplary 17th-century Chinese tapestries in *Noble Virtues: Nature as Symbol in Chinese Art* required complex conservation treatment prior to mounting in an oversized pressure mount. Large mounts always require collaboration with our colleagues in the Plexiglas shop, a team of highly skilled specialists. This was our last project with Sean Thomas, who retired from the museum in August.

After almost three years of intensive conservation, the King Arthur tapestry returned to the Cloisters to join others from the series. The occasion was celebrated with a joint event organized by Medieval Art, The Cloisters and Textile Conservation with many esteemed guests including donors, Friends, and Visting Committee members.

Shirin Fozi of The Met Cloisters presented on the historical background of the Nine Heroes' series followed by a presentation by Kisook featuring the conservation campaign. The gorgeous scenery of the Cloisters garden and lovely herbal arrangement prepared by the Cloister's gardeners were the highlights of the unforgettable morning.

THE
MET

Introduction

This year the American Institute for Conservation celebrated its 50th anniversary. Janina presented at the annual AIC conference focusing on the 10th anniversary of the new Islamic Gallery (ALTICALSA) which opened in 2011. Technical and conservation research is a significant part of our exciting work at The Met. In October we co-hosted the 6th Symposium of IASSRT, “Silk Road Textiles Under the Microscope,” together with China National Silk Museum, Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles, Institute of the History of Natural Sciences, and Tracing Patterns Foundation. Janina moderated the session in which Minsun and Kristine gave presentations. In November we hosted an informal virtual presentation by Helena Loermans who discussed her research reproducing the patterned canvases used by painters during the early renaissance.

These are some of the captivating activities that bring us into 2023 which marks the golden anniversary of the Department of Textile Conservation. Stay tuned for a great program to be part of our professional and collegial life.

Janina Poskrobko

Exciting News!!



2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the Department of Textile Conservation!

We are currently planning many exciting ways to commemorate this milestone and look forward to sharing the details with you soon.

Exhibitions



Quilt, Hexagon or Honeycomb Pattern
MMA 1980.498.1

Included in the exhibition is Rebecca Davis's *Quilt, Hexagon or Honeycomb Pattern* 1980.498.1, which includes many examples of the types of fabric represented in the sample books. A daguerreotype, *Two Girls in Identical Dresses*, made in 1857 provides context for the fabric samples. Two scrapbooks of designs for textiles 67.746.2 & 67.746.7 provide a rare window into the early stages of the design process.

Fascinating Fragments

Fascinating Fragments (August 2022–August 2023), is indeed a fascinating exhibition currently on view in Gallery 599 outside of the Ratti Center. This exhibition was conceived and organized by Dr. Courtney Wilder while she was a Met fellow in ESDA from September 2020 to August 2022. Ten examples from the Met's extensive collection of sample books are on view and will have a page-turn in February to help distribute exposure to light of the delicate fabric samples. Dr. Wilder commented in a recent interview: "The installation had two broad objectives: first, to show the astounding variety and vivacity typical of early nineteenth-century dress textiles accessible to a wide range of consumers; and second, to promote the use of sample books as rich research tools that can offer insight into a range of topics, such as design, imperialism and international exchanges; production, technology and science; and social issues such as labor, consumption, and identity formation." The elegant presentation included purpose made book mounts designed and fabricated by Heidi Hilker Associate Collections Specialist in Ratti and Caroline Broderies, long-time TC volunteer.

Dr. Wilder is currently working on publications exploring unexpected links between early nineteenth-century European textiles and a wide array of visual media with the support of a postdoctoral fellowship from the Paul Mellon Centre.

Cristina Balloffet Carr

Exhibitions

Art Of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection (Gallery 746 South), Ongoing and Water Memories (Gallery 746 North) June 23, 2022 – April 2, 2023

The 2022 rotation of *Art of Native America: The Charles and Valerie Diker Collection* opened June 23rd along with the special exhibition, *Water Memories*.

Two Ojibwe Jingle dresses are presented at the entrance of *Art of Native America* as well as two 19th century Diné (Navajo) Blankets within the exhibition. The Jingle dresses, one contemporary and one from the 1920s, required the customization of dress forms and the creation of undergarments to support the outfits while on display. For the blankets, conservators updated the hanging systems and reinforced broken warps to strengthen and support the textile while on view. For *Water Memories*, textile conservators worked with conservation preparators to mount a 19th century Ho-Chunk or Winnebago Bandolier Bag and created a custom mount for a 1970s American Indian Activist Denim Jacket. The invisible mount was made using buckram to cast a hollow male form that is discrete, but still strong enough to support the jacket.



