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Textiles Working Group Newsletter

In This Issue

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Decorating a bride's hands with henna before her wedding is a communal event in which women unite in shared creativity, Photo: Khandoker Upama Kavir, Fragment #66: Cut, Shared, Rewoven: How Textile Heritage Builds Connections (Page 20) © Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB, SPK

From the Coordinator

Sarah Benson

Dear Textiles Working Group Members,

2025 sped by for many of us, myself included. Unfortunately we were not able to get this newsletter out to you all within 2025, but we are very happy to be sharing with you now, the Working Group's second newsletter of the 2023-2026 triennium. As we go into our final year of the triennial there has been much to review in activities of the past year and to look forward to as we wrap up the triennial period. This has been my second term as Coordinator for the Textiles Working Group, and it will be my last as Coordinators are allowed to serve only two successive terms. I find this a good rule that ICOM-CC keeps as it allows us to give as much as we can within these two triennia, with the aim of passing on a bigger and more lively Working Group to the next Coordinator who will come in with new ideas and new energy. The new Coordinator will be voted upon during the triennial conference in September in Oslo, Norway (voting will also take place online for those who cannot attend).

Candidates who wish to stand for the next Textiles Working Group Coordinator for the 2026–2029 triennium are to submit candidacy by Monday 25 May 2026 (17:00 UTC+2). A Town Hall information session will be held on 9 April 2026 at 10:00 CET and 16:00 CET to provide an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and election process. All prospective candidates are warmly invited to attend and participate in this interactive session. The role is open to current voting members of ICOM-CC and the candidate will of course need to be part of the Textiles Working Group before the submission date.

More information and the application form can be found on the ICOM CONSERVATION website: https://www.icom-cc.org/en/news/call-for-candidates-icom-conservation-2026-2029-triennium

I feel that one of my accomplishments during my terms as Coordinator has been with the help of the Assistant Coordinators to improve the newsletters and to provide more information on current projects, dissertations and events that have happened around the world in textile conservation. I hope you find that this newsletter is continuing on this track. We have more exciting interviews hosted by Assistant Coordinator Rosie Chamberlin to share which start on page 9. Rosie interviews both of our previous supervisors: Frances Lennard who has now retired from the University of Glasgow, and our emerging conservator who is also Assistant Coordinator, Mengying Zhang; she also introduces a new survey for emerging professionals on page 6. We have the review of our Working Group's second informal Zoom meeting of the triennium by Assistant Coordinator Paula Nabais, which focused on analytical techniques for textile conservation and was the Textile's event with the highest number of registered participants to date (page 4).

2025 was an exciting year for textile conservation with several large conferences taking place and three of these are reviewed starting on page 14. I was fortunate enough to attend two of these conferences, the TCC 50 year anniversary and the NATCC that took place in beautiful Banff, Canada. Both these reviews are written by emerging professionals who attended their first textile conservation conferences and I enjoyed reading about them from their perspectives.

This time around we have a section for some interesting collaborations and ongoing projects, including a joint carpet project between Germany and India involving the community, an update of the InBloom thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU) project and a textile project using AI is presented.

Our popular recent publication and thesis abstract section has continued. It has been condensed to follow a standard within the ICOM-CC Working Groups and to eliminate any issues that the students may incur if they wish to publish their theses in the full format. It starts off with our former Assistant Coordinator Sarah Scaturro's PhD abstract which she worked on for many years and we all congratulate her for finishing.

I would also like to remind that all the past newsletters from the Working Group are available open access on the ICOM-CC website going back to 1991!

https://www.icom-cc.org/en/newsletters/Textiles

I would really like to thank everyone that has contributed to this newsletter and that has helped in keeping our Working Group lively and becoming more connected across the globe.

I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter!

Sarah Benson
-ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group Coordinator-

ICOM-CC Triennial Conference: Oslo, Norway

The end to this triennium is already upon us with the Triennial Conference in Oslo from 14 – 18 September 2026. The conference is full of many presentations from all ICOM-CC Working Groups as well as posters, technical visits, key note speakers, a Trade fair and much more. The Textiles Working Group along with the other Working Groups are in the final selection of the articles and the poster submissions. Stay tuned for the list of presentations and posters (to be released on the conference website in April) and remember that relevant textile topics are not only presented in our Working Group but may also be in others such as the Documentation, Education and Training in Conservation, Objects from Indigenous and World Cultures, Preventive Conservation and the Scientific Research group to name a few. We will also have our end-of-the-triennium Working Group business meeting where any attendee of the conference is welcome to join and give feedback and suggestions for the upcoming triennial period 2026-2029.

For full information on the conference and the extra activities please go to the official website:

https://icom-cc2026.org/

At the end of the Triennial Conference the next Textiles Working Group Coordinator will be announced.

Registration is now open and keep in mind early bird rates ends on 15th of May!

https://icom-cc2026.org/registration/

As we all are aware these conferences are pricey, and I encourage everyone to look into funding options. There is the ICOM-CC Getty Foundation Connecting Professionals/Sharing Expertise TRAVEL GRANTS for conservators working in ICOM country categories 3, 4, and 5. The deadline is very soon on February 15. Other grants may be available through your own ICOM National committee, such as ICOM Sweden or ICOM UK. You can find your National committees' website through the ICOM homepage. Check out their websites for travel grants and bursaries.

https://www.icom-cc.org/en/news/icom-cc-getty-travel-grants
https://icom.museum/en/network/committees

We hope to see you in Oslo!

ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group Coordinating Team:
Sarah Benson, Bronwyn Cosgrove, Rosie Chamberlin, Maria Lourdes Po, Deepshikha Kalsi, Paula Nabais, and Mengying Zhang

Committee News

Analytical Methods for Textile Conservation: Bridging the Bench and the Bay for Informed Preservation

©Paula Nabais, Department of Conservation and Restoration, NOVA University of Lisbon

The ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group successfully hosted a highly anticipated and critically relevant seminar, "Analytical Methods for Textile Conservation," on 21st of March 2025. Delivered as a free virtual event, the seminar gathered an exceptional panel of conservation scientists, conservators, and heritage researchers to profoundly explore how cutting-edge scientific investigation must now fundamentally support and enhance ethical decision-making across the textile conservation discipline.

The seminar's central aim was to foster essential interdisciplinary discussions and clearly demonstrate that analytical data is integral to formulating robust and responsible conservation strategies for historical textiles. The shared commitment to rigorous, evidence-based practice was the defining feature of the session.

Key Contributions

The seminar provided a comprehensive overview of the analytical landscape, showcasing four distinct yet critically interconnected perspectives:

Paula Nabais initiated the discussion with a focus on **Organic Colourants and Historical Formulations.** Drawing on her expertise as a heritage scientist, she emphasised the practical value of using in-situ techniques which minimise impact on the artefact, combined with powerful analytical methods like Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) and Mass Spectrometry (MS) to accurately identify natural dyes (such as cochineal, madder, and indigo). Her presentation highlighted how this detailed chemical analysis is crucial for determining a textile's provenance and directly informing her funded project REVIVE, which is dedicated to studying and recreating historical dye formulations from the Royal Textile Factory of Covilhã, Portugal.

The discussion was passed on to Diego Tamburini from the Department of Scientific Research at the British Museum, who tackled the urgent and complex challenge of characterising **Polymers and Modern Organic Materials**. Tamburini stressed that as collections increasingly include contemporary materials, conservators must be equipped to deal with modern synthetic textiles, which often degrade in unpredictable ways compared to traditional natural fibers. He emphasised that the robust identification of these materials requires advanced analytical precision, making sophisticated techniques like chromatography and mass spectrometry essential tools for scientists working with these newer materials.

Ana Serrano with the University of Amsterdam then focused on establishing a strong **Interdisciplinary Study and Ethical Framework** for the field. As a specialist in the combination of conservation, art history, and science, she stressed that the successful study of heritage textiles hinges upon the crucial integration of these three disciplines. Serrano highlighted that meticulous documentation and condition assessments must always serve as the ethical and necessary starting point for any analytical strategy, ensuring that scientific queries are well-justified and contextually relevant.

Finally, Hana Lukesova with the University of Bergen concluded the presentations with a perspective on **Heritage Science and Indigenous Materials.** Her research focused on the challenges of analysing highly sensitive objects, specifically Arctic textile materials such as skin and fur. She passionately stressed that the use of analytical methods are vital for these unique cultural artefacts, and she brought attention to the critical importance of engaging with Indigenous knowledge alongside scientific analysis to contextualise and preserve these specific cultural objects meaningfully. She concluded by advocating for textile conservation to be viewed as an integral part of the broader heritage science field, essential for tackling global preservation challenges.

The Path Forward

The seminar successfully engaged conservators, scientists, curators, and researchers. The final, unifying message was a call for ethical action: scientific data is not optional but necessary for informed stewardship. The discussions underscored that by moving towards more rigorous, evidence-based strategies—often utilising in-situ or techniques that require microsampling — the conservation community can ensure that its conservation treatments and storage protocols are both responsible and sustainable. The future of textile conservation demands the specific use of analytical methods to identify materials, understand decay, and allow a better decision-making regarding responsible interventions. Indeed, continued interdisciplinary networking is the most vital tool in our preservation toolbox.

