

LEATHER AND RELATED MATERIALS WORKING GROUP

Newsletter 10 - June 2021

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Editors: Theo Sturge and Laurianne Robinet	

Dear Members, dear colleagues,

One year on, and the perspectives are still uncertain as to when we will be able to meet and hug again, however this crisis triggered the exploration of other ways of communication, which allowed us to reach out to colleagues more broadly and imagine other activities for this new triennial.

This 10th newsletter of the Leather and Related Materials Working Group will introduce you to the new team and our plans in the Working Group for 2020-2023, as well as ongoing projects in the community, which you should hear more about in subsequent newsletters or presentations.

I am delighted to start a second term as Coordinator of the Leather and Related Materials Working Group supported by two dynamic Assistant Coordinators: Theo Sturge, who you know already, and Martine Posthuma de Boer. I invite you to meet the team, next, in this newsletter. In order to prepare the Working Group programme for this new triennium and make it your own, we asked for your input in a survey last December. Your feedback was very valuable to us, and helped us to know you better. As it can be of interest to all members, we decided to share a summary of this survey results in this newsletter, followed by the Working Group Triennial Programme established for 2020-2023.

The 19th ICOM-CC Beijing Triennial Conference took place virtually 17-21st May 2021. Within the Leather and Related Materials Working Group, we had two great presentations entitled *Study on bonding reinforcement techniques in the restoration of ancient shadow puppets* (Y. Yuang) and *Method development for the identification of Russia leather - A comparative study of waterlogged leather samples* (J. Weatherill). The planning session on the last day (previously called business meeting), was a good opportunity to discuss the Working Group activities with participants, that raised some interesting ideas, which are shared at the end of the Triennial Programme presentation.

We are really looking forward to the new ICOM-CC website, which should be released very soon. This will be much more attractive and offer a lot more possibilities to share information. Lastly, our team is starting discussion about the next Interim Meeting for the Leather and Related Materials Working Group in 2022, but cannot tell you more yet, so stay tuned !

Enjoy the Newsletter and stay safe,

Laurianne Robinet, Coordinator

Meet the team

Laurianne Robinet Coordinator

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Laurianne is in her second term as Coordinator after having started as Assistant Coordinator of the *Leather and Related Materials Working Group* in 2014. In a previous life, she has also been active in the ICOM-CC *Glass and Ceramics Working Group* as Assistant Coordinator to animate the *glass deterioration* group. Trained in analytical chemistry, she has worked as a conservation scientist in different research and museum laboratories, mostly in France and in the United Kingdom. Since 2011, she is in charge of the leather and parchment department at the Research Center for Conservation (CRC), based in the Natural History Museum in Paris, France. Her activities are directed towards the characterization and the conservation of leather and parchment

artefacts. For several years now, she has been involved in an interdisciplinary research on gilt leather to identify physical or chemical markers of provenance and better understand the degradation observed. She is also very active in developing the use of a new noninvasive analytical technique originating from the biomedical field, multiphoton microscopy, to image and assess the conservation state of skin based materials. She also teaches leather and parchment analysis and supervises students from the school of conservation INP near Paris, a great opportunity to come across a variety of conservation issues and current conservation treatments.

Theo Sturge Assistant Coordinator

theosturge@leatherconservation.co.uk
www.leatherconservation.co.uk



This is Theo's second term as an Assistant Coordinator. He is a familiar figure at our Interim Meetings and at some of the Triennial Conferences having been attending for 25 years. He has been a conservator all his life and has specialised in leather conservation for 25 years and is seen here working on the gilt leather in the Stadhuis (Town

Hall) Dokkum, Friesland, The Netherlands. He is passionate about gilt leather and relishes nothing more than the challenge of a room of leather hangings. He also works on most other aspects of leather conservation and specialises in solving complex problems. He enjoys working in front of the public and teaching them about leather and its care. He teaches leather conservation for universities and other institutions and also in his own studio where he welcomes students from all over the world. Recent events have forced him to start teaching on zoom. His courses concentrate on the practical side of leather conservation. All enquiries are welcome!