Alexandra Barlow



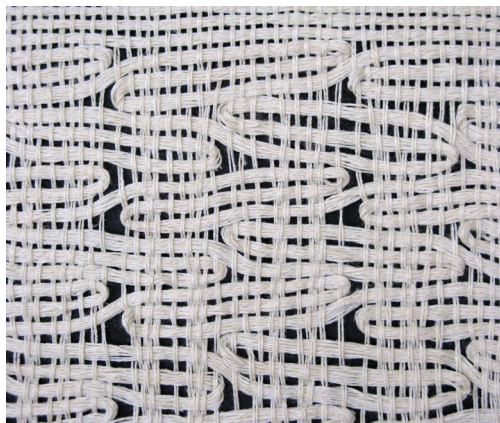
Ojibwe Jingle Dress
MMA L.2022.10a-d



Exhibitions



Ruth Asawa's wire crocheting, sculpture



Detail, grouped weft threads used together in plain weave

Drawing without Paper

The exhibition's title is described by Iria Candela, Estrellita B. Brodsky Curator of Latin American Art in the Department of Modern & Contemporary Art, as "Named after a work by Gego (1912-1994) that was recently gifted to The Met, *Drawing without Paper* features a select group of works that embrace an expanded notion of drawing, freeing the line into space."

An untitled work by Sheila Hicks is woven with undyed linen yarn, with two S-twisted threads used in pairs for the warps. Her hanging is a clever use of a plain weave structure (simple and extended) creating a pattern with variations in the density of weaving by leaving areas of exposed, unbound warps.

A less traditional material for making textiles is wire; however, a beautiful hanging sculpture made of enameled copper and iron wire by Ruth Asawa, also untitled, is included in this installation. Asawa uses a wire-crocheting technique that she learned from her travels to Toluca, Mexico in 1947. Included in *Drawing without Paper* are works by Alexander Calder, Davis Smith, and Zarina.

Kristine Kamiya



View of gallery, *Drawing without Paper* exhibition. Gallery 916, The Gioconda and Joseph King Gallery, Mezzanine

Exhibitions



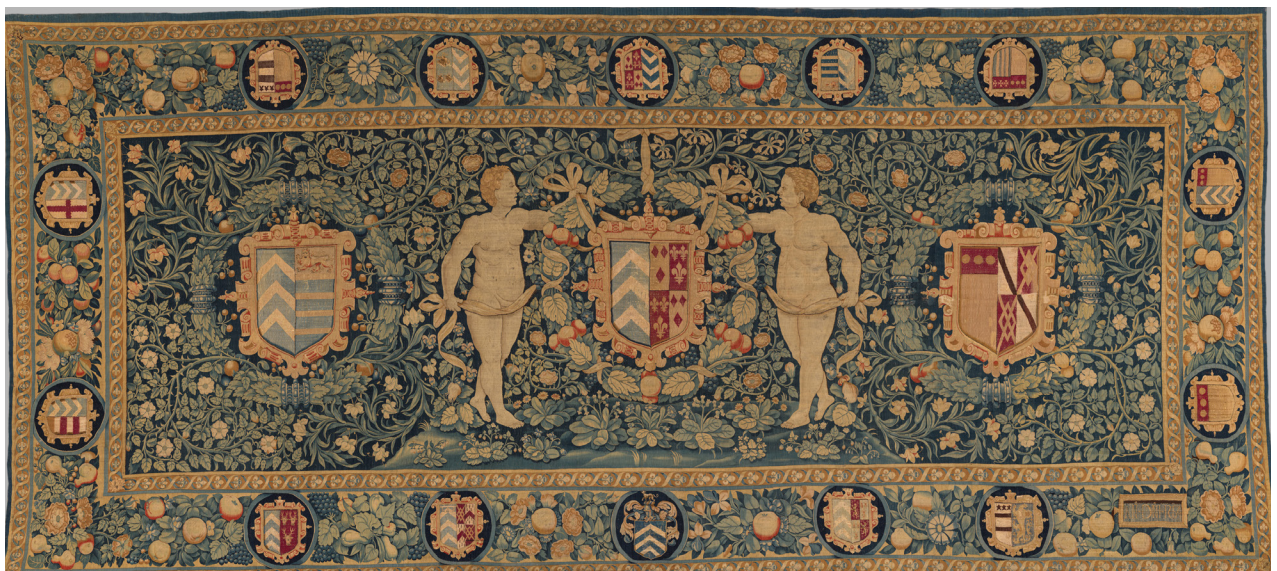
Furnishing Textile, Crimson Velvet Cloth of Gold
MMA 67.55.101

