

Textiles Working Group
Newsletter
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Dear Textiles Working Group Members,

I've begun this letter several times and even completed a draft last December. How much has happened since then and how much life keeps changing! I sincerely hope that all of you reading this are doing well despite all the challenges of this current moment.

The ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group has been busy in this triennial period (2017 – 2020). We've said farewell to two Assistant Coordinators and welcomed two new Assistant Coordinators. In June 2019, we held an Interim Meeting beautifully hosted by the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg, Switzerland. In September 2019, during the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto, our member Dr. Mie Ishii arranged a half-day visit to two Kyoto textile conservation studios followed by a dinner for participants.

Looking ahead to the (now rescheduled) ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in Beijing, Assistant Coordinators Suzan Meier, Sarah Scaturro, and Mika Takami and I reviewed

twenty abstracts. Of these, eleven were chosen to be developed into papers. And of those eleven submissions, nine were chosen for publication and presentation. The papers cover a wide range of topics and should make for most interesting discussions at the Triennial meeting and after. I'm writing this in July 2020 and hoping that many Textiles Working Group members will be able to participate in the Triennial Conference, now scheduled for May 17 – 21, 2021.

The ICOM-CC Directory Board and Working Group Coordinators recently held a Zoom meeting to discuss plans for the current and next triennial periods. The current Triennial will end in September 2020 when the new one will begin. Outgoing Coordinators will end their terms in September, but will work with in-coming Coordinators on planning and moderating the Working Group sessions at the Triennial Conference next May. The Directory Board is encouraging Coordinators to host video planning meetings for Working Group members. I plan to do this and will send more details soon.

This newsletter contains (extremely belated) thank yous to our former Assistant Coordinators – Rebecca Rushfield and Christine Mueller-Radloff, and introductions to our (now not-so-) new Assistant Coordinators, Dr. Ali Nasir and Sarah Scaturro. You can read reports on the Interim meeting and the Kyoto gathering, as well as a (previously submitted, but not yet

published) report on the November 2017 NATCC meeting in Mexico City and two reports on the 2019 NATCC meeting in Ottawa.

Thanks to our authors for their reports and photographs. Huge thanks to our editor, Rebecca Rushfield, for getting this to you.

Finally, let me apologize for the lack of a newsletter until now. It's proved to me what an excellent procrastinator I am and how much I need deadlines! Please accept my apologies and do enjoy reading this issue.

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July 2020
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Meet the new Assistant Coordinators of the ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group



Dr. Md. Ali Nasir holds a PhD and a Masters in Conservation and Restoration of Art from the National Museum Institute, New Delhi. For his PhD, he focused on the historical development of carpets, on the analysis of natural dyes used on carpets from the 17th - 19th centuries, and on preventive conservation measures for carpets. He is associated with Heritage Restore and Konserv Bhaav as a consultant for conservation and is working on the restoration of the tapestries designed by Le Corbusier for the Chandigarh High Court. He has participated in national and international cultural heritage seminars and workshops and has presented research papers at several of them. He also worked on the “Managing Risks in Cultural Heritage. Towards a sustainable conservation of cultural heritage” workshop organized by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. With a team from ICCROM and UNESCO, he has worked on the storage reorganization and preventive conservation at the National Handloom and Craft Museum, New Delhi. He received a Eurasia Pacific Uninet (EPU) Scholarship to study at the Institute of Conservation, University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria in 2013-2014 where he gained professional experience in project management and the conservation of carpets and textiles.

Dr. Nasir has is a co-author of the book, *Harappan Pottery: Archaeology Techniques and Its Conservation*, and has published several research articles. He curated an international exhibition titled “Rare Tribal Carpets: Perfectly Imperfect Weaves” at the

India International Centre, New Delhi (2015) and India Habitat Centre New Delhi (2109). He is a member of International Council of Museums (ICOM), Museum Association of India (MAI) and Indian Association for the Study of Conservation of Cultural Property (IASC). He has received international grants to attend international conferences and workshops, including an ICOM Getty Travel Grant to attend the 2019 ICOM General Conference in Kyoto, Japan, an Indian travel grant to attend the 2017 ICOM-CC Triennial Conference, a travel grant from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan to attend 5th Symposium on Azerbaijani Carpets in Baku, and the Bei Shan Tang Foundation Travel Scholarship to be part of the IIC- Palace Museum 2017 Hong Kong Symposium on the topic, "Unroll and Unfold: Preserving Textiles and Thankas to Last".