<http://www.leatherconservation.co.uk/training.htm>

publication at Delft Technical University in 2015 (Gilt Leather Artefacts: White Paper on Material Characterization and Improved Conservation Strategies within NICAS, Delft 2016).

In 2016 she decided to start her own conservation-restoration practice. She has a shared studio with 3 other conservators in Amsterdam, but she works mostly on-site on painted decorations in historic interiors. In 2020 she had the pleasure of working on two different gilt leather wall hangings from the first half of the 18th century in her own studio. This year she will be moving to France, but keeping a pied-à-terre in Amsterdam, hoping to work both in France and the Netherlands. She is looking forward to organising and coordinating the activities of our working group.

Martine Posthuma de Boer Assistant Coordinator

mposthumadeboer@gmail.com



Martine Posthuma de Boer is a Dutch conservator-restorer of painted decorations in historic interiors, and starts her first term as Assistant Coordinator of the Working Group. She trained at the University of Amsterdam from 2010 - 2015. During her studies she was introduced to gilt leather wall hangings, and found a special interest and love for these beautiful, but often fragile and damaged pieces of our cultural heritage. She decided to specialise in the conservation of gilt leather, which led to a research project and

Contributions for future newsletters

We would love to hear what you are doing and any plans you may have. Please send contributions for the next Newsletter to:

Laurianne ROBINET

laurianne.robinet@mnhn.fr

and

Theo Sturge

theosturge@leatherconservation.co.uk

ICOM-CC Leather and Related Materials Working Group Survey

Last December, we sent around a survey to the *Leather and Related Materials Working Group* to know more about our members, get feedback about the activities led in the past within the Working Group, and importantly, get members' input to prepare the 2020-2023 Triennial Programme. The information we got, from the 26 contributions we received, proved very valuable and greatly helped us to define the activities for the next three years. I would like to share with you the main results of this survey, so you can learn more about the interest of other Working Group members, why not get involved!

Who are the members of the Leather Working Group? Our members are mostly based in Europe, and to a minor extent in North America and few in Asia. In majority, they are conservators mostly working freelance or within small companies, as well as scientists generally employed by government organizations. They are working on a variety of skin-based materials, mostly leather and parchment, but also untanned skin, fur, or natural history specimens, within a large range of conservation specialisms, which are listed in the table below.

Conservation specialisms of members in the WG	
Archaeology	5
Book & Paper	6
Historic Interiors	10
Objects	16
Natural History	3
Musical Instruments	3
Furnishings	7
Means of Transport	2
Heritage Science	6

Communication. You were all satisfied with the distribution of information through the mailing list and the yearly newsletter, so we will continue in the same way. Some members would like more information on the ICOM-CC website, which is also our aim, once the new website is up and running. Finally, a few members expressed interest in other ways of communication such as social media, but this would require a motivated person, experienced in such media to run it, any volunteer(s)?

Working Group Programme. From the survey, it was confirmed we should continue the four themes in 2021-2023 and include a new topic on sustainability in conservation practices, which was added. All responding participants asked for the organization of a Working Group interim meeting in 2022 with the publication postprints. You also expressed interest in a virtual event, as well as in a meeting being shared with another ICOM-CC Working Group or another Committee of ICOM, such as *Graphic Document*, *Objects from Indigenous and World Culture*, *Preventive Working Groups*. Lastly, respondents showed interest in other ways of dissemination, such as conference video recordings or videos of practical treatments, the organization of practical workshops and a common and collaborative bibliography. All these new activities were added to the Working Group Programme (see below), therefore if you have anything to share or propose in that direction, get in contact!

ICOM-CC Leather and Related Materials Working Group Triennial Programme 2020 – 2023

The ICOM-CC Leather and Related Materials Working Group deals with theoretical and technical issues concerning the conservation of a wide variety of artefacts made of tanned, tawed or untanned animal skins, together with the diffusion and sharing of knowledge in the field. The artefact categories include: arms and armour, bookbindings, clothing and accessories, containers, furnishings, games, harnesses, means of transport, musical instruments, shoes,

parchments, mummies and natural history specimens.

Specific themes for investigation/ideas

•**Conservation materials and methodologies:** The development, the improvement or the assessment of conservation materials and techniques for leather and related materials.