The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England

The long-delayed exhibition *Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England*, includes many spectacular textiles and the entire conservation team, along with mount makers, and technicians, worked on installing these oversized pieces. Included are magnificent tapestries woven in wool, fine silk, and opulent gilt metal-wrapped thread. This luxurious material added splendor to these textiles and also increased their weight, making the installation a challenging task. Among these were *Andromache and Priam Urging Hector Not to Go to War* (from *Scenes from the Story of the Trojan War*) ca. 1470–90 from the Medieval and the Cloisters collection and *The Lewknor Table Carpet* from the ESDA collection, both conserved in our laboratory.

The Cloth of Honor featured in the first gallery, shown to the left, was the focus of an interdisciplinary study by Giulia, curator Elizabeth Cleland and conservation scientists Federico Caro and Nobuko Shibayama and will be published in the upcoming *Met Museum Journal 57*. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with an entry by Giulia.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2022/tudors>



The Lewknor Table Carpet
MMA 59.33

Exhibitions

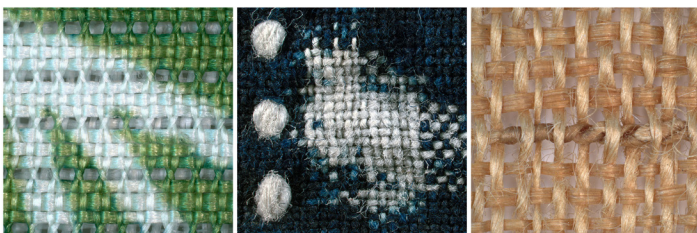
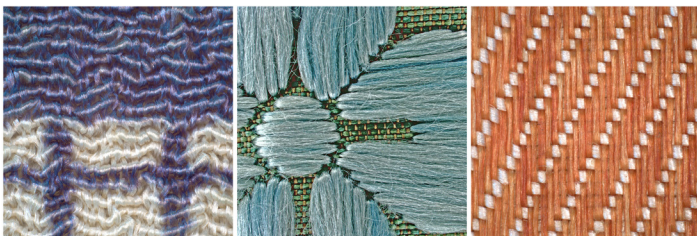
Kimono Style: The John C. Weber Collection

This special exhibition featuring approximately sixty-five Japanese costumes and textiles were displayed along with the fashionable modern kimono with their bold & colorful designs. Western fashion by designers such as Poiret, Balenciaga, and Charles James inspired by the Japanese aesthetic demonstrate the confluence of East and West in the modern era.

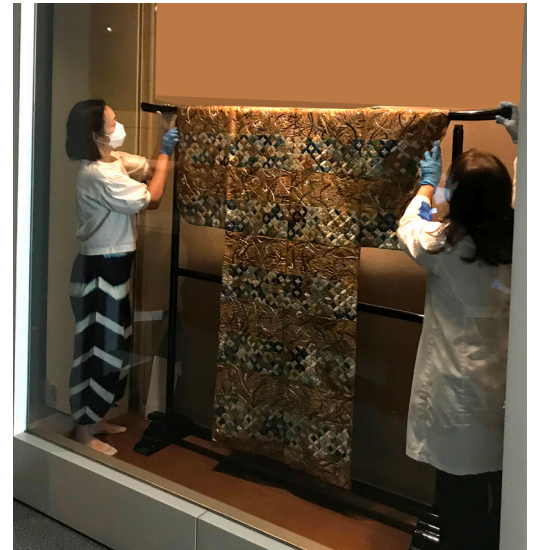
A catalog accompanies the exhibition comprised of essays by the Department of Asian Art and the Costume Institute including a glossary of Japanese terminology illustrated with high-resolution photomicrographs taken by conservators in our department providing perspectives from all angles in studying the kimono. The use of a microscope to closely examine the textiles' weave structures and/or surface embellishments helps conservators to understand the material and assess the condition in order to develop a treatment plan for conservation and display.