This was by far the Textile Working Group's largest event thus far with 898 registered for the event, including: 182 ICOM members, 118 ICOM-CC members, 84 ICOM student members, and 514 non ICOM members. Live attendees were just under 300 and everyone received the recording that was available for 3 months after the event. Participants came from 73 different countries and including 6 continents. Proving that the continuation of online events is highly valid in keeping our Working Group as accessible and international as possible.

Paula Nabais, ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group Assistant Coordinator

Emerging Professionals Survey

Dear Colleagues, I am Mengying Zhang, Assistant Coordinator and an emerging textile conservator myself. I feel honoured and excited to start developing a section for fellow emerging professionals. With the guidance and support from our Working Group, the first initiative—a survey is ready for you!

This survey is designed to hear YOUR voice—your experiences, aspirations, and challenges as you navigate this field. How are you finding your place in textile conservation? What skills, opportunities, or support do you need to thrive? What insights or ideas do you want to share with our community?

If your graduation date is between 2020 and 2026, this survey is for you. It will take you about 20 minutes to fill in the form and it will have an impact on the future programmes for the emerging professionals section of our Textiles Working Group. Thank you in advance for taking the time to share your perspective! We look forward to hearing from you!

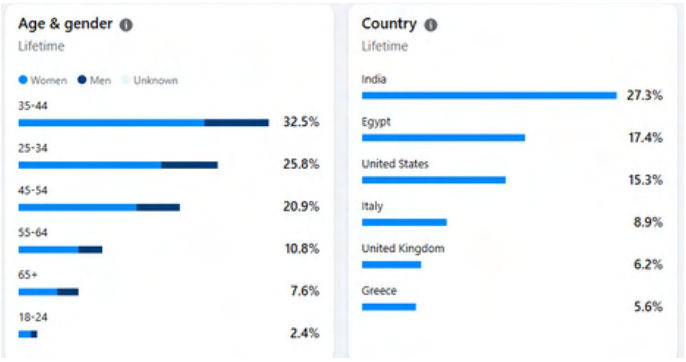
https://docs.google.com/emerging_professionals

Mengying Zhang
ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group
Assistant Coordinator

Social Media

Over the last year our Facebook page has grown to over 1,300 followers.

Generally speaking, we post on Facebook at least once a week, sometimes twice. The post with the highest reach (c. 6,008) was on the 24th of June, regarding The Textile Conservator in the 21st Century: An Evolving Role! Here's a graph of our followers:



Follow us!

Paula Nabais
ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group
Assistant Coordinator

Interviews

Behind the Seams with Frances Lennard

Interview by Rosie Chamberlin

In the last edition of the newsletter, we met Working Group Coordinator Sarah Benson and emerging professional Rachele Di Gioia, who shared insights from different stages of their careers. This time, we first reflect on the working life of Frances Lennard, whose teaching and research have shaped a generation of textile conservators.

So, Frances, why textile conservation?
I wanted to work in a museum, following my history degree, but was thinking in terms of being a curator. When I discovered that there was a career in conservation, —I think I had sent for information on careers from the Museums Association,— I jumped at it. I always loved the ability to use both your head and your hands.

Can you describe your career path in textile conservation?
I trained at the Textile Conservation Centre, then located at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey, England, between 1982 and 1985. I stayed on, working in the TCC's commercial Conservation Services department for another five years, then I set up a freelance business in the south-west of England together with Fiona Hutton, working for a wide range of clients.

In 2001, ready for a change, I returned to the TCC, which had recently moved to the Winchester campus of the University of Southampton. In what turned out to be quite a major change, I soon found myself teaching on, and then leading, the MA Textile Conservation programme. When the TCC was closed by the university in 2009, I was involved in the plans to move the programme to the University of Glasgow and led it there until 2017.

Frances Lennard investigating Pacific tapa at the University of Glasgow ©Frances Lennard

As an academic, I really enjoyed the mix of teaching and research and had the opportunity to carry out in-depth, multidisciplinary investigations into tapestry and Polynesian barkcloth.

Reflecting on your career, can you describe a memorable high and a challenging low point?
I've been so lucky with the opportunities where I've had to travel in the course of my career, and it has been wonderful to meet and work with so many brilliant colleagues around the world. One highlight was work in Taiwan on the conservation of the Tiger Flag for the National Museum, with colleagues from the Tainan University conservation programme.
A low point was the closure of the Textile Conservation Centre in 2009. But in reality, the dedicated teamwork of colleagues and the positive outcome of the move to Glasgow turned this into an exciting opportunity. The University of Glasgow has been a good home for the MA Textile Conservation programme.

Presenting research on tapestry degradation using strain-based engineering techniques at the University of Southampton ©Textile Conservation Foundation

What does a typical day look like for you currently?
Now I'm retired, I'm able to spend more time doing what I enjoy: seeing friends and family, knitting and sewing, walking, and visiting museums and galleries, as well as some voluntary work. I recommend it!

What do you like to do outside of textile conservation?
I've always enjoyed being creative with textiles, so knitting and sewing remain part of my life. I also love being outdoors, whether that's walking in the countryside or travelling to new places.

Looking forward, what are your hopes for the future of textile conservation?
Textile conservation has come a long way since I began my career—it's now more visible within the museum and heritage field, and there are more opportunities for collaboration. I hope that continues, so the valuable contribution textile conservators make is more widely recognised by other museum staff and the public.
I also hope that textile conservation education continues to thrive. It's never easy to provide training for a small group with very specific needs in either the university or museum sector. But the programme has already survived for six decades, and I feel confident that education is in very good hands and has a bright future.

Closing comments
This conversation highlights just how much the field has gained from pioneers like Frances, whose career has shaped both the practice and teaching of textile conservation. From her hands-on conservation work to her leadership in education and research, Frances's contribution reflects the true breadth and depth of the discipline.
Having studied under Frances on the Textile Conservation MPhil programme, at the courses current home —The University of Glasgow, I can say firsthand that her warmth, generosity, and passion as a teacher have left a lasting impression on me —as I know it has on many others in the field.

—Thank you Frances, for everything.

FRANCES LENNARD
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Working on the conservation of the Tiger Flag for the National Taiwan Museum ©Textile Conservation Foundation

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Behind the Seams with Mengying Zhang

Interview by Rosie Chamberlin

Now we turn our attention to emerging professional and one of our Assistant Coordinators, Mengying Zhang, whose already impressive résumé includes studies and hands on conservation work across the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Malta.

So, Mengying why textile conservation?
Textile conservation attracted me because it blends what I love: —textiles, analysis, handwork, and history. Growing up in the People’s Republic of China, I was fortunate to have the resources and time to explore costume design at school. My family’s rural traditions also exposed me to handwork such as sewing and knitting.

When I moved to the Netherlands, I pursued a Bachelor of Art History at Leiden University. The professors were inspiring, and many courses engaged with applied arts and exchanges between material cultures. The flexible curriculum allowed me to take courses at other universities, where I focused on costume history and fashion. In my third year, I discovered a minor in textile conservation and pursued it as my elective package. This sparked my passion for the field, and I went on to be selected for the Master’s in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage with a specialisation in textile conservation at the University of Amsterdam. The interdisciplinary programme, led by highly knowledgeable and skilled mentors, provided me with valuable training and exceptional guidance.

To me, textile conservation weaves together scientific and historical research, handwork, and creative problem-solving. It aligned with all my curiosities, and I feel fortunate to have found my passion and grateful for the mentors who guided me along the way.

Can you describe your career path in textile conservation?

My career began with volunteering. Before university, I participated in tour guiding and event organising at the Soong Ching-ling Memorial Residence in Shanghai, the Kunsthuis SYB artist residency in Beetsterzwaag, and the annual Kunstroute art festival in Leiden.

During my Bachelor's, I volunteered and interned at the Textile Research Centre in Leiden, cataloguing more than 400 textiles from around the world, as well as assisting with costume mounting and storage assessments. These early experiences introduced me to the cultural heritage sector and gave me the chance to engage with diverse material cultures in practice.

I continued with a Master's in textile conservation at the University of Amsterdam, followed by a two-year post-master professional training programme. During this, I conserved two costumes from museum collections, gaining valuable experience in in-depth treatments and curatorial collaboration. The training also included two internships: one at the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg, Switzerland, where I worked on archaeological textiles, and another at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, where I contributed to costume and tapestry conservation and mount-making for accessories.

After graduating, I completed an internship at Heritage Malta and then worked on freelance contracts as an assistant textile conservator. Projects included costumes, accessories, liturgical vestments, and tapestries dating from the 15th to 20th centuries. Working in Malta's warm, humid climate presented new challenges, but I gained insights into preventive conservation, material selection, and institutional organisation. I was fortunate to learn from a supportive and skilled team, and I

Rolling and packing historical tapestries during a Heritage Malta collaborative project at the Grand Master's Palace (Valletta, Malta). Image© Heritage Malta. Photography by Digitalisation Unit Heritage Malta.

look forward to new opportunities that continue to build on these experiences.