Sarah Scaturro is the Eric and Jane Nord Chief Conservator of the Cleveland Museum of Art, where she is in charge of all conservation labs and analytical and

preparatory areas. Previously she was the Head Conservator for the Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art (2012 - 2020) and the textile conservator and assistant curator of fashion at the Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (2006 - 2012). She received an MPhil in Design History and Material Cultural Studies at Bard Graduate Center, an MA in fashion and textile studies from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York; a BA *summa cum laude* in History and Italian from the University of Colorado, Boulder and is currently writing her doctoral dissertation on the history and theory of fashion conservation for her PhD at Bard Graduate Center. She is a Professional Associate of the American Institute for Conservation, as well as the Chair of AIC Textile Specialty Group's Nominating Committee. She is also a member of the Fashion Studies Alliance, the Costume Society of America, and the Midwest Regional Conservation Guild.

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Conference Reports

Embellished Fabrics: Conserving Surface Manipulation and Decoration

11th North American Textile Conservation Conference

Mexico City, Mexico, November 6 – 11, 2017

Contributed by Jacquelyn Peterson-Grace
January 2018

The 11th biennial North American Textile Conservation Conference (NATCC)

was held in Mexico City in November 2017. Twenty years have passed since the first NATCC was held in Ottawa, and during that time the conference has grown to foster truly international exchanges. The 2017 conference, with its focus on elaborately embellished textile surfaces, was an exceptional contribution to the ever-growing body of research pertaining to textile conservation.

The conference was co-sponsored by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), the National School of Conservation, Restoration, and Museography “Manuel del Castillo Negrete” (ENCRyM), the Textile Museum of Oaxaca, and Tru-Vue, and was held on the ENCRyM campus in the beautiful Coyaocán neighborhood of Mexico City. Several workshops on topics including aqueous cleaning methods, natural dyes and down-feather spinning, bobbin-lace making, and natural soaps took place on the days proceeding the days of presentations. A keynote lecture delivered by **Alejandro de Ávila Blomberg**, Director of the Museo Textil de Oaxaca and the Jardín Etnobotánico de Oaxaca opened the presentation portion of the conference. The lecture posed the interesting question as to what conservation should aim to preserve and whether previous alterations should be retained as a phase in the history of a textile or should be reversed to provide a more ‘true’ historic interpretation. The case study of several Mexican textiles with a supposed provenance of tremendous social and historical value which were found to have been recently altered with added signatures and dates in order to increase

their value and validate false claims about their history was used as a means to present various approaches to this question. The keynote lecture was an excellent beginning to dialogue about embellished textile surfaces and the many approaches to their preservation that continued through the conference.

Twenty-one papers were delivered in eight sessions over the course of two days and eleven posters were displayed for the duration of the conference.

Session one, titled *Pre-Columbian and Ethnographic Embellished Textiles*, included fascinating presentations about the technical study of techniques employed to create and embellish textiles of agave and palm leaf, about an interesting model for studying pre-Columbian garments with shell adornment that considered the weight, movement, and sounds of the embellishment as integral parts of the cultural significance of the objects.

Session two, *Textile Embellishment*, presented two studies on the use of feathers as embellishment on textiles as ornamentation and as culturally significant symbols that continue to be used to unite indigenous cultures. An understanding of the manufacturing processes for metal threads and sequins informed an investigation of the decoration of religious garments from several cultures. This knowledge aided in the characterization of degradation mechanisms of these fragile components.

Session three, *New Materials in Textile Conservation*, shifted the focus from archeological and historic materials to

contemporary artworks highlighting treatments and analyses of materials like cellophane and cellulose acetate, posing interesting questions about the responsibilities of conservators to artworks that were intended to have a limited lifespan.