•**Development of new analytical approaches** for the characterization of leather, skin and parchment, in particular non-invasive and micro-invasive techniques to gain information on the technologies and degradation.

•**Preventive conservation:** The development of strategies and guidelines on environmental conditions for leather, skin and related materials in museums, churches, libraries, archives and historic houses. Research and preventive conservation projects on the issue of low energy storage and display.

•**Leather, skin and parchment technologies:** Studies on the history and original technologies of leather artifacts of historic and artistic value from different countries, based both on scientific investigation and study of archival documents, technical sources and literature.

•**Sustainable conservation practices** related to climate control, integrated pest management and leather conservation treatments or materials, as well as approaches to achieve net zero through our work practises.

Projects

•**Newsletters and Communication:** Publication of a newsletter (once a year) based on submissions received, and direct communication through emails when new information (workshops, job position etc...) come out or when an update on our Working Group activities need to be shared. Once the new ICOM-CC website is online, long term information and resources will be posted on the Working Group pages.

•**Triennial Conference in 2023.** Encourage members to contribute papers that will address the Working Group and the conference themes.

•**Interim meetings and post prints publications:** Organisation of an interim meeting in 2022. Depending on the possibilities, the meeting may be organised in combination with another Working

Group of ICOM-CC or other committee of ICOM. A full publication will be produced following the conference and the talk may be recorded and made available online.

•**Archival issues, publications:** Facilitate the integration of the Working Group past publications within the *ICOM-CC publication online* platform.

•**Virtual discussion:** Organisation of short events online for a small group of participants to discuss and exchange ideas on a specific topic.

•**Videos on practical treatments:** Create a page on the ICOM-CC website that gathers links to access existing and newly created videos. Encourage the creation of new videos made by Working Group members showing practical conservation treatments and sharing tricks and tips.

•**Common and collaborative bibliography:** reflection on the possibility to create a common and collaborative bibliography on leather and related materials. Different topics will be defined and the project will be initiated on one of these specific topics.

•**Workshop:** organisation of workshop(s) either combined with the interim meeting or stand alone.

Feedback from the Working Group Planning meeting - May 2021

The planning meeting, that took place at the end of the Triennial Conference, was an opportunity to present our past and future activities in the Working Group and to stimulate new ideas, such as an interest in an online gathering of information about leather education opportunities, or a wish to learn about the effect of humidification and dehumidification on the mechanical properties of leather. Considering the current situation, the organization of workshops is put on hold, but virtual discussion could be organized on selected topics. A few topics have been identified to start with: the assessment and development of archival leather, the potential of analytical techniques applied to leather-based materials, and the use of adhesives for the consolidation of leather artefacts. Do not hesitate to get in contact to contribute and propose other topics, however we are also looking for people to lead these topics.

Preliminary Report on the Development of a Sulfur Free Full Vegetable Tanned Archival Calf

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Steven Siegel siegel.leather@gmail.com
Eric Robert Themmen
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The original idea came from Mr. Steven Siegel (www.siegelleather.com). The project is based on a simple observation; (Book) leathers from BEFORE 1830 more or less, do have a much longer life span than leather produced after 1830. From around 1830 – 1850 new kinds of leather making and chemicals and modern techniques were introduced. So, the idea is that these systems do have a negative influence on the longevity of (book) binding leathers [1-12]. Prior to circa 1830, sulphur containing syntans, fat liquors/greases, and inorganic sulphides were not used in the tanning of leather. This sulphur free (SF) Calf is the most historically accurate chemical representation of leather produced prior to the 19th century.