Reflecting on your career so far, can you describe a memorable high and a challenging low point?
As a junior conservator, a highlight was my internship at the Abegg-Stiftung. It was my first major placement in textile conservation, and I was thrilled to apply what I had learned. The institution's world-class collection and high standards were deeply inspiring, and the team's support helped me refine both my technical and professional skills.

A low point came near the end of my education, when I realised that securing a stable, long-term position in textile conservation might take longer than I had hoped, —or might mean pursuing freelance work. That was difficult to accept at first. But thanks to guidance from colleagues and mentors, I have grown more confident and open to diverse career paths, and I now see these challenges as opportunities for growth.

What do you like to do outside of textile conservation?
I like sewing and mending accessories and tool bags for myself while listening to interviews, reviews, and audiobooks. I enjoy films—films, especially those with interesting soundtracks, — and I love walking. I also used to practise Aikido, and I look forward to exploring more combat sports in the future.

Looking forward, what are some ambitions or goals you have for the future?
My most important goal is to keep working as a textile conservator and continue growing in this profession, while also maintaining a healthy daily routine.

If you could choose any project or object to work on, what would be your dream assignment?
My dream assignment would be to join a team of conservators working with specialists from diverse fields on exhibition objects tied to living communities. It would be a privilege to engage directly with those communities, access provenance-related information, and integrate that context into conservation decisions,— provided the resources are available to do so effectively.

Closing comments
It's inspiring to see how quickly Mengying has built a diverse and meaningful career. Her commitment to learning, adapting, and collaborating across different institutions demonstrates the kind of resilience and curiosity that drive our field forward. Talking to Mengying, her enthusiasm for the profession is palpable, reminding me of the energy and promise that new voices bring to textile conservation.

I hope you enjoyed reading these interviews as much as I enjoyed conducting them.

If readers have any questions they'd like asked in future interviews, or know someone who would make a great interviewee, please don't hesitate to contact us. Your input is invaluable in creating a dynamic community dialogue in our newsletter.

Reviews

AIC 53rd Annual Meeting Summary: *The Textile Specialty Group*

Review by Jacquelyn Peterson-Grace
Fashion Institute of Technology

The 53rd annual meeting of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA in May of 2025. The meeting was a gathering of professionals from across the spectrum of conservation specialties. The theme "What's your story? The power of collaborations and connections" presented a wide range of sessions with concurrent talks that included conservation specialty focused topics and general sessions.

The Textile Specialty Group hosted three sessions with presentations that covered everything from preservation efforts for individual collections to technical studies and complex treatments. Project-specific presentations included that by Flores Paredes and Zulema Paz Rodriguez, who spoke about their work to preserve the garments and legacy of Mexican fashion designer Pedro Loredo. Reilly Jensen spoke on behalf of co-authors Marie D. Desrochers, Steph Guidera, and Kaela Nurmi about the Community Partnership Project carried out by volunteers during the 2024 AIC annual meeting at the Alf Engen Ski Museum. The development of pesticide safety programs in historical collections was described by Maria Fusco. Kanban style project management software was discussed by Emma Fritschel and Michelle Leung, who represented the work of co-authors Lucia Bay, Jessica Chloros, Katrina Wilson and Deirdre Windsor. Jacquelyn Peterson-Grace and Gretchen Guidess presented solutions for the challenges faced when displaying a selection of unfinished quilts.

Several presenters spoke about multifaceted treatments. Michelle Leung detailed challenges posed by the many materials in a crazy quilt and Jennifer L. Cruise described the complex treatment of fine gauze layers in a 19th century wedding dress. Margaret O'Neil, representing co-authors Marlene Eidelheit, Robin Hanson, and Valerie Soll, discussed the unusual characteristics of an 18th century Chinese tapestry and the features that ultimately required the use of adhesive stabilization methods. Annalise M. Gall and Karri Vaughn co-presented on the treatment of a stitched palampore that required reversal of an aged and adhered lining before stabilization of the fragile textile could be carried out.

Technical research comparing efficacy of stain reduction on dyed wool fabric samples was presented by Eman Osman and Heba Saad on behalf of co-authors Abdel Rahman El-Srougy, Neveen Kamal, and Wael Sabry. Livi Andreini presented research on stain reduction of fugitive early synthetic organic acid dyes (representing co-authors Maarten van Bommel, Laura Maccarelli and Ana Serrano). Callista Jerman, representing co-authors Maria Fusco and Sumru Krody, spoke about the technical analysis of Anatolian Kilims as a pilot project to develop analysis methodologies at The Textile Museum. Artist Barbara Rossi's prints on textiles underwent a comparative technical study, the results of which were co-presented by Megan Creamer, Gillian Marcus and Stephanie Strother.

The Textile Specialty Group session also included a presentation by Camille Myers Breeze, who

reflected on twenty-five years in private textile conservation practice. Camille's presentation was followed by a panel discussion during which textile conservators Camille Myers Breeze, Kris Cnossen and Paulette Reading discussed the benefits and complexities of running a successful practice. The post-print papers for almost all of the talks presented in the Textile Specialty Group sessions will be published within the next year.
In addition to the thoughtful and interesting presentations during these sessions, the Textile Specialty Group also hosted a Wiki event during which the Wiki co-coordinators gave an update about recent additions and improvements to the Wiki and ongoing projects. Those in attendance were invited to participate in an in person "edit-a-thon", working together to define textile conservation terms that will be included in the Wiki's Lexicon.

General sessions with content applicable to textile conservation concerns included "Lighting the Way: Museum Illumination Policies and MicroFade Testing" that discussed the balance between object value and change induced by exhibition light exposure. The conference closed with the 8th annual mistakes session, "A Failure Shared is Not a Failure: Learning from Our Mistakes" where conservators shared brief, candid presentations about treatments or events that did not go as planned and the lessons learned from them.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to learn more about innovative research and treatments and reconnect with colleagues. The 2026 AIC annual meeting will be held in Montreal, Canada with the theme "Conservation at the Intersection of Innovation and Tradition" and promises to be another opportunity to gather to hear about new research and engage in energizing conversations about the conservation field.

For the full list of the abstracts: https://aic53rdannualmeeting2025.sched.com/subject/Textiles

TCC @ 50:
Building on 50 Years of Training, Research, and Practice

Review by Hailey Kremenek
Conservator student 2nd year, Textiles
University of Glasgow

Decades of textile conservation education wereas honored at the TCC @ 50: Building on 50 Years of Training, Research, and Practice conference that occurred over 16th-17th June 2025. Held at the current location of the Centre for Textile Conservation at the University of Glasgow in the Kelvin Centre, this conference both celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Textile Conservation Centre at Hampton Court Palace and invited a forward-facing reflection on the progression of the profession. Each day offered two themes of presentations, and posters were on view between sessions.

Day 1
The starting theme was "History of Practice", which revealed the living legacy of textile conservation as once practiced across different contexts from the beginning. The keynote presentation included personal reflections on the career development of the three editors of the second edition of Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice (Frances Lennard, Patricia Ewer, and Laura Mina), and a conversation on the development of textile conservation and education. An outline of the practice-led research approach of Karen Finch, founder of the original Textile Conservation Centre (TCC), revealed the foundations in practical skills and inquisitiveness of the TCC education. A timeline of cleaning ethics in the United States over the 20th century revealed how removing soiling has prompted questions since the beginnings of the profession. Further presentations examined the practical implementation of conservation across institutional contexts, such as the nuances of textile conservation at the National Trust or

within library collections. Discussions on documentation within private practice and recent developments in the use of X-radiography on textiles explored different facets of our modern practice.

The second half of the day examined "Collaborations". Textile conservation and contemporary art w ere as widely represented, reflecting the challenging negotiation between preservation and improving aesthetics that is often encountered when working with modern objects and designers. From working as the first textile conservator in a developing new contemporary art museum in Hong Kong to fostering the professional relationships necessary to work with these complicated objects within already established institutions, the expanding boundaries of what is a textile and therefore what is textile conservation were acknowledged. These material concern s are further complicated when considering performance objects, as speakers established through the complex composition of a David Bowie costume which required the knowledge of both a textile and objects conservator, and decision-making when preserving the remnants of ephemeral artistic actions. The second session under this theme presented more contexts both familiar to and outside of daily conservation that required professional collaboration. Incorporation of maker knowledge into conservation was explored through collaborative documentation and forming relationships with stakeholder communities to facilitate the continued use of ceremonial textiles. Composite objects and travelling exhibitions benefit from collaboration with other museum or conservation departments, while archeological contexts and post-sabotage response efforts become collective efforts across disciplines and local institutions.

This first day inspired rich conversation during the question-and-answer sessions and later in the evening. A traditional Scottish Ceilidh held on the first night brought attendees together in musical celebration of the five decades and three locations of this program.