The fourth session, *Surface Manipulation*, addressed the challenges of conserving textiles that continue to be used in a religious context and the problems associated with the preservation of 3D-printed fashion objects.

The second day of the conference began with papers which discussed the conservation of upholstery and furnishing textiles. One paper outlined a large-scale conservation campaign for a suite of furniture as it moved from a private collection to a museum. Another focused on an innovative method of reproducing complex textile surfaces through the use of custom-made stencils and paints. The third focused on the cleaning and conservation of a fragile and heavily embellished English bed hanging.

The following session, *Conservation of Embellished Textiles*, featured a paper that added to the body of knowledge about the manufacture of metal embellishments commonly used on textiles and built upon previous conclusions about their fragility. A second paper described the treatment of an elaborately decorated garment with many components, considering both how the interpretation of the garment changed as new research was conducted on it and considered the successfulness of the

mounting structure used to support the garment for display.

The papers presented in Session seven described the conservation of two very different textile objects: an elaborately embellished 18th century dress with condition concerns related to years of display, and a series of mid-production batik samples that illustrate the phases of the resist-dyeing process.

The presentations in the final session of the conference discussed the conservation challenges of the stabilization and visual reintegration of losses in an ikat rebozo and an ornately decorated chasuble, and the materials analysis and characterization of textiles printed with metal flake pigments.

The NATCC conference brings together an international group of textile specialists for the exchange of knowledge pertaining to textile materials, techniques, treatment options, research, and cultural significance. A running theme throughout the gathering was the attendees' shared passion for history and material culture. The field of textile conservation will continue to grow through conferences like this.

North American Textile Conservation Conference 2019, Ottawa, Canada

Part 1

Contributed by Frances Lennard

(Note: Versions of this article appeared in the University of Glasgow's Centre for Textile Conservation blog and *ICON News*, issue 86, February 2020.)

This conference was a special occasion. The first NATCC meeting took place in Ottawa in 1997 and 2019 was the first time the conference returned to its original location. The conference was held at the **Canadian Museum of History (CMH)**, an exciting museum which tells the story of Canada from the different perspectives of its original and colonial inhabitants.

The conference presented an opportunity to look back at how things have changed in the years since 1997. Reflection and development were key themes of the conference which was titled *Lessons Learned: Textile Conservation Then and Now*. As Ela Keyserlingk, Chair of the first NATCC meeting, said in her opening address, it is only by having the courage and honesty to look back that we can see how to learn lessons for the future.

The presentations demonstrated how much things have changed in these 20 years, with speakers reporting on refined conservation techniques, new conservation materials, and leaps in science and technology due to great advances in analytical methods.



The Main Hall, Canadian Museum of History

A less tangible but major change over these years has been that the social context of a treatment have become as important as the

physical considerations. As **Caterina Florio**, the textile conservator at CMH, notably said in her introduction, conservation has become more complex and more layered. Since its founding, the CMH has worked with originating communities and over the years working with communities has become a much more fundamental part of museum and conservation practice throughout the world.

In his keynote speech, **John Moses** of the CMH asserted that ‘in no other realm have we witnessed such profound developments in conservation practice as within the field of conservation values and ethics.’ He said that it is the conservator’s duty and a fundamental part of the museum role, to be aware of national and international milestones in indigenous rights including the internationally significant United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007. He asked us to do our utmost to retrieve and record indigenous terminology when treating indigenous objects and to document the cultural tradition within which the object was used so that truth can be established and then reconciliation can take place. This was a powerful and timely presentation in our time when the legacy of colonialism and the potential repatriation of objects are key issues for European museums.

Documentation was also an important theme with many presenters demonstrating how documentation can reduce the amount of conservation needed or even replace the need for conservation. It was clear that documentation has improved over the years and that it is now much more likely

that the rationale for a treatment will be documented in addition to the technical details of the treatment.

Sara Reiter's paper on the wet cleaning of a 10th century Persian shroud in 1961, a treatment unusually well documented for this period, showed how important that documentation was for later conservators and other stakeholders.