The traditional display for kimono on a Japanese lacquered robe stand, known as an ikō, is used for some of the historic kimono while most of the modern kimono are seen in a T-shape on metal robe stands. Fireman's and firewoman's jackets, ceremonial samurai garments and banners are hanging from wooden poles. To provide a sartorial view of the kimono, the curator requested that one be dressed on a mannequin to show how the kimono is worn with all its accessories, which became a project for Viviane Chen, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow 2021-2022 in our department (gallery 227). We hope that you will come to see the *Kimono Style* exhibition.

Kristine Kamiya



Example of different types of techniques, featured in the glossary.



Installation method of dressing the Noh costume on an ikō
Lent by John C. Weber
WT.Weber.06.



Coat
Elsa Schiaparelli
MMA 2002.479.4

Meisen Kimono with Large Checkered Pattern
Promised Gift of John C. Weber

Dress
Roselle Davis
MMA 2009.300.519

Recent Acquisitions

Early this year, Mrs. Karen B. Cohen gifted the Museum a large number of textiles, including 18th- 19th centuries quilts and coverlets; and medieval and early modern embroidery. ESDA was pleased to receive fascinating British coverlets and quilts whose variety of techniques enriched ESDA's collections of European domestic textiles. These colorful and decorative textiles were often used by friends or family to commemorate significant events such as a birth or a marriage.

This quilt has many examples of early 19th century printed cotton pieced together in a pattern of repeating hearts and chess pieces. Fragments of at least ten different prints were carefully shaped and stitched together to create the pattern. The textile is in very good condition, with well-preserved colors.

Giulia Chiostrini

Mrs. Karen B. Cohen's Gift



Hearts and Chess Pieces Quilt
MMA 2022.147.2

Research

Islamic Art Dress Viewings



Deniz Beyazit, Julia Carlson, and Viviane Chen during a viewing of Ottoman dress

Spanning many cultures and time periods, the collection of Islamic Art has been enriched further in 2018 by the acquisition of dress and accessories from the Costume Institute. After the formidable task of incoming assessment and re-housing by Ratti Textile Center staff in consultation with Textile Conservators, these artworks have become available for study. During the last few years there has been an increased interest from Met Fellows and outside scholars. Julia Carlson has been working with Deniz Beyazit, Associate Curator in Islamic Art, to further understand the depth of these recent additions to the collection by looking closely together. Our previous Mellon Fellow, Viviane Chen, researched these dressing garments from non-Western cultures working with Conservators and Curators. Highlighted here are two viewings from ongoing research by Nancy Micklewright and Wafa Ghnaim.

Julia Carlson

Research

Textile Conservation Work at The Met Egyptian Art Archaeological Expedition to Dahshur, Egypt

The mummies from The Metropolitan Museum of Art excavation in the Post-New Kingdom, Roman to the Late Antique cemetery at Dahshur can be considered one of the few Egyptian collections of textiles scientifically excavated and documented. This group is an important reference for technique and materials used in textiles, and a source of cultural information on the funerary tradition during these periods.

Excavation finds are interpreted through the experience and observations of textile conservator and liaison for the Egyptian Art textile collection of The Met, Emilia Cortes who has worked on a major excavation in Egypt, where she is responsible for the preservation, record keeping, storage, analysis of textile material, and development of innovative excavation methodologies, such as the “Mummy Kit.” This kit allows the archaeologists to wrap the mummy in-situ with the final storage materials, thus eliminating the need for changing packing materials between excavation and storage. This methodology reduces handling of the mummy for their long-term preservation. Minimal intervention is crucial for long term research, as well as the relationship between excavated material and museum collections.

Results of the research include reference material that is part of The Met Egyptian Art collection, including mummies, textiles, archival photographs, and documentation. The purpose of this research is to compare the context of Dahshur excavated material with The Met collection. Information from both excavation and Museum have been used to better understand and complement each other.