Day 2

On the second day, the theme of "Training" shifted focus from reflection on the past and present to consider the current challenges facing the field and new directions towards progress. Museum internships as core competency building experiences in conservation was discussed through current opportunities provided at National Museums Scotland and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. The Abegg-Stiftung as a pioneering textile conservation educator maintains an emphasis on workroom experience to prepare emerging professionals. An overarching practical outlook acknowledged the importance of diverse training backgrounds across conservation presentation and the pressing areas of skill development. A presentation which celebrated the international knowledge of the textile conservation studio of the V&A also expressed concern for the future as living costs and immigration policies change. An increasing need for career readiness in private practice is present, as well as for innovation in common treatments. Stitching support and adhesive treatments have long-established approaches that merit further innovation through experimentation and continued practice. A renewed approach to conservation through incorporating living heritage and eco-museum ethics represented the growing efforts towards sustainability and decolonization within the profession.

After this session, a tour of the new student labs and teaching spaces were a special insight into the current iteration of the program.

Emerging ground for practice and study was explored over the second half of the day through "Research and New Technology". Dyes were a prevalent theme. Conservation materials were evaluated through investigations into the shelf-life of stock solutions, as well as a developed dye cycle for the emerging Aviterra® dye. Use of a suction table to manage the wet-cleaning treatment of problematic dyes in an object further considered practical adaptations to different tools and techniques. New

technologies were shared which offer increasing accessibility in collection management and display. Simple detectors show promise for helping to monitor off-gassing materials in display cases. Digital access and interpretation for visually impaired individuals will benefit from advancements in machine learning which produce highly accurate object digitization and physical reproductions. New treatment materials were explored through sea-weed-based funori as an emerging adhesive and the use of "green" solvent diethyl carbonate in treatment. The difficulties of conserving new modern materials were considered through investigations into the incompatibilities of solvent-based treatments with man-made fibers, as well as the wide variation in composition that accompany materials developed over the 20 th century and in modern bio-based textiles. Each presentation suggested new solutions and quandaries that may have implications for future practice.

This conference brought together conservators across educational and professional backgrounds to examine the past, present, and future of textile conservation. As one of many current TCC students in attendance, I have encountered challenges related to those described in each presentation over my first year of coursework. Complex treatments, uncertain ethics, or tools yet to reveal their potential have inspired questions throughout the history of this profession and continue to complicate decision-making. I have gained an understanding of these difficulties as catalysts for innovation. Our understanding of textiles as materials and culturally significant objects grows as the field continues to meet challenges with curiosity and determined work. However, the relationships built during these projects and through sharing discoveries establish a strong foundation for an innovative profession. I look forward to joining this field as an emerging professional knowing that I will contribute to a supportive community which is already advancing towards the next five decades of textile conservation.

Full program of event with speakers: https://www.icon.org.uk/events/tcc-50-building-on-50-years-of-training-practice-and-research.html

NATCC

Mending Threads, Filling Gaps: Conservation Narratives of Loss and Renewal

Review by Margherita Barone
Conservator, Textiles
Nordiska Museum, Stockholm

From September 15th through 19th, I attended the 15th Biennial North American Textile Conservation Conference (NATCC), hosted by the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, located in the province of Alberta, Canada. For me, it was the first time participating in a NATCC conference, and I was extremely excited to be surrounded by such a large and diverse group of professionals who share my passion for textile conservation.

The theme of the conference, "Mending Threads, Filling Gaps: Conservation Narratives of Loss and Renewal," offered a rich opportunity to explore multiple aspects of loss, not only related to objects and materials, but also to culture, memory, and history. From reconstructing the conservation history of a tapestry series at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to researching and understanding the degradation of Chinese

southwestern synthetic dyes, to exploring restorative approaches for historical garments, the conference provided a multifaceted view of textiles' material and cultural histories.

Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th were dedicated to workshops and tours that reflected the region's land-based knowledge and artistic production. Workshops included miniature dolls, beadwork, leather bag and pouches, and ribbon skirt making, led by local craftspeople. The tours, meanwhile, highlighted the intent of past local collectors to create spaces that celebrate the rich artistic production of the area.

On Wednesday 17th, the paper presentations began. The conference, which counted around 80 in-person attendees, was also held online following the success of the previous editions to allow broader participation. The program was organized into seven thematic sessions: institutional practice, transformative education, loss compensation, alterations, technical skills, cleaning, and community. This structure, with multiple breaks throughout the day, was particularly effective in maintaining a rhythm that encouraged both in-depth engagement and exchange.

The two projects presented during session two, dedicated to transformative education, particularly stood out to me.

The contribution by Jessica Urick (RISD Museum) and Anna Rose Keefe (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum), explored the integration of textile conservation into art school curricula. Their long-term program at the Rhode Island School of Design highlighted the reciprocal relationship between conservation and education: students gain hands-on knowledge of materials, deterioration, and display, while conservators benefit from the creative and conceptual input of young artists. This educational model reframes conservation not as a specialized endpoint but as an active part of artistic and institutional life.

What made this presentation particularly compelling was its potential to redefine how conservation operates within academic and museum contexts. It offered a vision of conservation as an open, visible, and participatory discipline, fostering care, curiosity, and shared responsibility for collections, cultivating a culture of stewardship that extends beyond the professional field.

Another highlight was Katy Smith's presentation, which detailed the establishment of the first textile conservation studio in the Occupied West Bank through a partnership between the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Palestinian Museum. This two-year project represents an extraordinary example of conservation as a form of cultural resilience. The initiative not only safeguarded over one hundred traditional embroidered thobes but also created an infrastructure for local conservation training and reciprocal learning between Palestinian and British institutions.

Beyond its technical achievements, this project carried a powerful political and ethical resonance. In a present where tangible and intangible cultural heritage is being systematically endangered, the act of conserving and documenting traditional embroidery becomes a statement of endurance and identity. The presentation invited reflection on how conservation can serve as both a material practice and an act of cultural resistance, asserting the importance of preserving heritage amid conflict and displacement.

Another presentation I found particularly interesting and valuable in terms of methodologies development was offered by Emma Pattinson on Thursday 18th as a part of the cleaning section. This project, carried out at the National Museum of Scotland in collaboration with Stella Gardner, and Yufei Xiang, introduced Paraprint OL60 as an innovative cleaning method for fragile textiles. Originally developed for paper conservation, this non-woven viscose material demonstrated

Presentations took place in the Kinnear Centre for Creativity & Innovation, at the Banff Centre; photo by author

excellent potential in the controlled siphon washing of delicate, painted silks. The authors' meticulous testing process, culminating in the successful treatment of a nineteenth-century double-sided painted flag, underscored both the promise and the challenges of cross-disciplinary material innovation.

This presentation stood out for its methodological clarity and forward-looking perspective, highlighting once again how tools from related conservation disciplines can be reimagined for textiles, providing a new technique applicable to fragile or water-sensitive objects.

These are just a few of the incredible projects shared during the conference, but a shout-out must be given to all presenters for contributing their expertise and knowledge.

Overall, the conference was highly successful in bringing together a wide range of themes and professionals, demonstrating once again how conservation thrives on exchange, reflection, and shared curiosity.

Looking ahead, a few suggestions could further enhance the experience of future editions. It would be valuable to create more structured opportunities for attendees to network and engage with each other's work, even outside the formal presentation sessions. As often happens in professional gatherings, conferences can become occasions for colleagues who already know each other to reconnect, while early-career participants may find it harder to approach senior conservators. Introducing small-group discussions, mentorship breakfasts, or collaborative roundtables could help bridge this gap and foster a stronger sense of community across generations.

Another point of reflection could concern the scope of future conference themes. While the 2025 edition offered an impressive range of papers, a theme designed to engage professionals from other areas of the museum and cultural heritage fields could expand the dialogue even further. Encouraging the participation of curators, artists, designers, and scholars from related disciplines would enrich the interdisciplinary dimension of the discussion and open new perspectives on how conservation intersects with display, interpretation, and creative practice.

In conclusion, the conference embodied its title's dual motion of loss and renewal; it invited professionals to imagine a field that is not only technically proficient but also ethically engaged and culturally responsive. The exchanges in Banff made clear that mending, in conservation as in community, is never merely about repair — it is about connection, continuity, and care.

Full conference program can be found at: https://natcconference.com/images/natcc/conferences/2025/2025_NATCC_Final_Program_Condensed.pdf

To purchase the post-prints visit: https://natcconference.com/publications

Cultural Collaborations

Cut, Shared, Rewoven: How Textile Heritage Builds Connections

Authors: Anna Beselin, Farwah Rizvi, Cornelia Weberl

Museum for Islamic Art, Berlin (Germany)

This project is an art-and-outreach initiative by the Museum for Islamic Art (Pergamonmuseum, Berlin, Germany) which sent 100 carpet fragments into public life as a means of cultural exchange and participation. The fragments were cut from a hand-woven "doppelgänger" of a 17th-century Caucasian dragon carpet from the museum collection; the replica was produced in Rajasthan, India (2022) and donated by Rug Star / Jürgen Dahlmanns.