It was a great pleasure to meet up with and hear from TCC and CTC graduates who were well represented at the conference. Southampton graduates **Christina Margariti** and **Tina Chanielaki** reviewed old and new approaches in the conservation of excavated textiles, demonstrating how scientific advancements sometimes enable less interventive treatments. But they noted that conservation treatment is still necessary to communicate to the public what the objects are about.



TCC and CTC graduates

Emma Schmitt discussed the assessment and retreatment of a Buddhist thangka, concluding that opinions, processes and contexts may shift over decades. She detailed how the object itself was the best source of information when the rationale for a 1979 treatment was not found in the treatment records.

Gennifer Majors, another Glasgow graduate, co-authored a paper with **Sophia Zweifel** on their research project, undertaken as part of the Isabel Bader Fellowship at Queen's University, Canada, to look for traces of historic laundry techniques on objects in the collection.

I (**Frances Lennard**) worked with **Alison Lister** on a paper, based on our common background in establishing and running Textile Conservation Ltd in Bristol and our shared experience of teaching conservation students. Our paper evaluated changes in private practice over three decades and discussed the challenges of preparing conservation students to work on a freelance basis,.

I enjoyed both a tour of the very impressive stores and conservation labs of the CMH and a memorable early morning yoga session in the museum's Grand Hall. I'd like to thank the local hosts and the NATCC Board very much for all of their hard work in putting together another great conference. The 13th NATCC meeting with the theme of "Outside Influences" will take place in Nashville in 2021. I recommend it.



Conference delegates in the museum's very large lift during a tour of the conservation labs and stores

North American Textile Conservation Conference 2019, Ottawa, Canada

Part 2

Contributed by Heather Hodge

The presentations given in the conference's "Community Collaboration" sessions demonstrated how varied collaboration in our field can be.

Sarah Owens discussed the Material Tradition program that has taken place at the Anchorage Museum (in Alaska, USA) since 2012. During the week-long program, Alaska Native artists share their knowledge and skills of sourcing and working with various local materials from porcupine quills to gut skins with conservators, artists, and the community. This program provides an opportunity for native artists, who often work in isolated regions, to come together. In addition, the material processing demonstrations are filmed and made available on YouTube, allowing for further sharing and documentation of these techniques.

Jose Milne gave a presentation on how Parks Canada's staff is adapting to the growing number of public events and activities held at historic sites. She highlighted how protecting buildings and objects from potential damage varies from site to site with approaches including the use of reproductions, moving objects out of an event space, creating adult-only areas, and using spaces in unoccupied site buildings for programs. Jose explained how the implementation of procedures specific to a site and to an activity allowed for a successful event, reduced the possibility of

accidents, and safeguarded historic spaces and collections.

Sophia Zweifel (City of Calgary Public Art Program) spoke about Micheline Beauchemin's site-specific nylon-net stage curtain in The National Arts Centre's (NAC) Southam Hall in Ottawa, underscoring how treatments can evolve based on any number of variables. Due to the cost and a busy performance schedule, a cleaning protocol designed by staff of the Canadian Conservation Institute in 2005 to address the curtain's heavy soiling was not implemented. In 2018, prompted by upcoming hall renovations, Conservation Solutions ULC was called in to deal with the challenge of lowering and housing the large, heavy, and easily tangled curtain

Corine Siegmund (Badishes Landesmuseum) addressed the digital reconstruction of a Māori *piupiu* based on fragments discovered in the Reiss-Engelhorn- Museen. *Piupiu* is both the name of a woman's Haka dance skirt and a lily plant, from the leaves of which the skirt is made. Corine's explanation of the processing of the *piupiu* plant for skirt production illuminated the issues of inherent vice for these garments. A digital reconstruction allowed for minimal intervention on this culturally sensitive object which was in poor condition, The digital reproduction was made possible through collaboration with the Māori community and a Māori conservator, archival and historical research, and detailed documentation.

ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group – Interim Meeting

Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg 20-21 June 2019

‘A Challenging Dimension: The Conservation and Research of Costume and Accessories’

Contributed by **Marjolein Koek**,
Conservator of Textiles at the
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

July 16, 2019

Day 1 – Session 1: Social Lives I

Ana Serrano *et al.* presented the results of their material investigation of a unique archaeological finding of mid-17th century silk fragments. These fragments were unearthed from a shipwreck found in the Wadden Sea, the Netherlands. The goal of the research was to find the right climate conditions to preserve, store and display archaeological maritime silk. Artificially aged samples were produced to represent various parameters. One of the findings was that limiting exposure to light and oxygen significantly increases the life expectancy of this type of silk.

The paper by **Beatriz Nutz**, **Rachel Case** and **Marion McNealy** presented their experiences with collaboration between different specialties in the reconstruction of garments from the 14th and 15th centuries, showing that collaboration can lead to a successful outcome. Working with archeologists, conservators, artists and designers and using SLACK Software to share drawings and other material, the team was able to research and recreate constructions, patterns and materials. This

resulted in the reconstruction and identification of several objects.

Lara Derks, **Bettina Niekamp** and **Agnieszka Woś-Jucker** presented their research and conservation treatment of the costume of Elector August of Saxony, which belongs to the oldest collection of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Germany. Historical resources were still available for this well-documented costume and were used in the planning of the conservation treatment. For example, written sources describing the object’s construction provided an understanding of the crystal buttons that were once attached to the costume. Historical sources about the costume’s past conservation and display showed which parts were previous restorations.

Session 2: Social Lives II

The paper by **Zenzie Tinker** and **Rachel Rhodes** gave an overview of the large-scale project to conserve and install twelve costumed funeral effigies at Westminster Abbey, London, UK. The project team included conservators from different disciplines . Work was undertaken in the studio as well as on site at the Abbey. Historical resources and illustrated documentation about early treatments gave a good understanding of adjustments that had been made to the objects. The treatment respected the past history of the objects, whilst also fulfilling 21st century conservation terms and the demands of the new display.

Melangell Penrhys and **Michelle Barker** explained their collaboration on the 1760s court mantua at Berrington Hall,

Herefordshire, UK. The mantua had been deconstructed at one point, and some pieces were missing. When the decision was made to reconstruct the mantua, a toile was constructed following research into historical resources and other documentation. The dress was reconstructed on site in front of the public, making the conservation visible, documenting the process, and providing an opportunity to explain the house and its owners to visitors.

Teresa Toledo de Paula and **Larissa Torres Graça** presented the project to conserve 130 objects which had belonged to Carmen Miranda. The objects were severely damaged because of poor climate conditions, inappropriate interventions, and intense exhibition. The authors provided an overview on how to document a large collection starting from scratch, and how to develop a methodological strategy for its conservation. Collaboration between conservators, students and conservation scientists, both in- and outside of Brazil, made this project into a success.

Session 3: Exhibiting dress/costume/fashion

Constanze Zimmer and **Anne-Marie Pope's** presentation addressed the collection of costumes worn by Andrew Logan at the Alternative Miss World events which he organized and hosted. These costumes, each of which has a male and a female side, have been on long-term display in his museum since the nineteen-nineties. The project presented many challenges with the display, storage and preservation of the costumes because of the strong link to the living artist and to a specific event, and

because of the many different materials that were used in the costumes.

Dana Goodin and **Kelly Reddy-Best**

presented a paper about 'Queer Fashion & Style: Stories from the Heartland', a recent exhibition mounted at the Iowa State University Textiles and Clothing Museum (Iowa, USA), which focused on the dress and identity of Midwestern queer women. The installation of the costumes required a consideration not only of the practical aspects of costume mounting, but also of the question of fashion and identity. For example, in order to present how the costumes looked when worn in real life and their context, the costumes had to have a "poor fit" on the mannequins. Another issue was that certain body shaping garments turned out to be somewhat difficult to mount and display.