Our Goal is to produce a leather that:

- ♦ meets the Archival criteria in terms of appearance, durability, physical and chemical properties.
- ♦ is sulphur free (SF), using a beamhouse system based on hair removal and not destruction.
- ♦ 100% vegetable tanned without the use of any mineral and synthetic tanning agents and no sulphited, sulphated or sulphonated oils
- ♦ meets the demands of organoleptic characteristics including gold tooling with leaf and albumen
- ♦ is Archival (long term durable)
- ♦ is as sustainable as possible
- ♦ passes the ageing, and various other physical tests

Regarding the obtained test results so far, these can be obtained from the authors as they contain too much information for the purpose of this article. All tests are made on undyed crust leather. In addition, samples of the leather are available to qualified, interested parties by contacting any of the authors. This information includes:

- ♦ Quantitative analysis for Organic Sulphur - SF Calf: no organic bonded Sulphur was detected

- ♦ (heavy) metal analysis – ISO 17072-2: 2011 - SF Calf: METAL FREE according to UNI EN 15987
- ♦ Coherence of dry fibres assessment - SF Calf: performs better than the other leathers analysed and which are sold as being archival
- ♦ Measurement of tensile strength and percentage elongation - IUP6
- ♦ Measurement of tear load – IUP8
- ♦ Measurement of distension and strength of grain by the ball burst test – IUP9
- ♦ Determination of flex resistance - IUP20
- ♦ Tropical test (internal) at 50°C and 90% RH for 20 days. No light source and no gasses (NO₂ and SO₂)

Relevant tests were done by bookbinders to check the organoleptic properties. Tests which were carried out by experts in rebinding methods for pre 19th century books using gold leaf/albumen, indicated that this SF Calf met and/or exceeded other contemporary calfskins commercially available. These properties are very important to a binder and since the initial reactions were so positive, we decided to develop a more elaborate test regime. Introduced were an internal Tropical test (50°C/90%RH/20 days) and a oxidation test (120°C/24-48-96 hours). In addition, to the standard tests a coherence of dry fibres assessment test [13-15] to assess the freshly made leathers and the aged leathers. These results can be obtained from the authors as well through the following link (<https://tinyurl.com/ycp96uyy>). The Tropical test (for hydrolysis) and the oxidation test indicated that the SF Calf performed the best.

On the next page, you will find the “Mineral Tannins Determination – ISO 17072-2:2019” table. You will notice the very low, insignificant amounts of metals present in SF calf.

The authors are convinced that this project is of importance to the (book) binding and conservation community and therefore would be pleased to start a dialogue as this will help to obtain an honest and usable, most probably, archival binding calf leather with the right characteristics, see fig.1.



Fig.1. The new leather after first tannage

INDEPENDENT COMMERCIAL LABORATORY - ANALYSIS RESULTS						
MINERAL TANNIS DETERMINATION - ISO 17072-2:2019						
METALS (Mg/Kg)						
Leather ID	Aluminum (Al)	Chromium (Cr)	Iron (Fe)	Titanium (Ti)	Zirconium (Zr)	Start Date
SF Calf	93,0	12,9	42,0	19,9	ND	28/12/2020
BDS	1.410,0	5.570,0	137,4	16,1	ND	18/01/2021
BDM	1.540,0	6.370,0	108,0	13,0	ND	18/01/2021
DE	494,0	2.580,0	138,0	380,0	1,6	28/12/2020
UKV	9.390,0	24,8	266,0	22,1	4,9	26/11/2020
note: all tests done on fresh leather, not aged						
SF Calf: Sulfur Free Calf made by Themmen - 13 - 15 sqft						
BDS: Sumac retanned cow calf crust purchased as full veg. tanned. 20 sqft						
BDM: Mimosa retanned cow calf crust purchased as full veg. Tanned. 20 sqft						
DE: Cow side crust purchased as full veg. Tanned. Benchmark leather. > 20 sqft						
UKV: Purchased as Full veg. Tanned calf. Benchmark leather. Ca. 10 sqft						
METAL-FREE Leather: sum of tannin metals less than or equal to 0,1% (metals mass / total dry weight of leather). UNI EN 15987						
METAL FREE LEATHER according to UNI EN 15987						
Cannot be described as METAL FREE LEATHER acc. To UNI EN 15987						

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Developments at the Leather Conservation Centre, Northampton, UK.

Rosie Bolton info@leatherconservation.org

Exciting new developments are underway at the Leather Conservation Centre (LCC). Over the past few months we have undergone a rebrand and are reinvigorating our online presence ahead of our next big move into purpose-built studios, planned for 2023.