The project began with a public vernissage on 23 September 2023, when the replica was cut into 100 pieces (each approx. 60 × 30 cm). The fragments travelled worldwide with the support of DHL Group and were entrusted to a changing circle of collaborators — artists, makers, groups

Figure 2. CulturalxCollabs – Weaving the Future project carpet was cut up by the first owners at the event on September 23, 2023, Photo: Don Panakkal © Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB, SPK

Figure 1. Weavers of the CulturalxCollabs – Weaving the Future project carpet in Rajasthan, India 2022, Photo: Rug Star by Jürgen Dahlmanns © Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB, SPK

and individuals — who contributed stories, creative responses and new uses for each piece. These evolving owner-led narratives were gathered on the project portal and across the project's social channels. CulturalxCollabs frames the fragments as a tangible link between the closed museum and its audiences while the Pergamonmuseum (including the Museum for Islamic Art) is closed for renovation (closed Oct 2023 — reopening April 2027). The fragments are scheduled to return for documentation in early 2027 and will be reassembled at a vernissage when the permanent exhibition reopens, allowing visitors to explore how the pieces and their histories have changed through collaborative engagement.

Figure 3. Project participants at the CulturalxCollabs – Weaving the Future project carpet, wool and silk knotted, Rajasthan, India 2022, Photo: Rug Star by Jürgen Dahlmanns © Museum für Islamische Kunst, SMB, SPK

For project information, fragment stories and participation details, please check out our project portal, scan the QR code or follow @culturalxcollabs on Instagram.
Email contact: culturalxcollabs@smb.spk-berlin.de.

Research in Progress

InBloom | *A Recent Research Project Investigating Blooming in Polyurethane-Coated Fabrics*

The InBloom (2025–2026) project addresses a pressing challenge in textile conservation: the *blooming* phenomenon affecting thermoplastic polyurethane (TPU)-coated fabrics. Blooming appears as whitish crystalline deposits on surfaces, altering both the aesthetic and stability of these materials.

Since the mid-20th century, TPU has been widely used in fashion and design for glossy finishes, metallic effects, water-repellent textiles and leather-like fabrics. Today, these objects present complex conservation needs and blooming is one of the most common deterioration patterns in these materials.

Led by the NOVA School of Science and Technology (Portugal) and supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT, MCTES), InBloom brings together an international network of museums, universities, and conservation institutes—including MUDE, MoMu, The Met, the Deutsches Museum, Liverpool John Moores University, the Getty Conservation Institute, the Laboratório José de Figueiredo, and Universidade de Aveiro.

The project combines scientific research, historical and technical studies, and oral interviews with artists, curators, and conservators to better understand blooming in TPU-coated fabrics. These investigations will inform the development of conservation guidelines for museums and professionals.

InBloom in Numbers (and counting!)

- 15 team members
- 8 collections under study
- More than 25 objects scientifically analysed
- 4 stakeholder interviews conducted
- 2 industrial companies visited

If you want to know more, please visit our website and follow us on Instagram @inbloom.pex.

AI-Assisted Reconstruction of Viking Age Oseberg Textiles May Soon Be a Reality

Author: Davit Gigilashvili

Colourlab, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), (Norway)

An interdisciplinary group of researchers in Norway is trying to develop a software that will reassemble the puzzle of fragmented archaeological textiles. The project is funded by the TexRec project of the Research Council of Norway (Virtual Reconstruction, Interpretation and Preservation of the Textile Artefacts from the Oseberg Find), and run by a group of computer scientists led by Dr. Davit Gigilashvili at the NTNU Colourlab. They are working on a software called Artifact Assembly, which is made to assist archaeologists and textile conservators in reassembly and interpretation of the highly fragmented and degraded Viking Age Oseberg textiles. The software is being developed in close cooperation with the archaeologists and textile conservators at the University of Bergen and the Museum of Cultural History of the University of Oslo. The current version of the software enables archaeologists to load the fragments and reassemble them on a virtual canvas, which saves highly fragile and vulnerable artifacts from physical interaction, and facilitates conservation. Furthermore, the software enables enhanced visualization for easier interpretation of the motifs. The current version also calculates simple image statistics to identify potentially similar fragments for puzzle reassembly. However, the computer scientists are trying to find an AI solution which will suggest matching pieces and assist archaeologists in puzzle solving in a more efficient way. High damage to the fragments, the amounts of missing information, and the lack of ground truth solution, makes it an extremely challenging computational problem that we hope will be solved with the rapid advance of the machine learning and a more tight-knit collaboration across disciplines.

Screenshot of Artifact Assembly with a fragment from the Oseberg Find displayed on a virtual canvas. The software enables virtual reassembly of fragmented textiles, measurement of similarities among them, and image enhancement for improved visualization. ©Illustration by Davit Gigilashvili. The original photograph by George Alexis Pantos

This solution, when applied to the surface, did not cause any changes in either the synthetic base fabric or in their metallic component.

Further reading:

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Recent Theses

PhD Theses 2025

The Professionalization of Costume Conservation in North America and Britain, 1964–1986

Sarah Scaturro | Bard Graduate Center U.S.A

This dissertation argues that the conservation of dress artifacts professionalized during a pivotal moment from 1964 to 1986 in North America and Britain. It traces the emergence of two disciplines —textile conservation and dress studies— demonstrating how the professional conservation of clothing cohered within the boundaries of scholarly control as textile conservators and dress curators acquired and applied knowledge, operated within an ethical framework, achieved a unique vocational identity, and finally, were able to assert their authority. A core methodology deployed is oral history, analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Fashion curators like Polaire Weissman (1897–1986), Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Anne Buck (1910–2005), Gallery of English Costume, Platt Hall, Manchester Art Gallery, were the first to systematize the methods of preserving and displaying dress. They strategically crafted methods and processes that effectively managed and promoted dress collections.

Preservation was a primary goal affecting how these collections were stored, accessed, used, and displayed. Concurrently, textile conservators, such as Karen Finch (1921–2018), Textile Conservation Centre, and Nobuko Kajitani (1935–), Metropolitan Museum of Art, codified conservation practices based on an ethical positioning of historic textiles as documents containing past evidence that could be retrieved through careful research and preservation. This documentary understanding of dress and textile artifacts impacted the actions and goals of conservators and curators by prioritizing tenets such as reversible methods and minimal intervention. The discourse surrounding the ethical nature of preservation activities like stitching and cleaning affirmed the boundaries of acceptable conservation practice.

Practitioners faced an existential query of how to assert their professional authority as a textile conservator or dress curator. Legitimization was an overriding concern because of the feminized perception of many of the textiles and costumes being studied and conserved; the methods of treatment and preservation that derived from domestic duties like mending, housekeeping, and doing laundry; and the overwhelmingly female gender of those entering the professions. Thus, dress curators and textile conservators alike formed professional organizations and graduate education training programs, two aspects that furthered their own professionalization through overcoming isolation, articulating standards, providing support, and spreading knowledge.

Masters Theses 2024-2025

A pair of wrestlers breeches for Zurkhaneh, Weltmuseum Wien: Investigation, Conservation, and Mounting of a Tunbān Made of Leather and Textile

Maren Lencer | University of Applied Arts, Vienna AUSTRIA

The subject of this thesis is the preservation of the wall covering of the Scherbenzimmer in Loosdorf Castle from the early 19th century. It is the original assembly of eight related wall panels, consisting of a construction of anchored blind mouldings, a linen ground, the display side made of silk and a framing. An examination of the history of the interior emphasises the former appreciation of the originally radiant blue, patterned silk. Today's appearance is very faded and characterised by major losses. Through scientific and technological investigations, the inventory and condition of the wall covering are recorded. The concept discusses various approaches to the conservation of wall coverings in order to implement selected measures on a sample area. The focus here is on stitching support.

The textile wall covering of the 'Scherbenzimmer' in Loosdorf Castle, Lower Austria: Technological examination, discussion of treatment proposal and restoration of a sample area

Zoë Ludwig | University of Applied Arts, Vienna AUSTRIA

The subject of this thesis is the preservation of the wall covering of the Scherbenzimmer in Loosdorf Castle from the early 19th century. It is the original assembly of eight related wall panels, consisting of a construction of anchored blind mouldings, a linen ground, the display side made of silk and a framing.

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A Comparative Study of Techniques, Materials, and Preventive Measures in Traditional Indian Painted Textiles

Imrana Wasi | University of Applied Arts, Vienna AUSTRIA

This study explores the traditional techniques and materials used in four types of traditional Indian painted textiles – Thangka, Mata ni Pachedi, Kalamkari, and Pattachitra – each representing distinct regional practices. It highlights how understanding traditional craftsmanship, including materials and techniques guides conservators in selecting treatments that preserve the authenticity and character of the artwork.