Perhaps we will never be able to recover the geographic provenance of the textiles in museum collections, but discoveries during excavation may well indicate how a shroud was used when wrapping a mummy, or where a textile fragment might have been used. This long-term approach helps to recover context of unidentified fragments in museum collections, to understand more clearly how textiles were used when a mummy was wrapped, as well as iconography in relation to the body.

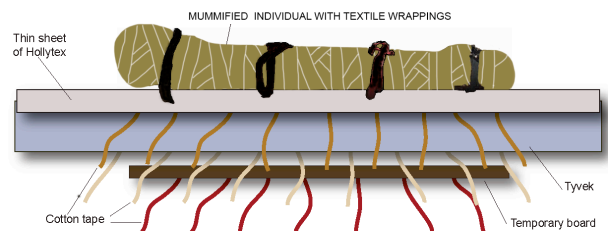


Excavated textiles from different periods



Preparation of the “Mummy Kit”

Emilia Cortes



Conservation Projects

King Arthur of the Heroes Tapestries Returned to The Met Cloisters

Late Spring in June 2022, *King Arthur* (32.130.3a; 47.101.4) returned to The Cloisters after the completion of conservation treatment for over three years. It was the first tapestry chosen for the major conservation campaign for The Cloisters' Heroes tapestries which embarked at the end of 2018.

Woven around 1400, The Cloisters Heroes tapestries constitute one of the earliest surviving medieval tapestries. After the acquisitions in the 30s and the 40s, the tapestry fragments were re-constructed into four hangings as currently displayed in the gallery by four "needlewomen" under the supervision of curators James J. Rorimer and Margaret B. Freeman from 1947 to 1949.

After several decades of displaying the Heroes tapestries, the Department of Textile Conservation has initiated a conservation campaign in collaboration with the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters.

During the extended time of over three years, due to the pandemic, the team of conservators, Kathrin Colburn, Kisook Suh, and Anna Szalecki worked with Janina Poskrobko in close communication with curators in decision making processes for the project. After thorough documentation, examination, and many hours of conservation treatment, *King Arthur* tapestry is physically in much more stable condition with improved appearance (more legible design in clearer colors) and ready to meet visitors back in the Heroes Room at The Cloisters.

The successful completion of the first phase of the conservation campaign was possible for the leadership of project curator Barbara D. Boehm, who led the project until her retirement, and generous donation and additional support by Jane and Michael Horvitz throughout the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

Kisook Suh



Installation of *King Arthur* tapestry



Before and after conservation
King Arthur (from the Nine Heroes Tapestries)
MMA 32.130.3a; 47.101.4

[1] Amelia Roché Hyde, *The Heroines of Heroes: After World War II, four Museum employees restored a set of beloved medieval tapestries* (<https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2022/3/heroines-of-heroes>)

Conservation Projects

Phoenixes Reborn: Conservation of Imperial Silk Tapestries



Panel with five phoenixes in a garden
MMA 25.109.1

Fenghuang, often translated as ‘phoenix,’ is the most iconic bird in Chinese mythology and art. A pair of oversize silk tapestry panels (25.109.1, 25.109.2) depicting this prestigious bird are featured in *Noble Virtues: Nature as Symbol in Chinese Art* (September 10, 2022-January 29, 2023). Together, the panels demonstrate the extraordinary craftsmanship and creativity of the 18th-century imperial textile workshops. The tapestries are so meticulously crafted—using polychrome silk and gold thread—that the designs appear painted or embroidered rather than woven. The bright yellow background, a color exclusive to the Chinese emperor, further confirms their imperial origin.

Identical in size (101 9/16” x 85 5/8”), both tapestries were restored and framed prior to entering The Met’s collection in 1925. Demounting the textiles revealed the original selvages—a key to understanding the original width of each tapestry and, consequently, the immense size of the loom required to weave such works.

In 2015, conservators and curators assessed the condition of both tapestries and created a plan for their restoration, starting with the removal of the old acidic mounts. The next step required the painstaking removal of earlier restoration efforts that had caused damages in the warp and weft threads.

The surface of both tapestries was so heavily covered in dust that a shadow of the tapestry designs was duplicated on the thin cotton backing from dust particles that had seeped through openings in the weave. As the surface was cleaned using a delicate vacuum and dirt erasers, the original colors were once again revealed.