Panel discussion: A Challenging Dimension (with Mary M. Brooks, Dinah Eastop, Sarah Scaturro, Bettina Niekamp and Suzan Meijer (moderator))

The panel discussion started off with the presentation, 'Conservation and the Narrative Power of Exhibited Garments' by **Mary Brooks** and **Dinah Eastop**. The narrative of costumes can be seen in three themes-- as agents of redress, as manifestations of refashioning, and as evidence of altered states. More about these themes can be found in Brooks and Eastop's most recent book, *Refashioning and Redress: Conserving and Displaying Dress* (The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles 2016).

After the presentation, the panelists were asked for their impressions of the first day of the meeting. They noted that many of the presentations focused on how conservators consider the narrative and identity of costumes and on combining conservation with curation. As an object's narrative often directs its conservation and display, conservators today approach their work in different ways than in the past.

The presentations made one aware of the large variety in types of costumes, ranging from archeological finds to modern and contemporary garments, which conservators have to deal with. It was clear that every object needs its own specific mount or mannequin. For example, while the mounts made by the Abegg-Stiftung for their tunics have been used as models by various other collections, it is important at the same time to consider the context in which these mounts were made.

It was notable that collaborative and interdisciplinary teamwork between conservators and specialists in other disciplines appeared in almost every paper. These collaborations should be encouraged. It was said that this expertise and the data that comes with it, should be made more available to conservators .

The panel discussion provided a good overview of the topics that were brought up during the first day, and gave a preview of the second day's talks which focused on the complications of displays that are heavily influenced by social and/or curatorial engagements.

Day 2 – Session 4: Practice I

The paper presented by **Rosie Chamberlin** and **Lucía Pereira Pardo** gave an overview of the early stage of their research project to find suitable solutions for the preservation and conservation of a degraded weighted silk costume. Their research is exploring the possibility of using pH-measurements to identify weighted silk. (Agar gel and a Horiba meter turned out to be the most controlled and viable method to do this.) The responses to a questionnaire they had sent out showed that the treatment most often applied to weighted silk is a support system consisting of a sandwich created with adhesives and stitching techniques. In the future, they will focus on the continued distribution of the questionnaire, the mapping of fracture patterns, and the taking of pH-measurements.

Lauren Osmond gave an interesting talk about her research on beetle elytra-- iridescent emerald green outer wing casings-- as decorative elements on textiles and the use of suction as a way to produce structural color change on them. Research revealed that change in color of these elements is caused by physical changes in the construction layers which cause light to diffract differently. Osmond described her experimental research on the use of suction as a possible treatment to return the layers to their original structure and thickness. The use of de-ionized water with low suction produced the best result.

Déborah Panaget's paper about the conservation and mounting of a 1920s evening dress from the Chanel Heritage

collection gave interesting insight into 3D-digital mounting techniques. Because of the fragility and weight of the dress, it was difficult to mount it on a mannequin. In collaboration with textile engineers specializing in virtual modeling, she virtually developed a display method for the dress. The modeling produced information on areas of specific stress and friction in the dress and helped determine the type of fabric with which to cover the mannequin.

Session 5: Practice II

Marina Hays gave an interesting talk about garment leather. It was especially useful as few publications in leather conservation deal with fashionable leather such as chrome-tanned leather which has issues that need specific treatment. Hays explained her clever and practical methodologies, i.e. using a LED-endoscope to examine the inside of a garment and using magnets to hold a sandwich construction together. Collaboration with conservators of other disciplines was of great importance in developing the treatment.

Cinzia Oliva gave a presentation on the conservation of pleated tunics dating to 2400-2055 B.C. in the collection of the Museo Egizio, Turin, Italy. To decide on the right conservation treatment, extensive research was conducted on the material aspects of the textiles. The research produced a better understanding of the construction and pattern of the pleats which led to a conservation treatment which took into consideration the type of pleating. A padded board and a special three-dimensional padded cushion were

created for both storage and display of the tunics.

Pecha Kucha Session: (Pecha Kucha is a storytelling format in which a presenter shows 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each)

Rosamund Weatherall gave an interesting talk on the 1660 wedding suit worn by Edmund Verney which is in the collection of Claydon House, Buckinghamshire, UK. The suit is special for several reasons, one of them being its particular rarity. It is believed to be the only surviving complete suit of its type in the UK. That Edmund suffered from a spinal deformity became evident during the treatment and mounting of the doublet. Weatherall's talk provided a good understanding of the use of historical sources and addressed issues of conservation and mounting.