We are currently situated in a temporary studio, located alongside the Museum of Leathercraft in Northampton's Grosvenor Chambers in the town centre. Since moving into the new space, due to the 2019 closure of the Northampton University Park Campus (where the previous studio was located), we have been steadily working and expanding our team.

After the retirement in 2019 of Yvette Fletcher, the well-loved long-standing Head of Conservation, the team was joined by Rebecca Kirsch, who came to leather from a textile conservation background. After almost 2 years of service, Rebecca left for pastures new.

Rosie Bolton (Studio Manager) has now returned to the studio after her maternity leave, and a new conservator, Shannon Campbell, joined the team in January 2020. Shannon arrives to us from Scotland, where she worked as a freelance conservator for National Museums Scotland following the completion of her Master of Arts degree in objects conservation.

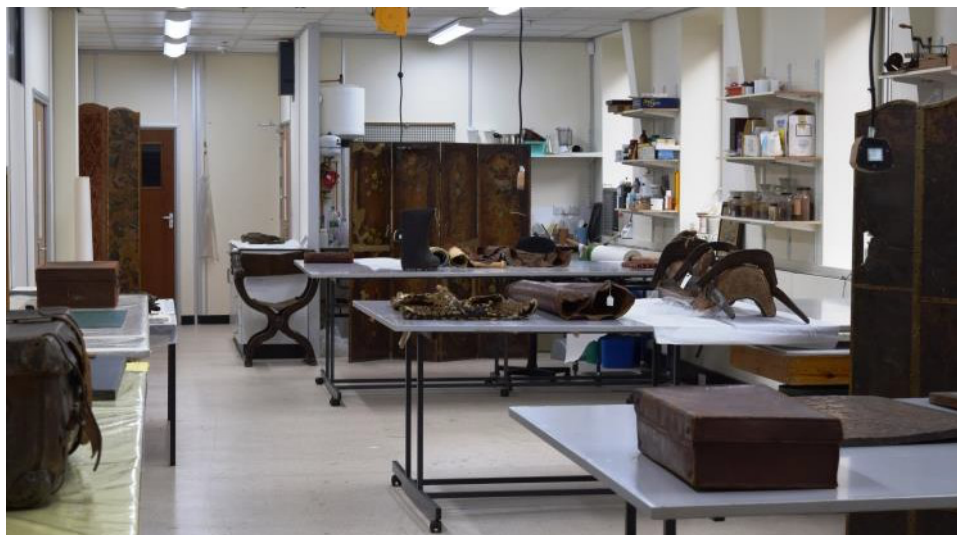
The core LCC team now consists of Rosie Bolton (Studio Manager), Arianne Panton (Senior

Conservator), Shannon (Conservator) and Cyd Clift (administrator), with Naomi Bergmans joining the team regularly as a freelance conservator.

The LCC has been able to keep working through most of the pandemic due in part to a generous National lottery grant. We have also been able to initiate a number of research projects alongside our day-to-day conservation work for museums, historic houses and private clients. A notable project currently underway is an investigation into consolidants used on the painted layer of gilt leather. This project is being carried out in association with the Museum of Leathercraft who have an extensive collection of gilt leather.

We are also working on a digitisation project in collaboration with the Institute of Creative Leather Technology (ICLT) at the University of Northampton, to digitise our collection of species identification slides – containing both cross sections and grain samples from a vast range of species. These slides were left to us by Betty Haines, the renowned leather chemist, and we hope to honour her legacy by making them available as a resource for conservators and researchers. We believe they are a valuable resource and their availability will have a positive impact on the advancement of our field.

We have reintroduced our quarterly newsletter detailing new developments – a link to sign up to the mailing list is available on our website (www.leatherconservation.org). And also have a series of new blog posts available on our website that will be updated on a regular basis focusing on some of the interesting objects and treatments being carried out in the studio.



The LCC's present studio.

If you are interested in any of the projects detailed above, or would like to make contact please get in touch with the team at info@leatherconservation.org we would be happy to hear from you.