Removal of a number of earlier patches, sewn onto the reverse of the tapestries, eased and corrected the distortions that they had introduced. Likewise, the formerly hemmed edges of both tapestries were relaxed using gentle humidification.

To enable these fragile textiles to be displayed vertically, it was decided to pressure mount them within a mount with a Plexiglas face that would also permit the pieces to be displayed and stored without rolling. Preparations for pressure mounting were carried out in tandem with the conservation treatment. This entailed preparing the mount with cushioning layers of non-woven polyester batting to achieve the correct amount of pressure between the tapestry and the facing sheet of Plexiglas. A layer of 1/16” thin non-woven polyester Pellon and cotton fabric covered the batting materials. The tapestry then was positioned in the center of the prepared mount and a Plexiglas was placed directly on the tapestry. The Plexiglas was secured to the mount with screws on four sides, allowing the tapestry to stay vertical.

Pengliang Lu
Minsun Hwang

Janina Poskrobko's Presentation: Commemorating The Met's New Islamic Galleries (ALTICAL-SA) Installation—Revisiting Textile Conservation Practices for a Culturally Diverse Collection

In 2021, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) celebrated the 10th anniversary of the new Islamic Art Galleries the initial planning of which began on the threshold of the 21st century. A presentation of culture reflecting the richness and importance of textiles offered opportunities for curators and conservators' ideas and imagination. The year 2023 will mark the 50th anniversary of The Met's Department of Textile Conservation, and we are honored that its foundation and existence coincides with the establishment of the American Institute for Conservation. This creates a great occasion to reflect on the evolution of textile conservation from craftsmanship or apprenticeship to a professional discipline. Therefore, the presentation considered practices and philosophy changes in the context of a large museum and its long-term vision for gallery improvements and education programming, requiring inter-departmental collaboration to display culturally diverse collections of various object types. It described the steps undertaken in building New Galleries of Islamic Art and illustrated the enormous team effort and decision-making during that 10-year period. The conservation plan included addressing four aspects: evaluating the previous gallery environment, assessing previous display methodology and materials, surveying the textile collection to assess current condition and recommending necessary treatments, display methodology and requirements (light, rotations frequency), and conducting technical research.

Janina Poskrobko



The Emperor's Carpet
MMA 43.121.1

The Met Around the Globe

Celebrating The Met: Highlights from the Gift of The Metropolitan Museum of Art to the Muzeul Textilelor



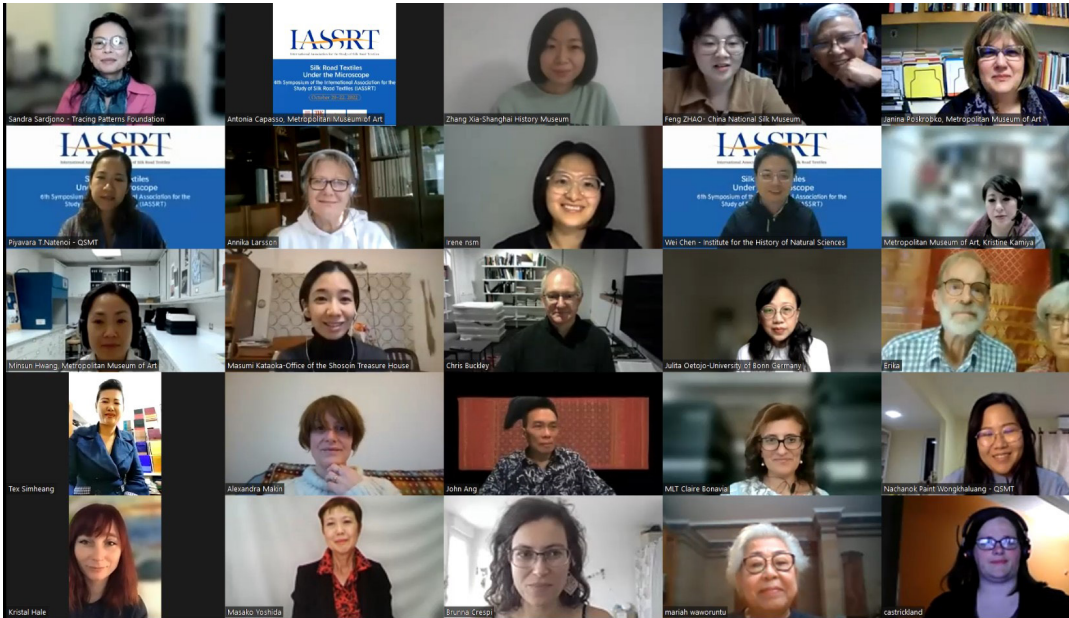
It is rare for a museum collection to be significantly enriched quantitatively and qualitatively all at once. This has happened in the case of the Muzeul Textilelor, an institution formed in 2017 in Băita, Hunedoara County, Romania. A year after its founding, the Museum received exceptional support from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in the form of a donation from the Met's Costume Institute, of 1,871 regional costumes and accessories indigenous to over eighty cultures worldwide. Included in this donation are a number of Romanian costumes of the best quality, which The Met generously gives back to Romanian heritage.