Katie Marie Sabo presented the challenges faced when mounting the exhibition 'Rodarte' at the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington D.C., USA including the unconventional construction of the garments, the visibility of the mannequins and the aesthetic demands of the exhibition team and the designers themselves. The presentation provided practical and creative solutions for difficult mounting issues such as making invisible mounts out of heavy Mylar (Melinex) painted on the inside.

Harold Mailand gave an interesting talk about the effects of time on the display of the costume collection of the Old State House Museum at Little Rock, Arkansas, USA. The effects of costume display without proper light conditions or climate control

were painfully visible. Fortunately, previous treatments turned out to be stable enough to withstand these poor display conditions.

Paige Myers and **Kendra Floyd** gave an animated talk on an exhibition of costumes designed and constructed by the African-American seamstress Willie Otey Kay. The display had very high community response and involvement resulting in “bonus” costume rotations and a fashion show of privately owned gowns. An online component containing background stories of the costumes and the people who wore them was added to the exhibit.

Session 6: Practice III

Ann Coppinger presented a talk about the recent renovation of the costume storage at the Museum at FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology, New York City, USA). The museum had clever ideas for using the space in the storage area. For example, to allow visual access accessories are stored open on the shelf in a cupboard. Also, an easy to use, low-cost, and fast to produce mount for hanging strapless dresses was designed and utilized. The Dressing Lab is something to be jealous of as it is very spacious and has all mannequins and materials in reach. The Museum’s plan to build a ‘really good box’ definitely worked out.

Johanna Nilsson and **Sarah Benson** gave a presentation about their research on decision-making within the field of textile conservation treatment. Along with a review of published literature on the subject, a survey, interviews and two experiments were used to collect data. One of the findings of the research was that

conservators tend to choose a more sustainable treatment method over a more aesthetic one. But, at the same time, conservators measure the success of a treatment by how well it integrates into the object.

ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group excursion

Kyoto, Japan Sept 2019

Contributed by Vanessa Havel

January 2020

The Textiles Working Group excursion was one of the highlights of the recent 2019 ICOM conference in Kyoto. On Friday 6th September 2019, Dr Mie Ishii generously helped us navigate our way around Kyoto in the late summer heat and humidity on a series of visits to fascinating places which he had arranged.

Our first stop was the Kyoto Costume Institute (KCI) where we were warmly greeted by our host Ms. Naoko Ueyama. The KCI was set up by and is financed by Wacoal (a Japanese underwear maker) with the purpose of collecting Western underwear and dress, providing cultural exchange between West and East and examining mutual influences in fashion. The KCI collaborates with other museums around the world, sharing both the results of research and travelling exhibitions.

We had the pleasure of viewing detailed examples of the incredible conservation work done on historic garments including the painstaking encasing of a shattered silk lining of a 19th-century blue velvet dress in layers of silk crepe, and the encasing of

a fraying woolen hem tape in perfectly dyed- to-match silk crepeline. One particularly beautiful piece in the collection was the metal thread embroidered bodice allegedly given to Queen Elizabeth I by the Duke of Sussex. The tour of the storeroom was a highlight of the visit. It houses 13,000 items documenting the history of western dress and a recently added collection of contemporary Japanese fashion. The 17th- to 19th- century dresses on the custom-made padded hangers were a rare treat to behold. The shoe storage and mounts gave us all many ideas for future storage solutions. It was also wonderful to view KCI's specialist mannequins and custom-made undergarments and see the materials used in creating these supports. The staff were so kind, gentle and generous with us and made our visit very pleasant.