The research also emphasises preventive conservation. It offers practical suggestions light, humidity, and temperature. Additionally, it provides guidelines for safe storage, handling, and display methods tailored to each painted textile tradition. It also compares how these textiles are displayed, stored, and conserved in traditional settings and in museum environments. By comparing the similarities and differences in techniques, materials, and motifs, within the context of regional practices, the study also highlights the cultural significance of each artwork. This comparative approach supports better-informed conservation decisions and contributes to the preservation of India's rich heritage of painted textiles.

https://phaidra.bibliothek.uni-ak.ac.at/detail/o:74602

Preliminary literature review of the biological removal of adhesive coatings and tape on organic heritage materials

H.Jacobs | University of Antwerp BELGIUM

In the conservation and restoration of organic heritage materials, solvents are used despite being a health hazard and having a negative environmental impact. It is often deployed to remove unwanted tape and their adhesive residues. However, biological removal methods, like enzymes, are a safer alternative. In order to find the right enzyme to remove tape or adhesive, an interdisciplinary collaboration with bioengineers can be advantageous. In this thesis, pre-existing research on the use of enzymes to remove adhesive from organic heritage materials was compiled. This was supplemented with information on the composition of different tapes and both advantages and disadvantages of the use of solvents as a treatment. This resulted in a collection of information which bioengineers can use to develop suitable enzymes that can be deployed to safely dissolve glue residues in tapes on organic heritage materials.

On the consolidation of heavily degraded silk: a study of the current methodologies and their limitations

Envy Smolders | University of Antwerp BELGIUM

This master's thesis, incentivized through the University of Antwerp and the MoMu, aims to expand on the foundational knowledge currently available regarding the consolidation of heavily degraded silk artefacts. Answering research questions such as "Which consolidation technique is most suitable for the consolidation of heavily degraded silk?".

This was achieved via a comparative study in which consolidation via stitching, a staple adhesive (Lascaux HV) and a newer contender within the textile restoration field (Evacol-R), all applied on a heavily degraded 19th century silk artefact with pongee silk support fabric, are put to the test by way of optical microscopy, UV microscopy and a tensile strength test.
The Lascaux HV samples garnered the best results, followed by the stitched support samples which all scored well above average on all tests. The Evacol-R samples obtained the worst results, this could be attributed to its 'laminating' effect, as well as its glass transition temperature.

Conservation-restoration study of an "Indo-Portuguese" colcha from the collections of the Château de Talcy (Loir-et-Cher). Semi-blackout blinds in heritage buildings: comparative analysis and performance monitoring tool

Margot Dubost | Institut national du patrimoine FRANCE

This dissertation is devoted to the technical, material, and historical study of an Indo-Portuguese colcha from the Château de Talcy collections. This piece, made of cotton embroidered with silk, bears witness to the cultural exchanges between Asia and Europe during the Renaissance. The attribution of this work as a colcha was made possible by research carried out over the year. It arrived in the summer of 2024 at the Institut national du patrimoine in six fragments and was stabilized through conservation work. It also showed significant deterioration due to extended exposure to light. A technical-scientific protocol in preventive conservation was drawn up to compare the durability of the blocking power of several solar protection fabrics intended for use in semi-occulting blinds. In addition, research has been carried out to establish an easy-to-use tool for monitoring the performance of these fabrics, allowing personnel in charge of heritage collections to be alerted when necessary.

"Interlacing of ultramarine", Study and conservation-restoration of a summer dress in embroidered and printed cotton (1840-1850; Paris, Musée de la Mode, Palais Galliera), Study of the behavior of a starched cotton canvas during aqueous cleaning.

Flora Llati | Institut national du patrimoine FRANCE

This thesis is devoted to the historical and technical study, and restoration of a 'robe d'été' gown from the collections of the Palais Galliera. It dates from 1840-1850. It is cut from a very fine, translucent white cotton fabric, starched, embroidered with white plumetis and printed with an ultramarine blue plant scroll motif. On arrival at the Institut national du patrimoine, the work showed very visible yellowing, characteristic of cotton oxidation, which is dangerous for the stability of the fibers and pigment, and aesthetically disruptive. Aqueous cleaning was therefore envisaged, and a scientific study was carried out to establish a washing protocol that would preserve as much of the water-soluble starch as possible. Areas of wear and significant gaps in the sleeves and bottom of the dress were also present, weakening the dress and preventing it from being displayed to the public. These were consolidated without altering the translucency of the work. The filling fabrics used for the larger gaps were printed to make them more discreet. Lastly, a mannequin was made to match the period silhouette and the dimensions of the dress, enabling it to be displayed.

Viscose textile cleaning : a study of a corpus of Madame Grès' dresses in viscose jersey following the impact of water damage on the fiber

Ana Rodriguez | University Paris, Pantheon-Sorbonne FRANCE

This thesis originates from an unexpected water damage incident, which inadvertently provided a research subject by forming a corpus of three significantly altered dresses by the renowned couturière Madame Grès, housed at the Palais Galliera in Paris. A preliminary study of the designer's unconventional career during the golden era of French haute couture was essential before any conservation protocol. This thesis originates from an unexpected water damage incident, which inadvertently provided a research subject by forming a corpus of three significantly altered dresses by the renowned couturière Madame Grès, housed at the Palais Galliera in Paris. A preliminary study of the designer's unconventional career during the golden era of French haute couture was essential before any conservation protocol.

From Fragment to Form: A Digital Study of 17th-Century Silk Textiles from the Palmhoutwrak

Noa Duijsens | University of Amsterdam NETHERLANDS

This thesis investigates 17th-century silk textile fragments from the BZN17 shipwreck using digital reconstruction techniques. Through photogrammetry, Gaussian splatting, historical and material analysis, the hypothesis is developed that the 34 crimson silk fragments originally formed curtain panels and valances of a luxurious four-poster bed. The case study demonstrates how digital visualization methods can reconstruct fragmented archaeological textiles, providing insights into 17th-century material culture while establishing methodological frameworks for future textile heritage conservation projects.

Evaluating Three Sheer Support Fabrics Attached with Laid-Couching or Adhesive on Double-Sided Textiles by 2D Digital Image Correlation

Gabriel Caracol | University of Gothenberg SWEDEN

This thesis focuses on the use of sheer mesh fabrics for structural support of holes in double-sided textiles. As the application of a regular textile patch to these objects would entail covering significant aesthetic and/or functional attributes, this research sought out to find alternatives. Silk crepeline, polyester tulle and nylon net, combined with 2 distinct attachment methods; stitching and adhesive treatment were tested. Mock-up samples with holes were treated with each combination and put through a fixed-load test that was monitored using 2D Digital Image Correlation, a method that determines strain and displacement values. Results showed that choice of sheer fabric made a considerable difference in these values and their distribution. Silk crepeline was the material showing the lowest values, with a consistent progression throughout the test. Lastly, for the most part, conservation stitching was found to be mostly successful in supporting the damaged area, showing lower strain values.

https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/89782

Evaluation of flexibility and drape properties in adhesive treated silk

Amanda Fredriksson | University of Gothenberg SWEDEN

This thesis examines how adhesive type, support fabric, and adhesive concentration and ratio influence flexibility and drape in adhesive-treated silk. A literature review identified two adhesives (Lascaux 303 HV with Lascaux 498 HV, and Vinamul 3171) and two support fabrics (nylon net and silk crepeline). Twelve sample combinations were created by varying adhesives, concentrations, and ratios, applied to silk mock-ups. Flexibility was measured using the cantilever method to assess bending length and flexural rigidity in warp and weft directions.

Results showed that support fabric had the greatest impact: nylon net produced more flexible samples than silk crepeline. Adhesive type, concentration, and ratio had comparatively minor effects. Vinamul 3171 failed Oddy testing, raising concerns about its chemical stability. Further research is needed to determine the most suitable adhesive–support fabric combination when flexibility and drape are considered, and to evaluate Vinamul 3171's long-term suitability for conservation use.

https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/90001

Liturgical Textiles in a Changing Climate: A Study of Mold and Preservation Conditions in the Church of Sweden

Sara Nordin | University of Gothenberg SWEDEN

The Church of Sweden holds a substantial portion of the nation's cultural heritage, including liturgical textiles ranging from historical artifacts to works by prominent 20th-century textile artists. According to the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act (SFS 1988:950), these objects must be preserved with care. Recent shifts in church heating practices, prompted by economic constraints and environmental objectives, have raised concerns about mold damage, particularly in the context of climate change. This study investigates whether altered heating strategies in the Diocese of Gothenburg correlate with increased mold incidence on textiles. Drawing on conservation reports, surveys, and interviews, the results do not indicate a definitive rise in mold cases over the past decade. While references to mold were more frequent in 2019–2024 than in 2014–2018, evidence remains inconclusive. The study underscores the need for broader longitudinal research, while highlighting the importance of preventive measures, microclimate monitoring, education, and sustained financial support.

http://www.conservation.gu.se

Inadvertent exposure to chemical residues in textile conservation - A risk assessment methodology

Henny von Schantz | University of Gothenberg SWEDEN

A range of chemical compounds has historically been applied to textiles to prevent and cure insect attack. Today this presents problems to conservators working with historical textiles. Several of the substances used are persistent, some have been classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or reprotoxic. Since many substances' residues cannot be detected by human senses, it can lead to unknowingly subjecting oneself to long-term exposure.