These creations blend necessity with a desire for beauty, practicality with an expression of spirituality. The costumes are unique to their cultures, developed according to the resources immediately available to each cultural group. Some of the objects show the intertwining of materials, techniques, and costume typologies within groups of populations from neighboring territories, while others show major differences between cultures located at opposite geo-climatic areas. All these cultural aspects are addressed in the exhibition, which includes objects from various countries presented in a cultural dialog with each other. Most of these pieces are on display for the first time.



Virtual Events

IASSRT Symposium



2022 IASSRT Symposium Day 1 Group Photo

This past October the Department of Textile Conservation joined in co-hosting the 6th Annual Symposium of the International Association for the Study of Silk Road Textiles (IASSRT). The symposium, consisting of six panels and spanning three days, was a grand success with viewers tuning in from all over the world.

A Discussion with Helena Loermans



The Supper at Emmaus
MMA 14.40.631

On November 10th we hosted our first informal webinar, a conversation with Helena Loermans, a weaver who has been reproducing patterned linens sometimes used as canvas by 15th and 16th centuries “Old Master” painters. The Met stores a collection of similarly patterned linen fragments and, in collaboration with Cristina, Helena has used x-ray images and photomicrographs to recreate the weave draft. Cristina and Helena discussed this fascinating topic in detail and a recording of their conversation is available on our website until January.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwut-VECPHQ&list=PL8HAKqKX065Ctw1ZfwvtjKb_N2vOmDiYD&index=20.

Staff News

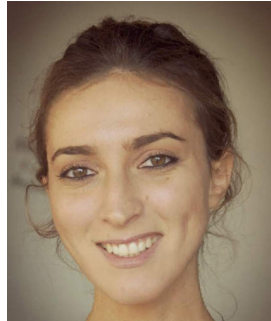
Earlier this year a new role was created in order to better facilitate our collaboration with the Antonio Ratti Textile Study and Storage Center. Cristina Carr has been appointed Consulting Conservator and will work collaboratively with Consulting Curator Amelia Peck (American Wing) and General Manager and Head of the Antonio Ratti Textile Study and Storage Center, Eva Labson.

New Hires

This year we have been lucky enough to have two new members join the department.

In April Martina Ferrari, previously a Mellon Fellow in the department, assumed the role of Associate Conservation Preparator.

Most Recently Oliver Orr signed on to be our new Laboratory Coordinator. We are very excited to welcome them as part of the team.



Mellon Fellowship

We are proud to welcome Jaya Misra to the Department of Textile Conservation as the current Andrew W. Mellon Fellow. Jaya has recently completed coursework at FIT in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, and Museum Practice. She holds a BA in Fashion Design from the National Institute of Fashion Technology in New Delhi, India. Her research project will focus on traditional textile preservation practices in India such as the rafoogari of Kashmir, the intangible cultural heritage associated with regional dress, and how these aspects speak to sustainable conservation.

Celebrations

Julia Carlson welcomed a new addition to her family. Her daughter, Diana Wohlgemuth, was born in October weighing in at 5lbs 11ozs. She is healthy and thriving.



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.

www.pinterest.com/mettextileconservation
www.instagram.com/mettextileconservation

To learn more about how you can become involved and support this important work at The Met, please contact: Jennifer Brown, Deputy Chief Development Officer of Individual Giving at 212-650-2366 or email to Jennifer.Brown@metmuseum.org

You may also contribute online at:

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

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