Our second stop was the Kyoto National Museum, Conservation Center for Cultural Properties where Shukakudo, a private Japanese art conservation studio has its facilities. Ms. Yoshimi Shiroyama had obtained special permission to show us a priceless 16th- century Noh costume used by the Konparu troupe, now in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. The conservators had recently completed twenty-four months of work on this kimono. As this is a National Treasure, the public is not usually able to view it. It was inspiring to see how the Japanese system supports the care and preservation of National Treasures, both by funding the conservators working on them and by providing sufficient funding to support the industries related to and needed by the conservators, preserving skills that would

otherwise be lost. For this project the conservators were able to choose the particular silkworms which would custom weave organic silk to the exact strength and transparency required to adequately support the shattered silk of the kimono. The completed work was of a very high quality and was incredibly inspiring. We felt very fortunate to have the opportunity to see such a precious object so carefully treated.

After the Kyoto National Museum, we enjoyed a trip down a narrow, almost hidden alleyway to the most beautiful tiny Japanese garden and 'The Misuya Needleshop'. The owner sells handmade needles as thin as a human hair. The needles which have a smaller eye than most European needles are both flexible and strong and are a pleasure to work with. We all left with a bundle of treasures to take home.

On our way to dinner we wandered through a few of the market streets of the Kyoto souvenir shopping district. Several participants brought secondhand kimonos to bring home.

We finished off the day at a dinner with many of the textile conservators from Kyoto and Nara. It was wonderful to talk with so many warm and kind people with similar passions and interests and to hear of the work being undertaken in textile conservation studios all over Japan and around the world. We would like to thank the textile working group and Mie for organizing such an inspiring excursion. I encourage everyone to visit Kyoto if you have the chance. It is a place filled with a

long, rich and fascinating textile history. It cannot fail to quietly charm its way into your heart and mind as it has ours.



In the textile lab of the Kyoto Costume Institute; left to right: Marjolein Homan Free (Netherlands); Mie Ishii, our organizer (Japan); Fumiko Umeno (Japan); Naoko Ueyama, Head of Textile Conservation at Kyoto Costume Institute and our host (Japan); Adelheid Rasche (Germany); Eiko Uchiyama (Japan); Chris Eckardt (USA); Deborah Trupin (USA); Yuka Ito (Japan); Eszter Mátyás (Hungary); Vanessa Bray (Australia)

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THANK YOU TO OUR FORMER ASSISTANT COORDINATORS!

At the beginning of this triennial (2017-20), the ICOM-CC Directory Board informed the Textiles Working Group that they had reviewed the guidelines for terms of Coordinators and Assistant Coordinators and had found that two of our devoted Assistant Coordinators, Rebecca Rushfield and Christine Mueller-Radloff, had served as long as was permitted (or longer in Christine’s case). This seems to have been a guideline that was inadvertently ignored for a few years! Sadly, I had to let them know that they could not continue as Assistant

Coordinators. They were both very gracious and understanding and have continued to be active in the Working Group. Herewith, is an appreciation of their work:



Christine Mueller-Radloff is a conservator of ethnographic textiles and composite objects at the Museum für

Voelkerkunde, Dresden (Ethnographic Museum of Dresden) where she has worked since 2010. She worked at the Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig from 1982 to 2009. She has been a member of the ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group since 1990 and served as Assistant Coordinator from 2005 - 2017. Christine always had her eyes out for events of interest to Working Group members and sent notices on for publication in the Newsletter. Through her museum she is now active with the Carpet Museum in Baku, Azerbaijan and has hopes of having our working group hold an Interim Meeting there in 2021 or 2022.



Rebecca Anne Rushfield, is a private consultant with special interests in the history of conservation (particularly the oral

history), the transfer of conservation knowledge by both formal and informal means, and the public perception of conservation and conservators. She served as Assistant Coordinator of the ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group from 2008 to 2017 and has been the Working Group Newsletter Editor since 2008. Between 2014 and 2017, she was also the Coordinator of the ICOM-CC Legal Issues in Conservation Working Group. Rebecca compiled a bibliography of all interim meeting papers that the Textiles Working Group has published. She has most generously agreed to continue to serve as editor for this newsletter. The delay in publishing is not in any way her fault!

Whenever you see Christine or Rebecca, please thank them for their service to our working group. Rebecca and Christine, please also accept my deepest appreciation for your past and continuing work!

Deborah Lee Trupin

Coordinator