This thesis assessed contamination in a folk dress collection in Sweden. To enable risk assessments, both hazards and exposure were investigated. A pesticide use history for the collection was created and likely routes of exposure in the textile conservator occupation were explored.

The study found that textile conservators are exposed to hazardous substances in their work and that some work tasks pose elevated exposure risk. The results indicate that since hazards cannot be fully controlled, the focus of risk management for conservators should be on limiting exposure.

https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/89602

The banner of the 'L'Union' choir from Saint-Imier: examination and adhesive conservation of a 19th-century banner

Francesca Maria Fracassi | Abegg-Stiftung SWITZERLAND

This thesis deals with the investigation, documentation and conservation of a 19th century banner. The object is made of two pieces of silk, which are each painted and sewn together. It was in a fragile state of preservation, which made it impossible to store and exhibit it without further damage. The combination of the silk fabric and paint layer, as well as the large format of the object, were the main challenges.

After weighing up various aspects, such as aesthetics and overall condition of the banner, adhesives techniques were considered and tested to stabilise the fabric. led to the development of a conservation concept that was successfully carried out one side of the banner within the planned timeframe for. A concept for storage and exhibition of the banner was also developed.

A ceremonial armour from the Qing dynasty: strategies for its preservation

Corine Siegmund | Abegg-Stiftung SWITZERLAND

In her work, Corine Siegmund dealt with the examination, conservation and mounting of a Chinese ceremonial armour from the 19th century. The focus is on three aspects:

- Documentation of a complex object: the armour consists of numerous individual parts with a multi-layered, three-dimensional structure.
- Conservation of an object with a combination of the materials textile and metal
- Mounting of a heavy, three-dimensional object consisting of many individual parts

This interdisciplinary thesis is a methodologically sound example of how to deal with complex objects made of textile and metal in museum collections.

GENERAL NOTE

All master's theses since 2010 are listed under the website of the Abegg-Stiftung. Please consult *www.abegg-stiftung.ch/en/masters-theses-conservation-restoration*

An insight into the topics, lines of inquiry, and results of the projects undertaken can be obtained from the posters available for download there.

Evaluating and Assessing the Efficacy and Suitability of Aged Pre-cast Adhesive Films for Use in Textile Conservation Treatment

Molly Anne Elizabeth Asbury | University of Glasgow, UK

This research investigates the practice and implications of using aged, pre-cast adhesive films in textile conservation treatments, evaluating both the material properties of aged adhesive films and professional attitudes towards their use.
Experimental work was carried out in which pre-cast adhesive films were tested on key issues relating to aging and on-going efficacy, and no major issues were identified with their performance. A survey of practicing textile conservators was also conducted, revealing that the practice of retaining and reusing adhesive films is common, with minimal concerns raised about their efficacy. The research culminates in guidance on the use of aged pre-cast adhesive films, aiming to enable textile conservators to make informed and sustainable decisions about the use of aged films in practice.

The textile after-lives of performance: what role does the textile conservator play in performance preservation?

Tereza Blahova | University of Glasgow, UK

This research contrasts two case studies of textile objects stemming from visceral, body-oriented performance art- Marina Abramovic's Rhythm 0 (1974) and Franko B.'s I Miss You/'Made to Measure' project (1999-2005). Placing the working conservation professional at its core, it seeks to determine how decision-making processes within the textile conservation field can be enhanced through a time-based media and contemporary art conservation interdisciplinary approach.
Through interviews with relevant conservation professionals, it is found that other factors such as institutional context are as, if not more, influential than the original performance itself. The conservation professional is positioned not as an empirically objective figure, but as a mediating figurehead and inherently subjective decision-maker, somewhat part of the wider creative process. It is found that recognition of multiple potential authentic states is necessary for preservation of conflicting tangible and intangible values.

Which solvents, if any, can modify the viscosity of funori without affecting its strength?

Yubi Coates | University of Glasgow, UK

This research investigates the dilution and viscosity of a Japanese adhesive funori when mixed with industrial methylated spirits [IMS], comparing bond strength with viscosity. A literature review in English and Japanese supports current knowledge and identifies gaps in the research.
Experimental work was carried out using a viscometer and a variety of funori strengths to IMS ratios, and the results were recorded and analysed. Funori was cast onto silk crepeline and reactivated to measure bond strength. The results showed that IMS lowered viscosity at certain ratios, but further research was needed to fully understand the relationship between solvent additions and bond strength.

Documentation as a collaborative practice: enhancing the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage

Olga Sofía Calvo Díaz | University of Glasgow, UK

This research explores how conservation documentation can be adapted to improve access to heritage baskets in museum collections and support the revitalisation of traditional crafts. Surveys and interviews with UK-based basket makers were conducted to assess their needs and priorities regarding access and documentation. Archival research at the Highland Folk Museum and the Museum of English Rural Life, alongside interviews with museum staff, provided the basis for comparing museum-centred and collaborative documentation approaches. Findings show that involving basket makers in documentation processes enhances the value of object records, strengthens museum-community relationships, and can support the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage. The author argues for broadening the view and roles of conservation documentation practices, redefining it as dynamic resource and a proactive conservation strategy for intangible heritage and cultural preservation.

Shady Business! Preserving Functionality of Three-Dimensional Textiles: A Methodology of Parasol Conservation.

Victoria Gosling | University of Glasgow, UK

This research investigates methods for preserving the functionality of historic objects, focusing on developing and evaluating a methodology for stabilizing splits in silk canopies so that parasols can continue to be opened and closed. After consulting with the wider conservation community through an online survey, three conservation treatments were assessed: stitching, adhesives and combined approaches. Each method was evaluated for effectiveness in mechanical function, aesthetic quality, ease of application and reversibility. The results demonstrated that a combination of adhesives and stitching can significantly improve structural stability while preserving the object's mechanical function. Further analysis found that the best performing adhesive is a mixture of 15% Lascaux® 303 and 498 HV at a ratio of 2:1. This study also presents practical guidance for those working with similar composite textile objects and advocates for interventive techniques that respect material integrity, object significance and intended purpose.

How does the context of an institution impact housing and care decision-making for textile bound books? A comparative study into the housing, handling, and access of raised embroidery and velvet bound books across different institutional collections

Caitlin Hartmann | University of Glasgow, UK

This dissertation explores the influence of an institutions' context on outcomes for housing, handling, and access of raised embroidery and velvet bound books. Textile-bound books' mixed materiality and requirement to function compromises their preservation, observed through a velvet embroidered Bible held within the Glasgow University Library. The author found the question of 'best practice' for the Bible's future preservation could not be separated from its institutional context.

An international survey builds on the identified gaps in the literature. Five case studies investigate the relationship between institutional contexts and approaches to collection care. Case study findings are reinforced through an interview with two research historians to determine successful care practices.

The researcher found the core contextual influence on textile-bound books' collection care was a result of understanding and valuing these books also as textiles. A guideline is proposed based on the research findings.

Learning Through Making: Co-Learning Between Conservators and Craft Practitioners

Jessica Hay | University of Glasgow, UK

This dissertation investigates the role of collaboration between conservators and craft practitioners in developing material knowledge, ethical awareness, and treatment approaches within textile conservation. Using a two-part methodology, the project combined semi-structured interviews with textile conservators and a practice-based workshop with a felt maker. The interviews explored conservators' experiences of collaboration, highlighting opportunities of knowledge exchange, rethinking authority, and ethics whilst the workshop generated first-hand observation of collaborative making. Findings indicate that collaboration with craft practitioners supports conservators in developing fine material judgements and cultivating a professional openness. The research concludes with recommendations for ethical, effective, and technique-focused collaboration. These include expanding understanding of expertise in conservation, adopting a collaborative 'mindset' within institutions, fostering knowledge exchange, and the promotion of long-term collaborative structures. Together, these outcomes contribute to a growing discourse on material-led, inclusive innovation in conservation practice.

Pleat Finishing: Investigating the Reshaping and Reinstatement of Distorted Narrow Knife Pleats

Jadeline Hibbins-Cline | University of Glasgow, UK

This dissertation investigates how conservators may reshape or reinstate distorted silk narrow knife pleats. Reference to historic pleat production and care processes contextualise the transience of silk pleats and supply directions for the practical research methods used and domestic pleat processes were reconstructed and later adapted into conservation experiments. The two phases of lab research, experimentation on aged taffeta samples and the case study silk gauze skirt hem, establish a humidification conservation treatment protocol for reinstating pleats without the need for removing remaining original pleats or deconstructing seams. These practical research findings are contextualised within the wider fashion conservation and restoration fields through specialist interviews. Discussions with experts about their own practice and other case studies referenced within conservation literature provide conservators working with different priorities, values, and in different contexts a treatment protocol suitable for their own and their artefacts needs.