CROYAN – the French Royal Collections from North America

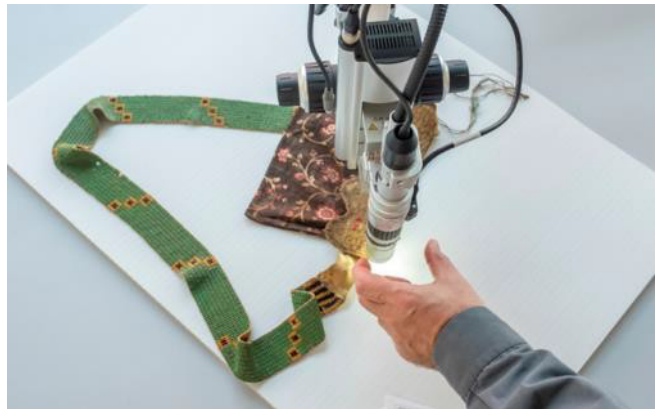
Paz Núñez-Regueiro, Head Curator of the Americas Collections, the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac.
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The musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac preserves an important set of objects obtained from in the 17th-19th centuries in the current territory of Canada and the United States. These objects were part of the so-called "royal collections" – pieces belonging to the aristocracy and the church. After the French Revolution and the subsequently confiscation of nobility properties, they were integrated into French national institutions. This is


an exceptional collection for the knowledge of the Native Peoples living in these regions, as well as for better understanding their relations with Europeans.

We have implemented an interdisciplinary approach for the study and the dissemination of this exceptional set: **the CROYAN Project – the French Royal Collections from North America**. It combines studies on written and pictorial sources of the time, material analysis of the objects, conservation-restoration interventions and collaboration with Native American and First Nations specialists. Our aims are to shed new light on the objects preserved in France, on value and function attributed to them in the past and today, and to ensure its transmission to futures generations.


To know more about the CROYAN Project and the French Royal Collections from North American, we invite you to visit our website <https://croyan.quaibranly.fr> and share your insights with us.



Two images from the Croyan web site: Working session, hide 71.1934.33.11 D and working session, bag 71.1878.32.142 D. © musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, photo Julien Brachhammer

**MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY
JACQUES CHIRAC**


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ANALYSE | JAN 14, 2021

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COLLECTION | JAN 14, 2021

The Royal Collections (2)

The French Revolution destroyed this system linking cabinets de curiosités and arts and science...

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Publications.

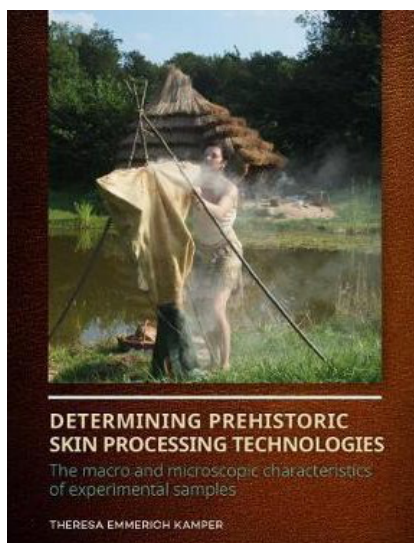
Paris 2019 Interim Meeting post-prints.



We are delighted that this is now available. The full publication is currently accessible on [Lulu.com](https://lulu.com), and you can either download the [ebook](#) for free or order a [printed copy](#). Individual articles will soon be available on the *ICOM-CC Online Publications Platform*.

Determining Prehistoric Skin Processing

Technologies: The Macro and Microscopic Characteristics of Experimental Samples.



Theresa Emmerich Kamper

The importance of skin processing technologies in the history and expansion of humankind cannot be

overstated, yet these technologies can be difficult to identify in the archaeological record. This research outlines the development of a systematic, non-destructive method for identifying the tanning technologies used to produce prehistoric skin artefacts. The approach combines extensive archaeological research and over 25 years of the author's personal tanning experience. The method employs observations of an extensive sample reference collection, both macroscopic and microscopic, to produce a database of defining characteristics for six tannage types, from a large geographic area and time frame. The primary collection contains 22 species identified as economically important from both Europe and North America. A secondary collection of clothing and utilitarian items, made from traditionally processed skins, was used to add 'in-life use' traces to the database. The method was tested against both archaeological items from a variety of preservation contexts, and ethnographic items from museum collections across North America and Europe. This analysis confirmed that defining characteristics do exist between the primary tannage technologies, and that at least some defining characteristics survived in all preservation contexts. These can be recorded at multiple levels of observation, and often provide insight into small sections of the artefact's production sequence and life history. This research shows definitively that processed skin items from vastly different preservation contexts can provide a wealth of information about prehistoric tannage technologies, as well as information on manufacturing sequences and the conditions of use an item experienced. The method is a valuable analytical tool for those involved in conservation, curation or analysis of archaeological or ethnographic skin products. It provides a consolidated source of information for artisans working with traditional tanning, or re-enactors interested in the history or science of skin products. Finally, it serves as an example of the targeted use of experimental archaeology in a large-scale research project, and will be beneficial to anyone involved in experimental or experiential archaeology.

Publisher: Sidestone Press

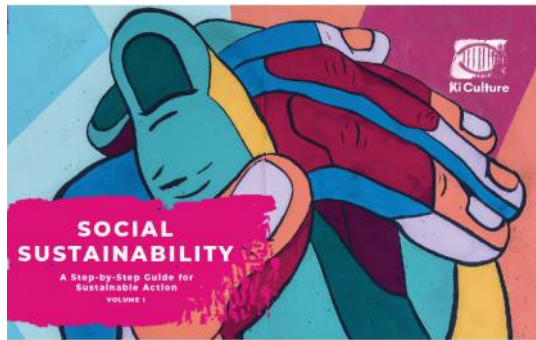
ISBN: 9789088908361

Number of pages: 206

Dimensions: 11 x 210 mm

<https://www.waterstones.com/book/determining-prehistoric-skin-processing-technologies/theresa-emmerich-kamper/9789088908361>

Ki books



The Ki Books are step-by-step guides for practical, sustainable action in the cultural sector. They are co-created by sustainability experts in collaboration with cultural professionals and are made specially for cultural practitioners. They are for curators, archaeologists, conservators, volunteers, registrars, architects - anyone in the sector who would like to be more sustainable but doesn't know where to begin or what the next step is. Their purpose is to make sustainability easy. The Ki Books translate technical sustainability jargon into accessible language and give actions that are relevant and achievable. Sustainability is for everyone, and the Ki Books show how anyone can start working in a more sustainable way today.

The idea for the Ki Books came when Ki Culture's Founder and Executive Director, Caitlin Southwick, herself a trained objects conservator, was coming up dry in her search for information on how she could be more sustainable in her daily practice. She wished someone would just hand her a book which told her what to do. Fast-forward to January 2021 when Ki Culture published the first three Ki Books - Waste & Materials, Social Sustainability and Energy - all free to download via the Ki Culture website here: <https://www.kiculture.org/ki-books/>.

Expanding on the concepts of the above, two new Ki Books - Exhibitions and Education & Outreach - are currently in development and set to be published in January and April 2022 respectively. Exhibitions will guide professionals on ways to make greener exhibitions as well as how they can use exhibitions to promote sustainability. Education & Outreach will not only focus on education by cultural practitioners but also education for cultural practitioners. They will be followed by an ambitious program of Ki Books on the topics of water-use, digitisation, accessibility, front-of-house waste & materials, Indigenous relations & traditional knowledge, storage, crisis response & recovery, and more. Ki Culture's intention is to continue building a community and dialogue with cultural professionals across the globe - responding to their needs by creating resources, tools, support systems, and programs on how we can work together to make culture more sustainable.

News

Award for Carole Dignard announced by the Canadian Conservation Institute.

The Institute is proud to announce that Senior Objects Conservator Carole Dignard has received the Charles Mervyn Ruggles Award.



Carole Dignard with headdress from Rio

Carole received this award from the Canadian Association for Conservation (CAC) for her exceptional contribution and achievement in conservation science, treatment, training and education, for developing the field of conservation in Canada and for promoting the ethics and ideals expressed in the Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice of the CAC/ Canadian Association of Professional Conservators (CAPC).