A Preliminary Investigation Into The Impact Of Conservation Related Solvent Exposure To Man-Made Fibre Textiles

Bryn P Kelley | University of Glasgow, UK

This research examines the impact of conservation-related solvent exposure to textiles of common man-made fibres. A review of literature underlines the gap concerning the treatment of man-made fibres, especially those involving solvents. Experimental work tested acetone, Industrial Methylated Spirit (IMS), and Stoddard solvent, with nylon fabric,

polynosic rayon fabric viscose rayon/acetate rayon fabric, and polyester fabric samples taken from extant garments. The methodologies include calculation of dimensional change, friction coefficients, fabric stiffness, and qualitative observations. The findings indicate the effects of the selected solvents on the selected fibres to be varied: all solvent-fabric interactions resulted in change but exact changes were highly dependent. Of the fabrics examined the viscose rayon/acetate rayon fabric was the most susceptible to physical change, and the polyester fabric was the least. Regarding the solvents examined, IMS was the most impactful to the fabric samples' properties.

An Evaluation of Techniques Used to Finish the Edges of Sheer Lightweight Supports in Textile Conservation

Hannah Lacaille | University of Glasgow, UK

The subject of this research is the edge-finishing of sheer lightweight supports in textile conservation. Practical testing and an evaluation rubric were used to determine the effectiveness of selected edge-finishing techniques. The creation of the techniques and development of the evaluation rubric was guided by a questionnaire (aimed at textile conservation professionals) and literature search. The results of the testing indicated that each technique has advantages and disadvantages which fit specific treatment scenarios. In addition to describing the application and effectiveness of six edge-finishing techniques, this dissertation offers a comprehensive list of edge-finishing techniques for sheer supports, a rubric for the evaluation of edge-finishing techniques in general, and a checklist of considerations for choosing the most appropriate technique

An Evaluation of Stitching Practice to Support Areas of Loss in Textile Conservation

Martha Peach | University of Glasgow, UK

This dissertation project documents the development of stitching techniques used to support areas of loss in textile conservation. The current state of practice is evaluated and the potential for the incorporation of a broader repertoire of stitching techniques is explored. A literature review establishes historical context and reveals the dominance of laid-thread couching, highlighting the need for a more substantial evidence base to guide stitch selection. A questionnaire gathered data on current practices and rationales for stitch choice and a series of interviews with established textile conservators provides insights into factors shaping the profession. Findings suggest the need for a re-evaluation of decision making for stitched supports, whilst also demonstrating the open-minded attitude and engagement with critical thinking which is characteristic of the profession. It is hoped the project will provide a useful resource for future research and experimentation.

Hold Fast: An Investigation into Washfastness Testing Methods in Textile Conservation

Catriona Margrit Macleod Rigby | University of Glasgow, UK

Washfastness testing is used to determine how dyes will behave during the wet cleaning process in textile conservation. This paper begins to determine which washfastness method is the most reliable for informing wet cleaning decision-making, given the limited published research and numerous approaches.

Three stages were carried out: A literature review, employed to identify established testing methods and highlight approaches with the potential to develop novel methods. A questionnaire to investigate current practices and decision-making processes involved in method selection. Finally, an experimental phase to assess both established and new methods.

The research indicated that most conservators continue to use methods taught in their training programmes. However, experimentation showed many established methods were ineffective in predicting dye behaviour during wet cleaning. A newly developed method, utilising the gel Curdlan, proved promising for both accuracy and accessibility.

Delivering Organic Solvents in Agarose Gels A preliminary investigation into the application of a Paper Conservation technique for use in Textile Conservation

Eleanor Simcoe | University of Glasgow, UK

This research investigated whether a simple method of creating rigid agarose gels with a high percentage of organic solvent could be applied to textile conservation practice. Developed for paper conservation, the method involves gradually loading water-based agarose gels with ethanol in order to improve compatibility with common low-polarity organic solvents which cannot otherwise be integrated into rigid gels. This method was explored through the context of removing pressure-sensitive tape (PST) residues from textile substrates with Ethyl acetate. Comparative testing was carried out on linen and silk dupion samples soiled with artificially aged natural rubber PST residue, using gels prepared with the ethanol loading method, a speculative double-loading technique and a 'soak only' technique commonly used by textile conservators.

Gels were assessed for solvent uptake with ATR-FTIR, shrinkage and cleaning efficacy with results indicating the ethanol loaded gels achieved superior residue removal.

Conservation Through Reconstruction: Remaking George Washington's Silk Suit, 1789

Philip de Paola | Fashion Institute of Technology, New York USA

This research focuses on reconstructing George Washington's silk suit (1789) at Morristown National Historical Park (MNHP) as a methodology of preservation and preventive conservation. A multidisciplinary approach was taken to document the original suit, analyze dyes present on the silk fibers, create an accurate pattern, and have the fabric rewoven in its original color to reconstruct the suit using period-appropriate methods.

A faithful replica allows museum visitors to experience an important piece of history when the original can not be displayed safely. Continuous display of the silk suit contributed to drastic dye fading. Direct Analysis In Real Time Mass Spectrometry (DART-MS) performed by the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute (MCI), was used to identify the original dyes. This information will be used to approximate the original color of the suit and create custom fabric for the reconstruction. This project combined conservation practices with historical research and hands-on experience to reconstruct a faithful and historically appropriate approximation of the suit.

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Substitutes, Sacrifice, and Symbolism: Conservation of a Fire-Damaged Acetate Naval Nurse's Jacket from the Second World War

Annalise Gall | Fashion Institute of Technology, New York USA

This research discusses the conservation of a World War II era acetate naval nurse's jacket (c. 1944) that was damaged in a fire at Sampson Military Museum (Romulus, New York). The jacket distorted and discolored from heat and pollution. Acetate posed unique challenges regarding reversibility of both the damage and the treatment. The decision-making process is detailed, as well as curatorial and contextual considerations including the symbolism of the uniform and the mobilization of the American textile industry for mid-century military production.

The treatment goal was to restore flexibility and improve discoloration so the jacket could be displayed. A range of treatment methods were explored. Ultimately, the jacket was brightened with a hydrogen peroxide bleaching treatment and the distorted sleeve was relaxed with tacking irons and a preservation pencil.

This treatment provides a framework for treating additional Sampson uniform pieces in the future. It also contributes to thinking around disaster recovery and man-made materials in textile conservation.

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Perennial Pansies: Reconstructing The "Lives" Of An Altered Fanet & Beér Ensemble, Mid-1870s To 2024

Isabella Moritz | Fashion Institute of Technology, New York USA

Between the years 1875–76, the French couturier Fanet & Béer created a woman's ensemble that experienced a range of "lives".

This qualifying paper presents the history of this ensemble, outlining four ways through which historical garments can be understood: their production, their cultural context, their consumption and use, and their material examination. The paper establishes the context for the ensemble's production and consumption and reconstructs the object's biography through description and analysis. A detailed outline of the physical reconstruction process is described.

This project demonstrates how reconstruction can be employed as a conservation technique and explores its use within ethical considerations for fashion conservation. The benefits of using interdisciplinary methods are discussed, advocating for the value of uniting historical research methods with knowledge gained through making and remaking. This ensemble, its three-dimensional "idealized" form now restored, is situated at the intersection of a complex system of materials, production, and exchange and reflects the shifting values of society over time.

Historical Research, Analysis, Conservation Of A Cantonese Opera Costume Faan Gung Zong

Yiqian Yao | Fashion Institute of Technology, New York USA

This research discusses the conservation of a World War II era acetate naval nurse's jacket (c. 19This qualifying paper explores the historical context and conservation of a Cantonese opera costume known as Faan Gung Zong, belonging to the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) and donated by the Chinese Musical and Theatrical Association (CMTA). Originally used in the play Tin Gei Sung Zi, the costume features regional craftsmanship, including intricate Cantonese embroidery and decorations of metal discs and mirrors. The object is dated to c. 1910 – 1930 based on the decoration style, materials, and the presence of Chinese opera in the United States.

This study analyzes the costume within the early 20th-century Guangdong's export economy and the cultural life of Cantonese opera troupes in North America.

Following a condition assessment, the conservation treatment focuses on dye stain reduction methods. Orvus solution, ethanol, and acetic acid were found to lighten the stains but could not completely reduce them. This study aims to preserve both the physical object and its cultural significance.

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A Bead-Ing Heart: The Ethics And Process Of Conserving Costume For Active Use

Claire Zimmeth | Fashion Institute of Technology, New York USA

This qualifying paper documents the conservation treatment of a privately owned circa 1922-1924 evening dress with the goal of returning it to active use. The first section of the paper examines the historical context and provenance of the dress. Investigations into the color and inspiration for the beaded motifs show how this dress exemplifies the fashion of the time that it was made. The second section of the paper is a full documentation of the condition of the dress and treatment proposal. The third section details the treatment performed and results. The final section of the paper is a post-treatment reflection, discussing how the results of the treatment relate to ethical considerations surrounding wearing historical clothing. The paper seeks to evaluate if a conservator can approach a treatment with the goal of active use while still adhering to accepted ethical guidelines set forth by professional organizations governing conservation practices.

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