Carole's receipt of the 2021 Charles Mervyn Ruggles Award is a testament to her distinguished career at the Canadian Conservation Institute as well as her leadership in a variety of professional conservation organizations, both in Canada and abroad. Well done, Carole!

Carole was an Assistant Coordinator of the Ethnographic Working Group (2005-2008) and Coordinator Ethnographic Working Group (2008-2011) and Assistant Coordinator Leather and Related Materials Working Group (2011-2014, 2014-2017, 2017-2020).

News from Portugal – articles and workshop activities

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Last year I had several articles published on leather art history: “Gilt leather for the king: the imports from Paris to Lisbon”, in New Zealand’s Leather Artisan, no. 175. In Portugal, part 3 – cases of the 13th and 14th centuries, and part 4 – scissors chairs from Grenade, were published, as a continuum on Medieval Iberian leatherwork series. Gilt leather in Algarve in 1500 (including heraldry and figurative/religious paintings) was published in a magazine of the archives of the Loulé; and a thick volume on “The Sea and the Imaginary”, by the Literature and Tradition Study Centre/New University of Lisbon, included an article of mine. Anyone wishing to receive a copy of any of these articles just drop me an email.

The long months without daily classes at school allow me to keep on developing the copies of the two embossed gilt leather wall coverings of the “Charola” of Tomar, dating from early 16th century. I already had the 2 wooden carved moulds made, and tried with sheepskin.

The columns’ pattern, with braided Gothic foliage and the Armillary Sphere, came out quite well after 3 hours of hand work (fig. 1). The rectangles measure 32 x 65 cm and are glued together two by two. Other traces are found scattered around the drum. The high relief of the column guadamecis is 5 mm.

Inside, the walls of the drum have guadamecis of 29 x 39 cm, forming a surface of about 220 and 170 cm; it consists of about 50 rectangles. Other parts – columns and walls – have traces of this type of guadameci, sometimes under mural painting; this fact leads to the admission that the entire inner wall was lined with guadameci. This pattern is too intricate, with the Portuguese coat-of-arms amidst detailed foliage; the moulding was coming out too blurred, but from the flesh side the pattern was perfectly seen. So I decided to mould flesh side up, turning the skin to mould the coat-of-arms, the Christ Cross and the Armillary Sphere on the dermis side (fig. 2). Both rectangles

received a silver foil covering, and are nowadays waiting their time to get into the painting and gold varnish process.

I took a trip to Lisbon’s Contemporary Art Museum, to photo, with a professional, a 2 x 2 meters diptych of figurative gilt leather, of a 19th century French workshop, according to Jean Paul Fournet; an article will be written for a future newsletter.

On December 11th, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences organized an on-line meeting under the theme “In gremio – in praxi. Leather without borders”. My talk was scheduled to 6 pm, but the meeting ended by lunchtime, without my knowing. Anyway, there will be papers published.



Fig. 1 – A full sheepskin moulded with the column’s pattern.



Fig. 2 – A detail of the drum pattern on sheepskin, the wooden carved mould, and the 2 modellers I’ve used.

Further News

The Glove Network

The Glove Network is an Arts and Humanities Research Council UK (AHRC) funded interdisciplinary project about English Leather Gloves.

The 25 month project started in February 2020 and brings together interested parties from academia, museums and manufacturing, with expert knowledge of the design, collections, conservation and display of English leather gloves ranging from 16th century to modern day.

We have many participants from museums: V&A, The Glove Collection Trust (Worshipful Company of Glovers of London), Museums Worcestershire, Birmingham Museum, National Motor Museum, Museum of Leathercraft, and a trustee of the Museum of London; Academia and Industry.

Brief Project summary

The sharing and exchange of information by those who have ownership and access to collections of gloves, associated material. Knowledge of the history of glove-making is key to exploring how best to preserve and promote the significance of English glove design and manufacture for future generations.

The following areas are being explored by the Glove Network:

- Current content and status of the individual collections, identify potential links by sharing information
- Histories, social and cultural and relationship to history of fashion
- Design, manufacturing and materials
- Approaches to maintenance and conservation
- Access to the collections and strategies for future understanding of their national importance

Website - www.theglovenetwork.co.uk